



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2023 Volume IV: Energy and Environmental History of New Haven and the American City

“Community Gardens: An Urbanite’s Connection to Nature, Community, and Self”

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Unit Overview

Over the years, as I have facilitated the sixth-grade English Language Arts curriculum, I have always wanted to incorporate Paul Fleischman’s book, “Seedfolks.” An intriguing quote from the author himself is what piqued my interest in wanting to teach this novel. Fleischman said, “Community gardens were oases in the urban landscape of fear, places where people could safely offer trust, helpfulness, charity, without the need for an earthquake or hurricane... Community gardens are places where people rediscover not only generosity but also the pleasure of coming together. I salute all those who give their time and talents to rebuilding that sense of belonging.” (Paul Fleischman, 2019, ‘Goodreads’) Now that I am transitioning to the eighth-grade teaching position, I can still incorporate this book because its themes relate to the eighth-grade curriculum as well.

“Seedfolks” describes the creation of a community garden in Cleveland, Ohio. The book tells the story of how a community garden helps solidify a community, bringing together people of various ages, cultures, and ethnicities for a common purpose: bettering themselves and their neighborhood. Each chapter of the book tells a different individual’s story and background. It describes their relationship to the United States and the varied reasons that brought them here. Through their stories, we discern their relationship with the land and the fulfillment of seeing something grow under inhospitable conditions.

In the English Language Arts (ELA) eighth-grade curriculum for the New Haven Public Schools (NHPS), the first unit focuses on self-identity and community. We work with Nikki Grime’s novel, “Between the Lines.” Grime’s novel describes a class full of students from all walks of life, each with personal struggles and challenges unknown to their peers. Every student in the class has something important to say, and they do so through the sharing of poetry. Like the garden in “Seedfolks,” poetry in “Between the Lines” binds the multitude together, creating a shared experience that might not otherwise occur. As the characters get to know each other, they bond over shared experiences and truths that emerge as they work on their poetry. “Seedfolks” aligns well with these topics and themes we typically cover and serves as a valuable complement to “Between the Lines.” Additionally, “Seedfolks” supports cross-curricular activities in Social Studies, as students will learn to identify where they fit within their community. In our ELA classes, we often make inferences and predictions about individual characters, but seldom as a collective community. This is where “Seedfolks” can introduce

the concept of communal unity and shared experience.

According to the periodical “Soil Science Society of America,” community gardens are community-managed open spaces designed to revitalize areas that might be seen as abandoned. These gardens serve multiple purposes: they combat food insecurity, promote community health through improved nutrition and exercise, and help fight climate change by reducing the distance food travels, thus minimizing carbon footprints (2023). While many of these benefits seem environmental, we recognize that community gardens play a broader role. As stated by Unidos US (2015), “Community gardens bring people together where they work side by side...” This collaborative spirit extends beyond the gardens and permeates the wider community.

Over fifty community gardens exist in the greater New Haven area as of 2023 (GatherNewHaven.org, 2023). For our students, this is new information. To help them understand the role community gardens play in the city, it's essential to delve into the history of gardens in New Haven.

In 1982, the New Haven Land Trust was established. From 1982 to around 1990, the Land Trust's primary objective was to generate interest and community investment in open spaces within neighborhoods. The primary goal was to assist communities in using open spaces productively. By 1991, community members began to view these open spaces as opportunities to establish gardens. This enthusiasm persisted into the 2000s, with a focus on education and structured organization, thereby contributing to the rise in gardens and attention to the associated health and wellness benefits.

Many students recognize New Haven as a city dotted with parks and green spaces. As defined by the periodical *Science Direct* in 2017, a green space is an “open-space area reserved for parks and other 'green spaces', which can include plant life, water features (also known as blue spaces), and other natural environments.” Such spaces are primarily recreational and differ from community gardens. Often, these parks are not within walking distance, restricting students' access to them for special outings or field trips.

According to an EPA community summary fact sheet by *EnviroAtlas* in March 2018, an estimated 33% of New Haven residents live within walking distance (500 meters) of a park, while approximately 40% reside beyond a walkable range (2 kilometers) from any park or recreational area. This data suggests that few students have easy access to these green spaces, even though they are present within their community. Many students perceive supermarkets and “bodegas” as their sole food sources, seldom contemplating the origins of their fruits and vegetables. The urban environment of New Haven, characterized by buildings, sidewalks, roadways, highways, and persistent vehicular traffic, leaves students feeling disconnected from nature. With limited or inaccessible green spaces, students often associate greenery and gardening with suburban lifestyles. Like many in their generation, the scarcity of outdoor experiences leaves them engrossed in technology, social media, and gaming.

Students often associate history with subjects like American and European History, rarely considering urban history or their city's past. The term “history” is understood as a study of past events, preventing students from recognizing that urban history isn't an ancient or distant tale but encompasses events closely tied to their lives. In this unit, students will journey through New Haven's past, exploring the relatively recent decline of urban farming and the genesis of community gardens. They will see the evolution of the landscape as modern advancements became widespread. Through photographs, paintings, and historical accounts, students will observe a time when much of New Haven was rural compared to today.

My objective is to help students grasp the significance of nature and community connection, with community gardening serving as a practical approach. This topic will offer them a glimpse into the hard work that many

endured, relying on the land for sustenance for themselves and their families. I hope to challenge students to feel connected to their forebears and the history of their current community. As an educator, I aspire for my students to perceive history as a tool to reshape their present circumstances. This perspective shift is vital, especially considering that many parts of the city are identified as food deserts. As defined by Webster's dictionary, a food desert is "an urban area where it's challenging to purchase affordable or high-quality fresh food." One solution to this problem is establishing or engaging in community gardens, informed by historical insight, and driven by a commitment to transforming the present.

Rationale:

Like many of my students, I am from New Haven. I was born and raised just a street away from Roberto Clemente and attended Hill Central School. Growing up in the city, my father maintained a large garden in our backyard where he cultivated over 15 types of vegetables. I helped him from start to finish: watering plants, weeding, and monitoring the daily changes. It was exciting to witness a flower bud transform into a miniature vegetable, and then follow its growth until it was time to pick. Through the garden, my father was able to recreate aspects of his childhood in Puerto Rico and share this experience with me. These are experiences that became life long memories. Yet, despite this backyard oasis, my overall childhood in the 1970s and 1980s was typical of a city kid. Though my father introduced me to gardening during the warmer months, I was predominantly surrounded by buildings, roadways, and sidewalks. Access to expansive open areas was rare. The nature I experienced felt fragmented, not harmonious.

Currently, I teach at the Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy for Global Awareness in the Hill section of New Haven, Connecticut. My students are in the eighth grade and study English Language Arts. They come from modest income homes. A significant portion of our student population comes from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Afghanistan. While many of these students migrated years ago and do not remember what their family's life was like before they moved to New Haven, our students from Afghanistan have a distinct narrative. Some may not recall their homeland, but they vividly remember relocation camps. In these camps, many described minimal interaction with nature, often due to harsh climates and the camp's social dynamics. Whether they're immigrants or native to New Haven, a shared experience among most of our students is their limited exposure to nature. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they have similar views about what they know and wish to learn. By exploring the relationship people in urban settings like New Haven have with food, these students can draw parallels with large cities in their countries of origin, bridging gaps in understanding and challenging preconceived notions.

Content Objectives:

Throughout this past year of teaching, I've discerned a keen interest among my students to learn more about their own history and where they live now. They've become quite proficient at crafting higher level questions that guide them in research and reading. During our new school year, I aim to satisfy these interests by tapping into non-fiction historical articles, journals, and photographs relating to farming, community

gardening, and the lack of these gardens or their limited participation in them. It is also important to incorporate maps, helping students get a geographic sense of where we are located in relation to the rest of the world and how our landscape has changed over the years. They will also discover if these changes were a result of nature or man-made interventions.

A fundamental component of the ELA class is research. Students be responsible for gathering historical information about community gardening generally and in specific neighborhoods in New Haven. This research will include the environmental degradation that had to be rectified before establishing a garden. They will also research the prerequisites they need to meet before creating a garden. Once they can appreciate the changing landscape, they can then see the need the community found in community gardens. Engaging in such multi-faceted learning about environmental evolution will enhance their understanding of their surroundings.

Grouped by the neighborhoods they live in, the students will chronicle the history of community gardens in their specific area. This serves a dual purpose: First, they can tap into community leaders who have done this before as a way to build upon expertise and knowledge. Second, the students can create their own original project based on historical knowledge and future needs of the community. Their research will also encompass the essence of community gardens and their transformative potential for their surroundings. By creating a community garden close to them or participating in one nearby that already exists, students are taking ownership of a project that will affect many, not just themselves. I believe that once students know the environmental history of their city, they can effectively voice opinions and learn of ways to make changes. Exposure to environmental history helps students become more analytical. Understanding the past equips them to envision future possibilities. Students will also need to learn organizational skills, leadership roles, team building skills, fact-based decision making, commitment and responsibility. Students will begin to realize that they can effect change and that no role is insignificant nor small when there is a common goal in focus.

Another idea I would like to explore and have students research is the increasingly popular “farm to table” restaurant. Many restaurants nationwide have been founded on the concept of utilizing sustainable and local products. The book, “New Haven Chef’s Table,” testifies to the city’s familiarity with this concept. The book is full of recipes and stories from chefs who have worked in New Haven and have utilized local products and produce. Anastatia Curley, in her chapter “Urban Farming With a Focus,” explains the creation of the Yale Sustainable Food Project (YSFP) in 2003. According to Curley, the project was created when a group of students in an environmental law class learned about the negative affect of pesticides. A sustainable organic garden was created on the Yale campus. From this garden they were able to provide healthy organic vegetables to many city organizations and they also would sell them at CitySeed’s Wooster Square farmers market. Although local chefs purchased their produce at the market for their restaurants, the YSFP is not an organization that produces a lot of food. Presently, the YSFP focuses on being a living laboratory that works to better investigate issues and conduct research that can lead to improved farming practices.

Imparting the significance of community gardens and the broader “farm to table” concept emphasizes real-world implications. The “Farm to Fork” initiative underscores this, emphasizing health benefits, knowledge dissemination about nutrition, and advocating for high-quality food. Community gardens resonate with this ethos. Beyond physiological benefits, gardening enhances mental well-being. As per *AgriLife Today*, Randy Seagraves, in the Junior Master Gardener Program, contends that gardening fosters pride and accomplishment (2022). Moreover, Charles Hall, Ph.D., posits myriad benefits of gardening, from anxiety alleviation to bolstered creativity. He believes that engaging with plants or gardens, tends to distract the mind thus quieting it down and relaxing the person. In our post-pandemic world, where social-emotional learning is paramount,

gardening offers an invaluable respite. It cultivates patience and deliberateness, which some students may find challenging yet fulfilling.

Although community gardens are not major food producers or large scale projects, they can help address the issue of food deserts that exist in and around New Haven. According to the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) a food desert is defined as “A tract with at least 500 people, or 33 percent of the population, living more than 1 mile (urban areas) or 10 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store. (Oct 20, 2022). These larger retail stores offer a wider variety of fresh foods and produce. Currently in New Haven there are two supermarkets that serve the downtown New Haven area. On Whalley Avenue we have Stop and Shop and on State street we have Elm City Market. According to Yale News, while the opening of Stop & Shop and Elm City Market in the 360 State Street building has boosted the ability of Yale students and downtown residents to shop for groceries, four census-defined areas in the city are still classified as “food deserts” according to the USDA: Quinnipiac, West Rock, Annex and East Shore. (August 2012). Transportation and finances often hinder community members from shopping at the supermarkets downtown. This leaves many with the option of fast food or less healthy choices offered at corner stores. In the article titled “Community Gardens: An Effective Approach to Food Equity,” it states that studies show that low income communities and communities of color eat even fewer fresh fruits and vegetables and carry the burden of chronic preventable health conditions even more heavily than the rest of the population (July 2021).

Although Yale’s School of Public Health has also been working to promote the accessibility and quality of food choices in the city, community gardens offer a solution to fresh food accessibility. Community gardens directly provide access to fresh produce at affordable prices in their neighborhood. Being able to grow your own food with a community of others can help bridge the gap between access to healthy food and the desire for it. Research has shown that participating in a community garden is also associated with improved health outcomes. One study found that people who joined a community garden ate 1.4 more times per day more fruits and vegetables than those who did not participate and were 3.5 more likely to eat the recommended 5 servings of vegetable per day. (Weltin AM 2014, 12-240). It is clear that accessibility does promote consumption and the more community gardens we have the greater impact on the community and the consumers.

By this unit's culmination, students will skillfully read, analyze, discuss, and articulate written responses, connecting non-fiction content with historical and current events. Students will also be able to create a plan or blueprint as to what a community garden should be and the importance it has today.

Teaching Strategies:

As an ELA teacher, I've learned that pre-teaching vocabulary is a sound practice for all students. It is especially beneficial for language learners and students with special needs. Some of the vocabulary graphic organizers that help with vocabulary acquisition are the Frayer model, word map meaning organizers, picture dictionaries, and the vocabulary web wheel. Students will also benefit from using a dictionary to research definitions and being able to see the word in context. Before each lesson, vocabulary should be front loaded in the attempt to facilitate overall comprehension while activating schema. Another way to activate schema for our EL's is by implementing the TPR (total physical response) strategy explained in the SIOP book. This strategy emphasizes using your body to act out or gesture the information you want to communicate. A lot of

the content from these lessons could easily be acted out to facilitate understanding and communication with students who do not speak English. Activating schema is a way to achieve a baseline comprehension before embarking on a lesson that may not reach some.

In order to continue teaching my unit, activating schema is always important because I need a base to begin my teaching. This schema activation will be annotated in a journal. This journal will contain the rough draft information they need to complete the unit goal. The overall unit question will be “Who am I as an individual and within my community and where do I fit in moving into the future?” “How can I grow and flourish through my involvement in community gardens? “What was this city and my community like when my ancestors arrived?” Some students who are first generation residents can ask themselves, “When I moved here, what was this city like and how much has it changed since arriving?”

After addressing these questions concerning their anticipations, students will analyze characters from core novels like “Seedfolks,” drawing connections between seemingly disparate elements. Some essential questions I will include are:

- What is the history of farming in New Haven? When did New Haven move away from farming and industrialize?
- What is the difference between mass production and sustainability?
- Which New Haven areas are considered “food deserts” and which areas are not? Why do you think there is a difference or distinction?
- What role do politicians, community leaders and individual citizens play in decision making in regards to urban planning?
- Why are social aspects just as important as health benefits when we discuss community gardening?
- In the late 1960’s we saw a “guerrilla gardening” movement. In your opinion is that an effective way of starting and sustaining a community garden or are more organized efforts needed?

Following their journal entries, students will employ the Cornell note template. It is always beneficial when reading and annotating nonfiction texts. Students will formulate questions that they will answer after reading specific articles and literature. This method supports concise note-taking, efficient information storage, and helps in practicing summarization.

Emphasizing best practices, graphic organizers like KWL charts (What I Know, Want to Know, and Learned) and story maps are beneficial, especially for language learners and students with special needs. The graphic organizers are useful because they drive the students to really interact with the readings, thus helping them to recall important information for future use. These graphic organizers help students engage in meaningful dialogue surrounding the topic. Once completed the students can pair up based on what they want to learn and share amongst each other what they already know. This fosters focused classroom discussion, which students do not get enough of. The focus on what they want to learn helps guide their research and be specific to the topic. Story maps make it easier for students to read and keep track of what they are reading. They also serves as a good study guide because all the information is on one page and readily accessible. It also helps bolster confidence in students who do not participate much, because they are not being asked anything they do not know or something that is not on the organizer. Another useful graphic organizer is the Venn diagram. Students are always asked to find similarities and differences between topic and characters who may seem to have nothing in common. The Venn diagram is useful because it gives students the opportunity to compare and contrast, really looking deep into the concept and reasoning their answers to then be able to support them.

We can use technology that enhances learning to complete all the aforementioned work. There are many videos, both current and historical, that talk about community gardens and the history of New Haven. The documentaries will be viewed as group and reading response questions provided. Students will be allowed to view, reflect, respond, and share. Directing critical thinking into oral expression is important at this stage in their educational journey. For struggling students, it is always helpful to give them templates and sentence starters. Because of the use of technology, lessons can be differentiated to facilitate and accommodate different learning styles.

As a culminating activity, students will create a community garden plan. This plan will be based on actual community garden models, research, and group work. Students will work in a group with specific roles and a concrete plan. Along with the community garden plan, each student will be responsible for an essay describing their individual rationale as well as the group rationale.

Classroom Activities:

Before beginning the lessons on community gardens, pre-teaching vocabulary is important. Pre read any articles or literature and determine what words may be difficult for the students and allow them the opportunity to define.

Lesson One: Exploration of the historical elements of “guerrilla gardening” vs. planned community gardens.

Activity one: Students will work on a KWL chart about the history of guerrilla gardening during the late 1960’s until present day. They will work on a second KWL chart based on modern day community gardens.

Once students have been given the opportunity to process the concepts and write down their own answers in regards to what they know, they will then be able to peer share and complete the section in regards to what they want to know. Images will be posted as stimuli so that they can create questions in regards to what they want to know based on what they are seeing. Pictures are helpful because they offer a focused starting point for students who may have no prior knowledge at all. Students will use the Depth of Knowledge question stems in order to create meaningful higher order questions. They will be required to use level 2 and 3 question prompts. Students will then peer edit each other’s work. Any closed questions will be made into open questions before they can begin research.

Activity two: Students will conduct research once they have formulated questions in regards to what they want to know about guerrilla gardening and modern day community gardens. Students will then annotate their findings on the graphic organizer and set aside for future reference.

Activity three: Students will then view an array of videos where they will be able to hear an explanation and view images in regards to the two concepts being discussed. They will then add the new learning to the organizer. This step is to ensure that some of our struggling readers get the same information our more

proficient readers have.

Activity four: After classroom discussions, peer sharing and questioning students will formulate an extended response to the following prompt: Now that you know the difference between guerrilla gardening and established community gardens, which approach do you think is most beneficial to our inner city communities? Use evidence to support your claim.

Suggested articles, images and videos for lesson one and further studies:

<https://arden/www.dreamgreen.earth/post/a-brief-history-of-guerrilla-gardening>

<https://nourishproject.ca/8-things-know-about-community-gardens>

<https://www.soils.org/about-soils/community-gardens/>

<https://www.naturespot.net/habitats/urban-gardens/12651-guerilla-gardening>

https://youtu.be/FPAf_vjOeyg

<https://youtu.be/850fUGZjLBE>

<https://youtu.be/HICtQfVGwII>

Lesson two: A map study to locate and analyze current community garden sites.

As an introduction to the map lesson, the teacher will facilitate the discussion in regard to understanding that although guerrilla gardening has its appeal, planned and authorized community gardens tend to have a more permanent effect on the community because they are not as susceptible to being torn down or eliminated. They are supported by Gather New Haven, the organization formed in 2020 by a merger of the New Haven Land Trust and New Haven Farms.

Activity one: Journal write: 1. How many community gardens can you identify on the map? Can you locate the community they belong to? What is the average distance from one community garden to another? Based on the size of the garden, how many people do you think are involved in the garden? What are some communities that you notice do not have a garden? What could be the reason behind this? Does your community have a garden? Are you aware of it and are you an active participant?

Activity two: As students view the map, they will be able to copy and paste the location of the garden closest to where they live and search it on Google Earth. Students will be encouraged to explore the various links provided in order to obtain visuals and views of the garden in real time. Students will jot down details and any new information obtained.

Suggested link for lesson two and further studies:

<https://gathernewhaven.org/our-programs/community-gardens> (from this link they will be able to expand and

complete activity two)

Lesson three: What prompted the planting and choice of produce or vegetation for the garden they are researching.

Activity one: Students will be asked to now observe the garden they are researching in detail. From all the information compiled, students will analyze and infer as to the choices the gardeners made when choosing what to plant. Some key questions would be:

1. Is the garden produce or floral?
2. Do you think the soil in the area had an influence on the choices made?
3. Does the amount of rainfall have an effect on choices made?
4. Can you observe any cultural aspects in the choices made?
5. What aspects observed reinforce the communal concept?
6. Describe in detail how these gardens affect your five senses on a personal level if you were to physically be there.

Activity two: After extensive research of the community garden they were assigned based on residency, students will now begin to compare and contrast their garden with the garden in Seedfolks. Each chapter is specific to a community member and it starts off individualistic. Students need to analyze and identify when the storyline shifts and becomes more of a communal effort. Students will answer the prompt provided in RACECES format. Prompt: In the novel Seedfolks, we meet members of a diverse community who do not have much in common. They do not mingle nor do they trust each other. As the novel progresses, these “gardeners” begin to form a community. Identify when the shift begins. Identify concrete examples and clues to support your reasoning. Once the community comes together, does the garden change any?

Activity three: Students will do a character analysis. This work will be done in their journal. They will choose a character from the book based on a connection they made while reading. They will begin to discuss how the character’s personality relates to their choices made in the garden. They can analyze the choice of seeds they planted, work done, or participation in the garden even if indirectly. How do these observations make a character predictable? Students will then relate on a personal level and explain how they would have done things if they were the character in that situation.

Lesson four: Students will begin to plan their own community garden that they will create in the classroom.

Prerequisite for lesson four: Students will browse a seed catalogue at the beginning of the unit. They will choose seeds based on likes and dislikes. After research is done and they begin to plan their garden, they will revisit their choices and makes changes based on research and the needs that their garden will address.

Activity one: Students will divide themselves into groups of four. Once in their groups, they will begin to plan

their garden. They will be provided a graphic organizer where they will begin to plot information they will later refer to when working on the garden. Students will need to divide and take specific roles, jobs, and responsibilities. Once roles are established, the teacher will provide the class with a variety of seeds (produce and floral). Group members will need to decide what they want to plant and why. Students will need to be able to verbally support their choices during an informal share out.

Activity two: Students will begin to create a space for their seedlings. They will also begin the planting once they have read the instructions. After that is done, students will be given a daily checklist/observation sheet. They will observe the garden and their classmates. On Friday's they will be given the opportunity to meet in their group and talk about their observations and the progress. Students will also be encouraged to discuss what can be done better to improve their joint endeavor.

Activity three: At the end of six weeks, students will document the process they just experienced. They will determine if the group was a success or not. What were 2 weaknesses they experienced and what were two strengths they identified. If they could do something differently what would it be? What communal aspects were most helpful? Could an individual have successfully created their own garden? Students will take all the information compiled during the 6 weeks and produce an expository essay as the culminating project.

Resources:

Student reading list:

Paul Fleishman, "Seedfolks"

Nikki Grimes, "Between the Lines"

Novella Carpenter, "Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer"

Toby Musgrave, "Green Escapes: The Guide to Secret Urban Gardens"

Malve von Hassell, "The Struggle for Eden: Community Gardens in New York City"

Danna Smith, "Rooftop Garden"

Marie Lamba, "Green Green, A Community Gardening Story"

John Seven, "Gorilla Gardener: How To Help Nature Take Over the World (Wee Rebel)"

Ellen Miles, "Get Guerilla Gardening"

Pat Brisson. "Before we eat: From Farm to Table"

Student reading list for multilinguals

Analia Paola Garcia, " Una etnografía acerca de las prácticas políticas pedagógicas prefigurativas en el Movimiento Popular La Dignidad"

Rex Dufour, “Comience Una Granja en la Ciudad”

Gema Lopez, “Huerto Urbano Sostenible”

Gillian Hibbs, “Errol's Garden (Bilingual Multicultural Book) - Pashto/English”

Idries Shah, “The Farmer's Wife: English-Pashto Edition”

Materials for Classroom Use

- Computers
- Student Journals
- Cornell Note Template
- KWL Chart
- Chart Paper
- Maps
- Colored Pencils
- Highlighter
- Poster board/poster paint
- List of Sentence Starters
- List of Meaningful Dialogue Prompts
- Team-Role Graphic Organizer
- Dictionary or Pictionary
- Depth of knowledge question wheel
- Schedule of city wide Farmer’s markets.
- Potting soil
- Flower pots (small) or disposable cups
- Seed catalogue
- Seeds produce or floral
- Watering cans
- Small box to serve as base for garden.
- Organic fertilizer
- Warming Pads
- Lamps

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. Students will use the anchor curriculum text to explicitly show examples of concepts discussed in the unit.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue. Students will use all information gathered on the various forms of graphic organizers completed from different sources in order to complete discussion questions, class discussions, and oral presentations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2 Determine a 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. Students will apply this standard when working with the Cornell Notes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.3 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes). Students will identify the idea of community unity and provide evidence to support their finding.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. Students will be required to write an expository essay where they must apply what they have learned throughout the unit.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2.D Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. Students will be required to use terms and new vocabulary acquired in their writing in order to explain the topic of their writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. Students will engage in the writing process when working on the essay assigned. The essay preparation is heavily reliant on peer editing and revising. Instructor input is given at different stages.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. Students will be afforded the opportunity to participate in class discussions where they will be required to be active participants.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.B Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed. Discussion ground rules will be created by the students and they will post them and hold each other accountable for following established protocol.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3 Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not. Students will practice this standard through informal class discussions as they listen to differing opinions.

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