

# TCRWP Unit 1-- 8th: Investigative Journalism

## Big Ideas/Overview:

- In this unit, students learn to use sharp observations of life to write news and investigative articles about meaningful topics, crafting vivid narratives and elaborating multiple perspectives. They'll write to shine a light on issues in their community and to actively stir their readers to take action.
- Investigative Journalism relies on students combining their knowledge of narrative, their use of information writing, and their skills in argument to write about events in their lives and in the world. This style of writing is challenging as it draws on multiple skill sets. Students need to practice the reading, talking, thinking, and writing of multiple genres across multiple experiences to really grow their skills. This is also a unit that invites students to get out into the world of their school and their out-of-school worlds and be observant, notebook in hand, issues of power in mind.

## Skills/Standards- Hybrid

Grade 8
<b>Structure</b>
I discussed key concepts within a topic and made it clear why these concepts are important. I developed an angle on the subject, while also demonstrating that other perspectives exist. I used explanatory structures and included well-researched evidence, and also used storytelling to especially develop one or more points of view.
After hooking the reader through concise, well-crafted storytelling or through the pointed use of relevant findings from my reporting and research, I provided context and let the reader know the significance of this topic, as well as the controversy that exists within it.
I used transitions to lead the reader across parts of the text and to help the reader note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts, using phrases such as <i>just as</i> , <i>returning to</i> , <i>as we saw earlier</i> , <i>similarly</i> , <i>unlike</i> , and <i>and yet</i> .
In the conclusion, I suggested implications, built up the significance of the main points, and/or alluded to potential challenges.

### Structure (cont.)

I focused on key concepts within the topic.

I used the organizational structure to help the reader's comprehension, perhaps holding back details until first conveying broader points, or only offering a second perspective after the first was established.

I used story structure strategically across my whole piece: providing multiple anecdotes that offered different perspectives, or weaving an anecdote across the text to build tension and provide a consistent reference point.

### Development

I brought out the parts of the topic that were most significant to my audience and to my point(s).

I analyzed the relevance of the reported information and made sure the information supported the major concepts.

### Development (cont.)

I chose language that I knew would affect my reader—to make the reader think, realize, or feel something specific.

I consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, and/or anecdotes to help readers grasp the meaning of concepts and the significance of information.

I made clear the relationship between key domain-specific terms relevant to my subject. I varied my voice to match the different purposes of different sections of my piece while maintaining an overall journalistic tone.

In my anecdotes, I created a mood as well as a physical setting, and showed how the place changed, or its relationships to the characters changed. I used symbolism to connect with a key concept in my larger report.

### Conventions

I checked spelling of technical, domain-specific words and was careful with the spelling and details of citations, statistics, excerpts, and quotes from interviews, as well as names of sources and key proper nouns from my reporting and research.

I used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout my piece.

I used verb tenses that shifted when needed (as in moving from a quote from an interview or dialogue in an anecdote back to my own writing), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate.

## BEND I Reporting the Real Story: Newscasts

*students spend time developing their writing about a shared classroom experience. You will teach students that journalists discern the small dramas around them and shape newscasts to bring the news concisely to their readers. In contrast to personal narrative, you will teach students to write in the third person, reporting facts and maintaining a journalistic tone. Finally, you will teach students techniques journalists use to make their short writing more powerful, such as using striking details, keeping a tight focus on what a story is really about, and writing delightful or clever endings. By the end of this first bend, students will publish their first works of journalism on a class website and you will invite them to offer thoughtful comments on their peers' work.*

1. Journalists Develop Their Powers of Observation to Capture Events
2. Turning Moments of Drama into Cogent Newscasts
3. Researching and Reporting Experience
4. Making Short Nonfiction Writing Pack a Punch
5. Setting Ambitious Goals & Working toward Publishing

## BEND II Writing to Inform and Illuminate

*In this bend, students will think about an issue that they find compelling and branch off to do another round of journalism writing, with more focus. This bend centers on writing the news story—the who, what, when, where, why, and how of an event—but also exploring the issues that surround that event. You will teach them ways journalists delve more deeply into topics they know well, drawing on everything they know about narrative writing—such as the skills of developing action, dialogue, setting, details—to tell a compelling true story and grab readers' attention. You'll teach students how journalists use tension to push readers toward that truth, and how they elaborate multiple perspectives to reveal complicated stories. This bend ends with another round of publication,*

6. Investigating to Reveal Underlying Issues
7. Using Narrative Craft to Hone Central Ideas and to Stir Empathy
8. Harnessing Narrative and Information Writing Techniques
9. Elaborating to Deepen Readers' Connections
10. Writing Partners Have Each Other's Backs
11. Editing Voice and Verb Tense

## BEND III Investigative Reporting

*The final bend in this unit is another full cycle, only this time students identify issues AND they are thinking about how they, as writers, write to educate their readers on that issue.*

*You'll help students understand that investigative journalists research the context and causes of underlying issues; trace possible implications; and collect facts, statistics, and expert quotes to support their stories. You will help students expand their repertoire of research tools by teaching them how to interview, to create surveys, and to use print and digital texts to gather information for their stories. Finally, you'll teach students ways writers organize pieces into logical sections and ways to craft endings to call readers to action.*

12. Mentoring Oneself to a Pro to Envision the Arc of Investigative Reporting
13. Expanding Repertoires of Research
14. Structuring Pieces and Leading the Reader with Key Transitions
15. Crafting Endings that Call to Action
16. Publishing Writing for Real Audiences

# TCRWP Unit 2-- 8th: The Literary Essay Analyzing Craft and Theme

## Big Ideas/Overview:

- This unit returns students to literary essays, writing arguments and counterarguments about themes in texts, supporting their positions with details of plot, character, and author's craft
- This unit is designed to help your 8th graders to be more independent as literary essayists, while introducing them to some more rigorous analytic moves that will pay off when they go to high school. In the unit, writers will produce 3 different essays. They'll interpret this text with claims about its theme, craft, and comparing and contrasting this text with another.

## Skills/Standards

	Structure
<b>Overall</b>	I laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why my particular argument is important and valid. I stayed fair to those who might disagree with me by describing how my position is one of several and making it clear where my position stands in relation to others.
<b>Lead</b>	After hooking the reader, I provided specific context for my own as well as another position(s), introduced my position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument I planned to develop.
<b>Transitions</b>	I used transitions to lead the reader across parts of the text and to help the reader note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. I used phrases such as <i>now some argue, while this may be true, it is also the case that, despite this, as stated earlier, taken as a whole, this is significant because, the evidence points to, and and by doing so.</i>
<b>Ending</b>	In the conclusion, I described the significance of my argument for stakeholders, or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.
<b>Organization</b>	I organized claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence into sections and clarified how sections are connected. I created an organizational structure that supports a reader's growing understanding across the whole of my argument, arranging the sections to build on each other in a logical, compelling fashion.

	Development
<b>Elaboration</b>	I brought out the aspects of the argument that were most significant to my audience and to my overall purpose(s). I incorporated trustworthy and significant sources and explained if and when a source seemed problematic. I analyzed the relevance of the reasons and evidence for my claims as well as for the counterclaim(s) and helped the reader understand what each position is saying. I made sure all of my analysis led my readers to follow my line of argument.
<b>Craft</b>	I intended to affect my reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and I chose language to do that. I consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, anecdotes, or other rhetorical devices to help readers follow my thinking and grasp the meaning and significance of a point or a piece of evidence. I varied my tone to match the different purposes of different sections of my argument.

	Conventions
<b>Spelling</b>	I spelled technical vocabulary and literary vocabulary accurately. I spelled materials in citations according to sources, and spelled citations accurately.
<b>Punctuation and Sentence Structure</b>	I used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout my argument. I used verb tenses that shift when needed (as in when moving from a citation back to my own writing), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate. I used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert excerpts from sources.

## BEND I The Thematic Essay

*you will teach students that when analyzing texts, literary essayists pay attention to plot, character, and the author's crafting decisions, reflecting on the link between the theme and those elements. As students begin drafting their own literary essays, you will guide them to draw on their previous knowledge about writing in this genre, and you will show them how they can examine mentor texts to plan and set goals for their own writing. You will then teach students ways writers use logic to clarify the relationship between their evidence and their ideas. As students continue drafting and revising, you will teach them how to search for other possible interpretations of the text and write arguments about which interpretation is the best one, explaining why an alternative argument may not be as sound. By the end of this first bend, your students will have learned how to complete a draft of a literary essay with a focus on theme.*

1. Looking for Themes All Around Us . . .
2. Reading Closely to Develop Themes
3. Fine-Tuning Themes by Studying Author's Craft
4. Drafting Essays
5. Finding the Courage to Revise Your Thinking
6. Clarifying Relationships between Evidence and Ideas
7. Counterargument within Literary Essays
8. Editing Using All You Know

## BEND II The Author's Craft Essay

*students will focus on understanding and writing about author's craft moves and how they affect the meaning of the text. You'll teach students that literary essayists look for craft moves that an author uses repeatedly and the effects those moves have on the text. Then you'll channel them to look for symbols in the texts they are studying and, as writers do, write long to try to discover the deeper meaning of the symbols they discover. In the rest of this bend, you'll teach students ways writers plan an essay about an author's craft, teaching them ways to frame the essay with introductions and conclusions that provide context and food for thought, and teaching them ways that essayists adopt an engaging yet formal tone.*

9. Noticing How an Author Tends to Write
10. The Power of Symbolism
11. Planning the Author's Craft Essay
12. Framing Essays with Relevance and Context: Introductions and Conclusions
13. Adopting an Essayist's Tone
14. A Comma Inquiry

## BEND II The Comparative Essay

*you'll push students to compare and contrast ideas across texts, writing to discover and writing to explain and support what they discover. Your students have written this kind of essay in earlier grades; now, you'll encourage them to apply all they know and work more independently, using familiar strategies—such as using thought prompts to push themselves to deeper analysis and using transition words to guide their readers. Your literary essayists end this unit by exploring places online to publish parts of their essays and then making their writing online-ready and posting it.*

15. Writing across Texts
16. Writing Comparative Essays on Demand
17. Publishing on the Internet

# TCRWP Unit 3-- 8th: Position Papers Research and Argument

## Big Ideas/Overview:

- This unit encourages students to compose principled arguments by drawing on evidence, contextualizing their positions, and addressing multiple perspectives
- The research and writing that students will do this month offers new opportunities to consider not just clearly oppositional positions within a topic, but the conditions that make certain positions stronger than others. This is high level work, but crucial for students moving on to more complex academic work, as well as the more complex worlds of late adolescence and young adulthood. Note that this is an argument unit of study, not informational (there is a misprint on the book cover that labels it incorrectly).
- students will research the issue of violent role-playing games and will each write an essay about this topic. They will then dive into an immersion in the research topic of child soldiers around the world, and they will write a second position paper about whether child soldiers should be given amnesty. Along the way, they will practice debate to rehearse and revise their stances and supports, use checklists to set goals for analysis and elaboration, and consider a variety of argument techniques, from the standpoint of researchers and writers.

	Structure
<b>Overall</b>	I laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why my particular argument is important and valid. I stayed fair to those who might disagree with me by describing how my position is one of several and making it clear where my position stands in relation to others.
<b>Lead</b>	After hooking the reader, I provided specific context for my own as well as another position(s), introduced my position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument I planned to develop.
<b>Transitions</b>	I used transitions to lead the reader across parts of the text and to help the reader note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. I used phrases such as <i>now some argue, while this may be true, it is also the case that, despite this, as stated earlier, taken as a whole, this is significant because, the evidence points to, and and by doing so.</i>
<b>Ending</b>	In the conclusion, I described the significance of my argument for stakeholders, or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.
<b>Organization</b>	I organized claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence into sections and clarified how sections are connected.  I created an organizational structure that supports a reader's growing understanding across the whole of my argument, arranging the sections to build on each other in a logical, compelling fashion.

	Development
<b>Elaboration</b>	I brought out the aspects of the argument that were most significant to my audience and to my overall purpose(s).  I incorporated trustworthy and significant sources and explained if and when a source seemed problematic.  I analyzed the relevance of the reasons and evidence for my claims as well as for the counterclaim(s) and helped the reader understand what each position is saying. I made sure all of my analysis led my readers to follow my line of argument.
<b>Craft</b>	I intended to affect my reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and I chose language to do that.  I consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, anecdotes, or other rhetorical devices to help readers follow my thinking and grasp the meaning and significance of a point or a piece of evidence.  I varied my tone to match the different purposes of different sections of my argument.

	Conventions
<b>Spelling</b>	I spelled technical vocabulary and literary vocabulary accurately. I spelled materials in citations according to sources, and spelled citations accurately.
<b>Punctuation and Sentence Structure</b>	I used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout my argument.  I used verb tenses that shift when needed (as in when moving from a citation back to my own writing), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate.  I used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert excerpts from sources.

## **BEND I Writing a Position Paper: Games Based on Fictional Violence—Diverting or Harmful?**

*E ighth-graders begin this argumentation study by learning to research and argue various stances within a complex topic—in this case, the pros and cons of kids engaging in games with simulated violence. Students will learn to use debate to strengthen their positions, developing and revising claims, reasons, and evidence. They'll learn ways writers flash-draft efficiently, setting ambitious writing goals so that they are constantly honing their arguments and their skills. Students will move from research of print and digital texts to drafting, and then they will return to research, this time with critical lenses. As they research again, you'll teach them how authors use connotative language to paint a tone, and how they might do the same in their own writing. Students will finish Bend I by publishing their position papers in a collection for students and parents and by giving speeches.*

1. Debating Positions to Develop a Complex Argument
2. Flash-Drafting Arguments while Working on Personal Writing Goals
3. Angling Evidence to Support Specific Points
4. Using Connotative Language to Paint a Tone
5. Writing Great Conclusions
6. Getting Ready to Publish: Polishing Presentation and Conventions
7. Unleashing the Inner Dramatist to Give Speeches More Impact
8. A Celebration of Speeches

## **BEND II Writing a Position Paper on a Complicated Issue: Should Child Soldiers Be Given Amnesty?**

*In the second bend of this unit, students will learn ways to understand, navigate, and develop considered positions within a topic with a complicated history and serious consequences. Specifically, students will argue whether or not child soldiers should be given amnesty, a question that is debated by the United Nations, by US military tribunals, and by advocacy organizations around the world. Students learn ways to tackle a topic of this gravity by immersion in information—researching case studies, statistics, and a variety of print and digital sources. Initially, you will help students use their debate skills and their knowledge of argument writing to compose preliminary position papers. Then you'll teach students that writers take these position papers through multiple drafts, honing their arguments as they extend their knowledge. In this bend, you will teach students ways writers consider multiple perspectives and ways they make their cases stronger by expressing the conditions under which their arguments have merit. As they do this, students will learn to write longer, denser arguments, using more sophisticated transitional moves to guide the reader. You'll coach them to maintain an awareness of purpose and audience. Students will tailor their arguments to their intended audience and then publish these position papers as letters.*

9. Grappling with Issues of Intensity, Developing Initial Understanding
10. Developing Preliminary Positions, Revising Thinking
11. Debating to Draft More Balanced and Principled Arguments
12. Strengthening, Framing, and Pacing Evidence
13. Attending to Alternate Arguments and Points of View
14. Using the Organizational Structure of Your Piece to Help Build Your Argument
15. Tailoring Position Papers as Letters; Attending to Audience and Presentation
16. A Social Activist Celebration

