COMMONLIT 360

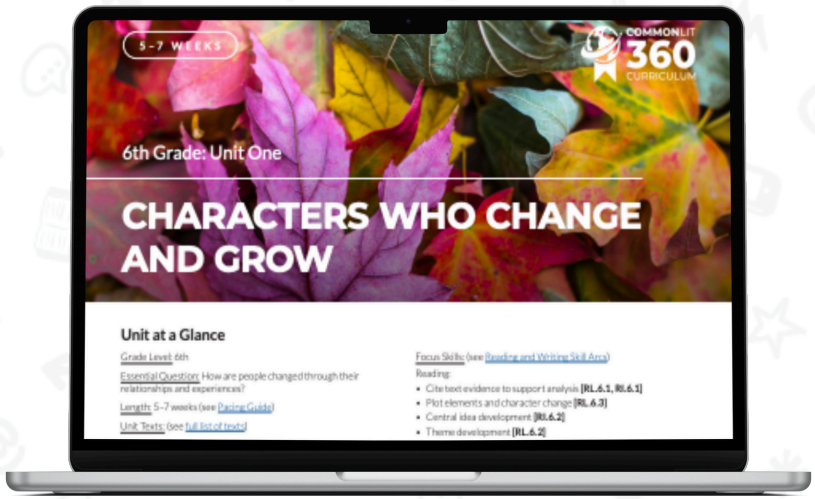
ELA Curriculum Year-At-A-Glance for Grades 9-12



Last updated July 2024

CommonLit 360

CommonLit 360 is a comprehensive ELA curriculum, complete with everything students need to become expert **readers**, **writers**, and **thinkers**.



Throughout the year, students engage with high quality texts that open the doors for meaningful class discussion and reflection. Students will enjoy engaging lessons and units that will push them to think critically and write about what they are reading.

In this guide, we will give an overview of every unit in the CommonLit 360 Curriculum for Middle School and High School.



Edition 1.0

COMMONLIT 360

9th Grade Year-At-A-Glance

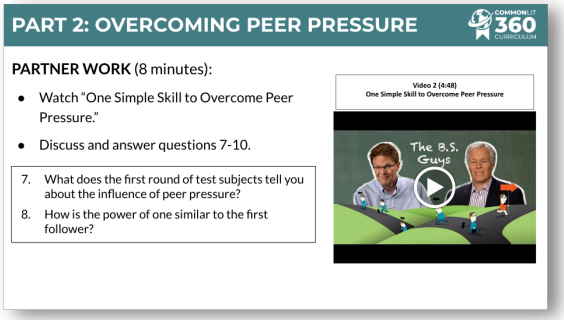
Unit 1: Following the Crowd

Thematic

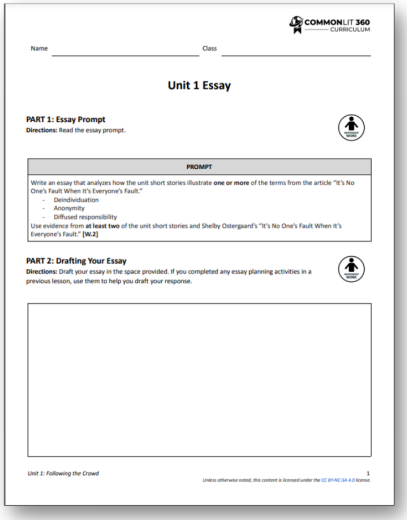
In this unit, students will read engaging short stories that evaluate how being in a group affects how we behave.

Students will learn about the danger of blindly conforming to the actions of a group. They will use evidence to explain people's tendency to act different when part of a group. They will collaborate in groups to discuss ways conformity shows up in everyday life.

Students will write a literary analysis essay that examines why people tend to act differently in groups.







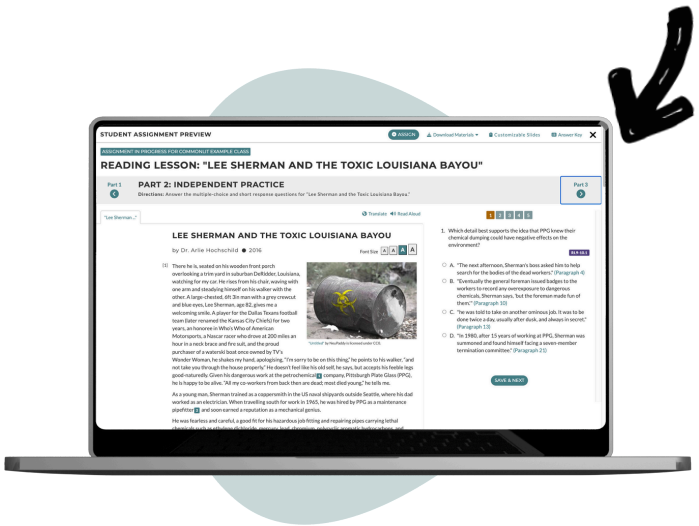
Unit 2: People and the Environment

Thematic

In this unit, students will read short stories, poems, and nonfiction articles that focus on how people and the environment affect one another.

Students will engage in a multimedia exploration to learn how humans are taking action to make Earth a place where humans and animals can thrive.

Throughout the unit, students will practice their writing skills to prepare for the end of unit essay that analyzes how the their own perspective has changed on the relationship between humans and the environment.



Unit 3: *Animal Farm*

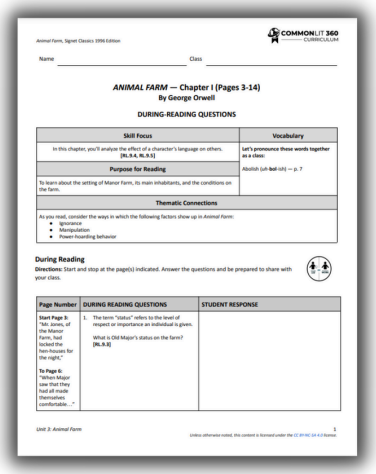
Novel

Students will engage in a novel study of *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. In this allegorical novel, Orwell explores the consequences of exchanging one oppressive government for empty promises of another.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to track character development, analyze how specific characters interact, and analyze the book's themes.

The unit includes chapter guides that will help students track the plot of the story as they read.





Unit 4: The Science of Branding: Why We Buy

Research

In this unit, students read informational texts about the influence of branding and how it can positively and negatively affect our lives.

At the end of the unit, students will be able to explain the strategies brands use to influence consumers. They will take a stance on the ethics of branding, analyze visual media, and conduct their own research.

Students will write a full research paper where they will analyze the strategies used by a brand of their choice.



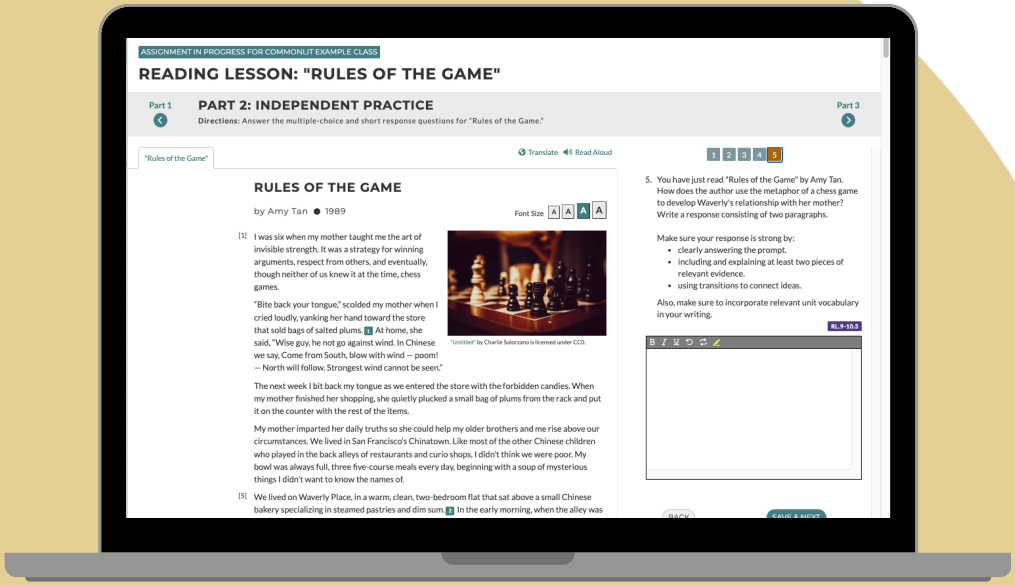
Unit 5: Parents and Children

Thematic

This unit includes short stories and poetry that will help students explore how parents and children influence one another.

Students will also engage in discussions on how parent-child relationships can shape a child's identity.

At the end of the unit, students will write a literary analysis essay about how authors use word choice and figurative language to develop their message.

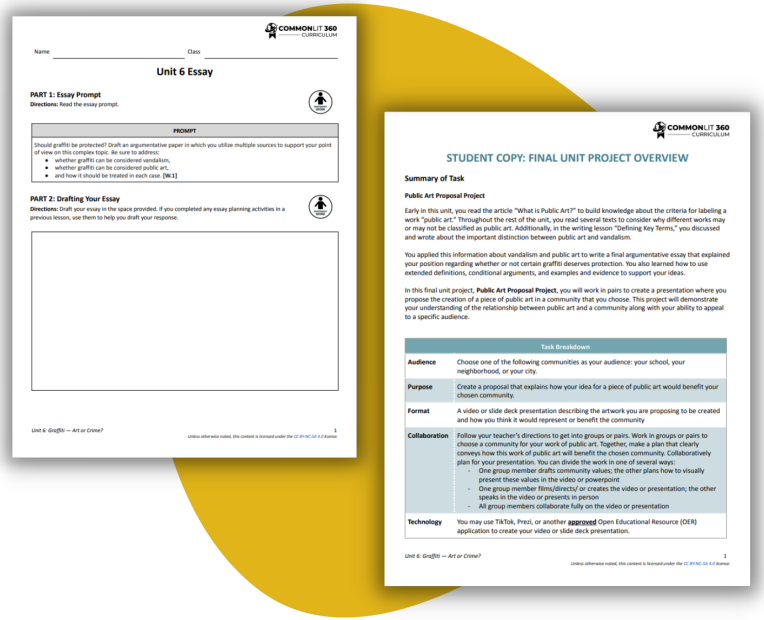


Unit 6: Graffiti - Art or Crime?

Argument

In this unit, students answer the the question, *'Is graffiti a work or art or a crime to be punished? How do we decide?'* To develop an informed opinion, they will engage with informational texts, videos, graphs, participate in a debate, and write an argumentative essay to support their stance.

Teachers can also assign an optional project where students will present a suggestion for a public art piece for their community.



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10th Grade Year-At-A-Glance

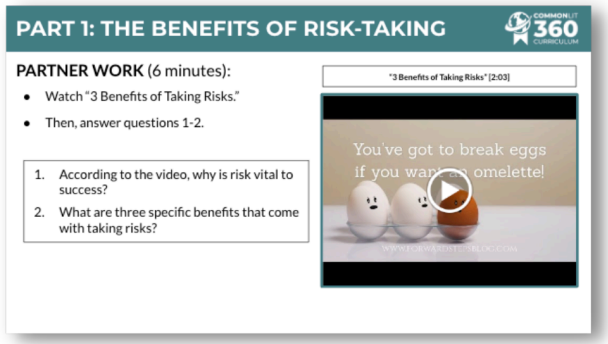
Unit 1: Coming of Age

Thematic

In this unit, students will read five engaging short stories that illuminate both the exhilaration and the pain inherent in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In their struggles to become independent, the protagonists in each of these stories often have painful realizations.

Students work collaboratively during a multimedia exploration featuring videos that look at the role of risk-taking and peer relationships in a person's coming of age journey.

Students will write an essay where they refer to unit stories and personal experiences to explain their perspective on coming of age.

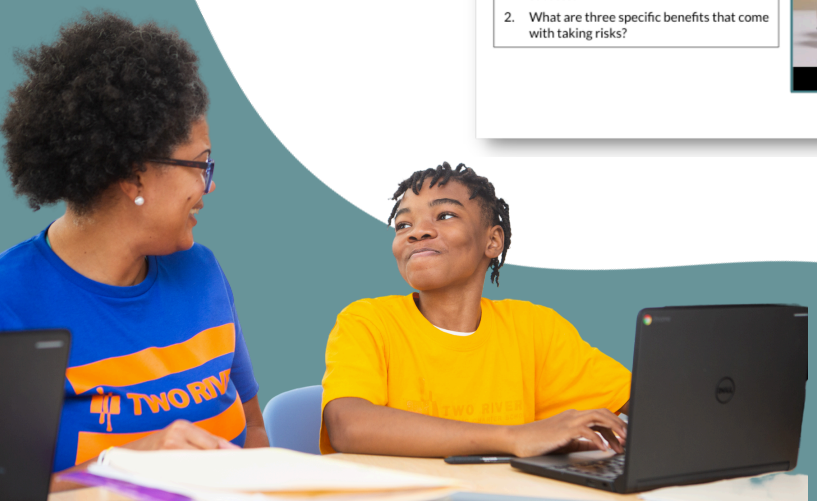

PART 1: THE BENEFITS OF RISK-TAKING

PARTNER WORK (6 minutes):

- Watch "3 Benefits of Taking Risks."
- Then, answer questions 1-2.

1. According to the video, why is risk vital to success?
2. What are three specific benefits that come with taking risks?

"3 Benefits of Taking Risks" [2:03]



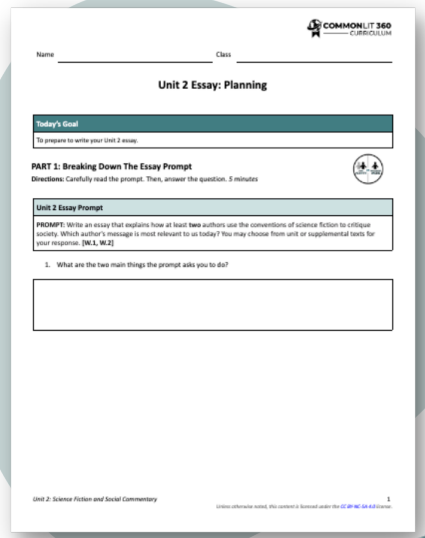
Unit 2: Science Fiction and Social Commentary

Thematic

In Unit 2, students will learn how authors use literary devices in science fiction to critique society. They will read stories that imagine scientific advancements in the future as a way to comment on the dangers of over-reliance on technology.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to analyze how authors use science fiction to comment on society.

Students will write an essay where they refer to stories from the unit as they argue which story's critique is most relevant to today's world.


Name _____ Class _____

Unit 2 Essay: Planning

Today's Goal

To prepare to write your Unit 2 essay.

PART 1: Breaking Down The Essay Prompt

Directions: Carefully read the prompt. Then, answer the question. 5 minutes

Unit 2 Essay Prompt

PROMPT: Write an essay that explains how at least two authors use the conventions of science fiction to critique society. Which author's message is most relevant to us today? You may choose from unit or supplemental texts for your response. [W.1, W.2]

1. What are the two main things the prompt asks you to do?

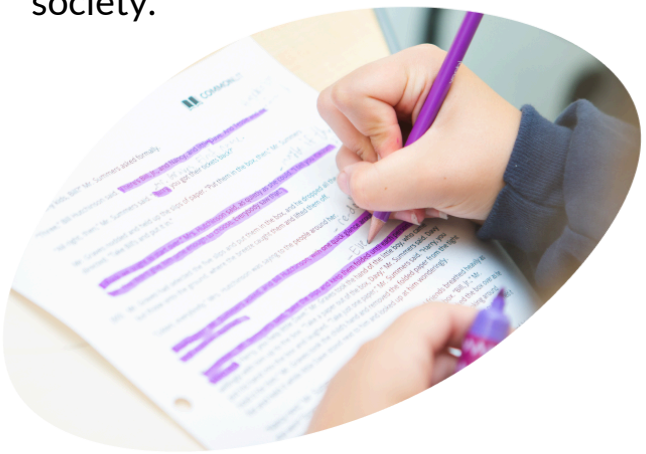
Unit 2: Science Fiction and Social Commentary 1

Unit 3: *Things Fall Apart*

Novel

Students will engage in a novel study of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. This is the tragic story of Okonkwo, an Igbo man who navigates his own society's expectations of a "strong man" and the destruction of his life and culture by British colonizers. Throughout the unit, students examine what it means to be "civilized" and how culture affects perspective.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to analyze how characters' experiences in a particular culture affect their perceptions and decisions, track the development of complex characters, and analyze the development of the plot and theme. Students will write an essay evaluating the Igbo and British cultures based on a given definition of a civilized society.



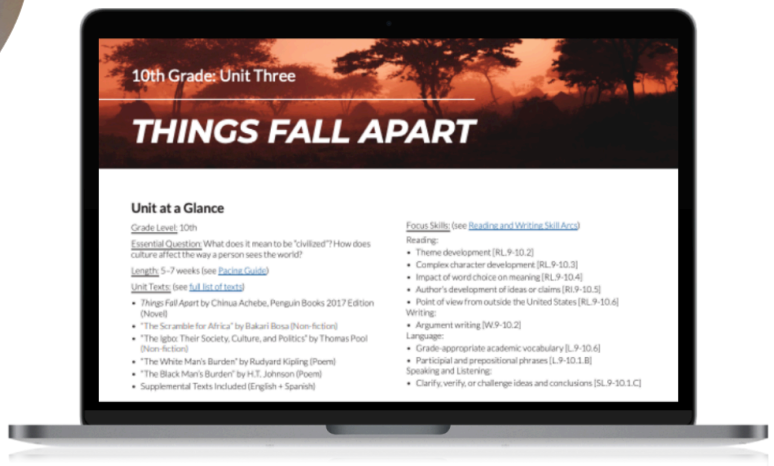
Unit 4: The Fashion Industry: Past to Present

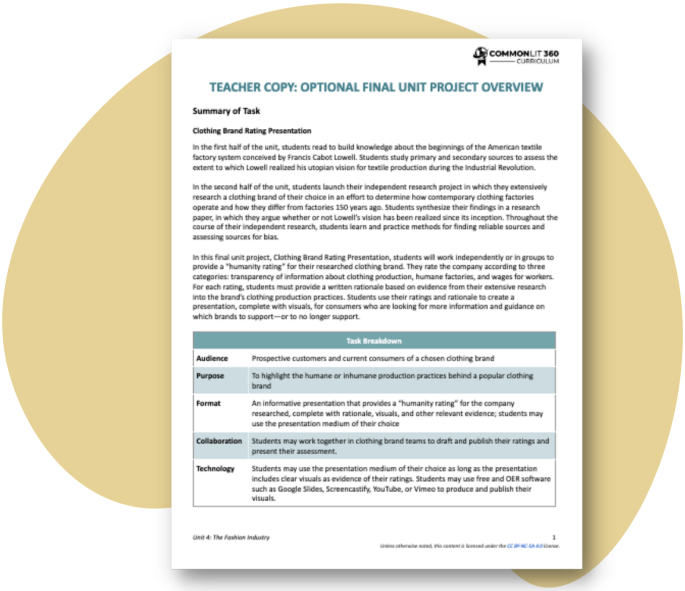
Research

Most tenth graders are into fashion and shoes, but do they know how their clothes are made or even who envisioned textile factories to begin with? In this unit, students will read five primary source documents and two nonfiction articles that explore early American factories: the vision, the people who worked there, and the legacy.

By the end of this 360 unit, students should be able to produce a research paper in which they address a research question on the vision behind textile factories and whether it has been realized.

The unit also includes an optional student-led project, which asks students to give their researched clothing brand a "humanity rating."



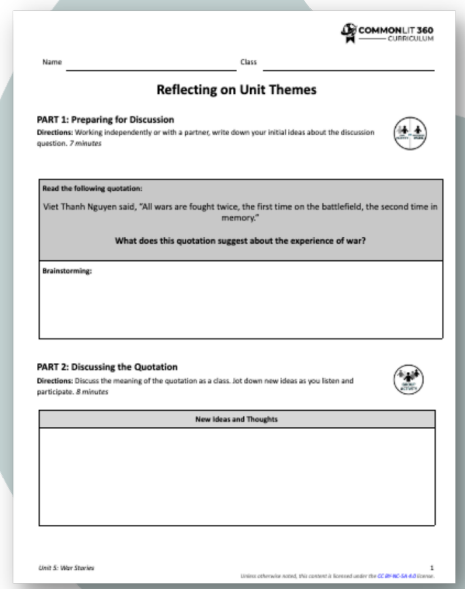


Unit 5: War Stories

Thematic

Throughout the unit, students read about conflicts such as the American Civil War to the Vietnam War from both combatant and civilian perspectives. Students gain an understanding of the experience of war and what people carry with them after leaving a war zone.

By the end of the unit, students should be able to use evidence from the unit's literary and informational stories to analyze the importance of war stories and the ways that the events of war live on long after a war officially ends.



Name _____ Class _____

Reflecting on Unit Themes

PART 1: Preparing for Discussion

Directions: Working independently or with a partner, write down your initial ideas about the discussion question. *7 minutes*

Read the following quotation:

Viet Thanh Nguyen said, "All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory."

What does this quotation suggest about the experience of war?

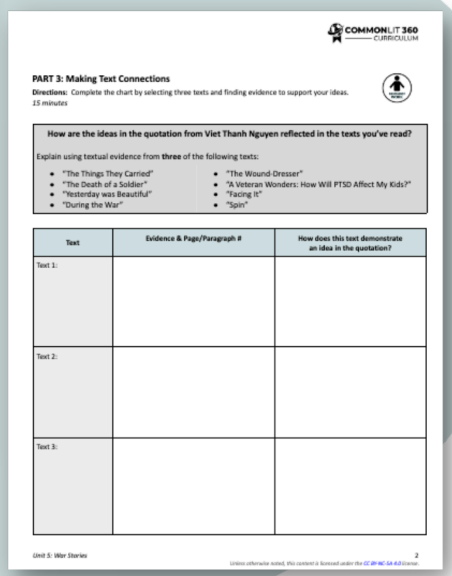
Brainstorming:

PART 2: Discussing the Quotation

Directions: Discuss the meaning of the quotation as a class. Jot down new ideas as you listen and participate. *8 minutes*

New Ideas and Thoughts

Unit 5: War Stories 1



PART 3: Making Text Connections

Directions: Complete the chart by selecting three texts and finding evidence to support your ideas. *15 minutes*

How are the ideas in the quotation from Viet Thanh Nguyen reflected in the texts you've read?

Explain using textual evidence from **three** of the following texts:

- "The Things They Carried"
- "The Death of a Soldier"
- "Yesterday was Beautiful"
- "During the War"
- "The Wound-Dresser"
- "A Veteran Wonders: How Will PTSD Affect My Kids?"
- "Facing It"
- "Spin"

Text	Evidence & Page/Paragraph #	How does this text demonstrate an idea in the quotation?
Text 1:		
Text 2:		
Text 3:		

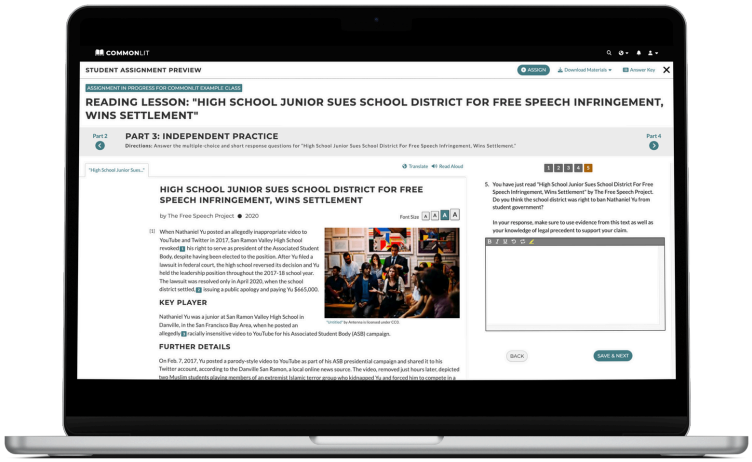
Unit 5: War Stories 2

Unit 6: Free Speech and Social Media

Argument

This unit explores the First Amendment and the historical interpretation of students' right to free speech at school. Through informational stories and media, students build an understanding of how schools navigate students' use of social media and weigh the benefits and harm of schools punishing students' free expression.

By the end of the unit, students should be able to analyze central ideas and use evidence to create a well-reasoned argument. Students will write an essay arguing whether or not schools should be able to punish students for what they write on social media.



STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PREVIEW

READING LESSON: "HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR SUES SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR FREE SPEECH INFRINGEMENT, WINS SETTLEMENT"

PART 3: INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR SUES SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR FREE SPEECH INFRINGEMENT, WINS SETTLEMENT

KEY PLAYER

FURTHER DETAILS

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COMMONLIT 360

11th Grade Year-At-A-Glance

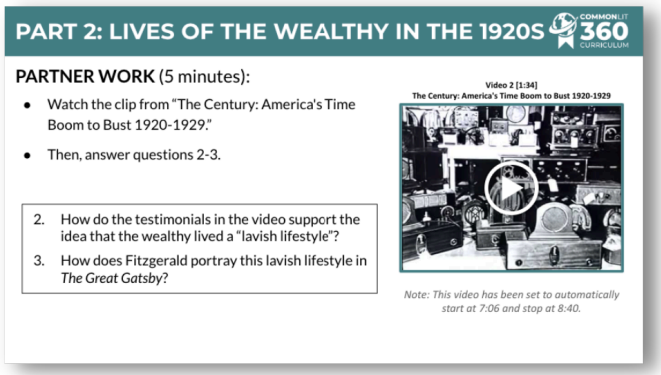
Unit 1: *The Great Gatsby*

Novel

In this novel study on *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, students will consider its literary merit and its relevance to life today.

Students will discuss themes related to the American Dream, appearance vs. reality, and the influence of wealth and social class on a person's life. They will discover the world of the 1920s through multimedia and investigate how the contemporary world resembles the past.

Students will write a book review expressing their own evaluation of *The Great Gatsby* and whether it is, indeed, great.



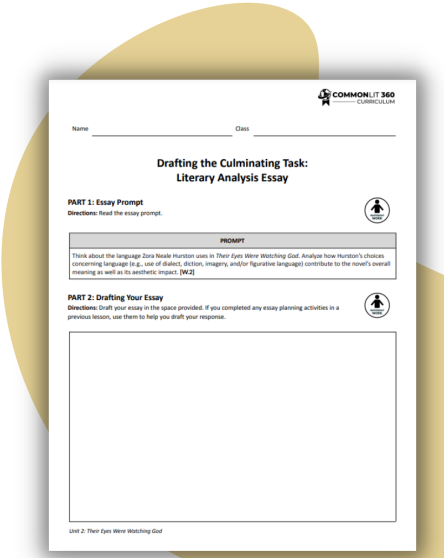
Unit 2: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

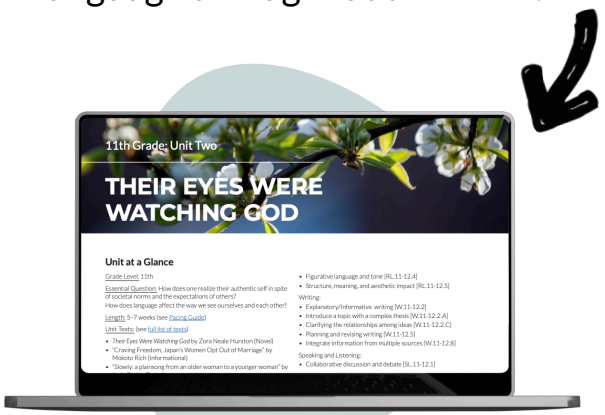
Novel

In this unit, students will engage in a novel study on *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neal Hurston. Set in rural Florida during Reconstruction, the novel follows a young Black woman named Janie on a quest for love and self-fulfillment.

Students will engage with supporting texts and related media to discuss themes related to self determination, the way language affects how people see themselves, and how societal expectations about race and gender keep people from realizing the life they want.

By the end of the unit, student will write an literary analysis essay on the impact of Hurston's uses of dialect, diction, imagery, and/or figurative language throughout the novel.





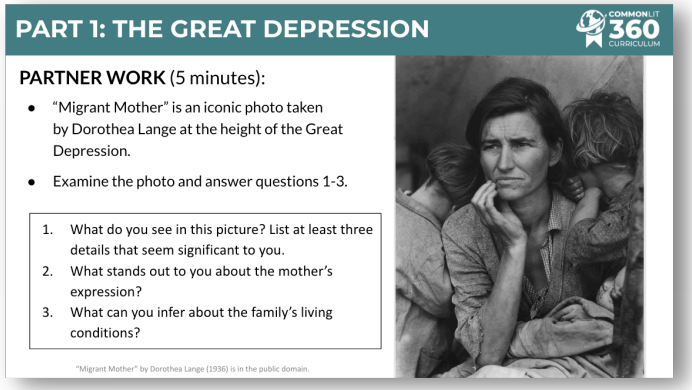
Unit 3: *The Social Contract*

Argument

This unit teaches students about the Social Contract through foundational texts from famous philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.

Students will analyze differing perspectives to expand their study of the Social Contract, reading texts by Emerson and Thoreau. Through multimedia exploration, students will apply their knowledge of the social contract to a real world example: Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal.

Writing lessons throughout the unit will prepare students for a research essay on a historical or contemporary example of defying the social contract. They will argue whether or not that defiance was justified.



PART 1: THE GREAT DEPRESSION

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PARTNER WORK (5 minutes):

- "Migrant Mother" is an iconic photo taken by Dorothea Lange at the height of the Great Depression.
- Examine the photo and answer questions 1-3.

1. What do you see in this picture? List at least three details that seem significant to you.
2. What stands out to you about the mother's expression?
3. What can you infer about the family's living conditions?

"Migrant Mother" by Dorothea Lange (1936) is in the public domain.

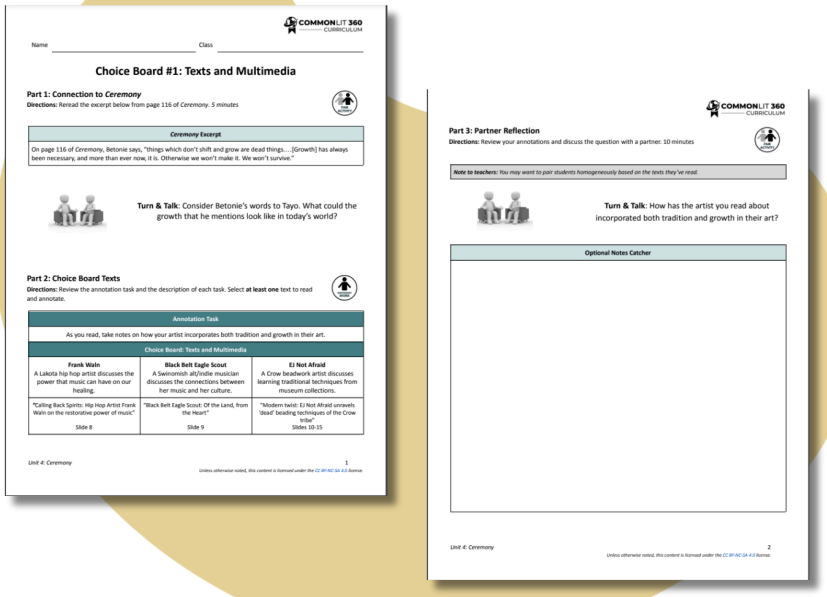
Unit 4: *Ceremony*

Novel

In this unit, students will read the classic novel *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko to consider how individual dreams and collective survival can be in tension with each other.

Related media, supplemental texts, and choice board activities throughout the unit will help students build background knowledge about Indigenous beliefs and customs as well as dive deeper into the unit's central themes about issues facing contemporary Indigenous communities.

At the end of the unit, students will write a memorandum about the impact of uranium mining and trinity testing in New Mexico and recommend follow up steps for the government to take.



COMMONLIT 360 CURRICULUM

Name _____ Class _____

Choice Board #1: Texts and Multimedia

Part 1: Connection to *Ceremony*

Directions: Reread the excerpt below from page 116 of *Ceremony*. *5 minutes*

Ceremony Excerpt
On page 116 of *Ceremony*, Betonie says, "things which don't shift and grow are dead things….[Growth] has always been necessary, and more than ever now, it is. Otherwise we won't make it. We won't survive."

Turn & Talk: Consider Betonie's words to Tayo. What could the growth that he mentions look like in today's world?

Part 2: Choice Board Texts

Directions: Review the annotation task and the description of each task. Select **at least one** text to read and annotate.

Annotation Task		
As you read, take notes on how your artist incorporates both tradition and growth in their art.		
Choice Board: Texts and Multimedia		
Frank Waln A Lakota hip hop artist discusses the power that music can have on our healing.	**Black Belt Eagle Scout** A Swinomish alt/indie musician discusses the connections between her music and her culture.	**EJ Not Afraid** A Crow beadwork artist discusses learning traditional techniques from museum collections.
"Calling Back Spirits: Hip Hop Artist Frank Waln on the restorative power of music" Slide 8	"Black Belt Eagle Scout: Of the Land, from the Heart" Slide 9	"Modern twist: EJ Not Afraid unravels 'dead' beading techniques of the Crow tribe" Slides 10-15

Unit 4: Ceremony 1

COMMONLIT 360 CURRICULUM

Part 3: Partner Reflection

Directions: Review your annotations and discuss the question with a partner. 10 minutes

Note to teachers: *You may want to pair students homogeneously based on the texts they've read.*

Turn & Talk: How has the artist you read about incorporated both tradition and growth in their art?

Optional Notes Catcher

Unit 4: Ceremony 2

Unit 5: *The Crucible* — Drama

or

Unit 5: *Just Mercy* — Novel

In this unit, students will read the classic American drama *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. They will analyze government's impact on its citizens and how certain mindsets can influence people to turn against one another.

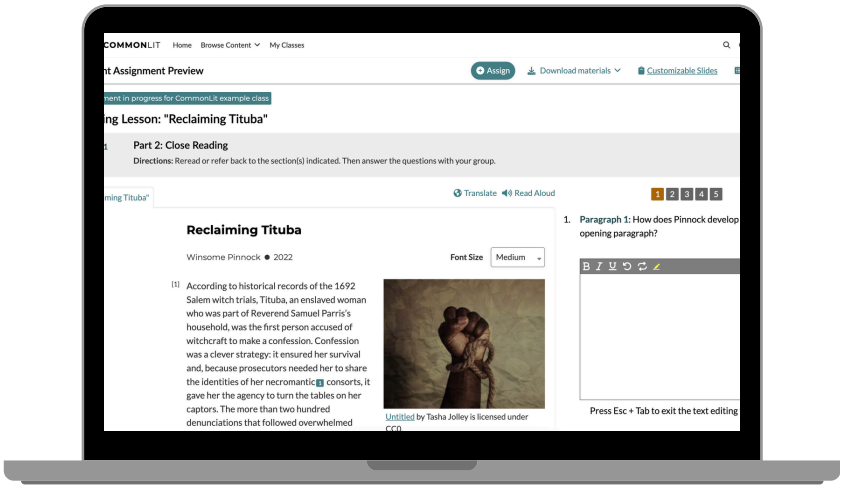
Students will engage with additional texts such as poems and speeches, as well as Related Media Explorations and narrative prompts, to build background knowledge in areas like government corruption, fear, hysteria, and the choice between integrity and safety.

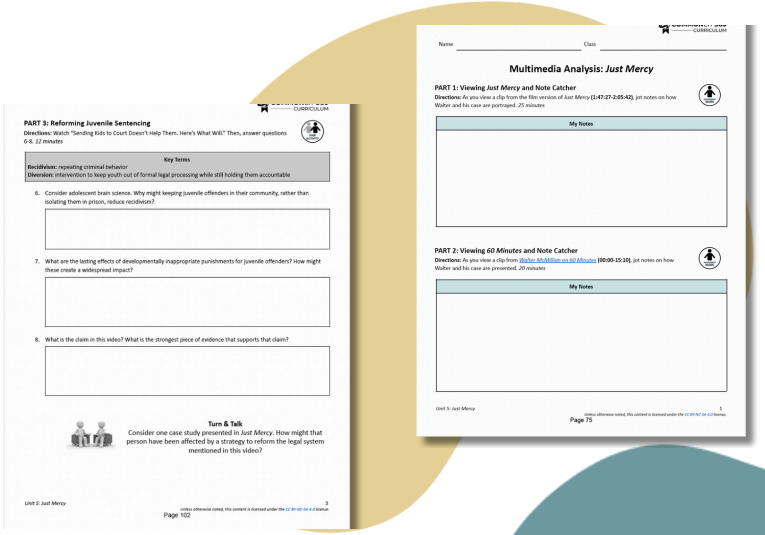
To close the unit, students will work with a partner to create an effective argumentative presentation that demonstrates how the classic themes of *The Crucible* present themselves in today's society.

This unit explores civil rights attorney Bryan Stevenson's nonfiction book *Just Mercy*. Students will learn how to evaluate arguments by analyzing Stevenson's claims about the American legal system.

Throughout the unit, students will explore various types of media, including a news broadcast and film, in order to have rich discussions related to compassion, mercy, and the lasting effects of injustice on individuals and their communities.

The unit ends with an argumentative presentation in which students work with a partner to compare two state laws and determine which they think will lead to better outcomes for the community.





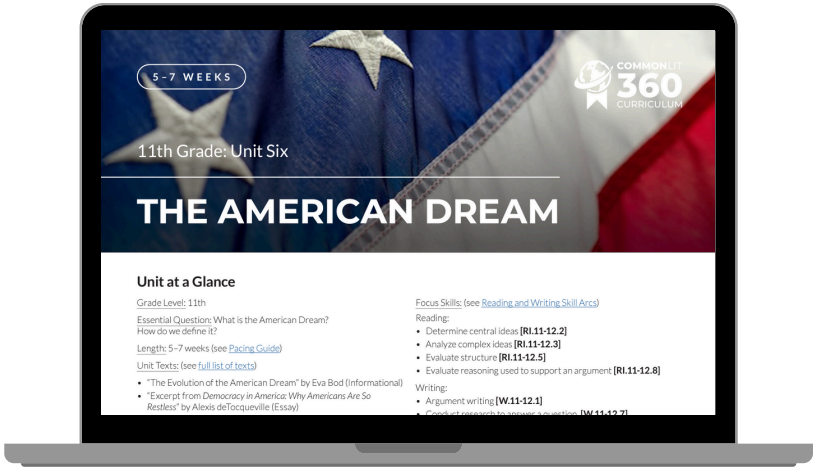
Unit 6: *The American Dream*

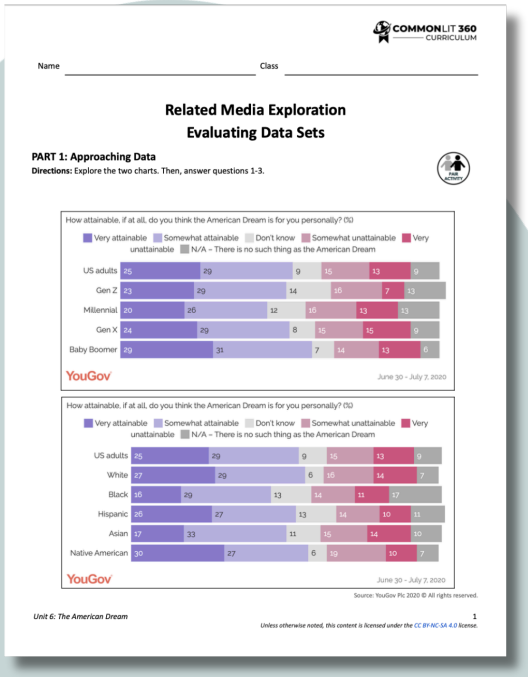
Argument

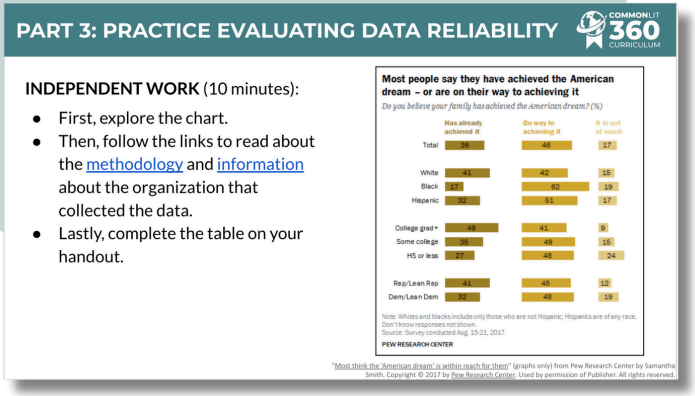
Throughout this unit, students will analyze texts and data sets that explore various perspectives about the American Dream. These materials will challenge students to consider how we define the American Dream.

To prepare for independent research at the end of the unit, students will engage with a Related Media Exploration that will deepen their understanding of the process of collecting and evaluating data. Ultimately, students will research a topic of their choice related to the American Dream and collect strong evidence to support their opinion.

By the end of the unit, students will write an editorial that brings together all of their research to convey their opinion on the American Dream.







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COMMONLIT 360

12th Grade Year-At-A-Glance

Unit 1: Memoirs and College Essays

Thematic

Students learn how to write memoirs that can also serve as application essays that capture their personal stories. Students first read engaging memoirs and consider how important moments, people, and places shape who we are and teach us important life lessons. They also read model student application essays to understand how writers can use a variety of techniques to promote their best traits.

As students move through the writing process, they will strengthen their narrative writing skills and learn techniques to structure their writing, incorporate voice, and address a specific audience. Students produce memoirs and application essays that they can use beyond the classroom.



Unit 2: *Frankenstein*

Novel

Students read the classic 19th century novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and consider how its themes continue to resonate. Students analyze and discuss the novel's themes about the dangers of unquestioned scientific advancement and the harmful outcomes of having too much ambition. They also explore themes about the nature of human progress and humanity's ongoing quest for knowledge.

The unit culminates in a research project in which students connect the novel's thematic ideas to contemporary scientific concerns.

RESEARCH PROMPT

COMMONLIT 360 CURRICULUM

Frankenstein centers around the ambition to move humanity towards greater scientific development. Today, scientific advancements are happening at a record pace. We know the benefits, but what about the costs?

Research a contemporary example of the ignored or unintended consequences of our quest for scientific advancement. Use this research and your knowledge of Shelley's novel to present *Frankenstein*'s most dire message for modern society.

Be sure to include:

- descriptions of the scientific advancement
- how this advancement was intended to improve people's lives
- unintended consequences of this advancement
- how it furthers our understanding of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Unit 3: *Othello*

Drama

Students will read Shakespeare's Othello and consider the imperfections of humanity and the corrosive nature of jealousy. From Iago's masterful villainy to Othello's tragic fall, students are immersed in the world of Othello, where appearances are not reality, love turns to hatred, and accusations lead to disastrous outcomes.

In the Related Media Exploration, students learn key cultural background information about the accomplishments and history of the Moors. Students will read poetry and nonfiction about why people become envious and how it affects them.

They will learn a new way to cite evidence, analyze literary criticism to deepen their understanding of Othello, and incorporate that criticism into their own evaluations of the play's merit and relevance.



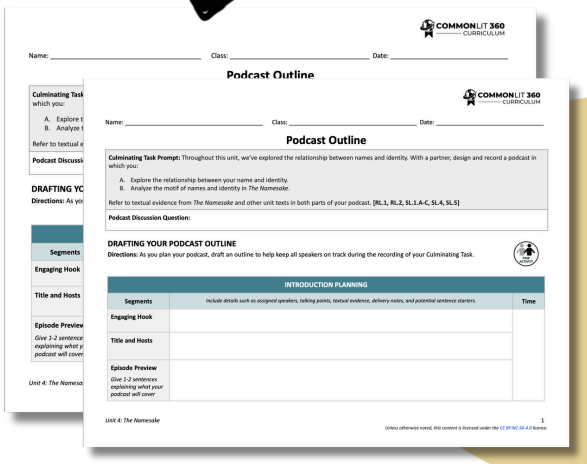
Unit 4: *The Namesake*

Novel

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri is a moving story about family and culture that will challenge students to consider the power that names have in shaping identity.

Throughout the unit, students will read additional short texts to examine topics such as immigration, generational conflict, relationships, and identity. Students will also have the opportunity to explore naming conventions in other cultures and the history of their own names through a Related Media Exploration.

At the end of the unit, students will demonstrate their understanding of the novel and unit themes by planning and presenting a podcast episode where they analyze the role of names within *The Namesake* and their own lives.





Unit 5: *The Stranger*

Novel

In this novel study, students will read Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, a 20th century classic that grapples with questions of social acceptance and life's purpose. Students will also consider how people make meaning in their lives.

Through a Related Media Exploration, students will explore ways people derive meaning from art and dig deeper into *The Stranger's* historical and cultural contexts, including Camus's absurdist philosophy. The unit's short stories and poems contrast with the novel, presenting diverging themes and perspectives on the meaning of life.

Students will conclude the unit by writing a cross-textual literary analysis essay comparing how two central characters navigate their relationships to society.

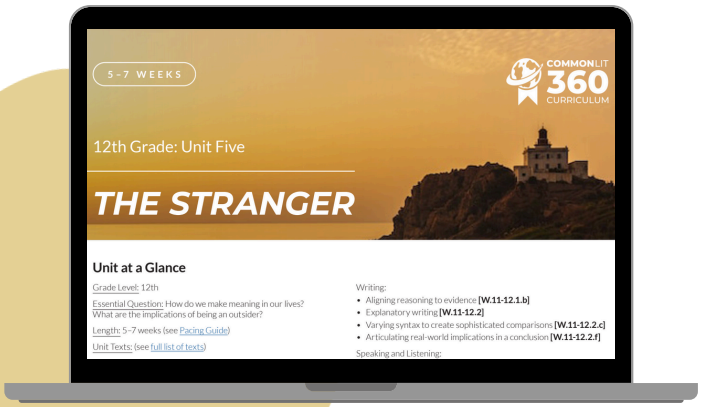
Unit 6: Balancing Connection and Solitude

Argument

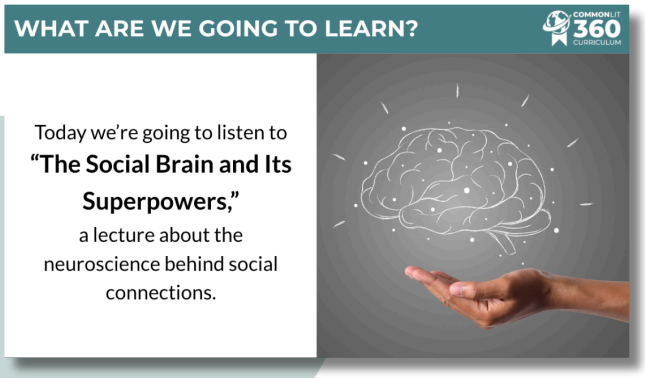
Throughout this unit, students will explore a collection of essays and a lecture to discover different perspectives on connection and solitude.

The unit includes data and related media on the consequences of isolation and constant connection. Students will probe further into why people seek out both connection and seclusion. As they examine these concepts, students will strengthen their reading, research, and argumentative writing skills.

At the end of the unit, students will apply these skills to a research project exploring their own perspectives on community and solitude. Students will share their findings through an argumentative essay or presentation.







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- Chelsea H., FL, 7th Grade ELA





"It has helped me to know exactly how to teach each standard and leaves me confident at the end of the year that I have taught every standard that students will be tested on."

- Hannah W., TN, 10th Grade ELA