



What are the Motivating Factors Behind Our Decisions

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
English & Social Studies Classes in 9-12th grades

Keywords:

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

Synopsis: This unit is intended to have students look at the decisions that they make today and how it will impact them in the future as well as what were the driving forces in their decision making process. Students will read two stories that are of high interest, as well as high consequence. The stories, *The Most Dangerous Game* and *The Lady and the Tiger*, create opportunities for students to question the decisions of the main characters and discuss the consequences of those decisions.

I plan to teach this unit this coming school year to 120 students in an English I class.

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

What are the Motivating Factors Behind Our Decisions?

Lisa M. Hagen

Introduction

Reading is the cornerstone to education. Without this skill, education and the world can be very difficult to navigate. In this age of technology and instant gratification, students typically don't appreciate the fine art of literature. Asking a student to slow down and read a book is foreign and is often an uncomfortable task. I believe a good book, magazine article, or short story can be the least expensive and most rewarding experience we can offer our students. Books and literature can take you to places and provide experiences that time and economics may otherwise prohibit. When a book is read and discussed, it allows for the student to reflect on the deeper meaning behind the words contained on the page. Reading can provide a different perspective on life. When students are asked to reflect about what the story makes them think, and how it can relate to their lives, we are beginning the conversation of agency.

As a special education teacher, I am constantly on the lookout for new and different ways to engage my students in the art of literature. It does not matter what literature students choose as long as they are reading. If a student chooses to read a graphic novel, that can be as beneficial as a traditional novel or a work of non-fiction when teachers are attempting to engage students in activities that are literature based. I believe that this unit will allow students to read, internalize and comprehend the magic of the written word, and explore the deeper meaning behind the decisions that characters, authors and even students themselves make in life.

Rationale

It is my belief that literature can guide the conversation for understanding the world around us. The conversations and the literature we read can often lead to changes in perception and provide a common ground for conversation. I want the students to recognize that literature can have meaning to them, and tie into their lives. Teachers can become so focused on what we have always done in years past, that the idea of inventing new lessons is often daunting. This unit will allow teachers to think outside of the box and still teach to the curriculum.

The readings that will be selected will help to open the conversation on the ideals and morality that we hold as people. "Morality is rooted in innate, hardwired emotional responses that are only slightly modified by self-conscious adult reasoning," as stated by Alison Gopnick in the text *The Philosophical Baby*. She goes on to say that "Children's moral thinking, and so our own, changes as we learn more about the world and

ourselves.”^{vi} Exposing students to literature that changes our view is not only the responsibility of the teacher, but the entire education system.

Population

My name is Lisa Hagen and I am a special education teacher working in an English I inclusion class. The students that I serve, along with my co-teacher, are often below grade level in the areas of English and Math. This is evidenced by the End of Grade test from their 8th grade year, as well as classroom assessments, anecdotal records, and observations done during class periods. I co-teach English I and Math I classes. These are classes that are offered to freshman or students who have not passed the class previously. A co-taught class is one where 2 teachers are in a room with one set of students. The “teacher of record” is in the room everyday, while the co-teacher is in the room providing support during specified times.

The goal of a co-taught or inclusion environment is that all students benefit from the content knowledge of the teacher of record, as well as benefit from the strategies and differentiation skills the Exceptional Children’s (EC) teacher brings. The ability of the students can vary widely, whether the student is classified as needing specialized instruction or not. Best practices dictate that the make-up of an inclusive classroom has no more than 33% of students with disabilities placed in the classroom. In an English class, the struggles of an EC student could be in the area of Reading comprehension, Reading Fluency or Written Expression. It is the job of the EC teacher to provide accommodations, modifications, and support in these areas not only to the EC students, but any student who may need that support to have success academically.

North Mecklenburg High School (North Meck) is a Charlotte Mecklenburg School that is located in the Northern section of Mecklenburg County. North Meck is a comprehensive high school with 1900 students. The student body is diverse with 59% African American, 4% Asian, 14% Hispanic, 3% Multiracial and 19% White. North Meck is located in the Huntersville area of Mecklenburg County and pulls students from that area, North Charlotte and parts of West Charlotte.

North Meck operates on an A/B day 4x4 block schedule with all classes meeting for 90 minutes. This means that the classes alternate every day. I am assigned to work with 2 Math I teachers and an English I teacher. These teachers classes meet during the same time on the same day; my responsibility is to be in multiple places at once. It truly requires a significant amount of planning and communication behind the scenes to meet the needs of all the students and the needs of the teachers.

My classes follow the Common Core State Standards as adopted by North Carolina, from NC Department of Instruction. The classroom is outfitted with an LCD projector, white board, computers for student and teacher use, as well as desks and chairs that can be moved about the room as needed. I try to incorporate text that is current and relevant

as well as the classics, literature that can be seen and used as a reference throughout history. The students participate in a flipped classroom, where some of the material is taught directly in the classroom by the teacher, assignments are completed either in class or online and lectures or readings can be accessed through the class web site. When assignments are posted and provided virtually it is expected that readings are done so that a Socratic seminar can take place, expanding the central ideas and the range of ideas students have developed while reading. Students are also broken into small groups so they can discuss different aspects of the reading and how it relates to them and their lives. The groups are always changing so that students can interact with different peers. The groups are grouped by reading ability, high and low achieving students in the same group to allow for tutoring when it is possible. The students are expected to present their ideas and thoughts to the class and back up the ideas they have with facts and details from the readings.

Content Background

Many of my students are below grade level when they arrive in the classroom. Students may only have a reading level of 3rd or 4th grade. It is the goal of educators at the school to have student proficiency expand by at least one academic year, if not more. This goal will be reached by providing a Foundations English class within the freshman year class, reviewing the basic skills needed to be successful in a “kill and drill” style, as well as the core class of English I.

All students will need be asked to demonstrate the following to meet reading competencies. Students need to be able to locate the main idea, compare and contrast, make inferences as well as use context clues to answer questions and complete assignments. To meet the writing competencies students will demonstrate the development of a paragraph, writing complex sentences and editing written work. Students who are classified under the Exceptional Children’s umbrella will have IEP goals that are correlated to the above goals, which is about one third of the class. Keeping this in mind I will introduce high interest reading selections that focus on the choices of the characters. I hope to open the door to differences between beliefs and the reasoning behind these.

Engaging in conversations and reading about worlds that are different from our own can open doors to new ideas, thoughts, and perspectives that may not have been considered before reading something from outside of our comfort zone.

Standards Met

Common Core State Standards

CCSS focusing on the specific standards of Reading Standards for Literature RL.9.5, RL.9 .6, and RL.9.10. Standard RL.9.5 asks students to Analyze how an author’s choices

concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. The selection that I have chosen will ask all of the above of the students, increasing their ability to think critically about what is being read. Standard RL.9.6 asks students to analyze a point of view or cultural experience from outside of the US and draw parallels to their life and the choices we make. The reading selections are based during a time when the experience of the characters is far from the life experiences the students in today's classroom will have had. Standard RL.9.10 requires students to comprehend literature with stories, dramas and poems in mind. The students will be reading stories that were written in the early part of the 20th century, and are centered on very dramatic themes.

I will also incorporate Reading Standards for Informational text RI.9.2, RI.9.4 and RI.9.7. Standard RI.9.2 asks students to determine central ideas of a text, and analyze its development over the course of the text. Standard RI.9.4 asks students to determine the meaning of words or phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and technical meanings. Furthermore, it asks them to analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Standard RI.9.7 asks students to analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Students will meet the standards by completing a variety of tasks. The activities will incorporate more than one standard as these can be combined into multiple lessons. The mastery of the standards will be shown in the following ways:

Student Objectives

Students will quote from the text

Students will draw inference

Students will identify the theme of a story

Students will summarize a text

Students will evaluate text using figurative language

Students will compare and contrast 2 or more characters, setting or events

Classroom Activities

My plan is to introduce high interest reading selections to the students. These readings will be explored in view of what decisions and choices were made by the author, characters, and narrator while asking students to consider how the choices the students make in their everyday lives affect them.

Students will be asked to compare and contrast the settings, characters, motivation, and process in the stories. Students will also be introduced to the ideas of personal choice, the repercussions of the choices we make and how to write a beginning/end of a

story. The stories that will be read are “The Lady and the Tiger” and the “Most Dangerous Game.” These are stories that can be applied to the life of students while asking greater questions and expanding the life view of the student.

The idea of human agency is one that asks what drives the decisions we make, and whether we are aware of the forces behind our decisions. Human agency asks if we have responsibility for the actions we take or are we as humans not aware enough to recognize the driving force behind how we travel through the day? Choice is a characteristic that is exclusive to the human experience and cannot be duplicated in the animal world.

This is evidenced in the article “Do You Really Have Free Will?” written by Roy F. Baumeister. In this article Baumeister states, “The evolution of free will began when living things began to make choices. The difference between plants and animals illustrates an important early step. Plants don’t change their locations and don’t need brains to help them decide where to go. Animals do. Free will is an advanced form of the simple process of controlling oneself, called agency.”ⁱⁱⁱ The stories that will be read in this unit ask the agency question often: do we really have a choice in the decisions that we make?

The questions that philosophy raises are generally surface level, leading to discussions and a forum to agree with one another within the confines of a safe place. Gareth Matthews states in A Philosophy Startup Kit for Schoolkids, “...we should not be surprised if there are lingering disagreements, even after a lengthy discussion. Still the effort to reach some agreement is always worthwhile.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The greater question that is a stem for many philosophical discussions is, how do we as humans operate in this world and not cause great harm to one another? This can lead to the question what drives the decisions we make and what are the consequences that stem from those decisions? The two questions, along with any others that are frequently asked will be posted in the classroom, revisited often, resulting in the focus of this curriculum unit.

Reading Background

“The Lady or the Tiger,” written in 1882 by Frank Stockton, continues to be relevant to today’s culture and society. There is an evil dictator who, for reasons unknown, finds pleasure in the terror and occasional happiness of others, in equal measure, and teaches this trait to his daughter. The story is short, but full of twists and turns that ask readers to consider what they would do given the same set of circumstances. Teachers should access the story; there is an adapted version complete with an MP3 audio (http://www.manythings.org/voa/stories/The_Lady_or_the_Tiger_-_By_Frank_R_Stockton.html), for those readers who are struggling and not ready for the full version. Taking the full reading and the adapted version could also be a great jumping off point for a compare and contrast.

“The Most Dangerous Game,” written in 1924 by Richard Connell, one of the most famous and well published authors of the early 20th century, is a suspenseful plot twisting short story. From the first sentence the reader is drawn into the story and invested in the characters. The story is fast moving with many opportunities for students to question why the characters behave the way they do.

As this story was written in the early part of the 20th century there is vocabulary that will be unfamiliar to students. This site has the most unfamiliar words listed with definitions and activities for students to use; <http://quizlet.com/401377/the-most-dangerous-game-vocabulary-flash-cards/>

- Stem and root words
- Foldable, tab pages
- Graphic organizer to follow the story

Teachers should have the following materials prepared for the lessons: Students will be provided a variety of graphic organizers in the form of A-B-C charts, Venn diagrams, butcher paper to create anchor charts and posters for gallery crawls, markers, copies of the stories and projector to view the movie clips.

First Lesson

Session length: 2-3 days

The first lesson will be structured on the decision making process of everyday choices. A short lecture will be given on what decisions look like and how we make them. This will be followed up with an opportunity for students to begin a discussion centering on decisions. A variety of stories will be provided from the local newspaper, each with some type of decision in it. More than one student can read the same story but the writing activities will be completed individually. Once students have read the story twice for clarity they will then be asked to verbally tell a desk partner about the story.

Students will be asked to write 7-9 sentences detailing how the story made them feel or what the student thought about the story and the outcome. It will begin the conversation of decisions and what are the driving forces behind them, how do we come to the end results of what we are doing?

Students will be asked to outline a decision that was made at some point either in the day or the proceeding days. The students will be asked to think about what was the decision that was made and how that decision affected the day or the week. An example of this is a choice for breakfast, or the shoes that were worn on a specific day.

This lesson will open the door to further exploration of the decision making process and what drives those decisions. It will begin the vocabulary of decisions as well as the

short and long term outcomes from decisions. Is there a correlation to the behavior patterns we have as students to what type of adults we are or how our lives are affected in the future? These are questions that I want students to consider and to be given the tools to answer. What are the driving forces behind what we do – weather, peer influence, comfort, or just a lack of choice in the closet when getting dressed?

The decision making process will be documented on a graphic organizer such as a time line or a fishbone. Having that concrete representation in front of them will allow students to see the process in action. Students will then be asked to consider and reflect on the implications of their decisions no matter how small.

Second Lesson

Session 2-3 days

This lesson will expand on the lessons taught in the previous days. It will look at the manner in which a decision was made during this day. What was the event that led up to the clothes the student chose to wear, the shoes they picked out and the need of a coat or not. Students will document the entire process in a graphic organizer structured in an “A-B-C” manner. We will be looking at the antecedent, behavior and consequence of a decision. The students will be taught the A-B-C vocabulary and best manner to document the decision making process. “A-B-C” is modified from the behavior tracking process that is used when looking at driving behaviors of students.

A student needs to be aware of what the process is when making decisions and an A-B-C structure is an easy quantifiable method to do this. The A stands for the antecedent, the preceding event is the decision making process, B is the behavior that results from the decision and the C is the consequence, positive or negative, as the result of the A and the B.

An example of the A-B-C can be found outlined below. The student reads the weather report, decides that a hat, coat and gloves are needed to be comfortable when meeting the bus in the morning. The student puts all of these on before leaving the house, is comfortable and leaves for the bus. The student arrives at the bus stop and is warm, comfortable and ready for a day of learning.

	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Leaving home for school	Read the weather report. See that it is 30 degrees	Get coat, hat, gloves Put all of these on	Stay warm and comfortable
At school	Remove hat, glove and coat, classroom is too warm	Become comfortable	Get work done
Heading home	Walk out of the	Remove hat and	Become comfortable

from school	school building	gloves keep coat on	on the bus.
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From this data the conversation of how we make decisions can be had. This method allows for the examination of the driving forces behind what we do.

Students will be asked to keep a log of decisions that happen over the course of this unit. Students will be provided with blank A-B-C charts, appendix 1, and asked to fill them out during the “warm-up” portion of class, typically the first 15 minutes of a class. The student will have the discretion of what is being logged but will be encouraged to think deeply, to really consider what is driving them in their decisions.

Third Lesson

Session 3-6 days

Begin reading the story of “The Lady and the Tiger.” This story is going to be read in chunks and examined in small parts. The story is one that requires small section readings, long discussions and a rereading to ensure all the parts have been looked at. Teachers should read the story first out loud to the students so there is an understanding of the fluency needed as well as a base for vocabulary and the pronunciation of unfamiliar words. Vocabulary may be unfamiliar; introduce students to the words by accessing the website, <http://www.vocabulary.com/lists/179438#view=notes> It is recommended that the story be read aloud as a class and students encouraged to ask questions for clarification before any other activities are introduced.

Students will be broken into learning groups to examine the characters in this story. The four main groups will consist of the Lady, the Dictator, the Lover and the narrator. The groups will create a poster showing why the characters carry themselves the way they do, how their decisions affect the greater world and any thing else that is deemed important about the character. Once the students have completed the poster they will do a gallery crawl, writing on the posters ideas, thoughts or parts of the story that have not been addressed by the group members. The class will have a discussion surrounding the posters and the ideas written there.

Students will complete another A-B-C chart that details the decisions the characters are making. The end goal is to have the students examine more closely the driving forces behind the decisions that led the Lady to what she chose to do, send her lover to death/a wedding. They will write an ending to this story and explain why they believe the Lady chose what she did when the time came.

This ending will be created on <http://www.toondoo.com>, an online forum that is free and allows students to create a product that is in a format not often seen. Students are expected to pick the story up from the point where the lover enters the arena.

Students will continue reading “The Lady and the Tiger.” As a wrap up to this portion of the unit, students will watch a small video that will create a visual representation of the story in 4 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0CX7oGBXxE>. Once this video is viewed the ideas may change as to what needs to be completed in the <http://www.toondoo.com> assignment.

Fourth Lesson

Session 3-8 days

The story “The Most Dangerous Game” will be introduced. Teachers should read it aloud to provide a sense of fluency as well as a basis for vocabulary that may be new or difficult for students. Don’t read all the way to the end. It is recommended that the story not be read in its entirety as the suspense is what drives the story. I suggest that on this first day the read aloud cease when Rainsford first meets the General. The story can be accessed here: <https://language-arts-land.wikispaces.com/file/detail/Most%20Dangerous%20Game%20-%20Full%20Text.pdf> with supplemental graphic organizer available on the same web page.

Ask students to complete a graphic organizer outlining the events that have taken place up to this point in the story. The students will continue completing the A-B-C chart that was started during the prior story.

Students will continue to read the story “The Most Dangerous Game.” The characters will be outlined, detailed and charted on butcher paper. The story will be read more than once to encourage comprehension and clarification. Vocabulary will be introduced and discussed, students and teachers will create anchor charts to be placed around the classroom with the vocabulary. An extra resource to use is <http://quizlet.com/401377/the-most-dangerous-game-vocabulary-flash-cards/>. This has the words that are missed the most or give students the greatest amount of trouble.

This story will follow the same timeline as the previous story, “The Lady and the Tiger.” It is important to follow the same timeline, as the stories are similar in many aspects yet strike differences in the long term effects on the main characters. Following the same timeline will also allow for repetition in skill building when considering the A-B-C charts, answering of questions surrounding the decision making process and the result of the decisions made.

The students will be asked to fill out a graphic organizer that looks at the main characters presented section by section. This graphic organizer will change as the story evolves and the setting changes.

Fifth Lesson

Session 3-5 days

The students have read both stories and have completed graphic organizers, quizlet activities introducing new vocabulary, written the ending to both of the stories and have been introduced to the A-B-C chart. All of these activities are the lead up to the end project that will have students create a story that is based on one of the decisions they have made over the course of the unit. The story can be in written form, an online presentation using toondoo.com, a visual representation in the form of a movie or diorama. Students will be graded on the rubric found in appendix 4, a copy of which will be provided when the assignment is given.

Before the unit is over students can be provided the opportunity to watch the movie that was made in 1932. This movie is 62 minutes long so it can be watched in a class period with enough time after for a brief discussion. The movie can be found on this site, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQC7JtZkfrk>.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

CCSS focusing on the specific standards of Reading Standards for Literature RL.9.5, RL.9.6, and RL.9.10. Standard RL.9.5 asks students to analyze how an author's choices structure of text, order of events and create effects such as mystery, tension or surprise. The selection that I have chosen will ask all of the above of the students, increasing their ability to think critically about what is being read. Standard RL.9.6 asks students to analyze a point of view or cultural experience from outside of the US and draw parallels to their life and the choices we make. The reading selections are based during a time where the experience of the characters is far from the life experiences the students in today's classroom would have had. Standard RL.9.10 requires students to comprehend literature with stories, dramas and poems in mind. The students will be reading stories that were written in the early part of the 20th century, and are centered on very dramatic themes.

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Appendix 2: A-B-C chart

	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Prediction of behavior outcome

On a separate sheet of paper in write what the characters behavior outcome was. Consider the following questions when writing your response.

1. What led the character to do what was done, how has the choice affected him or her?
2. Would you have made the same choice if you were in this character's shoes?

Appendix 3: “The Lady and the Tiger”

Compare and contrast the characters in the story

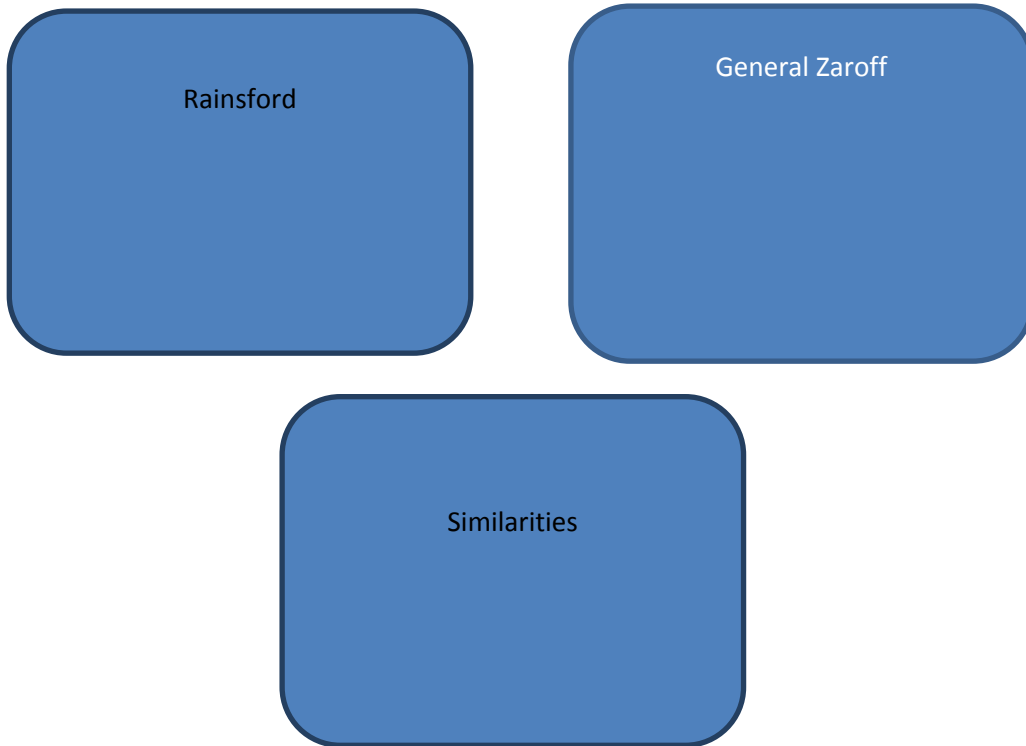
The Lady	The Dictator

Similarities

What happens in the end?

Why do think that is the outcome?

Appendix 4: Character organization for *The Most Dangerous Game*



Questions to consider:

1. What happened to Rainsford that made him such an avid hunter?
2. How would you describe Rainsford to someone? What adjectives would you use?
3. How would you describe Zaroff to someone? What adjectives would you use?
4. In General Zaroff's past, what do you think happened to make him a hunter?

Appendix 5: Final Project Rubric

This is to be used as the grading system for the final project. All grades will be based off of this rubric.

	Characters Driving forces behind the decisions the characters are making	Setting Where, why, how does the story move along?	Author purpose What is the purpose behind the story being written?	Your take away How does the story relate to your life? Anything you can take away?
4	Clearly defined, they have purpose meaning & can be followed	The setting is clear and conscience. It is understood where the story is taking place.	It is clear what the author is trying to convey. The details match with the story	Can it be tied back into the every day life of a 21 st century student?
3	The characters have a purpose, the meaning and reason is unclear	Setting is clear, you know there is something happening just not sure where	The author is trying to convey something, the meaning is unclear.	Can it be tied to the life of a student
2	Characters are surface level. There is little connection between	Setting is mentioned. It is unclear where the story is taking place	There is little consistency in what is discussed. The author is all over the place	Can this story be related to a student in today's time and place
1	Characters have names and little else	The setting is vaguely mentioned.	No consistency. The author is all over the place	Is there anything relatable to students?
Total :				

Notes

ⁱ Gopnik, Alison. *The Philosophical Baby; What Children's Minds Tell Us About Truth, Love and the Meaning of Life*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2009.

ⁱⁱ Gopnik, Alison. *The Philosophical Baby; What Children's Minds Tell Us About Truth, Love and the Meaning of Life*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthews, Gareth. *A Philosophy Startup Kit for Schoolkids, based on the text of Plato*. www.philosophyforkids.com/startup.shtml

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This book was a wonderful resource for new strategies that struggling readers in the upper grades would need to build a love of reading and have success.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts Grade-by-grade Progression View. Raleigh, N.C.: Department of Public Instruction, 2012.

These are the standards that are nationally recognized for educating students.

Gopnik, Alison. *The Philosophical Baby: What Children's Minds Tell Us about Truth, Love, and the Meaning of Life*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

The author has a wonderful way of framing questions and ideas that are practical for everyday conversations.

"The Lady or the Tiger? 52 words." *The Lady or the Tiger?* Accessed November 23, 2014. <http://www.vocabulary.com/lists/179438#view=notes>.

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The story can be accessed here. It is an easy read that captivates you from the first sentence.

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