CTI Charlotte Teachers Institute
Collaborative Teacher Education

SPACES Project:
Stuffed Pet Animal Characterization Experience for Students

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West Charlotte High School-*Project L.I.F.T. Academy*

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Literacy Internship, Foundations of English I,
Fundamentals of Composition, English I, Creative Writing

Keywords: Characterization, Project-based, Anthrozoology, Animal, Instincts, Human Animal Interactions, Companionship, Ownership

Teaching Standards: See Appendix 1 for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: While characterization is explored in English Language Arts classes, the way this topic is investigated can become predictable, bland, and overall ineffective for learners of all types. The fact is, the presentation and understanding of textual subjects becomes increasingly complex as the rigor of the coursework increases. Students who struggle with the basics of characterization stand at the forefront of continued academic issues in this area and many related areas. Characterization is not only helpful in aiding readers in understand the motivations, interactions, and behaviors of the characters in a text, but it also serves as a profound way for readers to gain insight on themselves, peers, and others in their lives. So, despite the complexity associated with the task, the ability to analyze, investigate, and make determinations about the subjects of a text is a critical and necessary skill for all students. The purpose of the SPACES (Stuffed Pet Animal Characterization Experience for Students) Project is to afford students an opportunity to gain, refine, and prove knowledge of basic characterization skills through an elaborative investigation of human-animal interaction and companionship. This project is an ideal choice for students because it offers seamless scaffolding and differentiation.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to (50) students in English I & Literacy Internship during the 2018-19 school year.

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The SPACES Project: The Who and the Why

Introduction

West Charlotte High School has been one of the leading high schools in serving minority, low-income students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg county for more than two decades (U.S. News & World Report, 2018). The population of students fluctuates between 1500-1800 students each year. Our student body is Title I and every pupil receives free breakfast and lunch. Financial hardships faced by our families have also encouraged fee waivers for sports and college applications for our scholars. To close achievement gaps, raise test scores, and better prepare our students for life after high school, we have implemented a wide variety of academic interventions, programs, and procedures. To name a few: occupational pathway "houses" now lead the instructional framework; leadership opportunities, college-ready clubs and after-school programs are in place for students; and academic strategies, such as AVID and Project-based learning, are schoolwide.

Despite, attempts to curve outcomes, many of our students leave our institution unprepared for college. According to a recent school review, West Charlotte High school has a 3/10 rating for college preparedness (Great Schools, 2018). The explanation for this is no simple one. Various theorists attribute rankings such as this to an imbalance in rigor and educational advancement for minority students. The academic challenge that should be present in the academic environments of minority students is simply not there. Researchers from California State University have confirmed in many instances that this lack of exposure leaves minority students at-risk for graduating late, repeating coursework, and dealing with low marks (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). The burdens for these student increase if they are, also, first-generation college students.

So, if we are already doing so much to curve negative outcomes, one may ask, "what's left to try?" Our answer is early exposure. In 2017 our school began an intentional focus on remediation, recovery, and new opportunities for mastery for students in ninth and tenth grade. The expectation is that students will avoid needing the remediation in upper-level courses, arrive equipped for future coursework, and are more confident when taking Honors and AP leveled classes. To support this initiative, my curriculum unit focuses on using a multi-level project to expose students in lower grade levels to the challenging activities of upper-class work and complex project creation, while gaining knowledge in their grade level objectives. The SPACES Project is academically modifiable on many levels, to include: Lexile of literature, complexity of student template components, peer collaboration opportunities, reporting options, and animal type.

Rationale

"Vandals Strike West Charlotte High School" is a quote from one of the most recent articles about negative behavior at our school (Esposito, 2018). A deeper search for comparable articles will reveal stories about some of our students carrying weapons on campus, engaging in large brawls, partaking in car theft, and, using drugs (Bryant, 2016). Some of our students end up with mugshots, some with ankle bracelets, and, unfortunately, some in caskets. As a teacher in this environment, this is disheartening and scary reality, but it is also a reality that I would like to improve. Personally, I feel like the company we keep drives much of our behavior and the

rationale for our actions. Therefore, our students must learn to keep good company if they are to develop the 21st century skills most critical for surviving in today's world. The SPACES Project gives students a chance to learn about animal companionship by investigating their assigned stuffed animal.

The benefits of human-animal interactions vary from person to person; however, the overall implications for this relationship are positive. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has even delegated a grant for funding research aligned with animal-based human therapy (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Over ten years of research from this institute reveal positive trends in adolescents battling diabetes, ADHD, and autism when paired with various animals. Fish served to help children with diabetes from more responsible routines, guinea pigs used to soothe autistic students, and dogs recruited to help students with ADHD focus when reading. Other examples of animal-based therapy, such as Animal-Assisted Intervention (O'Haire, Guérin, & Kirkham, 2015), also exist to help curve certain behaviors in the subject.

Although studies that incorporate stuffed animals in lieu of actual animals tend to be rarer and have less documentation of effectiveness, there are implications that this type of companionship can foster positive behaviors for participants. The SPACES Project allows students the opportunity to investigate any animal of their choice as a pet companion and individual being. Though students should view the animal as a companion, one major goal of the project is to create an individual identity for their pet for profound character analysis.

Implementation of School-wide Goals

In addition to skill in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCoS) objectives of focus, students will also gain exposure to schoolwide strategies and learning methods. Project-based learning, AVID, and student-to-text connections are three schoolwide goals featured in the SPACES Project. In terms of Project-based learning, students will create a multi-component project that, is not limited to but, includes: a formal report; a visual representation of their investigation; and an oral presentation. The AVID elements of writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reporting are also key pieces of the SPACES Project. Lastly, student-to-text connections encourage our students to consider the instruction and experience as meaningful. Students achieve this through various writing activities and class discussions throughout the duration of the project cycle.

Unit Goals

The revised North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCoS) will be the objectives used to decide the level of rigor and analysis students aim for in terms of mastery. My personal goal is to merge these aims with personal interest and practical application. Too often our students face activities, projects, and assignments that have no personal appeal to them. As a result, students face challenges vesting interest in coursework. During the creation of this unit, I was very intentional about using activities that could be easily related to common concepts and ideas to enact student thinking about relationships with humans and animals. Seminar readings, conversations, and shared resources were instrumental in finding approaches to instruction.

Content Research

The "Animals, Culture, and Society" Charlotte Teacher Institute (CTI) seminar, led by Professor Alan Rauch, allowed participants to investigate various aspects of animal life, such as: behavior, evolution, imaging, literary references, interaction, and companionship. Using a vast array of resources, content experts, and personal perspectives, curriculum designers were able to shape their units in a manner that included diversity, academic rigor, teacher preference, and student interest.

Animal behavior at the surface level, seems like a basic concept. However, a closer look at this element of animalism helps us understand why certain animals react the way they do and, also, why we, sometimes, seem to relate their behaviors to our own. During our exploration, I began watching the Netflix hit series, "Zoo (Rosenburg, Nemec, Applebaum, & Pinkner, 2017)." The central conflict to this plot was the animal kingdom's uprising against man. As the episodes progressed, the DNA associated with each species became more resilient against human attempts to curb this rebellious behavior. Oddly enough, scientists, theorists, the militia, and other stakeholders blamed the actions of nature on DNA, not human-animal interaction. The characters issued most or all the blame to the animals without regard to: the destruction of their natural habits; captures and hunting for personal use and gain; pollution; and failure to protect against human endeavors. When applying this fictional idea to our own society, Dr. Rauch pointed out the adaptations some animals have made to be able to live in such a human operated world. Whereas trees used to be their primary climbing space, you can often catch many squirrels scurrying across power lines. Learning this skill has proven fatal for many as they have found themselves air bound during the commute from column to column. Additionally, dogs have evolved as an animal species that has adapted to the expectations of man. "It's been a sort of cooperative relationship in which the most receptive dogs have spent time with us, and us with them. Nondeliberate exchanges of behaviors and services create these relationships. As we select and breed them, we create a world of reciprocity for friendships between this animal and man." For our group, this was one indicator of the spectrum of stimuli that encourage animal evolution.

Just as much as the fruit we ate decades ago was much different from what we have on our plates now, animals have also experienced unavoidable changes in populations, species, attributes, and behaviors. Some of our most intriguing seminar conversations involved the how and why these changes have occurred. Even more interesting, to me, were the ideas surrounding mythological and "created" animals. For instance, the jackalope. This fictional creature was one that manifest by adding antlers to a preserved hare carcass. Some believe the jackalope is an actual western animal that is unpredictable, feisty, and, potentially, quite dangerous. Using this feature to trick and evade predators, the jackalope is said to be able to mimic human voices. Additionally, the milk of the Jackalope is thought be a highly effective aphrodisiac. Many others, however, believe the animal to be one created, and manufactured, by Douglas Herrick and celebrated by the state of Wyoming (Boese, 2006). The animal and the animal's story are often the premise for its selection in literary selections, advertisements, and various forms of digital media.

The Clydesdale renewed its fame when Budweiser adopted it as its mascot in 1933 (Anheuser Busch, 2016). For years, many made this association, and, in turn, it inspired many others to use this trend. Animals became the face of children television shows, company advertisements, sports teams, themed locations, and school representation. Our students and

athletes refer to themselves as lions, bears, and eagles; they make every attempt to symbolize the strength and valor associated with their respective creature. Geico has used the gecko, Frosted Flakes delegated the tiger, and Chuck E. Cheese employs a mouse to spearhead their advertisement efforts. Many more examples exist, to include the exploitation of dogs, cats, and other "cute" animals in common household images. In our seminar, all these examples were pointed out to make the case that humans often make personal use of animals through personification to emphasis their own ideals. Another selfish way in which we see humans deal with animals is companionship.

Our seminar included an assortment of varying degrees of animal lovers. Dr. Rauch, of course, is a vegetarian who has an appreciation for all animals. I, on the other hand, am not passionately interested in the animal world. So, the snake he rescued and let free would have been mangled had I met it. The puppy he welcomed into his home would still be orphaned had I been offered him. And, the cheeseburgers he detests are a love of mine. For reasons such as these, some of us were pet owners and some were not. Nevertheless, it was agreed that animals could give solace and comfort to those who may be in desperate need. Beyond what they could provide to students with autism, diabetes, or ADHD, it is also implied that they can help with coping during grief, depression, and challenges transitions in life.

Conversations, laughter, research, lots of food, and the sharing of experiences were key in developing thoughtful, yet rigorous and content focused, units. Collaboration from an interdisciplinary perspective gave us the chance to design innovative ways to attack our own course content. Colleagues, such as Natalie Jones, one of the most dynamic art instructors in Mecklenburg County, was able to give me guidance on best practices for executing abstract artwork using multiple mediums. The greatest benefit of the seminar was being able to gain opinions of instruction and animalism from so many diverse stances and cultural positions. This aided me in accommodating my students when creating my plan for delivery.

The SPACES Project: The What

Understanding the Pieces of the SPACES Project

In short, the SPACES Project combines researching, formatting, presentation, imagery, and writing skills to complete a thorough character analysis of a specific animal. Moreover, students are also responsible for caring for their stuffed animal and bringing it to class on designated days. This means keeping the animal in good physical condition and protecting it from misplacement. The physical stuffed animal is necessary for enforcing the responsibility component and providing a visual during researching and class discussions. There are seven key features of the SPACES Project: *Animal Selection/Assignment; Fact Sheet; Pet Portrait; Characterization Map; Scare or Care Writing Activity; Friend Zone; and the Pet Biography*. Each activity includes a listing of the most relevant NCSCoS objectives. For a complete listing of objectives, see Appendix 1

Animal Selection/Assignment

Students will be allowed to select their own animal or be assigned an animal. Additionally, students who do not have a stuffed animal will be allowed to pick from the bin of extra animals in the classroom. Students will attempt to determine the actual animal that is represented by their stuffed companion. All activities for the project will be based on the animal they have found to be the real world, or mythological, representation of their pet. Students who wish to work on grade level will be encouraged to select simple animals that are easy to decipher. Students who seek an additional challenge will be encouraged to select a mythological, magical, imagined, or hybrid animal. In a sense, animals will be selected on "tiers". Simple animals will be "tier 1" animals, while hybrid and complex animals will be on tiers 2 and 3. We will also use this association to discuss key vocabulary within the unit. There are no specific NCSCoS goals attached to this activity.

Fact Sheet

This part of the project will begin the student's research on their pet. Typically, high school students in ninth grade do not get exposure to student led research. SPACES will afford this opportunity to, at least, some students. The fact sheet will list specific details critical in truly understanding the pet. Much like the pet selection, this activity can also be differentiated to add complexity or keep it at grade level. Students who look for a more challenging project will be asked to collect more information on their animal. Therefore, multiple fact sheet templates will exist to best accommodate the academic levels of a variety of students. For this activity, students will focus on using their skills in finding main idea to summarize, make inferences, and find specific details within a text. The goals of focus for this activity are NCSCoS RI 9.1-9.5, L9.4, SP/L 9.4-9.6 and W9.2-9.4.

Pet Portrait

Imagery is brought into the picture with this part of the assignment by allowing students to create their own depictions of their pet. Again, the rigor and complexity of this assignment depends on the student's personal interests in executing the task and the support available from the instructor. Students who wish to perform on grade level will be required to submit a simple portrait of their pet, as outlined in the activity directions. More challenging portraits may include props, pet owners, and pet relatives. With imagery being the focus of this activity, students will be encouraged to rely on sensory details to capture an exact representation of their pet. The goals of focus for this activity are NCSCoS RI 9.2, 9.7 and W9.3.

Characterization Map

Serving as the most traditional element of the project, the characterization map requires the students to infer certain character traits of their pet based on their fact sheet and overall research. Key elements of this activity include animal motivations, interactions, and communication. In addition, students will use the STEAL traits (speech, thoughts, emotions, actions, and looks) as a starting point for gathering specific character details on their animal. Since students are most familiar with applying the character traits to people, rather than animals, they will have to be

thoughtful in relating human character traits to respective animal character traits. The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4.

SCARE or CARE Writing Activity

The SCARE or CARE writing activity requires students to make uncomfortable, but logical, judgements about their pets. Despite how they may feel personally about their pet, students will be asked to create an essay that describes societal implications of their pets. This activity is used to reinforce the idea of student-to-text connections. Often, we, as citizens, make judgements or have biases about various people, places, and things. Even more importantly, these judgements tend to be evidence-based. This activity allows students to determine biases the world may hold about their pet or pets like theirs. Students will cite sources that confirm their findings about social implications of their pets during this activity. The target goals for this activity are NCSCoS RI 9.1-9.5, W9.2-9.4, L9.1-9.2, and SP/L 9.4-9.6

Friend Zone

Serving as another artistic element of the project, students will create a captioned picture of their pet with 2-4 animal friends. Again, students must make logical relationships or be prepared to explain unexpected friendships. For instance, a lion and a hyena as best friends is a relationship that would need explanation. For each caption, students will need to explain who each friend is and how they contribute to the overall friend group. Students will deepen their research skills by conducting brief research on the animal friends of their pet. This activity is another opportunity to master NCSCoS RI9.2, 9.7, SP/L 9.4-9.6 and W9.3

Pet Biography

As with any biography, the pet biography will tell the life story of the student's pet. This element of the project combines creative writing with formal writing and formatting. Students have creative freedom in how they build their animals backstory. However, there must be a logical flow to their life story. For example, a sloth could not, realistically, be a speed skater. The listing of required information will include: family, occupation, education, habits, hobbies, and any other pertinent information. This activity is a research-based activity with a creative spin. The NCSCoS of focus are RI 9.1-9.5, SP/L 9.4-9.6 and W9.2-9.4

Critical Conversations and Other Necessary Components

In addition to the required assignments, students will also complete extension activities associated with the project to give them a better understanding of animals and human-animal interactions. Each week we will have a focus topic that centers on a different element of animalism. During the week, students will investigate the topic by completing: an informational and/or literary text relating to the topic; an abbreviated, yet formal, writing activity; one 5-7 question quiz that tests their understanding of the standard reinforced during the lesson; and at least one question-based class discussion. See Appendix 2 for a listing of more resources and supplements to go with the activities below.

Mascots: Animals Used to Represent Human Ambitions

This activity will allow students to investigate the various rationales behind mascot choice. Students will to figure out "ideal" animal traits that make them suitable for human representation. Additionally, students will also discuss negative animal traits that also make them suitable for human representation. Part of this activity includes an analysis of our school mascot and implications thereof.

The Crew: Distinguishing Animal Groups by Name

Serving as one of the shorter extension activities, this assignment will encourage students to think about how animals group themselves and self-initiated segregation. For this activity, students will consider what makes a group unique and the titles of various animal groups. In addition, students will also consider the repercussion for animals that stray from their respective groups. Ideally, students will relate animal grouping to human grouping and self-segregation within our communities, schools, and social lives.

Who is Your Daddy: Ownership vs. Companionship?

There is much conversation surrounding the idea of whether animals can or cannot be the property of an individual. So, this section of the project forces students to consider the differences between ownership and companionship. Additionally, students will also discuss things that people can have, but never actually own.

The Will of Will's Will

Students must be able to find creative ways to incorporate language that revolves around animals in their writing. In many cases, this gives a visual that is otherwise unattainable for readers. To practice and review this concept, our volunteer alumni, William Lee Jr. will be reviewing figurative language featuring animals. To complement this section of our animal study, I will wear (on different days) three different animal heads that are the center of a human theme, conflict, or interest.

Anthrozoology: A Study of Human-Animal Interaction

This will serve as the most critical extension activity as it will help explain the need for projects of this sort. By investigating anthrozoology, students gain a better understanding of the need for human-animal interaction and the countless benefits thereof.

Animal Vulnerability vs Animal Strength

Some animals are projected as vulnerable or weak, while others are symbolized as powerful or authoritative. In Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Jews were portrayed as mice, because of the lack of authority and power they had during this period in history. Contrastingly, the pig served as the all-powerful German. The same use for the pig was used in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Students will use these and other examples to decide how and why we have assigned certain animals to distinct types of people, roles, and situations.

Teaching Strategies

The most imperative goal of our SPACES project is to learn, practice, and gain skill in NCSCoS objectives for ninth grade. While I will use common methods and resources, I will also take advantage of the series of literacy strategies, CLASS, I have created. CLASS is an acronym for *Classroom Literacy and Academic Strategies of Sequence*. Through these tools, students will gain insight on processes used for attacking common issues associated with decoding, understanding, and responding to literature. This also helps to gives students a common language for addressing skills that are essential in gaining skill in other contents.
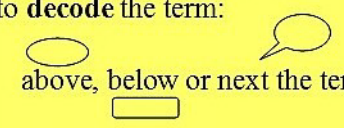
R.I.N.S.E

RINSE is an acronym that stands for five steps used to decode difficult vocabulary. In addition, the RINSE strategy encourages students to consider the way an author uses various language to elaborate on or describe other terms in the text. This allows students to track redundancy avoidance and understand word associations. One of the greatest benefits of the RINSE strategy is that it allows students to accurately evaluate the use of language for comprehending, analyzing, commenting, and replicating.

How to Decode Difficult Text Using the R.I.N.S.E. Strategy

R	READ the section of text and REVEAL subject, verb, and modifiers	With no more than ONE paragraph being your target text, carefully read your selected reading
I	IDENTIFY difficult text	Next, skim the text and make note of the terms or phrases that are unknown, complex, or confusing by writing them down, circling, highlighting, or otherwise marking the text.
N	Find NEW terms to replace difficult text	For each term or phrase that you have made note of, find one or more synonyms or synonymous phrases (definitions) that you can use as a substitute for the difficult term. Also, determine how the difficult terms relate to other terms in the text
S	SUBSTITUTE your difficult terms	Replace each difficult term or phrase with the synonym or synonymous phrase to clarify your understanding
E	EVALUATE the text again	Evaluate your new simplified interpretation of the text by READING IT AGAIN WITH YOUR SUBSTITUTIONS.

Student Sample:

Handout Styled RINSE Notes

There is a noise, and then the crowded herd
Of noon-time workers flows into the street.
My soul, bewildered and without retreat,
Closes its wings and shrinks, a frightened bird.

Plus Two

Being able to figure out the main idea of a text and how its development throughout the course of the literature is a critical literacy skill for all students. When analyzing both state tests (NCFE, EOC's, etc.) and national assessments (PSAT, SAT, ACT, etc.) questions that require the tester to identify the central objective and supporting information tend to account for 30-40% of the overall test (Heimbach, 2017). This percentage does not include specific details from the text that confirm the primary objective or supplemental information, which would bring our percentage, easily, to 50-60%. The problem that many students have is that they have no idea how to find the main idea in a text. So, the Plus Two strategy allows the student practice finding the initial idea presented by the author and the details used to develop that idea through the text b using ONLY 2-3 terms. These terms should always include a subject and a verb. The key principles of Plus Two are finding the who of each section and what about the who is important. Another major element of this strategy is an intentional focus on a variety of terms used to relay, express, describe, respond to, or elaborate on a common issue. This helps the student to extract unobvious context clues from the text, which will help with RINSE, as well.

Plus Two…

Ok, we're working on creating the "perfect" main idea/theme strategy. Right now, our struggle is not determining the main idea. Instead, our issue has more to do with:

➢ Determining the supporting details
➢ Determining how the author "builds" a topic
➢ The purpose of the author adding specific details (characters, phrases, bits of info)

With this in mind, I want us to start playing a little game when we read; it's called "Plus Two". When you play "Plus Two" you:

1. Record TWO words that describe the first paragraph. You only get TWO WORDS. Your two words should relay the overall general topic of the paragraph. Everything in the paragraph should be able to be tied to these two words.
2. For every additional paragraph, write the two words from the first paragraph AND TWO NEW words for the current paragraph. Here's the catch, the TWO NEW words MUST relate to the FIRST words. In addition, you must be able to EXPLAIN the relationship between the two sets of words.
3. Ensure you have TWO words for the FIRST paragraph, and FOUR terms for every additional paragraph, TWO of which should be the words from the FIRST paragraph.

Example:

Excerpt from Kate Chopin's "Story of An Hour"	Plus Two Terms
Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.	*Husband Dies*
It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.	*Husband dies* *Sister* *Railroad*
She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.	*Husband dies* *Wife distraught*
There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.	*Husband dies* *Exhausted* *Haunted*
She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.	*Husband dies* *Beauty* *Life*

LITSISTER

Serving as the final literacy strategy of the unit is LITSISTER. Like RINSE, LITSISTER is also an acronym. However, this strategy does not represent a set of steps; instead, it lists the nine elements that are most essential in the creation of any text. In short, students can use LITSISTER to find what is most important in a piece of literature and as a checkpoint for what their own writing should include. One of the greatest benefits of this strategy is the reinforcement of synonymous language used to represent concepts. For example, students know that plot refers to what happens in the story. Other terms that LITSISTER associates with plot are: organization, structure, development, creation, and textual pattern. By using a variety of language to describe key elements, students are better able to apply the literacy skills across contents and grade levels.

Find my LIT SISTER		
L	*Language*	**Which language is key in understanding the text?** What terms does the author use to **create imagery,** make his point, and **engage the reader?** Which terms are the **most effective** in achieving the author's purpose? How does the author use **figurative language?**
I	*Interpretation*	**What is the author's interpretation OR PERSPECTIVE of the text?** Which **point of view** is the story told from? What is the author's take on the topic or issue? How does the author FEEL about the topic?
T	*Title*	**What does the title reveal about the text?** Does your title relay the main idea or topic of the story? Is your topic related to the theme? Are there subtitles or headings in the text?
S	*Structure*	**How is the story built?** What specific things does the author do the make this story's "building" unique? Are there flashbacks? Flashforwards? How does the author support his main idea? Think about text structures: chronological, problem/solution, compare/contrast, etc.
I	*Issue*	**What are the issues or conflicts in the story?** Can you find the challenges or obstacles the characters are facing? Remember, you can have several conflicts within one story. Be sure to keep record of all you come across, especially those that repeat.
S	*Subjects*	**Who are the subjects or characters in the text?** Who is your good guy, or protagonist? What about the antagonist, bad guy? Who stays the same (flat) and who evolves during the text (dynamic)? Are your characters realistic? Why or why not?
T	*Theme*	What is the author trying to get you to focus on the most? **What does the author want you to learn about a specific topic, event, person, or situation?** Remember, a theme is built THROUGHOUT a text. While reading, you will see evidence of the author focusing on this message multiple times. Look for evidence in each section of the text.
E	*Environment*	**What is the setting of your story?** Setting is not just the physical location. This story element also includes: date, time, landmarks, dress, landscape, language, weather, and situation. Typically, the author uses setting to establish a mood and get the reader feeling a certain way. Where the story takes place has a tremendous effect on the plot.
R	*Rhetoric*	**Rhetoric is a fancy word for author's craft.** This refers to the unique things the author implements to make his story special. When determining the author's rhetoric, evaluate the: language he uses; realistic appeal of the characters; effectiveness of the setting; sensible structuring of the plot; and meaningfulness of the theme.

In addition to teaching the strategies (several times to ensure understanding) and issuing students a readily available resource for reference, I also intend to project the strategies on classroom and schoolwide bulletin boards. This will increase the likelihood that students review and re-read the steps, examples, and purpose of each strategy often.

☆CLASS☆
The Series

Classroom Literacy & Academic Strategies of Sequence

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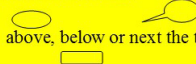
This week's focus:
Vocabulary

How to Decode Difficult Text Using the R.I.N.S.E. Strategy

R	READ the section of text and REVEAL subject, verb, and modifiers	With no more than ONE paragraph being your target text, carefully read your selected reading
I	IDENTIFY difficult text	Next, skim the text and make note of the terms or phrases that are unknown, complex, or confusing by writing them down, circling, highlighting, or otherwise marking the text.
N	Find NEW terms to replace difficult text	For each term or phrase that you have made note of, find one or more synonyms or synonymous phrases (definitions) that you can use as a substitute for the difficult term. Also, determine how the difficult terms relate to other terms in the text
S	SUBSTITUTE your difficult terms	Replace each difficult term or phrase with the synonym or synonymous phrase to clarify your understanding
E	EVALUATE the text again	Evaluate your new simplified interpretation of the text by READING IT AGAIN WITH YOUR SUBSTITUTIONS.

Helpful Reminders:

Circle, underline, highlight, write down or otherwise mark the term(s) that add complexity, confusion, or other difficulties to the text.

Next, write the notes used to **decode** the term:

above, below or next the term.

DON'T FORGET TO EVALUATE YOUR TEXT AGAIN!!

Student Sample:

Handout Styled RINSE Notes

There is a noise, and then
the crowded herd
Of noon-time workers
flows into the street.
My soul, bewildered and
without retreat,
Closes its wings and
shrinks, a frightened bird.

Unit Pacing and Lesson Planning

Because SPACES is such a huge project, teachers who choose to use the unit should do so based on the activity and academic aim. For example, it can introduce a goal and practice skills using the "Animals, Culture, & Society" framework. Or, it can be used to re-teach a standard and give an opportunity to further investigation. Lastly, the unit can be used to reinforce a specific academic practice, such as writing, research, genre study, or artistic interpretation.

Example: Lesson Plan
Activity: Characterization Map
Serving as the most traditional element of the project, the characterization map requires the students to infer certain character traits of their pet based on their fact sheet and overall research. Key elements of this activity include animal motivations, interactions, and communication. In addition, students will use the STEAL traits (speech, thoughts, emotions, actions, and looks) as a starting point for gathering specific character details on their animal. Since students are most familiar with applying the character traits to people, rather than animals, they will have to be thoughtful in relating human character traits to respective animal character traits. The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4. See
Appendix 1 for a complete listing of applicable NCSCoS objectives.

NCSCoS	SWBAT	Agenda

RL 9.1-9.4	Students will be able to explain how personified animals are characterized in various pieces of literature by analyzing:
	 ❖ The language the author uses to:
	    ➢ Indicate interaction
	    ➢ Describe the character
	    ➢ Show the specific traits of the character
	 ❖ The main idea and how its developed throughout the text
	 ❖ Using specific quotes from the text to support claims
	 ❖ What the author implies about characters by using clues in the text
		Do now: Board Questions:
		   1. What is a character?
		   2. What are the key elements of characterization?
		   3. How does a personified animal differ from other animals?
		 Focus: Characterization, Theme, Personification
		 Statement of Objectives
		 Students will begin gaining a thorough understanding the key elements of characterization, by investigating animals personified to reveal a theme.
		 Teacher Input:
		 ❖ STEAL notes for the basic elements of characterization
		 ❖ Definition of theme, main idea, supporting detail, and personification
		 ❖ Example of theme-based animal personification using Disney & and Looney Tunes. Discuss characterization and theme development.
		 Guided Practice:
		 ❖ Show students short clips from common tales that feature an animal as the central character. As a class, discuss the STEAL traits of the main character and add the traits to the graphic organizer. Discuss the theme revealed through the animal.
		 ❖ Allow students to view more examples and list the requested information aloud
		 Independent Practice
		 ❖ Show students one episode of "Dinosaurs" the 90's hit TV show. Remind students that after viewing, they will need to create:
		    ➢ A character map listing the STEAL traits for the character of their choice

		➢ A short response that explains the theme revealed through their selected character and how its development throughout the episode
		Closure/Reflection
		❖ Allow students/small groups to share out their findings.
		❖ Give feedback to each group on strengths and weaknesses in their character/theme analysis
		❖ Plan the next practice opportunity to improve initial outcomes.
		❖ Determine needs for reteaching

Example: Re-teaching Plan

Students will use the TV series from the original activity in shortened form. All students should have the notes assigned from the original assignment. Also, teacher will readdress notes and critical goals during each mini-lesson. Students will review written notes and answer oral questions during each review cycle. Teacher should use a cold calling technique to decide oral respondents.

Mini-Lesson: Thematic Personification	***Activity: Dinosaurs Media Viewing and Character Analysis***
NCSCoS: RL 9.1-9.4	❖ *Tell students that they will watch another episode of the TV show "Dinosaurs."*
Students will continue finding themes built through animal personification. Students will show character development, evidence from the source, and key language used to build ideas and details.	❖ *Teacher will DEFINE, give general EXAMPLES for, and allow students to collect notes on:*
	➢ *Character interaction*
	➢ *Character motivation*
	➢ *STEAL traits*
	➢ *Overall theme*
	➢ *Elements that build/support theme*
	➢ *Relevance of theme to the student*
	➢ *Importance of issue in society*
	❖ *Students will repeat this process 1-2 times per week until oral proficiency is reached.*
	❖ *Teacher will complete mini-lesson reteaching cycle by selecting one episode to use for assessment. The test will cover all elements that students collected notes on.*

Example: Skill Practice

Most educators approach writing in a scaffolded capacity. This makes activities, such as journaling, ideal for preliminary stages. Initially, students should focus on making a solid claim; providing enough evidence and reasoning; and wrapping up their response with a conclusion. Before assigning an entry, the instructor should create an exemplar, projecting student expectations and grading information. The exemplar should be accessible for student reference. Students will use the hit TV series "Dinosaurs," as the premise for their entries.

Basic Journaling W.K.1.2 & 2.2

Please collect each entry in your dedicated JOURNALING notebook. During journal checks, I will look for each element listed below. Each entry is worth 100 points. Be sure to include the following elements:

- ✓ *Title or Theme of Episode*
- ✓ *Character that contributes the most to theme development*
- ✓ *What the character does to set up theme*
- ✓ *How other characters interact, motivate, or help with main character*
- ✓ *Relevance of theme to the student*
- ✓ *How the theme relates to society as a whole*

Assessment Ideas

The SPACES project can be implemented in many ways, so the grading should also be assorted. For example, rubrics can be used to grade any creative or writing activity. Teachers should create their own element specific rubrics or use pre-created online rubrics. See Appendix 2 for web-based resources for creating rubrics. In terms of formal assessments, instructors are encouraged to use cold materials that assess the skills mastered during the lesson, rather than the student's fluency in the specific activities or subjects. Common interim and school based formal assessment are best. See Appendix 2 for online formal assessment resources. Lastly, informal scores for participation, practice, and oral review are discretionary to the teacher, but should be fair to the student. These are often the opportunities teachers need to individualize and change instruction for specific students.

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Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

RI/RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence- *student will use excerpts from texts to support arguments, answer choices, and claims.*

RI/RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme and/or main idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text- *students will use the Plus Two strategy to track the "who and what" of the text and to determine what the text relays about the who in each section.*

RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme- *students will use organizers to track character traits and how these traits contribute to the development of the character, theme, and plot of the text*

RI.9-10.3 Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events including the order in which the points are made- *students will track various patterns of organization and how specific details are addressed in each section of a text.*

RI/RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text- *students will determine how authors avoid redundancy and add variety by using RINSE to find context clues and make word associations*

RI/RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices- *students will analyze various choices authors make in text structure, perspective, characterization, language, and theme/main idea.*

RI/RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular perspective or cultural experience reflected in a work- *students will analyze cultural impacts on universal themes, subjects, and perspectives; students will also analyze author claims and how these are supported/built throughout a text*

L.9-10.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage- *students will review rules for, find when reading and practice usage of standard English conventions during all reading and writing activities. Conventions will be mini-lessons.*

L.9-10.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language and nuances in word meanings- *students will gain a thorough understanding and ideas for application of more than ten common figurative language types.*

L.9-10.6 Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases- *students will increase their knowledge of tier two terms and tier three terms as they relate to their specific projects*

W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts- *students will create biographical reports using research*

W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences- *students will create various fictitious stories and journal entries during the project cycle and extension activities.*

W.9-10.5 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question- *students will conduct research to complete various components of the project, using scholarly, credible resources*

SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions- *students will engage in back-channeling, Socratic seminars, and other structured discussion panels during theme investigations, characterization breakdowns, supporting detail tracking, structural development, and elements of rhetoric.*

SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely- *students will practice verbal identification of key elements in a text by making a claim, supporting with evidence, and identify the overall purpose of effect that is achieved.*

Appendix 2: Unit Resources and Student Supplements

Graphic Organizers for Characterization
https://www.literacyleader.com/sites/default/files/Character%20Graphic%20Organizers.pdf

"Dinosaurs" TV Series
https://www.amazon.com/Dinosaurs-Complete-First-Second-Seasons/dp/B01ATM6HYQ/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1542575936&sr=8-1&keywords=Dinosaurs+tv+show
https://www.hulu.com/welcome

Disney Store Online-For buying plush toys
www.disneystore.com

Released Formal Assessment Resources
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/common-exams/released-items/
https://edulastic.com/assessments/
https://www.edutopia.org/stw-yes-prep-lessons-resources-assessment
https://www.commonlit.org/
https://newsela.com/
https://www.khanacademy.org/

Writing Rubrics
http://gncufsd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_774455/File/For%20Staff/Rubrics/Common_Core_Rubrics_Gr_9_10.pdf
http://www.schrockguide.net/assessment-and-rubrics.html
https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/collection/speaking-and-listening-and-writing-rubrics/

Rubric Generator for Projects and Other Activities
http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/languagearts/
http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php?screen=NewRubric
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/worldlanguages/resources/aaa/samprc5.pdf