



# Equitable Access to Challenging Texts

Fishtank ELA emphasizes high-quality, culturally responsive core instruction for all learners. The curriculum aligns with a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) approach in which all students have access to high-quality core literacy instruction, differentiated to address student learning needs. Following an MTSS approach, the instructional targets needed to master a particular concept or standard are not changed to meet a range of learners, rather the services and instructional supports students receive to access the concept or standard are differentiated to provide greater access.

To support teachers in effectively implementing an MTSS approach, Fishtank ELA curriculum provides guidance on both Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels of support. The guidance is aimed at ensuring that all students, including English Learners and other special populations, can access the curriculum in the general classroom. Research-based suggestions for support are provided within each lesson and align with the demands of the lesson's text and tasks.

Intellectual preparation prior to teaching a unit is essential for anticipating students' unique needs. When intellectually preparing for a lesson, teachers must unpack the complexity of the text and tasks in order to determine which students would benefit from which supports. Because this varies by classroom and by the student, teachers are trusted to determine which supports are appropriate for their specific students. Using individual student data gathered through screening and progress monitoring, teachers can select from the range of suggestions to ensure all students receive the right amount of support.

## 6th Grade ELA – Challenging Authority: *The Giver*

In 6th grade, students read Lois Lowry's *The Giver* as part of a yearlong focus on coming-of-age narratives. This unit offers students two process writing projects through which to synthesize their understanding of the unit essential questions and their close reading of the text. They draw on the understandings developed through close reading lessons and daily target task writing that precede the first writing project. Throughout the lessons, Fishtank ELA provides teachers with a variety of strategies to support all students in accessing both the shared core text and the lesson's tasks.

### Close Reading *The Giver* Chapter 20–21 (Lesson 12)

This lesson's objective is: **Explain how Jonas has changed as a result of witnessing the release of the newchild.**

Teachers are guided to launch the lesson by reviewing comprehension questions and unit vocabulary, and building engagement for the lesson by activating knowledge from prior lessons.

Launch by reviewing key content and vocabulary from the previous lessons by having students quickly discuss the following questions, using the specific vocabulary words in their answer.

- In what ways is Jonas's community a "**dystopia**"? Provide as many examples as you can think of.
- Which of the following best describes how Jonas felt when he realized what his father had done: mystified, anguished, or apprehensive? Explain your thinking.

Remind students that yesterday, we reached the climax of the text—Jonas witnessed the murder of the newchild, and his view of the world changed immediately and drastically. Remember, in coming-of-age novels, our main character often undergoes significant changes as a result of a traumatic event.

Now that the text is nearing its conclusion, we as readers must think critically about how Jonas has changed, and how the author develops our understanding of these changes.

#### SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

##### Language Supports ?

If needed, review with students the different parts of the text. Reference the academic word wall to review the words "structure," "exposition," "rising action," "climax," "falling action," "conclusion/resolution" and "tension."

For the core of this lesson, students explore two close read questions.

#### CLOSE READ QUESTIONS

- How has Jonas' perspective of his father changed since seeing him release the newchild? Provide evidence from pages 190-192 (and the last pages of Chapter 19, if needed) to support your answer.
- How has Jonas' perspective of his community changed since witnessing the release? Provide evidence from Chapter 20 and Chapter 21 to support your answer.

Teachers are equipped with detailed supports for each close read question to help students access this challenging text. For the 2nd close read question, the supports are:

#### SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

##### Running the Close Read

###### Key Understandings

- Jonas has grown disillusioned with his community. He no longer sees the rules and "order" as something positive.

###### Scaffolding Questions

- In what ways is Jonas different from other people in the community?
- How does he feel when he looks back on the community he has lived in for his entire life?

###### Key Moments to Analyze

- Jonas stared at him. "Release is always like that? For people who break the rules three times? For the *Old*? Do they kill the Old too?" (p. 192)
- "Jonas wrapped his arms around himself and rocked his own body back and forth. 'What should I do? I can't go back! I can't!'" (p. 192).
- "He felt, surprisingly, no fear, nor any regret leaving the community behind" (p. 205).
- "Jonas reached the opposite side of the river, stopped briefly, and looked back. The community where his entire life had been lived lay behind him now, sleeping. At dawn, the orderly, disciplined life he had always known would continue again without him. The life where nothing was ever unexpected. Or inconvenient. Or unusual. The life without color, pain, or past" (p. 207).

###### Language Supports

- Jonas's perspective has changed because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jonas's perspective has changed from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jonas is disillusioned by the community because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jonas is disillusioned by the community, so \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jonas is disillusioned by the community, but \_\_\_\_\_.

Students then move from the close read into writing in response to the Target Task:

**WRITING PROMPT**

After witnessing the release of the newchild, Jonas and The Giver decide that Jonas must leave the community. Why does this event convince Jonas that this is the only way forward?

In your response, be sure to answer the following questions:

- How will leaving the community benefit Jonas?
- How will Jonas' leaving benefit the community?

Provide at least two pieces of evidence from the text to support your answer.

Teachers again have a menu of supports to deploy, depending on the needs of their students.

SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

**Language Supports** ?

Prior to independently answering the Target Task, give students time to orally rehearse their answers with partners using [Oral Language Protocols](#).

Provide students with the following sentence stems:

- This event has a significant effect on Jonas because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jonas thinks this is the only way forward because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jonas thinks this is the only way forward, but \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jonas thinks this is the only way forward, so \_\_\_\_\_.

**Additional Supports** ?

Have students closely read the following sections of text:

- "Jonas, you and I are the only ones who have feelings. We've been sharing them for almost a year."
- "It was possible, what they had planned. Barely possible. If it failed, he would very likely be killed. But what did it matter? If he stayed, his life was no longer worth living" (p. 194).
- "If you get away, if you get beyond, if you get to Elsewhere, it will mean that the community has to bear the burden themselves, of the memories you had been holding for them. I think that they can, and that they will acquire some wisdom" (p. 194-195).
- 'Giver,' Jonas suggested, 'you and I don't need to care about the rest of them.' The Giver looked at him with a questioning smile. Jonas hung his head. Of course they needed to care. It was the meaning of everything" (p. 196).

## Literary Analysis Writing Project (Lessons 16–19)

Over this four-lesson arc, students work toward answering the prompt:

**Is ignorance bliss? Write an essay in which you take a position on this question using evidence from *The Giver* to support your position. Use at least two of our vocabulary words in your essay.**

| Lesson    | Objective                                                                                          |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lesson 16 | Explain the expectations of the writing task and gather strong evidence appropriate to the prompt. |
| Lesson 17 | Craft strong thesis statements and effective body paragraphs.                                      |

|           |                                                                                         |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lesson 18 | Complete a strong introductory paragraph, and recognize and correct any lapses in tone. |
| Lesson 19 | Use pronouns appropriately in writing.                                                  |

Similar to the close reading lessons, these writing lessons include many resources and suggestions for how teachers can help all students succeed with the project. At the beginning of the arc, students are provided with a [mentor text](#), a [literary analysis essay rubric](#), and a [graphic organizer](#) with which to brainstorm.

Throughout the lessons, teachers have guidance for whole-class and targeted instruction to help students create and refine their essay drafts. In Lesson 17, teachers see this set of suggestions:

#### Body Paragraphs (40 minutes)

Have students read through the body paragraphs in the [Mentor Text \(6th Grade Unit 2 Lessons 16-19\)](#). Ask them to annotate for the assertion, evidence, and analysis part of each paragraph. Remind students that they've already had lots of practice writing analytical paragraphs in class.

Have students return to the [Argumentative Writing: Literary Analysis Essay Rubric](#) and consider the evidence and analysis sections. Ask students:

- How does the evidence and analysis included in these body paragraphs meet the expectations laid out in the rubric? How much evidence is included?

Students should look through their evidence chart (classwork/homework from yesterday) and think about their strongest evidence.

Ask students:

- How will you organize your evidence into different paragraphs?

Students should spend the remainder of class writing body paragraphs. Remind students of the expectation that they use at least two of our vocabulary words in their essays. They should look for opportunities to use these words as they write their body paragraphs.

When they complete a body paragraph, ask students to annotate each for their assertion, evidence, and analysis.

#### SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

##### Language Supports ?

- Students may benefit from orally planning with a teacher or peer before writing their body paragraphs.
- If students are missing transition words in their paragraphs, review the uses of transitions for certain text structures:
  - To mark cause and effect:
    - Therefore, as a result, due to
  - To mark sequence
    - First, then, later
  - To mark comparisons and contrasts:
    - On the other hand, then again, although, by contrast
- If helpful, provide a glossary with the vocabulary words and their definitions for students to reference.



## Student Writing Sample for Literary Analysis Writing Project

④ Excellent Essay! 2/7/22

Would ignorance be considered bliss? In "The Giver" by Lois Lowry, the protagonist, Jonas, learns of the true horrors of the world after being shielded from them for so long. And because of this, he becomes traumatized. This is illustrated by Lois Lowry when she shows that Jonas was overwhelmed by pain and accepted death when learning of war. As a result, he wants his old, nonchalant life back, and is shown to be isolated because he is the only one with memories of war, as well as feelings of love, making him isolated and causing him to want his old life back.

Ignorance is shown to be bliss in "The Giver" in the way of the protagonist, Jonas, becoming isolated because of his knowledge of war. The text states "In his mind, Jonas saw again the face of the boy who

of these things seemed to be slipping away." This shows that Jonas starts to realize that he is drifting away from his old self and the community. Another example of this is when Jonas notices that "He felt such love for Asher and Fiona. But they could not feel it back, without the memories." This shows that Jonas has feelings of love for his friends, but they cannot feel it back, isolating him from the community.

On the other hand, ignorance can be shown to not be bliss because the community, besides Jonas and The Giver, live in ignorance and have no concept of feelings that are positive, such as love. This is demonstrated when Jonas realizes that "He felt such love for Asher and Fiona. But they could not feel it back, without the memories." This shows that since the rest of the community lives in ignorance, they do not experience blissful feelings such as love. The thesis that ignorance is bliss is stronger than the claim that ignorance is not bliss because Lois Lowry advances the thesis that ignorance is bliss through the many hardships that Jonas faces, showing that since he has knowledge of the worst elements of the world, he does not

④ Excellent work!

had lain dying on a field and had begged him for water. He had a sudden choking feeling as if it were difficult to breathe." This illustrates the concept that Jonas has a panic attack because he remembers the trauma of war. The text also states "Then they were all silent, standing awkwardly and the only sound was the sound of Jonas's shuddering breaths. He was struggling not to cry." This demonstrates the idea that Jonas' trauma isolates him from the community because he was panicked and alone while everyone else didn't understand his fear of what they saw as a harmless game.

Ignorance is also shown to be bliss in "The Giver" when Jonas realizes that his feelings of love separate him from the community. An example from the text that shows this is when Jonas realizes that "his childhood, his friendships, his care-free sense of security = all

experience the same bliss as those who live in ignorance.

In conclusion, ignorance is shown to be bliss in "The Giver" by Lois Lowry illustrating the concept of Jonas becoming isolated from his community because of his knowledge of war, feelings of love, and his trauma. The thesis that ignorance is bliss is stronger than the claim that ignorance is not bliss because Lois Lowry shows that Jonas does not experience the same bliss as those who live in ignorance through his hardships, which contrast the calm and easy life of those who live in ignorance in his community.