



## **Embracing Identity through Children's Literature**

Curriculum Unit 16.02.01  
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“In a multicultural society like ours, the issue of belonging is especially important. One of the first issues for an adolescent walking through the doors of our schools is whether he or she can belong to this group of people” Gootman

### **Rationale**

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Understanding and embracing one’s cultural, racial, and gender identity is one of the most difficult tasks facing adolescents today. Our students are maneuvering between the identity they acquire from their parents, their cultural background, and their own identity that they are trying to embrace and understand. In addition, our students are trying to figure out if their chosen identities, or given identities, are accepted by others, particularly by their peers. They are experimenting with what is accepted and expected of them in the school environment. A variety of emotions and changes, both physical and social, are also taking place in the lives of adolescents. In many cases, they are not ready or equipped to deal with these changes appropriately. Our classrooms need to be one place where students should be able to feel confident and comfortable with this transformation.

As teachers, it is our obligation to support our students and help them understand and embrace these changes by reading literature that focuses on identities. Reading and discussing such literature will help students to discover, accept, and embrace their own identities and the identities of others. One’s identity is often developed or formed from a combination of both internal and external experiences and expectations. Through the discussion of different readings, students will be able to identify types of situations they have dealt with or they have imposed on others.

The overexposure to positive and seemingly “normal” white identities in media and in books does not include the lives of many students in our school population, especially African American and Latino students: they need to see and celebrate images of themselves in which they are not portrayed as inferior to the white culture. It is critical that we select literature that speaks to minority students, not merely images that reinforce

white privilege.

This unit will give students an opportunity to explore, understand, explain, and comment on their identities as well as the identities of others. To support the understanding of the very complex definitions and concepts of identities, teachers will expose students to multicultural children's literature, which covers the topic of identities. Through reading, writing, and discussing such literature, students will have conversations and address difficult topics related to the expression or development of students' identities. The majority of this identity study will be based on the discussion of texts.

My intent in this unit is to help my students discover and understand the value of embracing one's identity by linking events in the stories to their own lives. In addition, I hope to help my students see that identity is constantly changing through environment, and internal and external experiences shape it. It is also important for my students to understand that they can identify themselves through many lenses. It is also critical for my students to know the formation of identities; some aspects of their identity are given to them, for example their names or their families. Other aspects of identity are acquired or imposed and may change through experiences and societal expectations. While learning about the topic of identity, students will address and discuss social issues, which are important to them. At the same time, they will also be able to increase their ability to read and connect to diverse children's literature, which will align to the Connecticut's Common Core standards for language arts, and social emotional/behavioral expectations content areas.

In addition, this unit will support one of the important parts of Conte's community lesson: CREW. As an expansion of CREW, this unit will support the character development of students holistically. While addressing the academic requirements in this class, the unit will also address and support the social, emotional, behavioral, and ethical contents of the curriculum during circle time.

## Content Objectives

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The activities and lessons included in this unit explore themes of identity. This unit is designed to support and challenge students who are attempting to identify themselves and others as unique individuals, and their desires to belong to a group or school community. While addressing the formation of identity, this unit will help students to build a safe learning environment and strengthen our school community. Identity and the idea of belonging to a community are central thoughts in the minds of our students. The lives of our students are centered on forming peer groups and relationships. One way to create positive learning environment and strong community is thorough the exploration and explicit teaching of identity. It is critical to begin discussing the concept of identity during CREW lessons because many of our students wonder about who they are, who they want to be, and what it means to be part of the CREW (community). Moreover, creating a sense of community (CREW) is a goal of Conte West Hill School.

The activities and lessons in this unit have been developed to boost a sense of belonging, acceptance, and understanding of identities. I believe students perform their best when they feel they belong. They are able to share ideas, take risks, and support each other fully. The multicultural texts and activities in this unit will promote meaningful ways for students to introduce themselves to their classmates as well as to their teachers. These activities are also designed to break down stereotypes and help build positive and healthy relationships. Moreover, the discussion of the literature used in class will open the students' minds to the idea

of inclusion and the celebration of diverse identities. It is through open discussion, dialogue, and engagement that students can develop and learn to understand identity. The readings, activities, and lessons in this unit will not only support the development of students' identities but also help foster a sense of belonging and community.

Teaching about identity will help students not only in identifying their own individuality, but will also give students a deeper understanding of others who are different from them. Questions such as "Who I am?" and "Who and what influences identity?" are appropriate to analyzing and understanding individual or group identity. Encouraging students to think about and discuss identity is not only an effective way to create a positive school community, but it also teaches students about tolerance, acceptance, and self-pride.

The major part of our unit study will be based on group discussion using multiple work of children's literature. Students will be able to negotiate their identity and they will begin to understand the formation of their identity through the discussion of the type of literature they read.

This unit is developed for middle school students and unit will be taught in nine weeks. Although the unit is designed for middle school students, with a minimal modification, this unit could be taught in any grade level. This unit will be part of CREW lessons and activities. Although this unit was created with African American and bilingual/multicultural students in mind, the unit is appropriate with any group of students. This unit is also designed to be co-taught but it could be implemented with one teacher.

## School Setting

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Harry A. Conte West Hills is located in the Wooster area of New Haven. It is one of the oldest magnet schools in the City. Conte is a school of Expeditionary Learning. Expeditionary Learning partners with schools and it is based on the ideas of school reform developed by the founder of Outward Bound, German educator Kurt Hann. (Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, 2011). "Harry A. Conte West Hills Magnet School of Exploration and innovation uses the resources of our community members to offer a challenging, integrated curriculum that inspires students to become active, independent learners on their academic and social journey toward excellence" (Conte West Hills Staff handbook, school mission statement 2015-2016).

In the past, Conte's student body was diverse. The income and the race of students were composed of multiple family types. It included middle class, highly educated families and an even mixture of white and black families. Over the past ten years, the population of the students has changed greatly. As more immigrants are enrolled at Conte, the enrollment of white students has practically disappeared. Currently, there are 643 students enrolled at Conte West Hills. Of the 643 students, 308 of them are bilingual students, 294 of whom are Hispanic students. 284 of Conte Students are African American or black students (schoolnet.com/myschoolnet/Conte-West Hill).

To address students' academic and social emotional concerns, and to instill self-pride in the students racial, cultural or gender identities, and create a sense of school community, Conte participates in Crew activities. Teachers will teach this unit during "Crew." Crew meets for half an hour, four times per a week.

Crew is taught in order to build character, integrity, and love for learning and exploring. Crew seeks to establish and develop positive school culture by using literature to bring community together, "Crew promotes

shared understandings and encourages all community members to become crew members not passengers” (Expeditionary Learning, 2008). The lessons taught during crew allow the school community to create open and safe relationships with their peers and their crew leaders/teachers. Crew leaders strategically plan their lessons to address and assess multiple academic goals, as well as social emotional goals that are based on teaching students holistically (academic, social, physical, psychological, and ethical). Crew ensures that each student’s needs (academic as well as social/emotional) are met and individual strength is discovered. Crew meetings involve the whole class and are held in the beginning of the school day. Crew leaders develop lessons that have specific learning targets to support students’ character development and or address school wide concerns.

## **Instructional Strategies**

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This unit will begin with the introduction to the concept and the complex definition of identity. Class discussion will include what is identity? What or who influences identity? What is the process to the formation of identity? Students will examine their own identities while identifying the similarities and differences of their peers in order to create an inclusive community. Students will be able to determine character traits that address the concern of identity. In order to deepen their understanding of various topics of identity, students will be able to identify the theme of each text. Furthermore, students will be required to extend and make personal connections through journal writing and or drawing. The final project of this unit will be to write, draw, or create a collage relating to their individual identity. This project will be shared with families and community members during the celebration month in March.

## **Methods and Text Selections**

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With the population of Conte’s students, as well as the global school’s concerns and needs in mind, I have selected three books to explore identity. Each book will address certain types of identity such as personal identity conflict and expression of self. In this unit, the books chosen portray characters that are unique from others in their environment. In general, these readings will address and answer the essential questions of this unit: “Who am I?” and “Who am I in relation to others? Who or what influences identity?” Through reading, writing, and discussion, students will be able to understand and define their own identities. Moreover, they will be able to analyze how others define them. Often, society attaches labels to them based on those who looks different, speaks different language, and has a different cultural background or race.

Using simple books, texts, or short stories is a great way to address and discuss complex topics such as identity. Students who participate in this class are encouraged to examine the idea of identity through class discussion and journal writing. In addition, students are expected to summarize and to identify the theme or the main idea of each text. At the conclusion of each text, students will be required to have open dialog in regards to identity and come up with specific actions to help create a positive and welcoming school community.

In order to explore and understand identity, the unit will begin by reading a book, *Name/Nombre*, by Julia

Alvarez. The story follows a Hispanic girl, Julia Alvarez, who migrates to United States from the Dominican Republic. Julia, a middle school student, tries to blend in the best way she can; unfortunately, the color of her skin, her name, and her accent do not make this a simple task. As hard as she tries to fit in with her American classmates, she cannot get away from a disturbing question from her classmates; “Where are you originally from?” Her response never fails to surprise them when she utters her full name and her different pronunciation. Julia harbors her confused feelings toward her mispronunciations and is eventually given Americanized nicknames by people she meets in New York City. Initially, Julia hates it when people pronounce her name incorrectly. Ironically, she also enjoys that she can reshape or reconstruct her identity by using her flashy American nicknames given by classmates, but she soon discovers that she cannot own this false identity.

As time goes on, she plays with the idea of having an “American” name that is plain and simple, like Judy. She describes the shame and difficulty she encountered each time she had to introduce her eccentric extended family members, with complicated names, at her graduation. At the same time, she describes her wish to go back to her family’s homeland, saying, “Leave me to pursue whatever mischief I wanted in America, Judy Alcatraz, and the name on the wanted poster would read. Who would ever trace her to me?”

In the end, she embraces her heritage and is grateful for her diverse and colorful, exotic family and she learns that one’s name is central to one’s identity. She opens her graduation presents, which include a typewriter, and she begins to write her rich multicultural and no longer embarrassing story. She looks forward to having a beautiful future by embracing her identity. Under her Dominican name, Julia has written essays and novels, which celebrate her identity, which is centered in her Dominican heritage.

Students will discover that their names, given at birth, not only define their identity but also how others accept or reject them. A name alone is the first stage in the creation of individual identity. Using a name, the main character develops into the type of person she would like to be. She embraces her unique name and different background. To conclude individual or collective identity lesson learned by using the text *Name/Nombre*, students will explore the relationship between their individual identities and how their own identities are influenced by others.

The unit will then transition to the second part of identity: identity conflict. Prior to introducing and reading the second text “Fish Cheek,” students will discuss their own identity using their personal collages created in the introduction of the unit. Following the discussion, students will then participate in creating a map or a collage that responds to the question “Where am I from?” This activity will lead into discussion of identity conflicts. This lesson will begin by identifying their individual cultural or racial backgrounds. We will create a map or a collage of “Where I’m from” as a class project.

Following the creation of the map, students will be introduced to another multicultural text “Fish Cheek” by Amy Tan. In this memoir, the character struggles between her Chinese identity and the American identity she desperately attempts to create. I will also use sections from the graphic novel, *American Born Chinese* by *Gene Luen Yang*, to compare the characters from those readings. “Adolescents often find themselves in conflict with their societal, cultural, or parental identities. Children from a cultural minority have an especially difficult time forming an identity when the values of their culture clash with the values and standards of the dominant culture” (Irwin 23).

In this text, for Christmas Eve, Amy’s mother invites the minister and his family for dinner. Amy is ashamed of her Chinese heritage and to make matters worse she has a crush on the minister’s son, Robert. Amy’s mother is planning to cook traditional Chinese dishes. Amy is afraid that the American families will find the traditional

Chinese food strange. Amy feels this food will make them appear more foreign and different. She also worries about how the minister's family will view and receive the behavior of her large extended Chinese family. When the guests arrive for dinner, Amy is mortified and embarrassed by how her family members eat with chopsticks and reach across the table into different dishes instead of passing them, as the American guests are accustomed to do. To add to her embarrassment, her mother reveals with pride that she made the fish cheeks because they are Amy's favorite. In addition, her father belches loudly to show appreciation for the meal. Although this behavior is typical in Chinese culture, Amy is horribly mortified.

After the guests leave, Amy's mother gives her a skirt as an early Christmas gift. The style of her new skirt is popular among the girls at school. Amy's mother tells her that it is normal for her to want her appearance to fit in, but she should always hold on to her culture. That night, Amy realizes that her mother understands her identity conflicts. Amy also appreciates and understands how important it is to be proud of her culture.

Reading "Fish Cheek" and having discussions that focus on dealing with cultural and societal identity, students will be able to realize and understand that the conflict they have in their homes could be related to their conflicting identities. This identity conflict could open up dialogue to discussions of other identity experiences; they may have both internal and or external conflicts. After extensive discussion, students will be able to explain and understand their own identity in relation to their cultural, ethnic, or racial background. They will also appreciate that America has many different cultures, and students must think of their individual identity in relation to their culture and race.

To tie our unit together, I have decided to use one of Sandra Cisneros's short story; *The House on Mango Street*. Even though I chose this story at the last minute, I believe it is a great way to end the unit. *The House on Mango Street* addresses many identity concepts: gender, culture, sexual, ethnic, and economic. I chose this book because of a conversation I had with a group of students. During our weekly lunch bunch, the group of sixth graders began to discuss their neighborhoods and how much they dislike them. I also learned that most of my students live in neighborhoods that are predominantly from the same race. The Latino students mostly live in the Latino neighborhoods, such as in Fair Haven or in a section of the Hill. The African American students live in what they call the "Jungle." Much to my surprise, my students define themselves by where they live. It is my hope that my students will realize that their current neighborhood or their economic does not dictate who they will become or where they will live in the future. By reading this short story, I think the students will connect with the main character and know that they have a power to shape their futures.

I am going to use this book differently; instead of reading it in class and discussing it, I will assign some pages to be read at home, and I will ask the students to record their reactions, thoughts, feelings, and connections in their reading log. During CREW, we will discuss the assigned readings and the students will continue to respond to questions

The main character in *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza, despises her name, her home, and how it reflects her identity. The story begins when Esperanza's family buy a new house on Mango Street. The house is located in the Latino section of Chicago. Esperanza is very disappointed by the house; it neither is the house that her parents dreamed of nor is it located in the right neighborhood. She is not only ashamed of the house and the neighborhood, but she is also displeased with her own appearance. Esperanza feels her looks do not match her true inner personality. She is also very self-conscious about her name and jokingly longs to change her name to "Zeze the X." Esperanza also feels sad about the lives of the women in her family and in her neighborhood. She vows that she will not end up like so many women in her life.

Esperanza encounters both harsh and joyous realities on Mango Street. Living on Mango Street opens



Esperanza's eyes to the violence and hardships young people encounter in rough neighborhoods. She forms many friendships, some good, some bad, and some short. With Cathy, her first friend in this neighborhood, the friendship is short-lived. Cathy's parents move because they believe the neighborhood is getting bad due to the lower income families similar to Esperanza's family moving in. Soon after, Esperanza befriends two sisters: Lucy and Rachel. These two girls adopt her into their circle. Together, they parade around Mango Street in high-heeled shoes.

Eventually, Esperanza starts to notice her sexuality. She is excited when boys notice her on the street or at a dance. Sadly, sexual violence destroys her image of true love. Still Esperanza dreams of having a boyfriend, but unlike most girls in her neighborhood, she sets higher standards. Through all these hardship, Esperanza promises herself to leave Mango Street, become a writer, and build her dream home. At the end of the story, Esperanza learns that she cannot cut ties to Mango Street. She realizes that Mango Street has affected and influenced her dreams and her personality and, as a result, shaped her identity. That is why Esperanza tells stories about Mango Street: finding the beauty amidst the dirty streets is to find her true self.

After reading the novel and having a discussion, I want students to recognize and acknowledge how we grow up and where we come from are major factor in who we become or who we are today. I also want students to embrace their backgrounds and understand how their background makes them unique. By analyzing *The House on Mango Street*, the students will be able to identify and sympathize with Esperanza and see how, through her coming of age, she appreciates where she comes from and finds her identity.

After learning about the diverse identities that exist in my school, it is important to celebrate them. To conclude the unit, we will hold a multicultural fair where different international cuisines, languages, clothing, art, and dances are showcased. Students may work in groups or individually. They will research the country of their ancestors and create a showcase for the international day or multicultural day to celebrate the different cultures. On the day of the fair, we will invite administrators, staff, parents, and students for a tour. Each visitor will carry a passport as he or she tours different countries. Visitors will also write down facts they learn. If time permits, students will perform native dances for visitors.

## Reflection

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The importance of using aspects identity to create community during CREW is becoming even more critical as the school year ends. I notice the identity conflicts are arising with our sixth grade students. They are displaying very inappropriate behavior toward each other. They criticize the appearance of others, their family backgrounds, and even their socio-economic status. The girls in this grade are forming groups based on certain characteristics and are harassing others who may appear different from the "in group". The name-calling and racial slurs to each other have been increasing and it is influencing the learning of specific students, especially the students who have disabilities and/ or whose religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds are different. My Assistant Principal assures me this is just a phase that this age encounters, and they will be friends in about two years.

My goal for the unit changed slightly from when we started the seminar. My original idea was more focused on inclusion and embracing one's given identity (mainly race or background). However, as we continue to read and discuss issues regarding identity, my learning goal for my students' has changed. At the end, my desire

for my students is not only to recognize their identity but also to truly understand the factors that influenced or shaped the formation of it and to accept and celebrate it, instead of denying it. I want students to think about the characters they read in literature as a way to understand themselves. My goal is not to convince my students to have a specific opinion or conclusion about their identity or others, but to acknowledge and celebrate differences among all identities.

As I reflect in my own viewpoints regarding identity, I can honestly say there have been changes in how I view certain situations. Attending and participating in this seminar has helped and is helping me think about how I interpret situations. It is clear our beliefs and sense of identity shape how we think about and react to situations. However, I have also learned it is important to think about the identities or values of others as well. As I have learned in this seminar, I want to inspire my students to think about their own ethics or values and how it influences their formation of identities and perceptions of others as well.

## Assessment

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### *Journal and Reading Log*

Students will keep a journal while reading, sharing, and discussing this unit. They are expected to respond to and reflect on how the readings or discussion helped them to better understand or express their definition of their own identity and the identities of others. Their journals will be graded weekly as homework logs.

## Sample Unit Plans and Activities

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Crew activity takes place in 30 minutes schedule. The unit will be taught three times per week .

*Essential questions* : What is Identity? Who are you in relation to others? What or who influences identity

*Introductory Activity* : Who am I? Who am I in relation to others ?

1. Students will sit in a circle.
2. One of the crew leaders/teachers will hold a card that reads, "Who am I? Who are you?"
3. The other crew teacher will hold a card that reads, "How do you identify yourself in relation to others?"
4. Students will pass the talking ball and be able to summarize the definition of what identity is and how they identify themselves in relation to others.
5. Students will be given a hand trace to put their personal identities on. (five things)-students have an option to draw, write, or cut photos to make a collage of their identity.
6. When they complete the activity, crew leaders/teachers will ask students to share their personal identity work.
7. The teacher or peers are allowed to ask clarifying questions: what makes up your identity? How is your identity made up: of your relationship with other people, with your community, with your school? How do you think that this influences your behavior, interaction and involvement with your peers? Teachers?



Family? Working in groups? Sports?

8. Teachers will explain and give the definition of identity: our identity is comprised of a combination of experiences and both internal and external circumstances that help to shape our identity. Identity is made of what we feel, where we come from, and how we identify ourselves in relation to others.
9. Teachers will inform students that they we will be reading and discussing literature related to the formation or development of identity during Crew.
10. At the end of the unit, students will go back to their first creation of how they identify themselves and reflect on their discovery or growth of their own identity through reading and discussion of identity. Students will share what they have learned about their own identity

## Sample Unit Plans

### Week One:

Name/Nombres by Julia Alvarez

#### *Day one :*

Greeting: pass the talking stick, say hello (using different languages), and state their name, nickname, how they want to be addressed and share one important or interesting fact about their name or self. Example: "Selam, My name is Ms. Andom and I am from East Africa." Alex will say, "Hello, I am Ms. Novak and I am an artist" -15 minutes

#### *Introductory activity*

Hold the word identity written on an index card. Inform students that there are many ways we identify ourselves: where we are from, our gender, name, race, etc. Today we are going to use a print of our hands and palms to identify ourselves. Give construction paper (choose a color) and direct students to trace their hands and cut it out: 10 minutes

Clean up and closure-5 minutes

#### *Day two :*

Sit in circle, greet, and state name and pass their handprints. Remind students that today we will write five different ways we identify ourselves in our handprint. Show them my example: I am African, I am a mother, I like to travel, I am a teacher, and I am vegetarian- 5-minutes

Students will write or draw their personal identity on each finger and in the palm of their hand. Students will be given an option to personalize their work. For example, they can use pictures or cut out items from magazines-20 minutes.

When students finish 4, Crew leaders will ask students to share their personal identity of their finished product:

- What makes your identity?
- How is your identity defined in relation to other people?
- How does this influence your participation, involvement, or your socialization in the school community?

Closure: 5 minutes

Students will write in response in their journals: their discussion of identity, and their experience of creating their own identity, using five examples.

*Day three:*

Sit in a circle and greet each other. State one thing they put in their work yesterday that identifies them-10 minutes

Teachers will explain that our identity is comprised of many things, including who we are in relation to others. In addition, the teacher will inform students that we are going to read multiple literary works related to the idea of identity. We will have a discussion and write a reaction or a response to the texts we read as well as the discussions.-15 minutes

Students will display the hand print collages on the classroom bulletin board-5 minutes

## **Week two**

*Essential Equations*

What relation does a name have to a person's identity?

What is the main idea of the text, "Name/Nombres?"

What was the central theme of the text? What was the author's purpose?

*Lesson objective*

Students will be able to understand that a name is closely connected to how a person identifies him/her self.

Students will be able to identify the main idea of the text.

Students will be able to identify the theme of the text.

*Day 1 :*

Students and teachers will sit in a circle and greet each other-5 minutes

*Activity*

Read aloud " *Name/Nombres* " by Julia Alvarez-15 minutes

What is the main idea of the text? Discussion - 5 minutes

*Closure*

Journal writing: write a reaction to the story- 5 Minutes

*Day 2*

Students and teachers will sit in a circle and share how they got their names-5 minutes

Review the main idea of the book, "Name/Numbers" by Julia Alvarez - 3 minutes

Share what the relationship was between Julia's name and her identity? Provide evidence from the text to their responses.

### *Closure*

Journal writing: why is a name important? Do you have a connection to this story? How does her reaction to her name make you feel?-10 minutes

Share journal response -5 minutes

### *Day 3*

Sit and greet - 5 minutes

Identify the author's purpose and the messages learned - 25 minutes

Teachers will explain that the author may have a different purpose for writing, for example, to entertain readers, to express an idea or feeling, to explain or to provide information or to persuade. Students will be able to identify the author's purpose and provide evidence.

After a brief discussion and sharing regarding Julia Alvarez's purpose for writing her story, students will use the following graphic organizer to demonstrate that they can identify the author's purpose and the message (lesson learned)-

What is the problem in the text?	How is the problem solved?	What message does Julia Alvarez learn?	What message can we learn from the story?
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## **Appendix: Implementing District Standards**

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In addition to the language arts curriculum, this unit will also focus on the social-emotional, cultural, and behavioral standards in which the district required standards for students apply to critical thinking and problem solving skills. The social-emotional curriculum provides students with opportunities to participate, read about, and reflect upon school wide concerns and issues in order to make connections with their lives.

### **Appendix A**

#### *CCR Anchor Standard for Reading*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL. 6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL. 6.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through

particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL. 6.3: Describe how characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

RL.6.9: Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

RL.9-10.6: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

## **Appendix B**

### *Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies*

*Self-awareness* : The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

*Social awareness*: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

*Relationship skills* : The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

*Responsible decision making* : The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

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