

DREAM OF A NATION

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12th Grade Common Core Alignment Writing Interdisciplinary Essay

Writing analytic essays are a necessary skill for higher education and which secondary students should begin to build. This unit plan gives teachers tools to aid students in furthering their analytic writing skills by building upon the basic structure of a five-paragraph essay. This unit requires students to synthesize information from two disciplines (Literature and Current Events) and formulate a thesis which is interdisciplinary in nature. In this unit students will read literature and informational texts, develop an original thesis statement and edit their work. This unit plan provides easy rubrics for teacher evaluation of student work.

This process is aligned to English Language Arts Common Core Standards for 11-12th grade and utilizes the rich resource of *Dream of a Nation*. *Dream of a Nation* is a high Lexile level (1340), non-fiction text which aptly supports the Common Core emphasis on text range, quality and complexity. The standards addressed are the following:

Common Core Reading Literature:

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 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. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2 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.

Common Core Information Reading Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Common Core Writing Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2a Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2b Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2c Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of

the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2e Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2f Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Common Core Language Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1a Use parallel structure.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1b Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2a Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2b Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2c Spell correctly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3a Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (e.g., *MLA Handbook*, *Turabian's Manual for Writers*) appropriate for the discipline and writing type.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.6 Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will gain understanding of a topic related to a current social, political, environmental or economic issue found in *Dream of a Nation* articles and related to literary readings.
- Students will read a classic, American novel and discuss the books as they read in small groups with other students.
- Students will craft an original thesis statement, interdisciplinary in nature, which addresses the connection between literature and historical and contemporary events and issues. They will complete an outline prior to writing and will edit multiple drafts of their essay, as well as their peers essays, prior to submitting a final, polished essay for evaluation.

Teacher Planning:

This is a unit plan. Depending on length of class time and student reading and writing ability this unit can take from five to seven weeks. Students should read these books and articles in Literature/ Inquiry groups. This method—of student selected and student led reading groups—is usually found in the lower grades.

However, this style of student initiated learning works well with older students. Students can choose their own text—which increases engagement. Teachers facilitate rather than lead student discussions, therefore enabling greater student responsibility in learning—a skill they need to be successful in college and in their professional lives. It also means that teachers do not need class sets of books. Literature circles should have between three and six students in each group. Teachers can get copies of multiple books from school and

public libraries. Students do not need to take on the traditional “jobs” of literature and inquiry circles. Rather, they can answer questions and discuss the book informally with each other during each meeting. Ideally, these meetings should take place for twenty to thirty minutes each class period. This enables students to move through the books at a pace which is engaging. To implement this unit plan teachers need to have familiarity with [this strategy](#).

Unit Plan: Interdisciplinary Essay Writing using *Dream of a Nation* and Classic American Texts

1. Reading

Students need to read one classic American text and several articles from *Dream of a Nation* which correspond to the topics raised in the book. Students can either read the literature and articles in tandem or interspersed. Below is a list of possible suggestions for text and article alignment. The literary texts are hyperlinked to reading guides which teachers can use to facilitate literature circle groups for each text. If a text is not highlighted there are no free teaching guides but teaching guides can be purchased.

[The Grapes of Wrath](#) John Steinbeck

Creating Food Security, Improving Health, Creating Community Chap. 10
The Next Generation of Family Farming Chap. 10
Building Prosperity from the Ground Up Chap. 8
Lighting the Way to a New Economy Chap. 3

[The Jungle](#) Upton Sinclair

Creating Food Security, Improving Health, Creating Community Chap. 10
The Next Generation of Family Farming Chap. 10
Immigrants in America: Common Values, Common Dreams Chap. 10
The Rise of the Conscientious Consumer Chap. 9
Ending Poverty in America Chap. 8
Building a “We” Economy Chap. 3

[Nickel and Dimed](#) Barbara Ehrenreich

Reallocating Military Spending, Taking Care of Soldiers and Increasing National Security Chap. 11
Building Prosperity from the Ground Up Chap. 8
Ending Poverty in America Chap. 8
Tackling the Profit Problem in Healthcare Chap. 7
Real World Models for Creating Stability Chap. 3
Building a “We” Economy Chap. 3
Citizens Strengthening Democracy Chap. 1

[Native Son](#) Richard Wright

Transforming Urban Injustice into Beauty and Empowerment Chap. 10
Reforming Prisons, Saving Billions, Creating Opportunity Chap. 10
Building Prosperity from the Ground Up Chap. 8
Ending Poverty in America Chap. 8
Fair School Funding and Equal Opportunities Chap. 5

[The Things They Carried](#) Tim O’Brien

Reallocating Military Spending, Taking Care of Soldiers and Increasing National Security Chap. 11
War and Ending it Chap. 11
Establishing a US Department of Peace Chap. 11
0.7% of Wealth: A Small Price to End Global Extreme Poverty Chap. 8
Media: A Tool for Strengthening Democracy Chap. 4

Making Coverage Count Chap. 4
Redefining Security for Strong Communities and a Safer World Chap. 1

Winesburg, Ohio Sherman Anderson

We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For Closing
Everyone a Changemaker Chap. 12
Envisioning an Inclusive World Chap. 10
Building Prosperity from the Ground Up Chap. 8
Ending Poverty in America Chap. 8
A U-Turn on Transportation Chap. 6
Citizen Empowerment through Journalism Chap. 5
The Power of Young People to Change the World Chap. 2

Coming of Age in Mississippi Anne Moody

Reforming Prisons, Saving Billions, Creating Opportunity Chap. 10
Building Prosperity from the Ground Up Chap. 8
Ending Poverty in America Chap. 8
Fair School Funding and Equal Opportunities Chap. 5
Making Education Work for All Students Chap. 5
Citizen Empowerment through Journalism Chap. 4

Catch 22 Joseph Heller

Reallocating Military Spending, Taking Care of Soldiers and Increasing National Security Chap. 11
War and Ending it Chap. 11
Establishing a US Department of Peace Chap. 11
0.7% of Wealth: A Small Price to End Global Extreme Poverty Chap. 8
Media: A Tool for Strengthening Democracy Chap. 4
Making Coverage Count Chap. 4
Redefining Security for Strong Communities and a Safer World Chap. 1
Citizens Strengthening Democracy Chap. 1

Walden Henry David Thoreau

Chapter 2: Citizen Stewardship
Focusing on Solutions Chap. 4
A Blue print for a Clean-Energy Economy Chap. 6
Avoiding the Dangers of Toxic Exposure Chap. 7
Creating Food Security, Improving Health, Creating Community Chap. 10
The Next Generation of Family Farming Chap. 10

Self-Reliance Ralph Waldo Emerson (Shorter work for slower readers)

We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For Closing
Everyone a Changemaker Chap. 12
Envisioning an Inclusive World Chap. 10
Transforming Injustice into Beauty and Empowerment Chap. 10
The Rise of the Contentious Consumer Chap. 9
Citizen Empowerment through Journalism Chap. 4
Citizens Shaping Their World Chap. 2
Citizens Strengthening Democracy Chap. 2

Beloved Toni Morrison

We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For Closing
Reforming Prisons, Saving Billions, Creating Opportunity Chap. 10

Ending Poverty in America Chap. 8
Fair School Funding and Equal Opportunities Chap. 5
Making Education Work for All Students Chap. 5
Helping Others: Finding the Will and the Way Chap. 2
Redefining Security for Strong Communities and a Safer World Chap. 1

Fahrenheit 451 Ray Bradbury

Dreaming the Future Can Create the Future Chap. 12
Reallocating Military Spending, Taking Care of Soldiers and Increasing National Security Chap. 11
War and Ending it Chap. 11
Establishing a US Department of Peace Chap. 11
The Rise of the Contentious Consumer Chap. 9
Citizen Empowerment through Journalism Chap. 4
Citizens Shaping Their World Chap. 2
Citizens Strengthening Democracy Chap. 2

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Sherman Alexie (Text appropriate for lower level readers)

Chapter 5: Aiming for the Best in Education
Reforming Prisons, Saving Billions, Creating Opportunity Chap. 10
Building Prosperity from the Ground Up Chap. 8
Ending Poverty in America Chap. 8
Redefining Security for Strong Communities and a Safer World Chap. 1
Citizens Strengthening Democracy Chap. 1

When the Emperor Was Divine Julie Otsuka

Reallocating Military Spending, Taking Care of Soldiers and Increasing National Security Chap. 11
War and Ending it Chap. 11
Establishing a US Department of Peace Chap. 11
Envisioning an Inclusive World Chap. 10
Citizen Empowerment through Journalism Chap. 4
Media: A Tool for Strengthening Democracy Chap. 4
Making Coverage Count Chap. 4
Redefining Security for Strong Communities and a Safer World Chap. 1
Citizens Strengthening Democracy Chap. 1

2. Developing an Interdisciplinary a Thesis

Students should understand that a thesis is their interpretation of an idea. Give students some example theses:

Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, introduced to many Northerners the quotidian evils of living as a slave and helped to grow the abolitionist movement in the North.

Students should understand a thesis is a claim that they make that others could argue against and their purpose in writing is to defend their claim using facts. In order to help students write a strong thesis they first have to choose a theme from their novel and connect it to a current issue found in *Dream of a Nation*. This process should be modeled to the class prior to students writing their own. Some potential connections could be:

- The legacy of racism and slavery and the prison industrial complex (Native Son)
- Public Debate and Democracy (Fahrenheit 451)

- Education as potentially enabling or defeating (Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian)
- Civilization and Devaluation of the Natural World (Walden)
- Isolation and Modern Society (Winesburg, Ohio)
- Agribusiness and Food Security (The Jungle)
- Capitalism and Economic Equality (The Grapes of Wrath)

Once they have this information they can use this thesis generator to help them construct a thesis:

<http://johnmgarvey.com/apworld/student/thesiscreator.html>

3. Gather References

Once students have a solid thesis to guide their reading. Have them take notes on their article(s) and novels. Use the Trash or Treasure method of note taking instruction:

<http://mrjhlbrary.pbworks.com/f/Reading+for+Information+T+%26+T+note+taking+jansen.pdf> They should organize the information they take down on the [Essay Outline handout](#). Coach them to only write down information which directly supports their thesis. To cite their sources use <http://www.easybib.com/> or, Purdue Owl. For a lesson on understanding citations and plagiarism: <http://www.copyrightkids.org/>

4. Writing, Editing and Revising

After students have written their essay have them first, review their own work using the [Essay Self-Review Handout](#). Coach them to read their essays aloud to themselves as this will help them catch the most obvious mistakes. After they have revised their own work, have them pair up and review a partner's essay using the [Peer Review Handout](#). Once they think they're done have them go through the [Revising and Editing Guide Handout](#) and highlight the necessary components.

5. Evaluation

Use the [Essay Rubric](#) for evaluation of student work. Partial points can be awarded for each category. Make a bulletin board of student essays to celebrate their skills.

Please send *Dream of a Nation* examples of your students' finished essays and suggestions for improvement of our Unit Plan. We appreciate your feedback and insights.