Kindergarten
Overarching Yearly Thematic Concept: COMMUNITY

These thematic concepts guide (but do not restrict) text selection and writing tasks. They help ensure that students are reading and writing for ideas, not simply for the sake of practicing and developing skills.

Thematic Concept 1
Identity in Community

I have an identity in our community. We have an identity as a community.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. Who am I? (What makes me special?) Who are you? (What makes you special?)
   - I/you am a unique person.
   - I/you have likes/dislikes, talents/abilities, and experiences.
   - I am like you and “unlike” you in many ways (the way we look, what we’re interested in, what we’ve done, where we come from).

2. Who are “we”?
   - We are a community.

3. What is a community?
   - A community is a group of individuals that live, work, or interact in the same place (e.g., home, neighborhood, school, town, city).
   - People in a community sometimes work together for a cause, purpose, or reason.
   - People in a community often have things in common.

4. What communities am I a part of? What do I “do” in those communities?
   - I am a member of many different communities (e.g., family, friends, neighborhood, school).
   - I have different roles and responsibilities within each of my communities.
Thematic Concept 2
Change and Growth in Community

All Communities Change and Grow.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is change?
   - Change is when someone or something becomes different than it was.
   - Change can happen quickly or slowly.

2. What is growth?
   - Growth is a kind of change that describes someone or something getting “bigger” or better in some way.

3. How am I changing/growing?
   - I am changing because I am growing bigger in size.
   - I am changing because I am getting older.
   - I am changing because I am learning new things every day.
   - I am changing because I am having new experiences.

4. How do communities change/grow?
   - Communities change in size (i.e., through birth, death, marriage, movement).
   - Communities change in what they can do or accomplish.

5. Why do communities change/grow?
   - Communities change when people or things in the communities change.
   - Problems - and the process of solving those problems - can change a community.
First Grade
Overarching Yearly Thematic Concept:
RELATIONSHIPS

These thematic concepts guide (but do not restrict) text selection and writing tasks. They help ensure that students are reading and writing for ideas, not simply for the sake of practicing and developing skills.

Thematic Concept 1
Relationships
Many relationships exist in the world around us.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. How are people/things connected?
   • People/things are connected through relationships.

2. What is a relationship?
   • Relationships describe how people/things are connected.
   • There are many kinds of relationships.
   • Relationships can be based on circumstances, needs, and wants.

3. How do relationships “work”? 
   • Relationships can last for a little while or for a long time.
   • Each member or part of a relationship has a role or responsibility. Relationships “work” best when each part or member carries out his/her role and responsibility.
   • Relationships can face problems.

4. What can relationships “do”? What is the power/value of relationships? (Why are they important?)
   • Relationships can shape who people are and what they do.
   • Relationships can meet needs and wants.
   • Relationships can challenge people’s thinking and/or cause them to grow.
Thematic Concept 2
Community
*Relationships exist within Communities.*

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. **What relationships exist between a person (individuals?) and a community?**
   - There are many kinds of relationships among and between people in communities.
   - Relationships in a community can be personal, professional, or situational (e.g., friends, siblings, classroom, sports teams, police, library).
   - Relationships in a community can exist between two people, between a person and a group, or between groups of people.

2. **How do relationships in a community affect an individual?**
   - Relationships in a community can provide safety and support.

Thematic Concept 3
Character
*Character influences relationships.*

- Relationships in a community can shape a person’s identity.
- Relationships in a community can teach the community and its members new things.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. **What is character?**
   - Character is “who” a person is “inside”.
   - A person’s character is reflected [can be seen in] the choices he or she makes.
   - Character has many parts/sides. (It isn’t just one thing.)

2. **How does character affect relationships?**
   - People’s choices can affect relationships positively or negatively.
   - Similarities and differences between people’s character can affect their relationships in positive ways or negative ways.
Second Grade
Overarching Yearly Thematic Concept:
CHANGE

These thematic concepts guide (but do not restrict) text selection and writing tasks. They help ensure that students are reading and writing for ideas, not simply for the sake of practicing and developing skills.

Thematic Concept 1
Change
Everything changes. Change is everywhere.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is change?
   Change is a process when something becomes different.
   Change is everywhere. It can happen to everyone and everything.
   Change can happen once, or change can repeat.
   Change can be positive or negative.

2. How does change “happen” or occur?
   Change can happen in cycles.
   Change can happen in sequence.
   Change can be predicted or random (unexpected).
   Change can happen suddenly or over time.

Thematic Concept 2
Adaptation
Adaptation is a response to Change.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is adaptation and what does it “look like”?
   Adaptation is a response to change. Adaptation is also a kind of change.
   Adaptation is a process that can occur quickly or slowly.
   Adaptation can happen on the inside or the outside (physically, socially, emotionally).

2. When and how does adaptation “happen”?
Adaptation happens when something needs to survive or function under new conditions.
Adaptation can be easy to see or difficult to see.

3. **Who or what adapts?**
   - Adaptation is everywhere in real and imagined worlds.
   - All living things adapt. Some living things can adapt parts of their world.
     *Note: Readers and writers adapt.*

4. **What does adaptation “do” (or allow, or result in)?**
   - Adaptation can help or hurt survival.

**Thematic Concept 3**
**Culture**
**Culture changes.**

**Essential Questions & Understandings**

1. **When do stories change?**
   - Stories change through the lens of different cultures.

2. **How are culture and story connected?**
   - Different cultures tell the same stories.
   - Different stories from different cultures can share the same message.

3. **Where do a culture's stories "come from"?**
   - A culture's stories come from many places (e.g., family, traditions, celebrations, art, music, food, geography, etc.).

4. **What can a culture's stories do? (What power do they have?)**
   - A story can bring people together (within a culture or from many cultures).
   - A culture's stories reveal what the culture is like and what it values.

5. **How do (people in different) cultures tell stories?**
   - (People in different) cultures tell stories in different ways (e.g., oral, written, song, poetry, dance, etc.).
Third Grade
Overarching Yearly Thematic Concept: CHANGE

These thematic concepts guide (but do not restrict) text selection and writing tasks. They help ensure that students are reading and writing for ideas, not simply for the sake of practicing and developing skills.

**Thematic Concept 1**
Choice
*Choice influences change.*

**Essential Questions & Understandings**

1. **Why do things change?**
   - People’s choices can make change happen.
   - Environment forces change.
   - Time causes change.

2. **How do people make choices?**
   - People make choices based on what they need and want.
   - Choices can be easy; choices can be hard.

3. **Do [people’s] choices matter?**
   - Choice can have a positive or negative outcome.
   - Choice can create or prevent change.

**Thematic Concept 2**
Survival
*Survival is a response to change.*

**Essential Questions & Understandings**

1. **What does it mean to survive?**
   - People/things survive when they continue to exist in the face of change or conflict.
   - Survival can be physical, mental, emotional, or social.
   - Survival is an ongoing process, not just an event.

2. **What does it “take” to survive?**
   - Survival calls for change and perseverance.
   - Survival is sometimes a matter of chance or fate, not choice.
3. What are the effects of survival?
   • Survival can change thinking and/or behavior.

Thematic Concept 3
Perspective
Change influences perspective.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is perspective?
   • Perspective is a lens for "seeing" people, ideas, and events.

2. What shapes perspective?
   • Who people are and where they are from shapes their perspective.

3. How (and why) does our perspective change?
   • Perspective changes with new information.
   • Perspective changes with new experiences.

4. Who has a perspective?
   • Everyone has a perspective/point of view.

5. How can change affect perspective?
   • Change can influence or alter perspective in a positive or negative way.
Fourth Grade
Overarching Yearly Thematic Concept: PERSPECTIVE

These thematic concepts guide (but do not restrict) text selection and writing tasks. They help ensure that students are reading and writing for ideas, not simply for the sake of practicing and developing skills.

Thematic Concept 1
Identity
Identity shapes perspective.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. How do people “see” themselves?
   • People have multiple identities, collective and individual. Identity is multi-faceted.

2. What shapes identity?
   • Identity is shaped by perspective, culture, experience, and relationships.

3. Can identity change?
   • Identity evolves in response to new knowledge, experiences, and relationships.

4. What influences how people perceive identity? (Or, what influences how identity is perceived?)
   • A person’s behavior influences how others perceive his/her identity (i.e., who he/she is, what he/she is like).

Thematic Concept 2
Inquiry
Inquiry shapes perspective.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. How can/does perspective change?
   • Inquiry can change perspective. (Perspective can change through inquiry.)

2. How can inquiry shape perspective?
   • Inquiry can change perspective by broadening understanding of self, others, and the world.

3. What is the power of inquiry?
   • Inquiry can lead to new knowledge.
• Inquiry can confirm or challenge previously-held beliefs or ideas.
• Inquiry can lead to change by provoking action or further inquiry.

Thematic Concept 3
Interdependence

Interdependence requires balancing and respecting various perspectives.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is interdependence?
   • Interdependence creates a relationship in which the people/parts rely on one another equally

2. How is interdependence developed?
   • Interdependence develops when a person or group begins to rely on another to achieve a greater benefit than what either could achieve alone.

3. What does interdependence require?
   • Interdependence requires an understanding of different perspectives.
   • Interdependence can call for compromise.
   • Interdependence requires that all people/parts fulfill their roles (i.e., they do what they’re supposed to do).
Fifth Grade

Overarching Yearly Thematic Concept: PERSPECTIVE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Concept 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independence influences and shapes perspective.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Questions &amp; Understandings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>What is independence? What makes someone/something independent?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Independence is the power to make decisions apart from authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>How is independence gained or lost?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Independence can be gained and lost through choice, experience, or conflict.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>What are the benefits and risks of independence?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• With independence comes power and responsibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Independence influences and shapes perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Thematic Concept 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and Values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs and values influences perspective.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Questions &amp; Understandings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>What are beliefs and values?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Beliefs express what individuals or groups of people accept as true or want to be true.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Values are principles or standards that make a judgment about what is or should be important.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Where do beliefs and values come from?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• All people/humans have beliefs and values; having beliefs and values is part of being human.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Beliefs and values come from many places (e.g., family, community, experience, culture, region).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>How are beliefs and values represented? (“Where” are they?)</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Beliefs and values are reflected in choices and/or actions.

**Thematic Concept 3**

Justice

*Justice requires perspective.*

- Beliefs and values influence perspective. Perspective can arise or come from beliefs and values.

**Essential Questions & Understandings**

1. **What is justice?**
   - Justice is a way of resolving conflict that upholds what is fair and right.

2. **Who decides what is just (or unjust)?**
   - Justice is a matter of perspective.

3. **When is justice served?**
   - Justice is served when individual/collective beliefs about what is fair and right are upheld.

4. **What happens when justice isn’t served?**
   - When justice isn’t served, there can be conflict.
Grades 6-8 Overarching Thematic Concept:

**CONFLICT**

The following are potential essential questions and understandings directly related to conflict that can be raised and investigated throughout middle school ELA as recurring ideas or “threads”.

1. **What is conflict—and where does it “come from” or occur?**
   - Conflict is struggle between two or more opposing forces (person v. person, person v. self, person v. nature, person v. society).
   - Conflict can be internal or external.
   - Conflict is universal. (Everyone experiences conflict.)
   - Conflict in literature often reflects conflict in real life.
   - Conflict occurs on many levels (personal, professional, societal, national, global).
   - Conflict may occur (or recur) in cycles.

2. **What’s the role or purpose of conflict (in real life, in literature)? What can conflict “do”? What’s the power of conflict? What’s the value of conflict?**
   - Conflict propels or motivates action. (Conflict drives plot.)
   - Conflict can unite or divide (a person, a group, society, a nation).
   - Conflict can lead to change (in people, in situations, in perspective), positive or negative.
   - Conflict can reinforce or undermine identity.
   - Conflict shapes and reveals character.
   - Conflict can build or undermine independence/interdependence.
   - Conflict can compel conformity or resistance.

3. **When and how is conflict resolved (in real life, in literature)? (When is it “over”?)**
   - Conflict is resolved when a force (or person or people) involved in the “struggle” succeeds. (Literary version: Conflict is resolved when the protagonist triumphs over the antagonist—or vice versa.)
   - There are multiple ways for conflict to resolve (e.g., fighting, debating, death, birth, marriage, repentance, forgiveness, etc.).
   - Conflict isn’t always resolved. (Not all conflicts are resolved.)

4. **What does it “take” to endure (internal or external) conflict?**
   - Conflict can require physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual resolve to endure.
Sixth Grade
Overarching Yearly Thematic Concept: CONFLICT

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<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict shapes Perspective.</td>
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</table>

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is perspective?
   • Perspective is the “lens” for “seeing” people, ideas, and events.

2. What shapes perspective?
   • An individual’s life experiences, knowledge, beliefs, emotions, and values shape perspective.

3. Is there always a “right” perspective? (Which perspective is “right”?)
   • Perspectives will vary, and there is not always a right or wrong view.

4. What happens when there are different perspectives?
   • Differing perspectives can create conflict.

5. What is the value in seeking perspective?
   • Perspective can lead to understanding, empathy, and resolution.
Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is change?
   • Change is a process, intentional and unintentional.

2. What causes/shapes change?
   • Conflict is an agent of change.

3. What does change lead to? (alt. What does change cause?)
   • Change can create conflict.
   • Change can affect decisions, actions, and beliefs.
   • Change can shape perspective.

4. How do people respond to change (and why)?
   • People respond to change in similar and different ways.
   • People’s responses to change are influenced by experiences.

Thematic Concept 2
Change
Conflict can lead to Change.

Thematic Concept 3
Character is shaped by Conflict.

Essential Questions & Understandings

1. What is character?
   • Character is “who” an individual is on the inside.
   • Character influences decisions and actions.
   • Character is multi-faceted and situational.

2. What shapes character?
   • Experience, conflict, background, and values shape character.

3. How is character revealed?
   • A person’s character is revealed through his/her words and actions.
   • Conflict can reveal a person’s character—including previously “unseen” aspects of his/her character.
Seventh Grade
Overarching Yearly Concept: CONFLICT

These thematic concepts guide (but do not restrict) text selection and writing tasks. They help ensure that students are reading and writing for ideas, not simply for the sake of practicing and developing skills.

**Thematic Concept 1**
Independence & Interdependence
_Conflict can influence Independence & Interdependence._

1. **What is independence (and how is it different from dependence and Interdependence)?**
   - Independence is a way of exercising power.
   - Interdependence is when all parts are mutually dependent on one another

2. **Who or what is independent? Interdependent?**
   - Everyone is both independent and interdependent in some way.
   - Independence and interdependence varies by role and circumstance.

3. **What is the effect/result of independence?**
   - Independence and interdependence can create conflict (positive or negative).
   - Independence and interdependence can strengthen or weaken identity (positively or negatively).

**Thematic Concept 2**
Relationships
_Conflict impacts Relationships._

1. **How are people connected?**
   - People are connected through different kinds of positive or negative relationships.

2. **How are relationships formed/created? (How do they "happen"/come to be?)**
   - Relationships form by choice or by circumstance.

3. **How do relationships affect people?**
   - Relationships can affect identity and choice positively or negatively.

4. **When/why do relationships change?**
   - Time, circumstances, and conflict can change relationships.
   - Relationships can create interdependence and/or dependence.
1. What is “society”? What defines it?
   - Societies share certain beliefs and values.

2. What's the “ideal” society?
   - The "ideal" society meets the needs of all its members.
   - The “ideal” society carries out the shared beliefs and values of its members.

3. What makes societies "work" or function?
   - Societies are interdependent.
   - Conflict can strengthen or weaken society.
   - Conflict can force society to re-evaluate assumptions, history, laws, values, and traditions.
   - Conflict can compel change in society by inspiring or compelling individuals to act.
Eighth Grade
Overarching Yearly Concept: CONFLICT

These thematic concepts guide (but do not restrict) text selection and writing tasks. They help ensure that students are reading and writing for ideas, not simply for the sake of practicing and developing skills.

Thematic Concept 1
The Individual
Conflict can strengthen or weaken the Individual.

1. Who or what is an individual?
   • The individual is both independent and dependent.
   • An individual has the power to make choices.
   • Individuals have shared and unique beliefs and values (which can create or resolve conflict).

2. What “power” does an individual have?
   • An individual’s power is related to their circumstances, role, and choices.
   • An individual has the power to affect change (i.e., by instigating or responding to conflict).
   • Society can limit or expand the power of the individual.

3. How should an individual respond to conflict?
   • Conflict compels an individual to make (or avoid) a choice or decision.
   • An individual's perspective affects how he/she handles conflict.
   • Responding to conflict may raise new conflict for an individual.

Thematic Concept 2
Power
Conflict creates and suppresses Power.

1. What is power?
   • Power is an ability to affect change.
   • Power is an ability to instigate, control, or resolve conflict.

2. Who has power—and how do they get it?
   • Everyone has power (but not everyone has the same “amount” of power).
   • Power is gained through conflict, control, and consensus.
3. **How can power be used?**
   - Power can be used in positive or negative ways.

4. **How can power be controlled?**
   - Power can be controlled through balance.

5. **What happens when power is “out of balance”?**
   - The imbalance of power can lead to corruption, resistance, or conformity.

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**Thematic Concept 3**

**Change**

*Without Conflict, there is no Change.*

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1. **When and how does change occur?**
   - Change occurs within the individual and within society.
   - Change can occur in cycles.

2. **How can change begin? (What instigates change?)**
   - Change can begin with (or result from) conflict.

3. **Who can effect change—and how?**
   - Everyone has the power to effect change.
   - Individuals can effect change through the choices they make.

4. **What is the power of change? How is change powerful?**
   - Change can improve society and the individual.