



***Improving Writing by Improving Grammar***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
(English/Language Arts/9-12)

**Keywords:** Grammar, writing, theme, improving writing, sentence combining,

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** Teaching grammar in a way that can be measured has been a difficult task. Every grammarian has a way that they feel is beneficial to students. This unit seeks to find the best way to engage students with grammar and syntax and to produce proof that students understand and have the ability to manipulate what they have learned to display their knowledge of the structures of the English language. With this unit, students will be asked to learn different ways of creating sentences. They will be asked to manipulate sentence structure so that the text they are writing will be assessable and appropriate for different audiences. For example, the theme of the unit they will be writing about is “man’s inhumanity towards man”. The culminating activities, writing for audiences of different reading levels using what they’ve learned about sentence structure and grammar conventions, will show that they understand and can manipulate words and structures that elementary students can comprehend as well as adult readers using the same topic.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 35 students in English II tenth grade.*

*I give permission for the Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.*

## **Improving Writing by Improving Grammar**

*Furika A. Reed*

### **Background**

We do not have time in our classes to teach everything about the rhetoric of a sentence. I believe in island hopping, concentrating on topics where we can produce results and leaving the rest...to die on the vine.

Francis Christensen, Notes toward a New Rhetoric

I teach at William A. Hough High School, a high school opened in 2010 nestled in the town of Cornelius North Carolina. The Cornelius area is a growing suburb sitting northwest of the metropolitan area of Charlotte, NC. It is made up of many affluent families and the median salary for those families has grown by \$30,000 in the last ten years. The expectations for academic success are set high for these students. Many of their parents are professionals whose successes derive directly from being successful in the classroom. Parental expectations are high and student expectations are just as high. Students here tend to have many of the necessary provisions to be successful in school. Many of them are equipped with technology that they can use at home and at school, and they expect some of their instruction, if not most of their instruction, to incorporate technology. Only a few students that I encounter need for me to provide alternatives to online lessons.

In the school year beginning in August 2013, William A. Hough housed 2298 students. The school is made up of local students, a high percentage of students who have moved into the area from different parts of the country, and each year, there is an influx of students who transfer in from local charter and private schools. When I look at the microcosm of my own classroom, I see a great difference in the ability levels of my standard level students. Standard level students are defined as those students who are at or below grade level. Those that are far below grade level may not have the basic skills to keep up with the students who test closer to grade level. Some of the students I teach have failed English classes several times prior to taking my class and are falling behind their classmates who entered high school at the same time. With the extensive spread of the abilities levels so great in ones classroom, it is sometimes difficult to engage all students in necessary exercises to improve each individual student's writing abilities.

### **Purpose**

In my own education to becoming a teacher, I took one course on grammar. The professor in the class required that each student produce a lesson plan that taught a lesson

on grammar. We watched each other's presentations and listen to the critiques of the professor. That was the extent of my "teaching grammar" education.

When creating my unit at that time, I relied heavily on the grammar I learned in my 7<sup>th</sup> grade language arts class. That was the last time, in my educational career, that there was a major focus on grammar. In that course, we learned the parts of speech and diagramed sentences in order to learn the functions of the parts in sentences. That is one of the exercises that we did daily that I looked forward to. Because I so enjoyed those exercises, I figured I would attempt diagramming with my own students. It didn't work as well as I had hoped, because my students lacked real background knowledge of grammar. They were very aware of the definitions of the parts of speech; they didn't however, know the functions of those parts of speech, nor did they know anything about how parts of sentences functioned. As tenth graders, they were unaware of how words played a specific role in sentences or why the knowledge of those roles could help to establish them as more sophisticated writers. They had not learned different types of phrases and clauses. Many, I found, did not know the difference between the two.

I have taught English 10 for the majority of my seventeen year career. I teach with a focus on the writing process because, for years, that was the focus in tenth grade English. Each year, I found myself focusing more on the five paragraph format and the basics of grammatical correctness. These focuses included subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, run-on and fragment corrections, and proper homonym usage. I have struggled with determining the best way of introducing grammar that students can use to better their writings in a meaningful and measurable way. I desire to see my students exhibit a noticeable jump in written communication through the understanding of how words function together to create text for a variety of audiences.

### **Unit Objectives**

The purpose of this unit is to use grammar to improve the writing of my students. Many times I've noticed that the instructional tools that I am using are not beneficial to the learning styles of my students. Because of that, I want to spend some time doing research on different strategies to use when teaching grammar as it relates to their writing skills. Through the seminars that we've had through the Charlotte Teacher Institute, I've learned that if students not only know the parts of speech but also the functions of each, then that would indicate a better understanding of grammar and may influence the effectiveness with which they write. My goal with creating this unit is to successfully incorporate grammar instruction into the writing instruction and not have them be mutually exclusive in any way.

With the inception of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), focus on argumentative writing has increased greatly. Prior to its implementation, tenth grade English in North Carolina focused mainly on expository writing. Up until 2012, students in these classes

took tests each March on how well they mastered the formulaic 5-paragraph essay. Now the expectations are that our students are able to read increasingly difficult text, analyze said text, formulate an argument, and write well enough to express that argument to a variety of audiences using the difficult text as support.

### **Summary of Unit**

This unit will take approximately three to four weeks. I will begin the unit in the second half of the semester. Students will review the writing process and the expectations of essay writing prior to the beginning of the unit. We will also use literary pieces read in the first half of the semester to practice determining theme. The theme for this unit will be Man's Inhumanity Towards man. Students will use this theme as we aim to improve writing and manipulate grammatical structure to reach a variety of audiences. By this point in the semester, students have already written several essays and have received feedback and a Flesch-Kincaid readability level for the writing they have produced up until now. By the end of the unit, half of the class will be writing essays on the given theme for an audience at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. The other half of the class will write their essays at the 11<sup>th</sup> grade level or higher. I will use their original Flesch-Kincaid levels to determine which students will receive which assignment.

There will be three main pieces of literature used during this unit: The memoir *Night* by Elie Wiesel, the poem "Night, Death, Mississippi" by Robert Hayden, and "White Man's Burden" by Rudyard Kipling. These pieces will provide students with the background knowledge and source material needed to write the essay. They also fulfill the Common Core Standard of reading text of higher complexity. In addition, samples will be garnered from these texts for students to mimic when practicing the manipulation of phrase and clauses functions. By the end of the unit, my students will discuss the difference in grammatical structures by studying the differences of these pieces as well as effectively use these grammatical structures in their own writing.

I focused my research on how to more effectively deliver instruction of grammar to measurably improve the writing of my students. The sources I used to produce this unit did not agree on which way was the best way to improve students' writing, so I decided to use a combination of the three most prominent methods I found during my search. One way was to mimic the writing of other authors who possessed superior writing skills. In *Reading Reasons*<sup>1</sup>, Kelly Gallagher, suggests mimicking after reading to help students understand the reading that they've done and also to strengthen their own writing. By seeing examples of superior writing and practicing the same sentence structures of those writers, students can begin to incorporate those structures in different writing tasks.

The second method that occurred frequently was sentence combining. For those students who seem to struggle, Saddler and Preschern<sup>2</sup> suggest that sentence combining provides a systemic structure that gives weaker writers a framework from which to work.

According to this article, weaker writers need more direct instruction when it comes to improving sentence structure and sentence structure manipulation.

The final method used to improve student writing focuses on the direct teaching of syntactical structure. In the article “The Effect of Teaching Grammar on Writing”, the authors suggest that teaching the of phrases and clauses works to produce more quality writing and better sentence structure than other methods.<sup>3</sup> Instead of showing student examples and having them copy the structure, the students are taught directly what the different types of phrases and clauses are. Then they are guided on how to use them within their own writings.

## **Strategies**

### Scaffolding

According to Anthony and Ula Manzo, the best way to engage students in learning information they have not mastered is to scaffold it; build on what they know and where they are in order to ensure their success<sup>4</sup>. Starting with the grammatical structures, students may be asked to separate the subject of the sentence from its predicate. Then build from there when discussing the functions of the different parts of the sentence.

### Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are a tool that be used for many different situations. They can be used to help students organize their thoughts. They can also be used to help students discover the patterns in their writing as well as the writing of others. Graphic organizers could be used to help students discover the function of different parts of sentences as well. Marcia Rock provides explicit instructions on the use of graphic organizers for different uses in students’ educational lives.<sup>5</sup>

### Anchor Charts

Anchor charts are used around the classroom so that students are constantly being reminded of the things covered in class. They can also remind students of what they should be aware of when they are writing or analyzing the writing of others. Kylee Beers suggest different strategies to explicitly teach students when developing reading and writing skills.<sup>6</sup>

### Cooperative Grouping

Students will be placed in groups where they will be able to discuss different aspects of writing styles and the use of grammatical structure and vocabulary. They will be asked to

chart their group discussions and compare what they found to what other groups have discovered.

## **The Unit Plan**

### Day 1 and 2

To begin the unit, it is necessary to introduce or review with your students the different sentence structures. Here is a link to a [handout](#)<sup>7</sup> that can be given to students. Individual teachers may decide to turn this into a power point and allow students time to take notes. After the introduction to the sentence structures, students should be given the opportunity to practice deciphering between the different structures. In collaborative groups, students will be given ten different sentences. They will be allowed 10 minutes to categorize the sentences as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. The teacher will bring the students back together to discuss their choices and to provide feedback to the students. Additional practice should be provided to ensure students understand the differences.

### Day 3 and 4

Use the [PowerPoint](#)<sup>8</sup> presentation to delve deeper into the structure of sentences. This presentation also gives an introduction into sentence diagramming, which may be handy for your students who are visual learners. In addition, sentences can be created on sentence strips and cut up to allow for manipulation by the students in order to accommodate those kinesthetic learners.

### Day 5

On day five, students will look at and analyze the structures of famous writers. In collaborative groups, students will determine the sentence structures of different authors. They will be given a [worksheet](#) that contains the opening lines to novels. They will be asked to determine the sentence structure types for each sentence in each opening. As a class, we will discuss the effects of the sentences types and structures on each piece. At this point, we will also begin discussing readability levels and how they are determined. We will use the Flesch-Kincaid reading formula for two reasons. The first reason is because it is considered to be the most accurate of the formulas being used today; the second reason is because it is readily available on Microsoft word. I will not spend much time on the formula with students, but I will introduce it to them. The Flesch-Kincaid model uses average sentence length and average words per sentence. The actual formula is  $RE=206.835-(1.015 \times ASL)-(84.6 \times ASW)$ .

Additional Information about the Flesch-Kincaid reading formula:

90-100=very easy; 5<sup>th</sup> Grader  
60-70=Standard; 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grader  
0-30=Difficult; College Level<sup>9</sup>

## Day 6

Students will be asked to use a piece of writing they have previously produced for this class. They will be instructed on how to determine their Flesch-Kincaid. After they have their readability levels, we will practice how to manipulate what they have previously written to convey information for different levels of readers.

## Day 7 and 8

The next strategy that they will undertake is sentence combining. As a class we will work on different ways of combining sentences in order to strengthen writing. Students will learn how to combine sentences using different methods such as coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS). Here it may be necessary to review when it is useful to use each of the FANBOYS and instruct students that they are not necessary interchangeable.

They will be introduced to combining sentences using subordinate conjunctions. Compound subjects and verbs, as well as compounding other parts of speech, can also be used to combine sentences. All of this will be taught while also reviewing the sentence structures that we will be studying. In order to teach the different ways of combining students will be given a sheet, and in groups they will be asked to figure out the best way to combine the different combination of sentences (coordinating conjunction, subordinating conjunction, compound subject or verb)

### Sentence Combining Worksheet

Directions: Combine each group of sentences into one sentence using one of the methods discussed in your notes.

- Orangutans are found in Asia.
  - Orangutans have reddish- brown hair.
  - Orangutans are very intelligent.
- The track team will be featured at the pep rally.
  - The wrestling team will be featured at the pep really
  - The cross-country team will be featured at the pep rally.
- Tom will attend the meeting afterschool.
  - Tom's coach told him not to attend the meeting after school.

4. A. The Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom in the world  
B. The American flag is a bigger symbol of freedom in the world.
5. A. Seniors will be allowed to leave school early.  
B. Seniors must pay their dues by the end of October.
6. A. People who wear glasses are smart.  
B. People who wear glasses are avid readers.  
C. People who wear glasses are quiet.
7. A. Wrestlers are “smack” talkers.  
B. Wrestlers love eating food more than the average person.  
C. Wrestlers are lazy.
8. A. 16 year olds in North Carolina can get their licenses.  
B. 16 year olds must maintain a 2.0 grade point average.
9. A. Winston Churchill was prime minister of England.  
B. Winston Churchill once said, “Never, never give up”.
10. A. Kurt Cobain suffered from mental illness.  
B. Kurt Cobain produced a lot of music

Day 9-10

After continuing to practice the manipulation of sentence structures students will be given the assignment to write an essay on the theme “man’s inhumanity towards man”. One half of the class will be instructed to write the essay in a way that is readily understandable for students in the fifth grade. The other half of the class will be given the instructions to write for an audience of 11<sup>th</sup> graders. Later in the semester, students will be given another topic and the audience for them will switch. This is to ensure each student gets to practice for different levels of audiences. They must use the pieces studied in class as their resources when supporting their ideas.

### **Literature to Read While teaching the Grammar**

While teaching the grammar, these are the literature pieces students will be studying. They will be focused on the theme “man’s inhumanity towards man”. After the reading of each of these pieces, students will be led in a Socratic seminar where they will be asked guiding questions to soliciting their understanding of the pieces and the inhumane way different groups of people have been treated by other people. When conducting a Socratic seminar, I make it a homework assignment for them to create at least three



questions concerning the upcoming seminar. This way they are thinking about the seminar, and they are prepared to actually participate. I do have my list of questions that must be asked in order to help the students get to the gist of each piece and to lead them in the direction they may go when writing their essays.

The reading of *Night* will take approximately 1-2 weeks depending on your group of learners. In order to give my class a break and to get them already thinking about other types of inhumanity outside of the Holocaust, I would break in with either of the poems. I also include current event articles so that they can be thinking about the inhumane things in the world that we live in now.

### Big Idea Questions

1. How does one's environment or culture dictate the choices one makes?
2. How does allowing one group to perpetrate inhumanity on another group affect what may happen in the future?
3. What is man's duty or responsibility to the preservation of what is good for all of humanity?

### Night

Socratic seminar questions:

1. What does Moishe report that makes the people in the village not believe him? Why do you think they find it so unbelievable?
2. At the beginning of this memoir, we find that Wiesel is very aware of his religion and wants to learn more about it. So much so, he is being tutored on it by Moishe. How does his religious fervor change as the novel progresses?
3. What things have influenced the change in Weisel as he experiences the horrors of the Holocaust? How has these actions changed the relationship he has with his father and others in the book? How does his view of himself change because of what he has to go through during this time?
4. Night shows up often in the text of this memoir is the title of this memoir. What could be the symbolic and literal meanings of the use of "night" in this memoir?
5. Although there are many people who are dedicated to not allowing such atrocities as shown in Night to happen to people again, there are some very recent examples that have happened? What lessons should the reader of Night have learned to prevent slaughters like this from happening again?

### "White Man's Burden"

Socratic seminar questions:

1. According to this poem, what is the white man's burden and what should he do with it?
2. This poem can be discussed from different perspectives. Some may read it as the westernized man lending a helping hand to those who need it. Others may read it as a show of the western world's domination over developing countries. From what perspective did you read the poem and why?
3. How could this poem be used to discuss the theme man's inhumanity towards man?

### "Night, Death, Mississippi"

Socratic seminar questions:

1. In this poem, we are introduced to a man who has participated in the lynching of black men. The descriptions of the acts are very vivid. What do you think would make a person able to commit such acts against another person?
2. What might justify the glee in which the former perpetrator reminisces?
3. Did any image created in the poem enlist sympathy in the reader? What image and why? Do you think the author was purposeful when creating these images?

It may be necessary to distinguish what the writing assignment is for students. For example, I will give my students a choice of how they can tackle their writing assignments.

1. They can define inhumanity using the reading selections to paint a picture for their audiences.
2. They can discuss the effects of being treated inhumanely.
3. They can discuss what causes a person to treat someone inhumanely.
4. They can write their essay discussing ways to prevent or stop different types of inhumanity in the world today.

Some of the treatment of people in these selections would also force the students to determine how to handle certain images as they write to make it appropriate for the audience for which they are writing.

### Graphic Organizers

To compare the three pieces, use the three way [venn diagram](#) found in the appendix of this document. The writing styles can be compared as well as the content of the pieces. This activity will work well in small group sessions where the teacher will have the opportunity of working with four or less students at the time. The teacher may decide to observe and monitor the conversations of the students to determine how well they understand the subject matter. In addition, this can be the beginning of the planning stages for the essay they will write for the culminating activity.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

In this book, Anderson proposes that writing teachers not separate mechanics and grammar from writing. He introduces a way for teachers who are not "grammarians" away to teach what students need in order to improve their writing. One technique that Anderson uses in his writing workshops is imitation of mentor sentences. He has students imitate the mentor sentences and then teaches them what they need to know in order to understand the pattern of the sentence they have just mimicked.

Andrews, Richard, Carole Torgerson, Sue Beverton, Allison Freeman, Terry Locke, Graham Low, Alison Robinson, and Die Zhu. "The Effects of Grammar Teaching on Writing." *British Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 1 (February 2006): 39-55. Accessed October 26, 2013. JSTOR.

This article sets out to determine which is better for writing: formal grammar instruction or sentence combining. The findings of this research says that while more research needs to be done, sentence combining far outweighs formal grammar instruction when attempting to improve the writing of students between the ages of 5 and 15.

Beers, G. Kylene. *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2013.

Kylene Beers provides strategies in this book to help struggling and reluctant readers improve their reading skills. Students practice six strategies until they feel comfortable enough to read and discuss the literature on their own. The use of anchor charts reminds students of these strategies, and they are available for students to review as they complete their assignments.

Connors, Robert J. "The Erasure of the Sentence." *College Composition and Communication* 52, no. 1 (September 2000): 96-128. Accessed October 26, 2013. JSTOR.

This article compares three different ways of teaching grammar for the improvement of writing. Its focus is on the decades of the 1960s and the 1970s. One technique discussed is the generative rhetoric coined by Francis Christensen. With this technique, students are taught to add more information to an already written sentence. In contrast, the second technique is sentence combining. Here, students are asked to combine sentences that have already been created. The third technique discussed in this article is imitation. Students are given examples of sentences written by established authors and are asked to copy the technique used by those authors. In Connors opinion, because of these discussions, today writing instruction is purely about the grammatical aspects and

not the construction of the sentence. That has been erased.

Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities*. Unabridged ed. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998. Print.

"THE FLESCH READING EASE READABILITY FORMULA." *THE FLESCH READING EASE READABILITY FORMULA*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Nov. 2013. <<http://www.readabilityformulas.com/flesch-reading-ease-readability-formula.php>>.

Gallagher, Kelly. *Reading Reasons: Motivational Mini-lessons for Middle and High School*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2003.

Kelly Gallagher focuses, in this book, on encouraging students to read better and more. He starts his book with a quote from Donald Graves: "If you make a student feel like a reader, he'll become a reader". Later in the book, he espouses that if you make a student feel like a writer, he'll become one. He does this by suggesting that students will become better writers by imitating the authors they read who exhibit those skills teachers deem necessary for students to be successful.

Honegger, Mark. *English Grammar for Writing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

Honegger provides a book on how to teach grammar in conjunction with writing. He sets out to provide step by step directions on how to engage students by teaching them the strategies and having them understand the nuances of the written language.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York, NY: Grand Central, 1988. Print.

Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*. Reissue ed. New York, NY: Signet Classics, 2010. Print.

"My Big Fat Grammar Project - PowerPoint PPT Presentation." *PowerShow*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Nov. 2013.

This is a power point that introduces the user to different types of sentence structures.

Rock, M. L. "Graphic Organizers: Tools to Build Behavioral Literacy and Foster Emotional Competency." *Intervention in School and Clinic* 40, no. 1 (2004): 10-37. doi:10.1177/10534512040400010201.

This journal article gives explicit directions on how to implement the use of graphic organizers in the classroom. The effective use can help student organize ideas, but it is imperative that the organizers are used in scaffolding and that they are used frequently in

the classroom. Otherwise students may see the use of graphic organizers as busy work and not a necessary tool.

Saddler, Bruce, and Jennifer Preschern. "Improving Sentence Writing Ability through Sentence-combining Practice." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 39, no. 3 (January/February 2007): 6-11. Accessed October 26, 2013. JSTOR.

Saddler and Preschern include in this article research that shows that teaching sentence combining will improve students writing in several areas as opposed to simply teaching grammar. Introducing students to sentence combining shows growth in the ability to create more complex sentences. Additionally, students who were exposed to direct instruction on sentence combining were more able to use those skills when given a revision task.

Strong, William. "Creative Approaches to Sentence Combining." *National Council of Teachers of English*, 1986, 1-94. Accessed October 29, 2013. JSTOR.

This is a complete booklet published in 1986 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Its purpose is to give background information on the different techniques used previously to improve student writing. It affirms that the most effective way of improving student writing is to teach them how to combine sentences.

The Structure of a Sentence." *The Structure of a Sentence*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.writingcentre.uottawa.ca/hypergrammar/sntstrct.html>>.

Tyson, Timothy B. *Blood Done Sign My Name*. Reprint ed. New York, NY: Broadway, 2005. Print.

Zinsler, William Knowlton. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

Zinsler provides a book on that breaks down in parts the necessary skills needed to be a great writer. He gives the reader a brief explanation of what to use in writing, where to use it, and how to use it to be effective. The short concise advice for writers is what many high school students need to be exposed to.

## Reading List for Students

Kipling, Rudyard. "White Man's Burden". *Kipling: A Selection of His Stories and Poems*. Edited by John Beecroft and Richard M. Powers. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956.

"Robert Hayden Poem Night, Death, Mississippi." *Robert Hayden Poem Night, Death, Mississippi*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Nov. 2013.  
<<http://www.blueridgejournal.com/poems/rh-night.htm>>.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Translated by Marion Wiesel. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, a Division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

## Appendix

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Students will be able to use the texts in the unit in order to support the claims they will make about man's inhumanity towards man.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1b: Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.

Students will be able to manipulate the structure of their sentences by using different types of clauses in order to convey certain meanings or add emphasis to certain ideas in the sentences that they write.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2a: Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses. (Sentence combining).

Students will be able to combine sentences in order to manipulate the structure of their writings via the use of punctuation and/or conjunctive adverbs.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Students will write expository essays in order to display their understanding of the concepts discussed in the unit such as the theme, man's inhumanity towards man, and the grammatical structures practiced throughout the unit.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Students will be able to determine the main theme of the pieces read throughout the unit and explain the events that the author uses to develop that theme.

## Examples of Famous Leads

Directions: With your group, analyze the lead paragraphs of some well-known novels. Note the sentence structure for each sentence in each lead. Discuss the effectiveness of using certain sentence structures in each lead.

“When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed, and Jem’s fears of never being able to play football were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury. His left arm was somewhat shorter than his right; when he stood or walked, the back of his hand was at right angles to his body, his thumb parallel to his thigh. He couldn’t have cared less, so long as he could pass and punt.” --*To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee

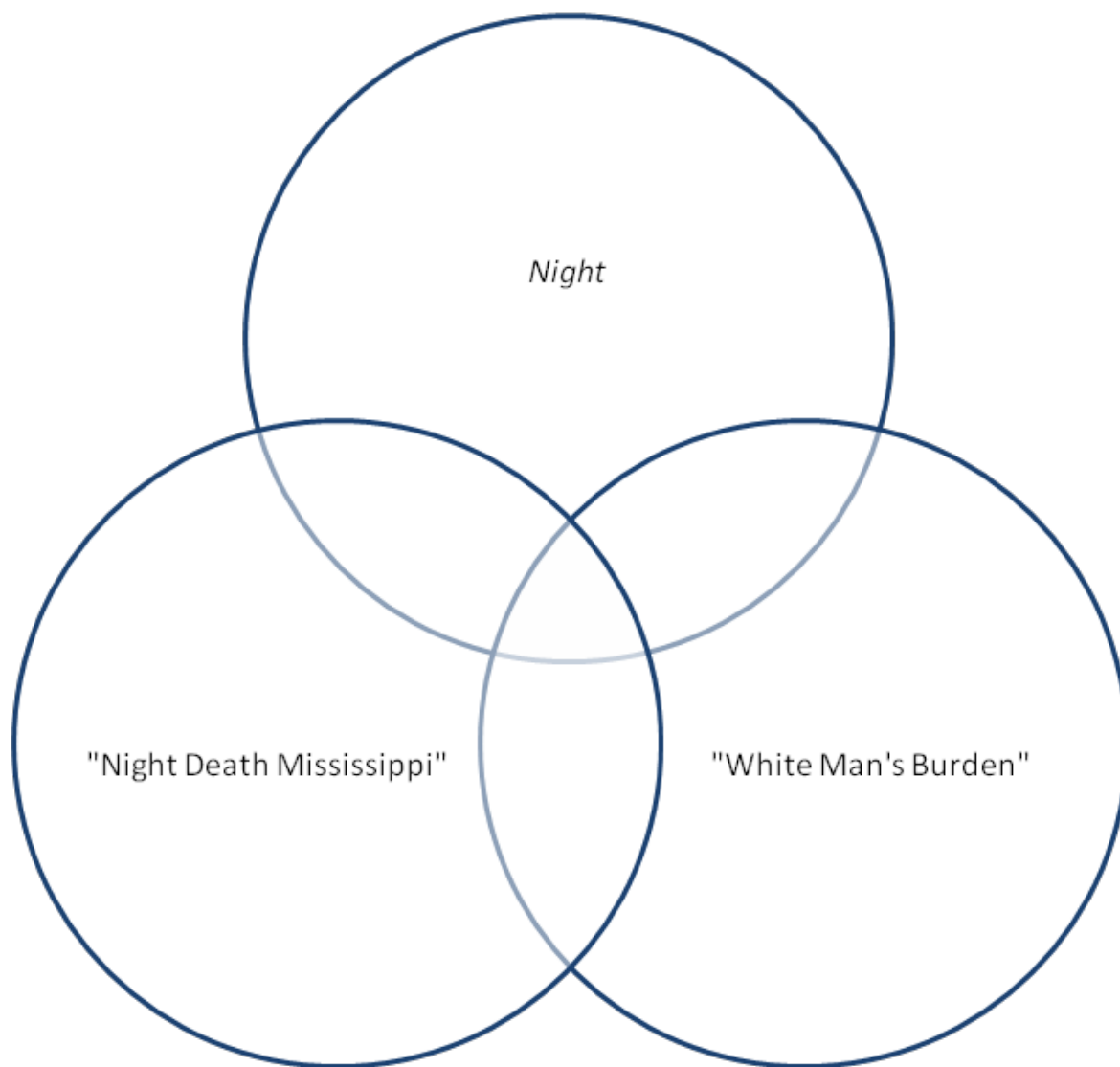
“Sometimes at night I think that my husband is with me again, coming gently through the mists, and we are tranquil together. Then morning comes, the wavering grey turns to gold, there is a stirring within me as the sleepers awake, and he softly departs.” --*Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other Way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.” – *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens

“‘Daddy and Roger and ‘em shot ‘em a nigger.’ That’s what Gerald Teel said to me in my family’s driveway in Oxford, North Carolina, on May 12, 1970. We were both ten years old. I was bouncing a basketball. The night before, a black man had “said something” at the store to Judy, his nineteen-year-old sister-in-law, Gerald told me, and his father and two of his brothers had run him out of the store and shot him dead. The man’s name was Henry Marrow, I found out later, but his family called him Dickie. He was killed in public as he lay on his back, helpless, begging for his life.”—*Blood Done Sign my Name*, Timothy B. Tyson



Venn diagram to use help students see the similarities and differences of the inhumane ways people are treated in each work.



## Notes

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1. Kelly Gallagher. *Reading Reasons: Motivational Mini-lessons for Middle and High School*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2003.

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