

Willis English 11—AM. Lit Course Rationales

***The Crucible* by Arthur Miller (1952)**

With Film Adaptation (1996)

The English department has carefully evaluated *The Crucible* and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade curriculum. The film adaptation is rated PG-13 for intense depiction of the Salem witch trials. To further understanding of drama, the student will compare the text of the play with the performance.

I. Plot Summary

Miller's play tracks a New England community as it comes undone in the wake of a child's accusation of witchcraft. To cover after she is caught dancing naked in the woods, Abigail Parris accuses Tituba of witchcraft. This terrifies the townspeople, and soon many more are accused of alliances with the Devil. At the heart of these accusations lie petty grievances, old grudges, and jealousies. The consequences of these false charges drive the town to a reckoning, but not before recrimination and executions tear the community apart. The play loosely follows the events of the Salem witch trials of the late 1600s, but Miller exercises artistic liberty as he uses the events of the trial to comment on the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

Miller's allegory presents an opportunity for students to encounter two critical moments in American history as they negotiate the source documents relevant to the trial and Miller's dramatization of those events. They must grapple with the nature of truth and justice, the need for facts and the desire for political expediency, and the complexities of human relationships.

Students naturally respond to Abigail's desire to hide her delinquencies and see the need for truth in a court of law. Questions of proof and personal responsibility echo throughout the American literary tradition and this critical analysis sets the stage for the remainder of our work together in the course.

As students begin their study of American literature, it is essential that they experience some of the earliest documents of this canon. At the same time, the study of Miller's allegory emphasizes the recursive and referential nature of literary works. Finally, Miller's work is a valuable resource for students as they encounter American literature in the classroom and American politics in their lives.

III. Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details	Grades 11 - 12
1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

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2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
Craft and Structure	Grades 11 - 12
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Grades 11 - 12
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	Grades 11 - 12
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive subjects in *The Crucible*: reference to adultery and sexuality, witchcraft, executions. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her views openly in the classroom. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

The consequence of Abigail's misdeeds and lies is death, and discussion of this topic may be concerning to some readers and parents. This aspect of the novel is foundational to the study of American literature, as many of the texts in the canon explore the need for truth and justice in American society. By raising the importance of these needs, the play provides students with an opportunity to establish their own ideas about personal responsibility and community participation.

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Students should be forewarned about the violent aspects of the play. However, the universality of the themes within Miller’s work can provide a space for students to consider the importance of integrity in their own lives. Of the work, Miller said, “It is rare for people to be asked the question which puts them squarely in front of themselves.” In the study of this seminal work about American life, students will have just this kind of opportunity.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass (1845)

The English department has carefully evaluated *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade curriculum.

I. Plot Summary

In this memoir, Frederick Douglass recounts his life as a slave and his escape from its bonds. Though he is the child of a slave and her owner, Douglass is treated as property by his father and passed around the family as help. In his teens Douglass learns to read and encounters the works of abolitionist authors. His desire to escape to freedom is further cemented by his experiences as a slave under the command of a notoriously violent slave-breaker. Ultimately, Douglass uses the power of literacy to escape north and begins his work as an outspoken abolitionist.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

Douglass’ account of slavery is central to the story of American justice, and is one of the most challenging works in the American literary canon. It pushes students to reconcile the founding documents of the nation with the experience of its citizens.

Though the *Declaration of Independence* declares each American free to pursue life, liberty, and happiness, Douglass’ memoir stands as evidence that “equal” meant something far from it. Students find Douglass’ story both difficult and gripping. It allows them a first-hand view of the brutality of American slavery, while at the same time providing an opportunity for analysis of pro-slavery rhetoric. Both aspects of this work are central anticipatory material for the study of the Civil War.

III. Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details	Grades 11 - 12
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3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	3. Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

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Craft and Structure	Grades 11 - 12
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.	5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Grades 11 - 12
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	Grades 11 - 12
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*: profanity or vulgar language, scenes of torture, reference to rape, and violence. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

The stark realities of the American slave trade are difficult for Americans to process. It is easier to discuss the violence and brutality of the Civil War, than to examine the violence of slavery. However in order to process the political and social context of the war, students must have a complete picture of the antebellum nation. And because the nature of education is to prepare them to handle difficult material in a mature way, and give considered thought to the dark and difficult parts of our past, this is literature of intense value. As Frederick Douglass said, "It's easier to build strong children than repair

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broken men.” With careful study of the violence of slavery, students will have the fortitude to tackle the violence of the Civil War.

12 Years a Slave (2013)

The English Department has carefully evaluated *12 Years a Slave* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade English curriculum. The film adaptation is rated R for violence/cruelty, some nudity and brief sexuality. Scenes of explicit sexual violence will not be screened in the classroom. Students will compare the slave memoir *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* to the film to crystallize their understanding of this crucial moment in American literature.

I. Plot Summary

12 Years a Slave is based on the true story of an American man kidnapped and sold into slavery in the Antebellum South. Solomon Northup is stolen from his home and family, auctioned to a plantation owner, and trapped in the legal, social, and economic nightmare of the slave system for over a decade. This adaptation of Northup's memoir bears uncanny resemblance to the experience recorded in Douglass's work, particularly the importance placed on literacy and autonomy.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

12 Years a Slave is a critically acclaimed film that provides students with an opportunity to explore the complexity of Frederick Douglass's work. The language of the 19th century memoir can be challenging for modern readers, but when coupled with the film adaptation of Northup's memoir, the true weight of Douglass's story comes to life.

One critical component of Northup's experience lies in the inconsistency of laws and justice between northern and southern states. While in his home state of New York Northup is entitled to the freedoms granted to all men, in Louisiana he is deprived of even basic human rights. This is a continuing conversation in the course and is critical to the appreciation of the study of founding principles and American democracy.

III. Common Core Standards

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3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

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Craft and Structure	Grades 11 - 12
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Grades 11 - 12
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10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive topics contained in *12 Years a Slave*: profanity or vulgar language, scenes of torture, reference to rape, nudity, and violence. Portions of the film are not suited to the classroom environment, including the violent rape of a young girl. The screening of this work will omit the egregious sexual violence committed by slave owners. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

The dark history of American chattel slavery is essential to the story of American literature. While Frederick Douglass's narrative is evocative, this film adaptation brings his words into stark relief and validates the authenticity of his work. Northrup endures tremendous violence and degradation in the course of the film, but the triumph of hope and humanity that closes the film serves to close the study of this dark period. Solomon Northrup invites the reader to, "converse with him in trustful confidence, of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' and [suggests] they will find that ninety-nine out of every hundred are intelligent enough to understand their situation, and to cherish in their bosoms the love of freedom, as passionately as themselves." For students of American literature, this screening serves to give them the opportunity to embrace empathy for all past, present and future Americans.

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Dead Poets Society (1989)

The English Department has carefully evaluated *Dead Poets Society* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade English curriculum. The film adaptation is rated PG for emotional intensity, but it also includes brief nudity and social drinking. Students will compare philosophic treatises, essays, and short stories to the narrative of the film to crystallize their understanding of Romantic literature.

I. Plot Summary

Inspired by their English teacher, Mr. Keating, a group of boys at a boarding school create a secret club called “The Dead Poets Society.” Designed as a celebration of Romanticism and poetry, the group rejects the conformity and rigidity of their school and attempts to “Seize the Day” and live their young lives to the fullest. Soon their unorthodox behavior attracts the attention of school authorities, and the reality of life in their conservative school and the expectations of their parents come crashing down on the young romantics.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

Dead Poets Society (DPS) is a critically acclaimed film that provides students with an opportunity to explore the principles of the Dark Romantics and the Transcendentalists we have studied in class. Works by Emerson and Thoreau can be difficult for students to appreciate; but with the inclusion of *DPS*, they have access to a vicarious application of transcendental ideologies. At the same time, they are able to see the limitations of those works, as the warnings presented by Poe and Hawthorne intrude into the lives of the young boys.

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Craft and Structure	Grades 11 - 12
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Grades 11 - 12

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7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	Grades 11 - 12
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive topics contained in *Dead Poets Society*: suicide, mild language, social drinking, brief nudity. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

After Neil's parents discover his participation in the school play, which they forbid, he ends his life, which is a troubling aspect of the story for both parents and students. It cannot be overstated that his suicide is a concerning feature of the narrative, but the opportunity to discuss this troubling decision in light of the discussion of free will and autonomy make this portion of the film essential. Students can, and should, be forewarned about the potentially upsetting nature of Neil's death. To consider the extreme decision to end a life, especially one's own life, students need a discussion venue that is properly moderated.

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Iron Jawed Angels (2004)

The English Department has carefully evaluated *Iron Jawed Angels* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade English curriculum. The film has no MPAA Rating (*Teach with Movies*, a history and literature resource site, estimates that if this HBO feature had been rated, the movie would have been given a PG-13 rating for some intense scenes of women being assaulted by crowds and tortured in prison). Students will compare non-fiction, poetry, and short stories to the narrative of the film to crystallize their understanding of Suffrage.

I. Plot Summary

The film follows the lives and efforts of American suffragists Alice Paul and Lucy Burns as they pursue elective franchise for American women. Initially these young women work to persuade American legislators through debate and discourse, but find that the American public remains unaware of their work to secure suffrage and indifferent to their philosophical arguments. They begin public protest to draw attention to their cause and alert Americans to the injustice they face, only to be met with violence and imprisonment.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

Iron Jawed Angels (IJA) is a powerful film that emphasizes the suffering endured by Suffragists and brings to life the words of writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Kate Chopin, and Emily Dickinson. Connections to previous units, including Transcendental literature, are woven throughout this film, but the critical awareness that emerges as a result of this narrative is also essential to the conversations about civil rights movements that follow.

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Reading Standards for Literature

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Craft and Structure	Grades 11 - 12
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IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive topics contained in *Iron Jawed Angels*: mild language, social drinking, brief nudity. This film includes a brief montage that some parents may find concerning because it concludes with a suggestive bubble bath. This scene will not be shown in the classroom. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

The violence perpetrated against these women is upsetting, and students must be given warning about this aspect of the film. Suffragists were force fed, beaten, and imprisoned without access to legal representation. Critical figures and realities of American history must be included in the conversation about American literature, and these lives should not be censored lest their struggles be trivialized or forgotten. Of her incarceration Paul said, "Well, to me it was shocking that a government of men could look with such extreme contempt on a movement that was asking nothing except such a simple little thing as the right to vote. Seems almost unthinkable now, doesn't it?" It's for this very reason that Paul's story is critical to the course.

The Great Gatsby (2013)

The English Department has carefully evaluated *The Great Gatsby* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade English curriculum. The film adaptation is PG-13 for some violent images, sexual content, smoking, partying and brief language. Students will compare poetry and short stories to the narrative of the film to crystallize their understanding of The Lost Generation.

I. Plot Summary

This modern adaptation of Fitzgerald's classic American novel brings to life the passionate love story, the sparkle of the Jazz Age, the frantic pursuit of the American Dream, and the crushing impact of WWI that have made *The Great Gatsby* essential to the American literary canon.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

The course up to this point has covered the tradition of the American Dream and the doctrine of American Exceptionalism. In each successive generation, and unit of study, students have examined the pursuit of perfection inherent in our government and society. This film adaptation brings these issues to the forefront and pushes the conversation to the next natural question: *can we repair the mistakes of our past?*

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9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
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IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Great Gatsby*: suicide, murder, mild language, social drinking, brief nudity. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

While the excesses of the Jazz Age inhabit the screen throughout this adaptation, the decay and moral bankruptcy of this era are made manifest. At this point in the study of American literature, students have encountered many challenging literary moments. Fitzgerald's work is not easy, but it does present a world that glitters only as a veneer. The shame, ruin, greed, betrayal, and lies that serve as the foundation of glitter and glitz edify. Fitzgerald famously warned, "Either you think, or else others have to think for you and take power from you..." On the verge of very serious decisions about life, students should be prepared to keep their power and do their own thinking.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck (1937)

With Film Adaptation (1992)

The English Department has carefully evaluated *Of Mice and Men* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade English curriculum. The film adaptation is rated PG-13 for some scenes of violence. To further understanding of setting as a literary device the student will compare the novel with the performance.

I. Plot Summary

Steinbeck's classic depression-era novel traces the journey of two outsiders in search of the American dream: a small plot of land to call their own and an independent life. The novella hinges on the friendship between these two, which requires George provide leadership, guidance, and caretaking for his friend. As a counter to their bleak migrant existence, George tells Lennie a story about their future, embroidered with stability, safety, and calm that their do not and will not have in their lives.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

Of Mice and Men serves to illuminate the historical condition of a critical moment in American history and provides one of the most powerful narratives in American literature. The central question of the work is connected to our conceptions of justice, an issue that students have traced from the earliest moments of the course. In order to protect Lennie from the world, George must make a heartbreaking decision to kill him. This moment challenges students to consider the grey in a world of black and white.

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Key Ideas and Details	Grades 11 - 12
1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
Craft and Structure	Grades 11 - 12
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

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Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Grades 11 - 12
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	Grades 11 - 12
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive subjects in *Of Mice and Men*: reference to adultery and sexuality, vulgar language, manslaughter, mercy killing. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her views openly in the classroom. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

The conclusion of this novel is difficult. In the end, in order to protect Lennie, something he has done many times over the course of the work, George must kill him. While this moment has been foreshadowed, this takes many students by surprise. In order to process this tragedy, students have built a rapport and a venue. Steinbeck said, "It is true that we [humanity] are weak and sick and ugly and quarrelsome but if that is all we ever were, we would millenniums ago have disappeared from the face of the earth." The conversation about Lennie helps students consider this dichotomy and all its complexities.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee (1960)

With Film Adaptation (1962)

The English Department has carefully evaluated *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 11th grade English curriculum. The film adaptation is unrated, but parents are advised that the recommended rating is PG-13 for thematic material, some language, and references to rape. To further understanding of narrative devices the student will compare the novel with the performance.

I. Plot Summary

Lee’s novel is narrated by Scout Finch and follows her family as they struggle against the entrenched racism of 1930s Alabama. Scout’s father Atticus is a local public defender, called to confront bigotry and discrimination directly as the attorney for a black man named Tom Robinson. Tom has been falsely accused of rape and because the narration is provided from the perspective of a child, the crime in question is bewildering on many levels.

II. Rationale and Learning Objectives

To Kill a Mockingbird is vital to any study of literature. The novel, its characters, and Lee herself are frequently alluded to in popular culture and academia. But the value of the novel is not limited to its existence as a touchstone, the framework provided by Lee’s work is ideal for the study of literary elements and story archetypes. Theme, motif, and allusion are particularly evident and easily accessible for students.

The motif of childhood that infuses the first portion of the narrative makes the novel particularly appealing to high school students. Readers naturally sympathize with Scout’s escapades and the accessibility of Lee’s prose makes the complexities of the novel manageable for students.

III. Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details	Grades 11 - 12
1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
Craft and Structure	Grades 11 - 12
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical,	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning

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connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.	5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Grades 11 - 12
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	Grades 11 - 12
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

IV. Addressing Sensitive Subjects

Possible sensitive topics contained in *To Kill a Mockingbird*: profanity or vulgar language, reference to rape, and violence. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

Bigotry can be a sensitive issue in the classroom, and the undercurrent of violence that pervades the novel adds additional complexity. While the racism and injustice that feature in the narrative may seemingly have receded out of the public consciousness, certainly these issues remain relevant for students. Harper Lee has remained steadfastly silent on the book and its influence, but she once noted, "The book to read is not the one which thinks for you, but the one which makes you think." To the extent the students will have an opportunity to think about crucial issues and conduct difficult literary analysis this is the book to read.