

Grade 11 Unit 4: Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Tales

Dear Family,

In this unit, students will learn about the American short story. They will consider the power of narrative and why people choose to carry on this tradition. Students will read a variety of texts as they discuss the Essential Question for the unit.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

As a class, in small groups, and independently, students will work to answer the question *What do stories reveal about the human condition?* Give your student the opportunity to continue the discussion at home.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR STUDENT

- What are some of the ways you could answer the question *What do stories reveal about the human condition?*
- What do these selections tell us about the human condition? Are stories important to the development of a person's humanity?
- Why do you think different types of stories are so popular in the media and in books and film?
- What is the most interesting aspect of the idea of ordinary lives, extraordinary tales that you learned from your reading?

PERFORMANCE TASKS AND PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

Your student will need to answer the question *How does a fictional character or characters respond to life-changing news?* He or she will write a short story and then may conduct a storytelling session, drawing on knowledge gained from the selections in this unit, as well as from the Performance Tasks he or she completed.

STANDARDS

Here are some key standards students will work toward mastering in this unit.

Reading

- 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 here the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.
- 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.
- 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.

Writing

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Speaking and Listening

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

Thank you for your continuing support!