

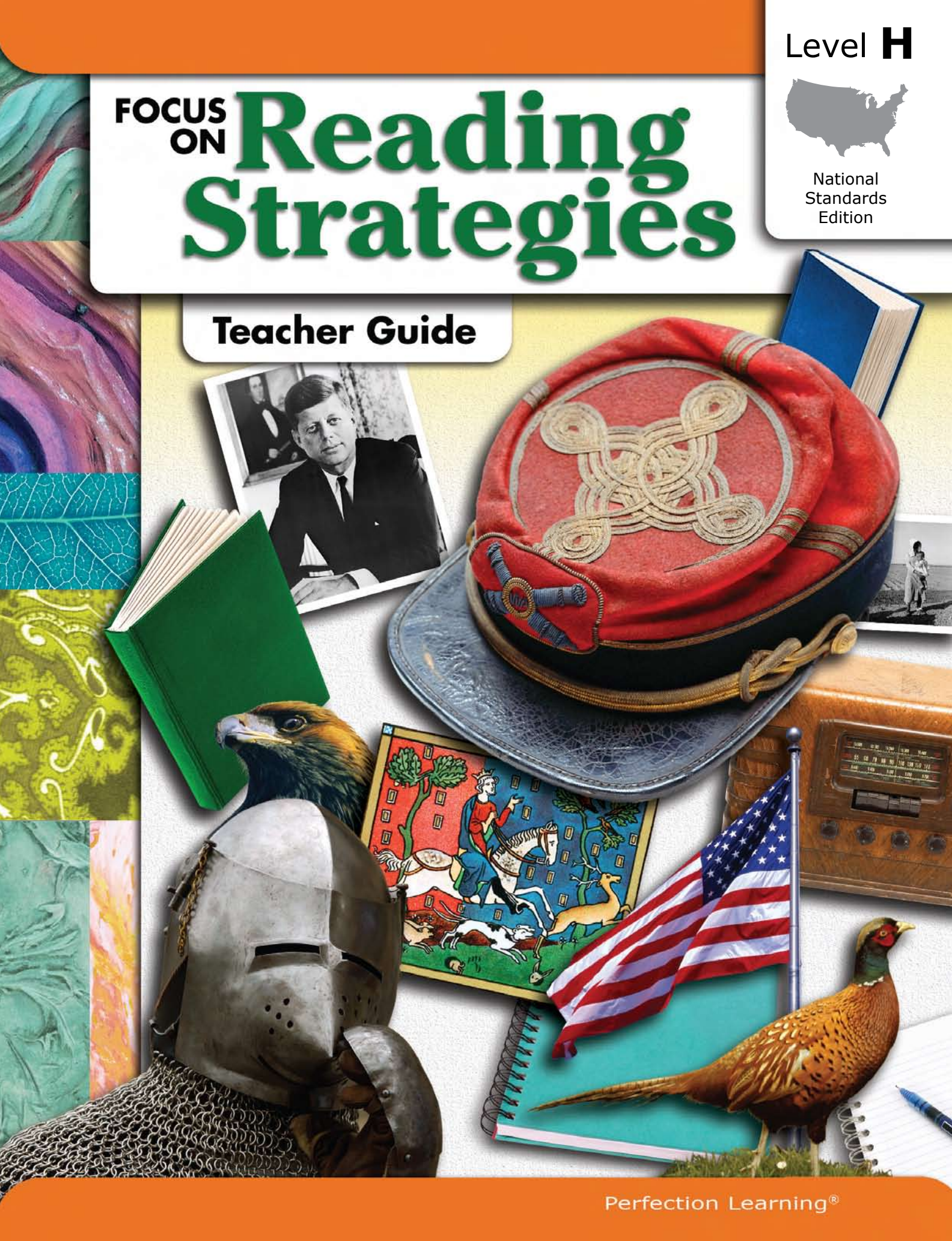
Level **H**



National  
Standards  
Edition

**FOCUS  
ON** **Reading  
Strategies**

**Teacher Guide**



**FOCUS  
ON**

# Reading Strategies

Level **H**



National  
Standards  
Edition

## Teacher Guide

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## All About Reading

Reading research clearly indicates that reading and learning are active processes (Vacca & Vacca, 1996; Barton & Billmeyer, 1998). The six *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbooks, Levels C–H for students in grades 3–8, offer direct instruction and practice in essential active reading strategies. Students need to be taught and have the opportunities to practice active reading strategies, which are the tools needed for comprehension. Competent readers use active reading strategies to seek meaning (Palincsar & Klenk, 1991).

### **What Is Strategic Reading?**

Strategic reading is thinking about and interacting with text—a conversation, either out loud with others or to oneself, between the author and the reader. Strategic readers are active thinkers when they read, not just passive receivers of information (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Irvin, et al., 1995; Vacca & Vacca, 1993).

### **What Are Active Reading Strategies?**

A strategy is defined as “skillful planning and management.” Therefore, think of a reading strategy as a conscious plan that helps readers manage the comprehension skills they have. Reading strategies are about connecting, questioning, visualizing, determining importance, inferring, synthesizing, monitoring, and repairing—not as isolated processes, but as interrelated processes—working together simultaneously during reading. Strategies are plans that require the reader to be an active participant in what is read. Research supports the benefits of using strategies (Pressley, 2000; Barton & Billmeyer, 1998; cf. Barton, 1997; Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

### **What About Reading Skills?**

Skills are the cognitive processes that make up the act of reading. Skills are essential. Good readers must be both skillful and strategic. Anyone who has been involved in sports can recall long practice sessions, drilling on skills until they became automatic. So it is with reading. As students progress beyond “learning to read” and into “reading to learn,” early reading skills, such as decoding, become automatic. At this point, students focus on more advanced comprehension skills. Strategies are the reading tools or behaviors that help readers take their literacy comprehension skills to the next level.

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## All About the *Focus on Reading Strategies* Workbooks

### **How Can *Focus on Reading Strategies* Help?**

Each *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbook offers direct instruction in using essential active reading strategies to master standards-based skills critical to reading comprehension. The high-interest fiction and nonfiction selections span a wide range of genres and topics.

### **How Are the *Focus on Reading Strategies* Workbooks Organized?**

Each workbook has six units with two related lessons. Each lesson, featuring a fiction or nonfiction selection, offers direct instruction and practice in before, during, and after reading strategies to help students develop and manage comprehension skills.

## What Skills Are Covered in *Focus on Reading Strategies*?

The following standards-based literacy skills are covered in the six workbooks for students in grades 3–8.

Focus on Reading Strategies	Grade 3 Level C	Grade 4 Level D	Grade 5 Level E	Grade 6 Level F	Grade 7 Level G	Grade 8 Level H
<b>Reading</b>						
Analyze Plot Structure	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Analyze Tone						✓
Articulate Author's Perspective					✓	
Compare and Contrast	✓	✓			✓	
Describe Mood						✓
Determine Main Idea			✓		✓	
Distinguish Fact and Opinion	✓					
Distinguish Point of View					✓	
Draw Conclusions	✓			✓		✓
Examine Theme	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Find Relevant Details	✓			✓		✓
Interpret Symbolism						✓
Make Connections	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Make Inferences	✓		✓			
Practice Active Questioning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Predict	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Recall Facts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognize Cause and Effect			✓		✓	
Recognize Persuasive Techniques				✓		✓
Sequence Events	✓	✓				
Summarize				✓	✓	✓
Understand Characterization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Use Prereading Strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use Visual Mapping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Writing</b>						
Write a Friendly Letter	✓		✓		✓	✓
Write a Prediction	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Write an Interview	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Write to Describe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Write to Entertain	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Write to Explain	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Write to Inform	✓		✓	✓		✓
Write to Persuade	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Write to Summarize		✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Vocabulary</b>						
Analyze Multiple Meanings		✓	✓	✓		
Build Vocabulary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classify Words		✓		✓	✓	
Identify Parts of Speech	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognize Base Words	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Understand Prefixes & Suffixes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Understand Synonyms & Antonyms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use Context Clues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use a Dictionary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The following strategies are covered in the six workbooks for students in grades 3–8.

<p><b>Previewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 most important words</li> <li>Analyze title</li> <li>Anticipation guide</li> <li>Brainstorm</li> <li>Framed sentence</li> <li>Knowledge chart</li> <li>KWL chart</li> <li>Make connections prompt</li> <li>Predict based on introduction</li> <li>Predict based on key words</li> <li>Prediction chart</li> <li>Prior knowledge prompt</li> <li>Probable passages</li> </ul>	<p><b>Knowing How Words Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a scenario using target word</li> <li>Create sentences with target word</li> <li>Frayer model</li> <li>Identify synonyms</li> <li>Identify word parts</li> <li>Knowledge rating checklist</li> <li>Provide examples</li> <li>Rewrite definitions</li> <li>Student VOC strategy</li> <li>Use context clues</li> <li>Use dictionary</li> <li>Word parts chart</li> </ul>
<p><b>Self-Questioning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think-along questions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check for understanding multiple-choice questions</li> <li>Review activities</li> <li>Think-along questions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Making Connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make connections prompt</li> <li>Metacognitive statement</li> <li>Op-ed piece</li> <li>Persuasive essay</li> <li>Think-along questions</li> <li>Venn diagram</li> </ul>	<p><b>Summarizing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Ws organizer</li> <li>Plot chart</li> <li>Retelling chart</li> <li>Sequence chart</li> <li>Story frame</li> <li>Story string</li> <li>Think-along questions</li> <li>Write newspaper article</li> <li>Write summary</li> </ul>
<p><b>Visualizing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cause-and-effect organizer</li> <li>Character map</li> <li>Comparative organizer</li> <li>Diagram</li> <li>Draw pictures to visualize</li> <li>Frayer model</li> <li>Hierarchical organizer</li> <li>Plot chart</li> <li>Problem/solution organizer</li> <li>Semantic map</li> <li>Sequential organizer</li> <li>Series of events chain</li> <li>Spider map</li> <li>Story frame</li> <li>Story string</li> <li>Venn diagram</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evaluating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 most important words</li> <li>Characterization chart</li> <li>Character map</li> <li>Character sketch</li> <li>Think-along questions</li> </ul>

## How Is Each Lesson Organized?

Each lesson in *Focus on Reading Strategies* has six sections. Students will use multiple strategies as they complete the activities in each section. The variety of activities addresses multiple learning styles.

**Before Reading: Heads Up** Direct instruction in this section accesses prior knowledge and builds background knowledge to provide a framework for deeper understanding of the reading selection in the lesson. Research shows that readers are in a better position to understand what they're reading if prior knowledge is activated (Vacca, 2002; Irvin, et al., 1995).

**During Reading: Think-Along Questions** Specific questions are interjected throughout the selection to promote active reading. Readers will question what they read, make predictions, make connections, and practice the featured skill as they answer the questions and interact with the author's words. Research shows that proficient readers keep a constant check on their understanding as they read (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Irvin, et al., 1995).

**After Reading: Read with Understanding** This multiple-choice question offers practice in the featured skill. The format of this activity is similar to questions included in state, national, and standardized tests.

**After Reading: Make Sense of Words** A featured strategy will be applied to vocabulary bolded within the selection. Students are encouraged to use this vocabulary strategy with other words that they identify as difficult as they read. Research substantiates vocabulary knowledge as an important factor in successful comprehension (Laflamme, 1997; Barton & Billmeyer, 1998). Building vocabulary will increase students' comprehension (Stahl, 1999).

**After Reading: Understand by Seeing It** Students use visual mapping strategies with a variety of graphic organizers to practice the skill featured in the lesson.

**After Reading: Write to Learn** Reading instruction should make connections between reading and writing (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Students connect reading and writing and demonstrate their understanding of the selection through this low-stakes writing activity. Research shows that low-stakes writing helps readers interact personally with the text without the pressure of completing a finished piece of writing (Vacca, 2002).

## Will Students Have a Chance to Review?

Two Review lessons, one after the first three units and the second after the last three units, offer students an opportunity to make connections as they practice the skills and strategies from the previous three units on a new selection.

## How Is Listening Comprehension Included?

A Listening Comprehension activity follows each review. The selections for each listening lesson and directions for presenting them are provided in this resource. These selections and the activities that follow help students learn to become attentive, active listeners. Students will make and confirm predictions as they complete the questions related to the listening selections.

# All About Using the *Focus on Reading Strategies* Workbooks

## Which Students Should Use the *Focus on Reading Strategies* Workbooks?

*Focus on Reading Strategies* workbooks Levels C–H are designed for all students in grades 3–8. By third grade, students have mastered the cognitive processes of reading. It is at this point that they need to begin using strategies to master comprehension.

The standards-based skills and reading strategies featured within each unit of the *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbooks align to the National Standards for the English-Language Arts. The *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbooks are written for students reading at or near grade level. The interest level and reading level of the selections in the workbooks are grade-level appropriate.

## How Are the Units Introduced?

Unit introductions are provided in this Teacher Guide. Teachers frontload instruction through discussion, a minilesson, and related standards practice in the teacher guide before students begin each unit in the *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbook. In addition, vocabulary from the two lesson selections in each unit in the Student Workbook is featured with definitions and offered as reproducible word cards at the end of each Unit Introduction to prepare students for reading the selections.

**Unit 1: Recognize Persuasive Techniques**

Unit 1 focuses on *Recognizing Persuasive Techniques* in informational text. Persuasive techniques are often referred to as propaganda. Propaganda is defined as “ideas or facts spread deliberately to further one’s cause.” To persuade means “to make someone believe something or convince someone to take a specific action.” Sometimes these techniques are used intentionally, and at other times, fallacies or flaws in logic or understanding influence the writer’s message.

**Selections Featured**

**Lesson 1: Birmingham Speech by President John F. Kennedy**  
In this address, President Kennedy makes an emotional and ethical plea to persuade the American people to change their thoughts and actions and work toward true equality for all people.

**Lesson 2: Cover Craft Binding by Perfection Learning Corporation**  
This advertisement tries to persuade consumers to purchase Cover Craft books. Persuasive language appeals to buyers with the promise of books with the best binding in the business, generous discounts, and a lifetime guarantee.

**Before the Unit**

**Introduction**  
Explain that even though informational text is fact-based, it is generally written with a bias and persuasive techniques to cause readers to feel one way or another. Persuasive techniques include emotional and ethical appeals. Persuasive text often includes a promise. This type of writing tries to convince the reader to adopt a particular opinion or to perform a certain action.

**Minilesson**  
Persuasive Techniques

**Materials**  
Create an overhead transparency of the text on page 17 to practice *recognizing persuasive techniques*.

**Procedure**

- Discuss the meaning of each technique and any examples provided. Challenge students to recall an advertisement or other example where each technique is used. Some examples they share may actually use more than one technique. Identify the technique each example illustrates. Discuss why the example might use more than one technique.
- **Cause-and-Effect Fallacy:** Begin by discussing the meaning of cause-and-effect (one event is the direct cause of another). Remind students that, just because one event follows another, they do not necessarily have a cause-and-effect relationship. Discuss the example provided and challenge students to think of another.

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Unit 1: Recognizing Persuasive Techniques

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## Teacher-directed minilesson

**Minilesson**  
from *The Sculptor's Funeral*

**Materials**  
Create an overhead transparency of the text on pages 69–71 to model and practice interpreting symbolism.

**Procedure**

- Remind the students that they will be looking for the symbolism that the author is trying to convey.
- Ask the students to read the first paragraph. Then model-read the first paragraph, including think-alouds shown below to illustrate the thinking processes that good readers use to interpret symbolism. Point out how the author uses the train and the surroundings to represent the ominous plot. You may want to define the use of *siding* as "a short stretch of track that connects with the main railroad track." *The men are gathered around waiting for the train, which is already twenty minutes late. The image of the night train contrasts with the white snow covering everything. The men are uneasy, not sure how to act. I wonder if this train symbolizes something ominous.*
- Continue by asking students to read the next six short paragraphs. Discuss with the students what clues give you more of an idea about what is happening. Identify such things as *It's not the first time the men have waited for the train to bring a corpse. The men might be part of an army, having to bury soldiers lost in battle.*
- Ask students to read the next paragraph. Release more responsibility to the students as you act as facilitator. Guide students to see additional details that represent the train: *The distant whistle is called a virtual scream, a wail-side call for all men. Ask them to share the mental images and feelings these words create.*
- Complete the passage discussing the students' interpretations of the train's symbolism. Have them explain their reasoning. A possible response: *The train symbolizes the death that every man faces.*
- Discuss with students that not everything in a story is necessarily symbolic. Only when something is contrasted with another thing does it suggest additional meaning.

**Reproducible Practice**  
from *Anthem for Doomed Youth*

Use the reproducible poem excerpt on page 72 for further practice on interpreting symbolism.

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**from The Sculptor's Funeral**

A group of the townspeople stood on the station siding of a little Kansas town, awaiting the coming of the night train, which was already twenty minutes overdue. The snow had fallen thick over everything in the pale starlight the line of bluffs across the wide, white meadows south of the town made soft, smoke-colored curves against the clear sky. The men on the siding stood first on one foot and then on the other, their hands thrust deep into their trousers pockets, their overcoats open, their shoulders screwed up with the cold, and they glanced from time to time toward the southeast, where the railroad track wound along the river shore. They conversed in low tones and moved about restlessly, seeming uncertain as to what was expected of them. There was but one of the company who looked as though he knew exactly why he was there; and he kept conspicuously apart, walking to the far end of the platform, returning collar of his overcoat, then pacing up the track again, his chin sunk in the high dogged. Presently he was approached by a tall, spare, grizzled man clad in a faded Grand Army suit, who shuffled out from the group and advanced with a faked preference, craning his neck forward until his back made the angle of a jackknife re-quiarters open.

What object or action might have additional meaning?  
What might it symbolize?

... "I reckon she's agoin' to be pretty late in tonight, Jim," he remarked in a fableto. "S'pose it's the snow?"  
"I know," responded the other man with a shade of annoyance, speaking in an astonishing cataract of words and beard that grew fiercely and thickly in all directions.  
The man shifted the end of his toothpick he was chewing to the other side of his mouth. "I ain't likely that anybody from the East will come with the corpse, Jim," responded the other, more curtly than before.

continued

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Think-aloud for discussion

## Practice related to the featured standard

**Directions:** Read the poem. Then on the lines below, write what the author is symbolically describing.

**from Anthem for Doomed Youth**

What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?  
—Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle  
Can patter out their hasty orisons.  
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;  
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—  
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

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## Vocabulary word cards

<p><b>accusations</b></p> <p>claims that somebody has done something wrong or undesirable</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>	<p><b>ambrosia</b></p> <p>food of the gods</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>
<p><b>ambushed</b></p> <p>unexpectedly attacked from a concealed position</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>	<p><b>assent</b></p> <p>agreement</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>
<p><b>contender</b></p> <p>competitor in a contest</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>	<p><b>cracker</b></p> <p>derogatory slang for a poor white person</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>
<p><b>gaiety</b></p> <p>lighthearted feeling</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>	<p><b>lynching</b></p> <p>putting someone to death without a trial, usually by hanging</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>
<p><b>maimed</b></p> <p>permanently injured rendering a limb unable to move</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>	<p><b>ordained</b></p> <p>established something formally</p> <p>The Fight from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</p>
<p><b>dozing</b></p> <p>lightly sleeping</p> <p>The Necklace</p>	<p><b>francs</b></p> <p>French currency</p> <p>The Necklace</p>

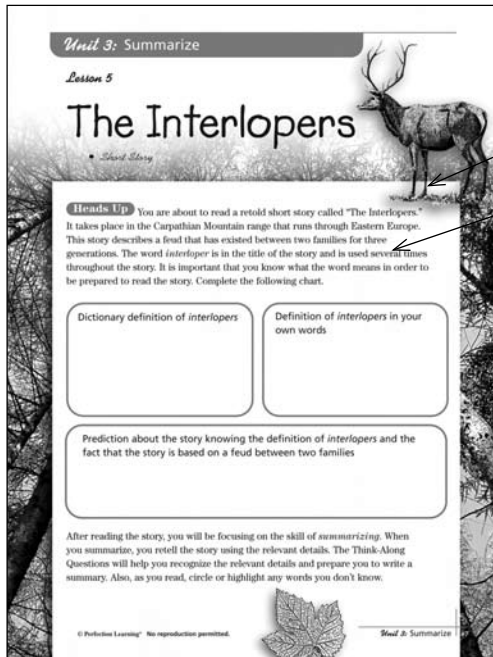
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# Can Students Work Through the *Focus on Reading Strategies* Workbooks Independently?

The *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbooks are written to be completed independently by students. The direct instruction and clear, detailed directions provide explanations and practice of important literacy skills and strategies. Response Keys for introductory activities and workbook lessons follow each Unit Introduction in this teacher guide and can be reproduced for self-correcting.

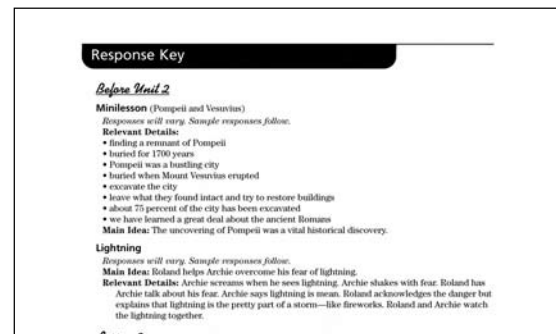
## Student Workbook



Explanation of the featured skill

Detailed directions

## Response Key for introductory activities



## Response Key for Student Workbook lessons



e, but since they weren't there often, the  
in the movie. The garrison, knights,  
the constable. The groom, watchmen,  
is constable.  
ness in a typical castle?"  
today's standards.  
Be  
of meat and bones.

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## **What About Students Reading Above or Below Grade Level?**

Although Levels C–H correspond to grades 3–8, a grade-level designation does not appear on the workbooks. As a result, students can be provided with a workbook at a higher or lower grade level based on their individual needs. English-Language Arts standards cycle up the grades, becoming more challenging as they are based on more difficult reading material. Therefore, students reading above or below grade level can use the *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbooks at their own individual reading level and still practice grade-appropriate English-Language Arts standards.

While the *Focus on Reading Strategies* workbooks are designed to be used independently by students, learning will be enhanced through classroom discussion. Talking about text, whether teacher-directed or student-to-student in partners or small groups, extends and deepens comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Teacher-directed lessons are recommended for struggling readers and English Language Learners. Although all students benefit from classmates' discussion, this discussion is especially beneficial for struggling readers and English Language Learners.

Blackline masters of graphic organizers used in the workbooks are included at the end of this teacher guide. Use these graphic organizers to help struggling or disadvantaged readers extend their use of reading strategies and build comprehension in reading outside their work in *Focus on Reading Strategies*.

At the end of each Unit Introduction, a Jump Start Vocabulary section lists and defines key vocabulary. Preteaching this key vocabulary is critical for English Language Learners, who cannot rely on context clues and general background knowledge to the extent that their English Language peers can.

## **How Long Will It Take to Complete a Unit?**

With a 30- to 40-minute class period, you should be able to cover a unit in two weeks. Shown below is a sample plan.

- Day 1: Unit Introduction and Minilesson
- Day 2: Complete reproducible practice activity and discuss
- Day 3: Heads-Up for first lesson and read selection
- Day 4: Reread selection and complete Make Sense of Words, Read with Understanding, and Understand by Seeing It
- Day 5: Reread selection and complete Write to Learn
- Day 6: Discuss all workbook activities completed for first lesson
- Day 7: Heads-Up for second lesson and read selection
- Day 8: Reread selection and complete Make Sense of Words, Read with Understanding, and Understand by Seeing It
- Day 9: Reread selection and complete Write to Learn
- Day 10: Discuss all workbook activities completed for second lesson

## National Standards for the English-Language Arts

Together NCTE (the National Council of Teachers of English) and IRA (International Reading Association) formulated twelve national standards with the vision that “all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life’s goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society.” These standards do not address specific curriculum or instruction but encourage varied reading and experiences related to reading. *Focus on Reading Strategies* offers a wide range of text and the instruction and practice related to reading, addressing the following eight of the twelve National Standards for English-Language Arts.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

# All About *Focus on Reading Strategies*, Level H

The fiction and nonfiction selections represent a wide variety of interesting reading for students in grade 8.

## **Unit 1: Recognize Persuasive Techniques**

**Lesson 1:** Birmingham

*Speech* by President John F. Kennedy

**Lesson 2:** Cover Craft® Binding

*Advertisement* by Perfection Learning Corporation

## **Unit 2: Find Relevant Details**

**Lesson 3:** Life in a Castle

*Online Interview* by NOVA Online

**Lesson 4:** A Mansion Built for Ghosts

*Narrative Essay* retold by Pat Perrin

## **Unit 3: Summarize**

**Lesson 5:** The Interlopers

*Short Story* by Saki (retold by Beth Obermiller)

**Lesson 6:** What Are Wormholes in Space?

*Expository Essay* by Janet Myers

## **Review 1**

Is Humanity a Special Threat?

*Personal Opinion Essay* by Gregg Easterbrook

## **Listening Comprehension 1**

The Lawyer

*Short Story* by Edward Siegel

*continued*



**Unit 4: Describe Mood**

*Lesson 7:* Preludes

*Poem* by T. S. Eliot

*Lesson 8:* The Flood *from* The Grapes of Wrath

*Novel Excerpt* by John Steinbeck

**Unit 5: Interpret Symbolism**

*Lesson 9:* The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

*Autobiography* by Maya Angelou

*Lesson 10:* The Necklace

*Short Story* by Guy de Maupassant (retold by Paula J. Reece)

**Unit 6: Analyze Tone**

*Lesson 11:* Little Things Are Big

*Personal Essay* by Jesús Colón

*Lesson 12:* Water everywhere and not a drop to drink (for free)

*Editorial* by Dave Barry

**Review 2**

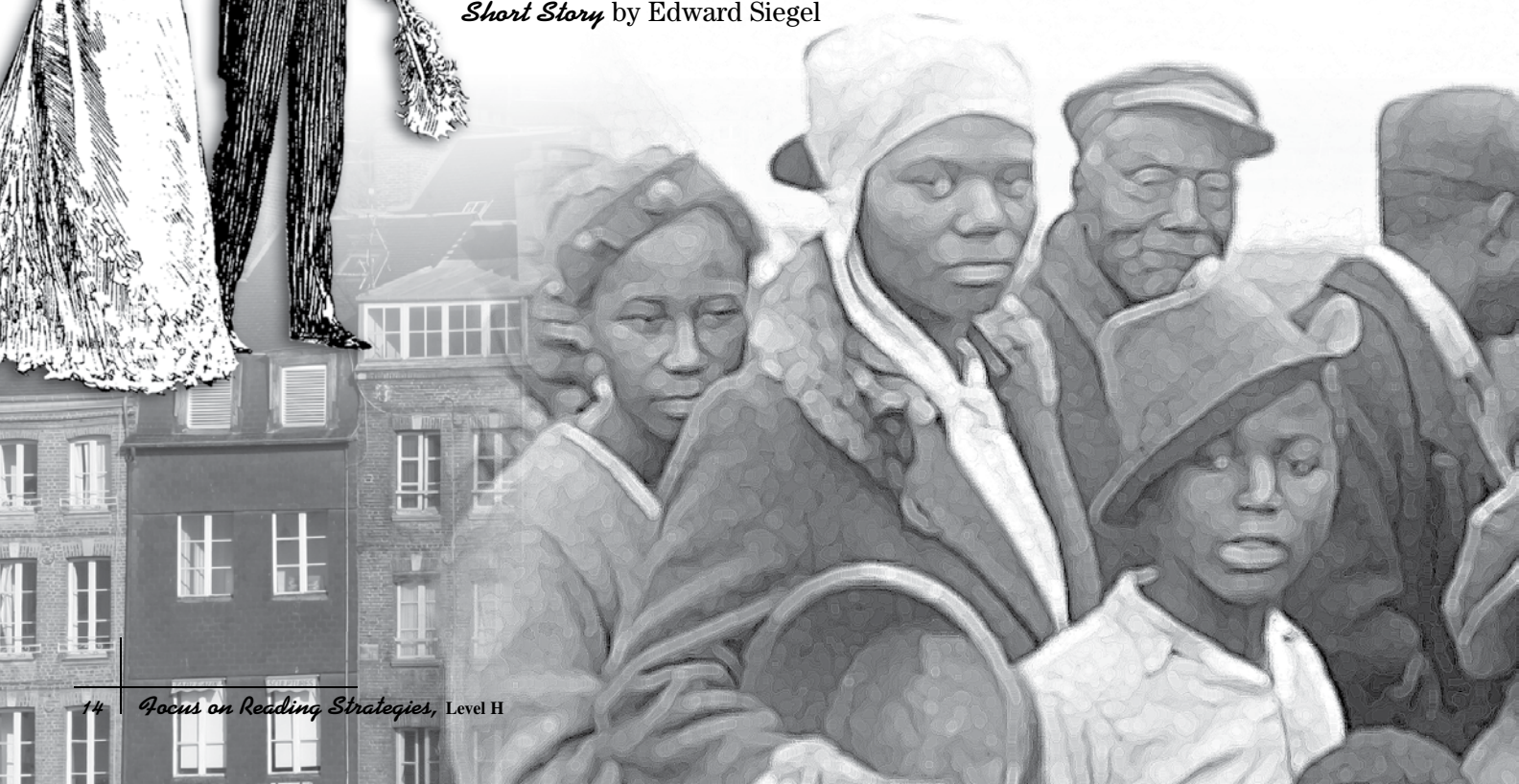
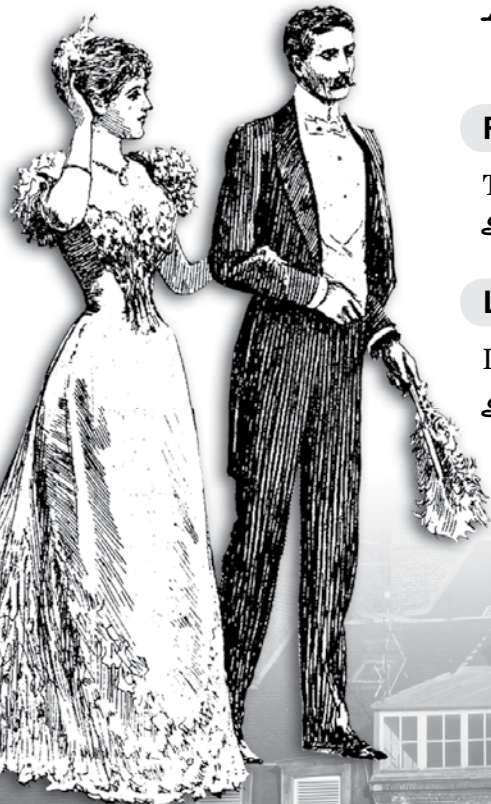
The Knife *from* Paulo's Wall

*Short Story* by Shelly DeSimone (retold by Peg Hall)

**Listening Comprehension 2**

Deliverance

*Short Story* by Edward Siegel



## Unit 5: Interpret Symbolism

Unit 5 focuses on *Interpreting Symbolism*. In literature, a symbol is the use of a word, phrase, or description that suggests some additional meaning beyond what is actually being described. It represents something more than the words themselves. The plot can be thought of as one level of meaning, while the symbolism of certain things in the piece enhances the writing on another level.

### ***Selections Featured***

***Lesson 9*** The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

The symbolism in this excerpt is powerful as the fate of black people everywhere appears to rest on whether Joe Louis maintains the title of heavyweight champion of the world by winning the boxing match people are listening to on the radio.

***Lesson 10*** The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant, retold by Paula J. Reece

After being invited to an elite party, the underprivileged Madame Loisel borrows a necklace for the event and then loses it. The necklace's symbolism becomes apparent when Madame Loisel is faced with the consequences of her greed and vanity.

### **Before the Unit**

#### ***Introduction***

Explain that in literature, a symbol is an object or action that represents some additional meaning beyond the object or action itself. Symbolism can take place when the plot of a story is represented on a physical level such as a transition from winter to spring symbolizing a move from despair to hope. Symbols generally take two forms:

- universal symbols that have widespread, recognizable meanings wherever used, such as a dove to symbolize peace or a heart to symbolize love
- constructed symbols that are given symbolic meaning by the way an author uses them in a specific passage or literary work.

Sometimes authors make the symbolism in a piece of writing very clear and at other times very subtle, where the reader has to interpret what the symbol might stand for using hints from the text as well as his or her own background knowledge.

## ***Minilesson***

*from* The Sculptor's Funeral

### **Materials**

Create an overhead transparency of the text on pages 69–71 to model and practice interpreting symbolism.

### **Procedure**

- Remind the students that they will be looking for the symbolism that the author is trying to convey.
- Ask the students to read the first paragraph. Then model-read the first paragraph, including think-alouds shown below to illustrate the thinking processes that good readers use to interpret symbolism. Point out how the author uses the train and the surroundings to represent the ominous plot. You may want to define the use of *siding* as “a short stretch of track that connects with the main railroad track.” *The men are gathered around waiting for the train, which is already twenty minutes late. The image of the night train contrasts with the white snow covering everything. The men are uneasy, not sure how to act. I wonder if this train symbolizes something ominous.*
- Continue by asking students to read the next six short paragraphs. Discuss with the students what clues give you more of an idea about what is happening. Identify such things as *It's not the first time the men have waited for the train to bring a corpse. The men might be part of an army, having to bury soldiers lost in battle.*
- Ask students to read the next paragraph. Release more responsibility to the students as you act as facilitator. Guide students to see additional details that represent the train: *The distant whistle is called a vibrant scream, a world-wide call for all men.* Ask them to share the mental images and feelings these words create.
- Complete the passage discussing the students' interpretations of the train's symbolism. Have them explain their reasoning. A possible response: *The train symbolizes the death that every man faces.*
- Discuss with students that not everything in a story is necessarily symbolic. Only when something is contrasted with another thing does it suggest additional meaning.

## ***Reproducible Practice***

*from* Anthem for Doomed Youth

Use the reproducible poem excerpt on page 72 for further practice on *interpreting symbolism*.

## *from The Sculptor's Funeral*

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A group of the townspeople stood on the station siding of a little Kansas town, awaiting the coming of the night train, which was already twenty minutes overdue. The snow had fallen thick over everything; in the pale starlight the line of bluffs across the wide, white meadows south of the town made soft, smoke-coloured curves against the clear sky. The men on the siding stood first on one foot and then on the other, their hands thrust deep into their trousers pockets, their overcoats open, their shoulders screwed up with the cold; and they glanced from time to time toward the southeast, where the railroad track wound along the river shore. They conversed in low tones and moved about restlessly, seeming uncertain as to what was expected of them. There was but one of the company who looked as though he knew exactly why he was there; and he kept conspicuously apart; walking to the far end of the platform, returning to the station door, then pacing up the track again, his chin sunk in the high collar of his overcoat, his burly shoulders drooping forward, his gait heavy and dogged. Presently he was approached by a tall, spare, grizzled man clad in a faded Grand Army suit, who shuffled out from the group and advanced with a certain deference, craning his neck forward until his back made the angle of a jackknife three-quarters open.

What object or action might have additional meaning?  
What might it symbolize?

"I reckon she's agoin' to be pretty late ag'in tonight, Jim," he remarked in a squeaky falsetto. "S'pose it's the snow?"

"I don't know," responded the other man with a shade of annoyance, speaking from out an astonishing cataract of red beard that grew fiercely and thickly in all directions.

The spare man shifted the quill toothpick he was chewing to the other side of his mouth. "It ain't likely that anybody from the East will come with the corpse, I s'pose," he went on reflectively.

"I don't know," responded the other, more curtly than before.

*continued*



## *from The Sculptor's Funeral* (continued)

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“It’s too bad he didn’t belong to some lodge or other. I like an order funeral myself. They seem more appropriate for people of some reputation,” the spare man continued, with an ingratiating concession in his shrill voice, as he carefully placed his toothpick in his vest pocket. He always carried the flag at the G.A.R. funerals in the town.

The heavy man turned on his heel, without replying, and walked up the siding. The spare man rejoined the uneasy group. “Jim’s ez full ez a tick, ez ushel,” he commented commiseratingly.

What words or phrases give hints about the symbolic meaning the train might have?

Just then a distant whistle sounded, and there was a shuffling of feet on the platform. A number of lanky boys of all ages appeared as suddenly and slimily as eels wakened by the crack of thunder; some came from the waiting room, where they had been warming themselves by the red stove, or half-asleep on the slat benches; others uncoiled themselves from baggage trucks or slid out of express wagons. Two clambered down from the driver’s seat of a hearse that stood backed up against the siding. They straightened their stooping shoulders and lifted their heads, and a flash of momentary animation kindled their dull eyes at that cold, vibrant scream, the world-wide call for men. It stirred them like the note of a trumpet; just as it had often stirred the man who was coming home tonight, in his boyhood.

What other details clarify the train’s symbolism?  
What image do these words create?

The night express shot, red as a rocket, from out the eastward marsh lands and wound along the river shore under the long lines of shivering poplars that sentineled the meadows, the escaping steam hanging in gray masses against the pale sky and blotting out the Milky Way. In a moment the red glare from the headlight streamed up the snow-covered track before the siding and glittered on

*continued*

## *from The Sculptor's Funeral (continued)*

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the wet, black rails. The burly man with the disheveled red beard walked swiftly up the platform toward the approaching train, uncovering his head as he went. The group of men behind him hesitated, glanced questioningly at one another, and awkwardly followed his example. The train stopped, and the crowd shuffled up to the express car just as the door was thrown open, the man in the G.A.R. suit thrusting his head forward with curiosity. The express messenger appeared in the doorway, accompanied by a young man in a long ulster and traveling cap.

“Are Mr. Merrick’s friends here?” inquired the young man.

The group on the platform swayed uneasily. Philip Phelps, the banker, responded with dignity: “We have come to take charge of the body. Mr. Merrick’s father is very feeble and can’t be about.”

**Directions:** Read the poem. Then on the lines below, write what the author is symbolically describing.

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### *from Anthem for Doomed Youth*

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

—Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

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## ***Jump Start Vocabulary***

Preteach key vocabulary to English Language Learners and struggling readers. Without this preteaching, they may be unable to access the concepts. Important vocabulary and relevant definitions are shown below. Discuss the meanings and provide examples. Whenever possible, provide visual clues as well.

### **The Fight *from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings***

**accusations:** claims that somebody has done something wrong or undesirable

**ambrosia:** food of the gods

**ambushed:** unexpectedly attacked from a concealed position

**assent:** agreement

**contender:** competitor in a contest

**cracker:** derogatory slang for a poor white person

**gaiety:** lighthearted feeling

**lynching:** putting someone to death without a trial, usually by hanging

**maimed:** permanently injured rendering a limb unable to move

**ordained:** established something formally

### **The Necklace**

**dozing:** lightly sleeping

**francs:** French currency

**humble:** low in rank or position; plain and simple

**imitation:** copy or likeness

**loan sharks:** people who lend money at excessively high rates of interest

**luxury:** item that is desirable but not essential and often costly or hard to get

**mortgaged:** given to a money lender to hold as a pledge that a loan  
will be repaid

**parlor:** living room set aside for entertaining guests

**waltz:** ballroom dance in which a couple turns continuously while moving  
around the dance floor



## accusations

claims that somebody has done something wrong or undesirable

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## ambrosia

food of the gods

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## ambushed

unexpectedly attacked from a concealed position

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## assent

agreement

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## contender

competitor in a contest

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## cracker

derogatory slang for a poor white person

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## gaiety

lighthearted feeling

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## lynching

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The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## maimed

permanently injured rendering a limb unable to move

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## ordained

established something formally

The Fight *from* I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## dozing

lightly sleeping

The Necklace

## francs

French currency

The Necklace



## **humble**

low in rank or position;  
plain and simple

The Necklace

## **imitation**

copy or likeness

The Necklace

## **loan sharks**

people who lend money at  
excessively high rates of interest

The Necklace

## **luxury**

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but not essential and often  
costly or hard to get

The Necklace

## **mortgaged**

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a pledge that a loan will be repaid

The Necklace

## **parlor**

living room set aside  
for entertaining guests

The Necklace

## **waltz**

ballroom dance in which a  
couple turns continuously while  
moving around the dance floor

The Necklace

# Response Key

## Before Unit 5

### **Minilesson** (from The Sculptor's Funeral)

Responses will vary. Sample response follows.

The train symbolizes the death that every man faces.

### **from Anthem for Doomed Youth**

Responses will vary. Sample response follows.

The author is using gunfire to symbolically describe the music and prayer at a funeral service.

## Lesson 9

### **Make Sense of Words** (page 103)

Responses may vary; suggested responses follow.

I think hewers means . . . people who cut or chop with an ax

because . . . it would have to be something difficult since it says “God Himself hated us” and also it is parallel with “drawers of water”

### **Read with Understanding** (page 104)

1. the fight of the African Americans for equal rights

### **Understand by Seeing It** (page 105)

Responses may vary; suggested responses follow.

#### **Words**

“‘master’s voice’”

“our people falling”

“This might be the end of the world”

“Champion of the world”

#### **Symbolism**

white people as authorities

African Americans losing their fight for freedom

African Americans failing to gain identities

African Americans’ self-worth

## Lesson 10

### **Make Sense of Words** (page 117)

