

Unit #7: Overcoming Our Obstacles

Language Arts 8

Mr. Coia

Name: _____ Period: _____

Mon 1/26 (Tues 1/27)

- Write 1: *New Yorker* Captions
- Website/rules review
- Parent-student conferences
- Writing Portfolios
- Reading Logs
- Literature Circle groups

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Wed 1/28 (Thurs 1/29)

- Setting up for Lit Circles
- Assign roles within groups
- Lit Circles #1
 - 20 min reading
 - 20 min role work
 - 20 min discussion/workshop

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Fri 1/30 (Mon 2/2)

- Poem: "Sympathy"
- Lesson on marking a text
- Write 2: After our study of the poem, answer this in a paragraph: Why does a caged bird sing?
- Conversation Roundtable
- Watch: *Piece by Piece* (15 min)
- How does the cube act as a symbol for overcoming obstacles?

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Tues 2/3 (Wed 2/4)

- Root Words 1-70 quiz
- Sent. Comp 16.1 (MLK)
- Poem: "Mother to Son" (IR 76)
- Write 3: "Son to Mother" version of the poem

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Thurs 2/5 (Fri 2/6)

- Lit Circles #2 20/20/20
- Write 4: In a paragraph, describe your bedroom in concrete terms
- Sent. Comp. 18.2

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Mon 2/9 (Tues 2/10)

- Root Words 1-80 quiz
- Lesson: Writing a paragraph (EOW 62-71). Exercises 1 & 2
- Write 5: A paragraph about the obstacles that you face in your life. Underline your topic sentence.

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Wed 2/11 (Thurs 2/12)

- Reading Log work in IC
 - type books, Reading Counts, evidence
- Lit Circles #3 20/20/20

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Fri 2/13 (Tues 2/17)

- Poem: "Speech to the Young" (IR 76)
- Repetition
- Write 6: Life Takes Visa

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Wed 2/18 (Thurs 2/19)

- Root Word Quiz 1-90
- Lit Circles #4 20/20/20

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Fri 2/20 (Mon 2/23)

- Poem: "A Man" (LOL 434)
- Charting Themes sheet
- Write 7: TV Episode Titles

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Tues 2/24 (Wed 2/25)

- Root Word Quiz 1-100
- Lit Circles #5 20/20/20

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Thurs 2/26 (Fri 2/27)

- **Reading Log Turn in (15 books)**
- Watch: *Invisible Children*
- T Notes
- Write 8: Paragraph summarizing the plight of these children, and your thoughts about it. Underline topic sentence.
- Turn in Composition books for grading

HW: Read; reading log; root word work

Mon 3/2 (Tues 3/3)

- Lit Circle Reflection
- Poetry Mash-up Writing

Wed 3/4 (Thurs 3/5)

- Terra Nova Prep Work
- Bring root word cards (no quiz)

Unit Assignments:

Root word quizzes:	30 points
Poem Work:	20 points
Sentence Composition	20 points
Reading Log	20 points
8 Write Exercises	40 points
Lit Circles work	50 points
Lit Circles participation	25 points
Micro-Writing	20 points

Assignment Descriptions**Literature Circles**

This unit will be the premiere of Literature Circles, a small group study on a choice book. Your group will choose one book to work on together throughout February. We are working on non-fiction works to read, discuss, and write about. Each participant will rotate through these roles during the five sessions:

- Discussion Director
- Illuminator
- Illustrator
- Connector
- Word Watcher
- Summarizer

The structure will be in a 20/20/20 format. **20 minutes to read, 20 minutes to work on discussion preparation** for your daily role, **20 minutes to discuss the text.** In addition, I will be working with each group on close-reading skills to ensure all students are progressing in reading. Most students find that these "mini book clubs" are not only a chance to improve reading skills, but that they are also a fun way to get involved in an academic book discussion that whole-class talks can't provide.

For these to work, you must do your part in both the reading and the discussing. In-class participation is graded this unit to assess the DoDEA standards. You must be present in these Literature Circles to receive participation points. If you are absent, you **MUST** come in between classes to catch up on your reading and complete a make-up writing assignment.

While most will complete the reading during class, all are welcome to come in during Seminar, lunch, and Monday tutorials to catch up on reading if needed. Unfortunately, these books cannot go home since all classes use them. You may want to order a copy from Amazon.

Poetry

We will read and study four poems that relate to our unit theme, "Overcoming Our Obstacles":

- "Sympathy" by Paul Lawrence Dunbar
- "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes
- "Speech to the Young/Speech to the Progress-Toward" by Gwendolyn Brooks
- "A Man" by Nina Cassian

Writing Opportunities

We will continue to work on improving our sentences and paragraph writing through 8 different writing opportunities. Included are three new micro-writing creative assignments.

Film

We will watch two short films that connect to our theme on obstacles. *Piece by Piece* and *Invisible Children* are about issues light years apart from each other, but we will use them both to deepen our understanding of our theme of study.

Root Word Study

We will continue our vocabulary acquisition for this class by studying root words, one of the best ways to learn meanings of words. This will help you in school, on your SATs, in college, and even on crossword puzzles!

Each week, we will review a group of roots. You will do the following after our study:

- Create flash cards, one per word or word group
- On the front, include the root(s), and the number
- On the back, include the meaning of the root and three examples of words that use the root
- Be sure that it is neat and clear. You may want to add color to assist in memorizing
- You may want to create the entire set at once, so you can spend your time studying, not creating
- You will remember these for life...I can guarantee it!

Reading Log

You will continue towards the DoDEA goal of 25 books per year by reading up to 15 books by our next checkpoint on **Thurs 2/26 (Fri 2/27)**. This time, you will have to type your Reading Log. Include the same books and evidence already listed, but this time save it to your H: drive for easy access.

Micro-Writing Assignments

In case you forgot: these are short writing assignments used to test your creativity and originality. These can be used as evidence for future reading log books.

Write 1: New Yorker Cartoons

Each week, The New Yorker magazine posts a cartoon and solicits possible captions from readers. We will look at two or three and try a few of our own.

Write 6: Life Takes Visa

This is a slight variance to the American Expression assignment we completed early in the year. Following the ad campaign from Visa, we will create a list of 15 things to do while you are alive. Notice from the examples that these all begin with active verbs (like our directions from the character recipes). Make this not goals just for this year, but activities and dreams to do sometime in the next 80 years. Use vivid verbs and concrete details. Dream big!

Write 7: TV Episode Titles

Every TV show names each of its episode titles that match an aspect in the story. For this assignment, you will pretend that you have a DVD collection of a famous television show named either *Lester Middle School*, **or** *Mr. Coia's Language Arts Class*, **or** *The 8th Grade Life in Okinawa*, and you will create the names of ten episodes of that series. The titles should give the potential viewer information on what that episode will contain. Instead of calling one "School" or "Lunch," try "Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, and Detention." Make these fun and interesting episodes that would make you want to watch them if it were a real show.

Look up the titles of your favorite TV show. Some follow a naming convention:

Seinfeld: Each episode starts with "The"

Friends: Each title begins with "The One Where..."

Scrubs: Most episodes start with "My...:"

Grey's Anatomy: All episode titles are the names of famous pop songs.

This may be something to post, so make the product pleasing to look at. Include the TV show title, 10 episode titles, and a picture that relates to the show. Typed, of course.

Write

Content Standards for the "Overcoming Our Obstacles" Unit

E1 Reading

E1a: The student reads at least twenty-five books or book equivalents each year.

E1b.1: makes and supports warranted and responsible assertions about the texts;

E1b.3: draws the text together to compare and contrast themes, characters, and ideas;

E1c.3: extends ideas;

E1c.4: makes connections to related topics or information.

E2 Writing

E2a: The student produces a report that:

E2a.2: develops a controlling idea that conveys a perspective on the subject;

E2a.3: creates an organizing structure appropriate to a specific purpose, audience and context;

E2a.4: includes appropriate facts and details;

E2a.5: excludes extraneous and inappropriate information;

E3 Speaking

E3b: The student participates in group meetings, in which the student:

E3b.1: displays appropriate turn-taking behaviors;

E3b.2: actively solicits another person's comment or opinion;

E3b.3: offers own opinion forcefully without dominating;

E3b.4: responds appropriately to comments and questions;

E3b.5: volunteers contributions and responds when directly solicited by teacher or discussion leader;

E3c: The student prepares and delivers an individual presentation in which the student:

E3c.1: shapes information to achieve a particular purpose and to appeal to the interests and background knowledge of audience members;

E3c.3: uses notes or other memory aids to structure the presentation;

E4 Conventions

E4a: The student demonstrates control of:

E4a.2: paragraph structure;

E4a.4: sentence construction;

E4b.4: rearranging words, sentences, and paragraphs to improve or clarify meaning

E5 Literature

E5a: The student responds to non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes; that is, the student:

E5a.1: identifies recurring themes across works;

E5a.2: interprets the impact of authors' decisions regarding word choice and content, and literary elements

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Invisible Children T Notes

Obstacles in My Life

Obstacles in Their Lives

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Student Name _____ Period: _____

Dear Parent:

Your child's assignment is to show you our Grade 8 Language Arts home page, explain how it can help you to stay informed about class, and answer any question that you may have.

Thank you for taking a few moments to view our site and complete the Conference Checklist below.

Sincerely,
Ron Coia
Teacher, English Language Arts

Conference Checklist
(to be completed by parent)

___ My child showed me how to access **www.mrcoia.com**

___ He or she pointed out and explained each part of the site: a) **Handouts** (to print off extra forms if needed), b) **Homework** (to see changes made to unit guide), c) **Forum** (to see any messages from the teacher, including extra credit work)

___ He or she opened the **Study Stack** link (under Handouts) and showed how this tool is used for root word study.

___ He or she opened and explained the **GradeSpeed** link.

___ He or she opened and explained the **Reading Log** document, and that future checkpoints are to be typed

___ He or she explained how students must spend **at least 10 minutes on the site each weekend** to 1.) Check that grades are accurate, 2.) Prepare for the upcoming week, 3.) Read Forum comments

___ He or she showed me the newest copy of the unit guide, **Unit 7: Overcoming Our Obstacles**, clipped in the 3-ring binder (not stuffed in a pocket), and discussed current topic of study and assignments.

___ He or she reviewed the **class rules** together (a copy must be in the Handouts section of binder), with a special focus on policies for late work and absences.

___ He or she explained how this home page and unit guide, if viewed by student and parent together, can help the student to succeed in class and the parent to stay informed.

Thank you for helping your child with this assignment. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Parent signature _____ Date: _____

Sympathy

By Paul Laurence Dunbar

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!

When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;

5 When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing

10 Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

15 I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,

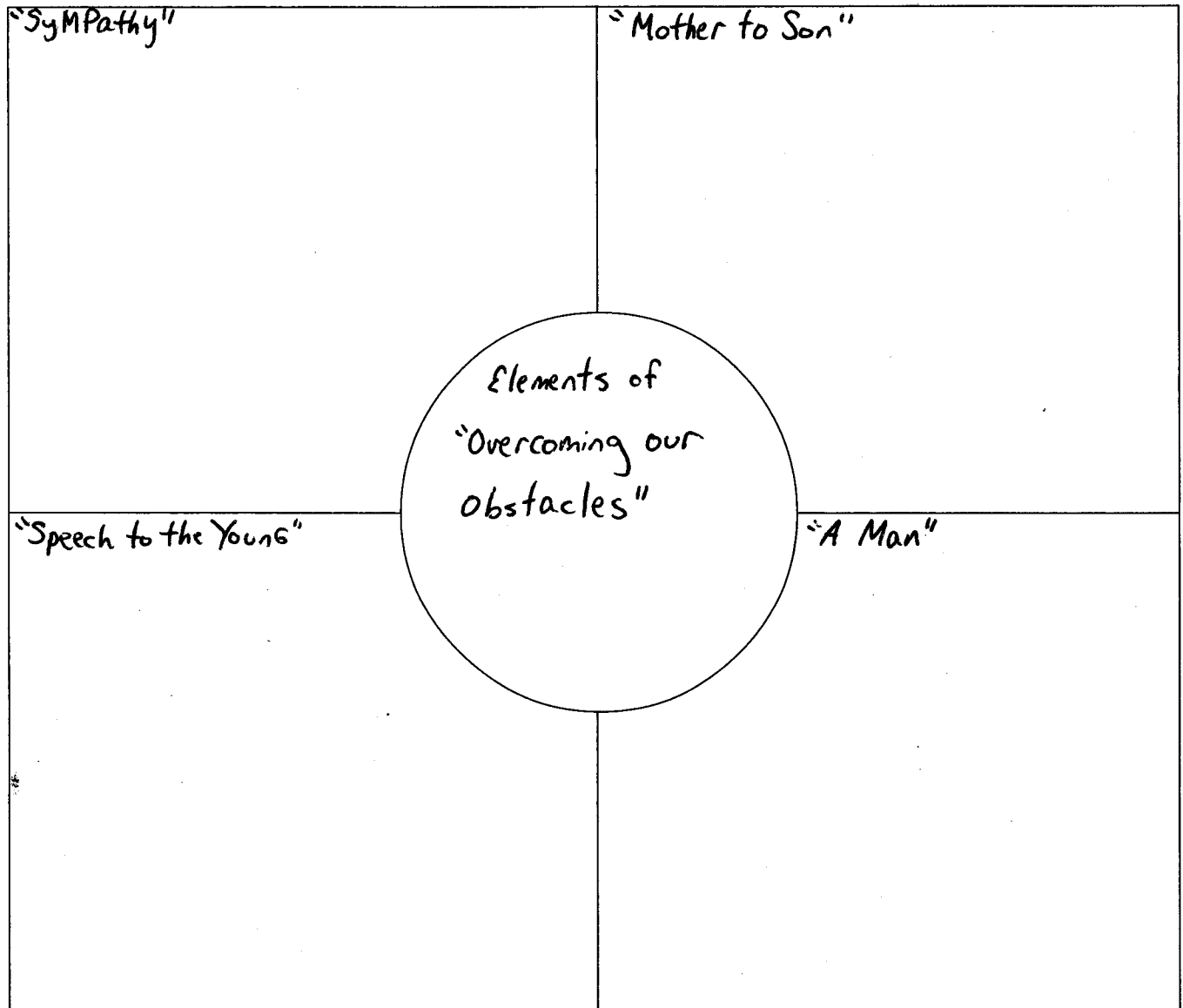
 When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
 But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
20 But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

Conversational Roundtable

Name _____ Date _____

Topic _____ Period _____

Suggestions for Use: Ask yourself what the focus of your paper, discussion, or inquiry is. Is it a character, a theme, an idea, a country, a trend, or a place? Then examine it from four different perspectives, or identify four different aspects of the topic. Once you have identified the four areas, find and list any appropriate quotations, examples, evidence, or details.



Six-Word Memoirs (Pick either two poems.)

1.

2.

1. Give elements for each poem in how it addresses theme.
2. Draw one object that is a symbol in the poem.

Titillating Long Sentences

Practice 1

The model sentence below, based on a sentence by Martin Luther King, Jr. from "Letter from Birmingham Jail," is a series of similar sentence parts beginning with *when*. Read the sentence several times to analyze the sentence parts.

Model Sentence

When you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers and drown your sisters and brothers, *when* you have seen hate-filled policemen curse and kick your black brothers and sisters, *when* you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of a wealthy society, *when* you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television and see her cry when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, *when* you take a long trip and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you, you will then understand the horror of prejudice.

Practice 2

Write an imitation of the model sentence, using, like the model, a series of sentence parts beginning with *when*. For the last sentence part, choose one of these:

1. you will then know what my life is like.
2. you will then get a good idea of what real fun is like.
3. you will then know what real success is.
4. you will then understand why success takes hard work.
5. you will then be aware of what it's like to baby-sit.

6. you will then grasp what it takes to be an athlete.
7. you will then experience real love.
8. you will then know the joy of doing your best.
9. you will then. . . . (Choose one of your own.)

Sentence Parts of Model Sentence

1. *When* you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers and drown your sisters and brothers,
2. *when* you have seen hate-filled policemen curse and kick your black brothers and sisters,
3. *when* you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of a wealthy society,
4. *when* you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television and see her cry when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children,
5. *when* you take a long trip and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you,
6. you will then understand the horror of prejudice.

Activity 18

Imitating Paragraphs (Part Two)

Practice 1

The model paragraph below, from the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, describes a bunk house where ranch workers live. Read the paragraph to prepare to write an imitation of its sentences in a paragraph of your own.

(1) Inside a long, rectangular building, the bunk house had whitewashed walls and an unpainted floor. (2) In three walls there were small, square windows, and in the fourth, a solid door with a wooden latch. (3) Against the walls were eight bunk beds, five of them made up with blankets, the other three unmade, exposing the burlap ticking on their mattresses. (4) Over each bunk there was nailed a wooden apple crate containing two wooden shelves for the personal possessions of the occupant of the bunk. (5) On these shelves were loaded little articles: soap, shaving cream, combs, brushes, razors, and medicines. (6) Near one wall there was a wood stove, its stovepipe going straight up through the ceiling. (7) In the middle of the room stood a big square table littered with playing cards, and around it were wooden apple boxes for the card players to sit on.

Practice 2

Write your own paragraph describing the interior of some place—your room at home, your classroom, a theater or sports arena, etc. Imitate the sentences in the Steinbeck paragraph, one sentence at a time. Below, those sentences are broken down into their sentence parts to help you focus on how each part is written.

- 1a. Inside a long, rectangular building,
- b. the bunk house had whitewashed walls
- c. and an unpainted floor.
- 2a. In three walls there were small, square windows,

- b. and in the fourth, a solid door with a wooden latch.
 - 3a. Against the walls were eight bunk beds,
 - b. five of them made up with blankets,
 - c. the other three unmade,
 - d. exposing the burlap ticking on their mattresses.
 - 4a. Over each bunk there was nailed a wooden apple crate
 - b. containing two wooden shelves
 - c. for the personal possessions of the occupant of the bunk.
 - 5a. On these shelves were loaded little articles:
 - b. soap, shaving cream, combs, brushes, razors, and medicir
- Hint: The verb (*were loaded*) comes before, not after the subject—a reversal of the usual pattern. Also, colons often introduce lists. Use one to introduce your list of objects, just as the model sentence does.
- 6a. Near one wall there was a wood stove,
 - b. its stovepipe going straight up through the ceiling.
 - 7a. In the middle of the room
 - b. stood a big square table
 - c. littered with playing cards,
 - d. and around it were wooden apple boxes
 - e. for the card players to sit on.

Speech to the Young / Speech to the Progress-Toward and A Man (page 434)

Strategic Reading: Literature

Charting Themes

These two poems have similar, but not identical, themes. Compare and contrast the themes—messages about life or human nature—by completing this chart. Read the statement in the first column. Think about whether the narrator of each poem would agree or disagree with the statement. Then write a reaction each narrator might have. One sample has been done for you.

Statement	Narrator of "Speech to the Young" / "Speech to the Progress-Toward"	Narrator of "A Man"
1. It is better to adapt to difficult circumstances than to struggle against them.		
2. Everything will turn out OK in the long run.	<i>No it won't—unless you do something about it.</i>	
3. It is OK to sit around and feel sorry for yourself.		
4. You shouldn't always allow the opinions of other people to affect your decisions and actions.		

Literature Circle Notes: Overview of the Roles

Discussion Director: Your role demands that you identify the important aspects of your assigned text and develop questions your group will want to discuss. Focus on the major themes or "big ideas" in the text and your reaction to those ideas. What interests you will most likely interest those in your group. You are also responsible for facilitating your group's discussion.

Sample Questions

- What were you thinking about as you read?
- What did the text make you think about?
- What do you think this text/passage was about?
- How might other people (of different backgrounds) think about this text/passage?
- What one question would you ask the writer if you got the chance? Why?
- What are the most important ideas/moments in this text/section?
- What do you think will happen next—and why?
- What was the most important change in this section? How and why did it happen?

Illuminator: You find passages your group would like to/should hear read aloud. These passages should be memorable, interesting, puzzling, funny, or *important*. Your notes should include the quotations but also why you chose them and what you want to say about them. You can either read the passage aloud yourself or ask members of your group to read roles.

Sample Questions

- What is happening in this passage?
- Why did you choose this passage?
- What does this passage mean, or what is it discussing?
- How should you present this passage?
- Who is speaking or what is happening in this passage?
- What is the most unique aspect of this passage—and why is it unique?
- What did this quotation/passage make you think about when you read it?
- What makes this passage so confusing, important, or interesting?

Illustrator: Your role is to draw what you read. This might mean drawing a scene as a cartoonlike sequence or an important scene so readers can better understand the action. You can draw maps or organizational trees to show how one person, place, or event relates to the others. Explain how your drawing relates to the text. Label your drawings so we know who the characters are. Make your drawing on a separate sheet of paper.

Sample Questions

- Ask members of your group, "What do you think this picture means?"
- Why did you choose this scene to illustrate?
- How does this drawing relate to the story?
- Why did you choose to draw it the way you did?
- What do we see—i.e., who and/or what is in this picture?
- What, if anything, did drawing it help you see that you had not noticed before?
- What did this quotation/passage make you think about when you read it?
- What are you trying to accomplish through this drawing?

Connector: Your job is to connect what you are reading with what you are studying or with the world outside of school. You can connect the story to events in your own life, news events, political events, or popular trends. Another important source of connections is books you've already read. The connections should be meaningful to you and those in your group.

Sample Questions

- What connections can you make to your own life?
- What other places or people could you compare this story to?
- What other books or stories might you compare to this one?
- What other characters or authors might you compare to this one?
- What is the most interesting or important connection that comes to mind?
- How does this section relate to those that came before it?

Word Watcher: While reading the assigned section, you watch out for words worth knowing. These words might be interesting, new, important, or used in unusual ways. It is important to indicate the specific location of the words so the group can discuss these words in context.

Sample Questions

- Which words are used frequently?
- Which words are used in unusual ways?
- What words seem to have special meaning to the characters or author?
- What new words did you find in this section?
- What part of speech is this word?
- What is the connotative meaning of this word?
- What is the denotative meaning of this word?

Summarizer: Prepare a brief summary of the day's reading. Use the questions to the right to help you decide what to include. In some cases, you might ask yourself what details, characters, or events are so important that they would be included on an exam. If it helps you to organize the information, consider making a numbered list or a time line.

Sample Questions

- What are the most important events in the section you read?
- What makes them so important?
- What effect do these events have on the plot or the other characters?
- What changes—in plot, character, or tone—did you notice when you read?
- What questions about the section you read might appear on an exam?
- What might be a good essay topic for this section of the story?

Literature Circle Notes: Illuminator

Name _____ Date _____

Illuminator: You find passages your group would like to/should hear read aloud. These passages should be memorable, interesting, puzzling, funny, or *important*. Your notes should include the quotations but also why you chose them and what you want to say about them. You can either read the passage aloud yourself or ask members of your group to read roles.

Write the page and paragraph number in this column. Unless the quote is really long, you should also write the quote in this column; write your responses to it in the main note-taking area to the right.>>>>

Sample Questions

- What is happening in this passage?
- Why did you choose this passage?
- What does this passage mean, or what is it discussing?
- How should you present this passage?
- Who is speaking or what is happening in this passage?
- What is the most unique aspect of this passage—and why is it unique?
- What did this quotation/passage make you think about when you read it?
- What makes this passage so confusing, important, or interesting?

Assignment for Today: page _____ — page _____

Topic to be carried over to tomorrow:

Assignment for Tomorrow: page _____ — page _____

Here you should review, retell, or reflect on what you read so far. (Use the back if necessary.)

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