

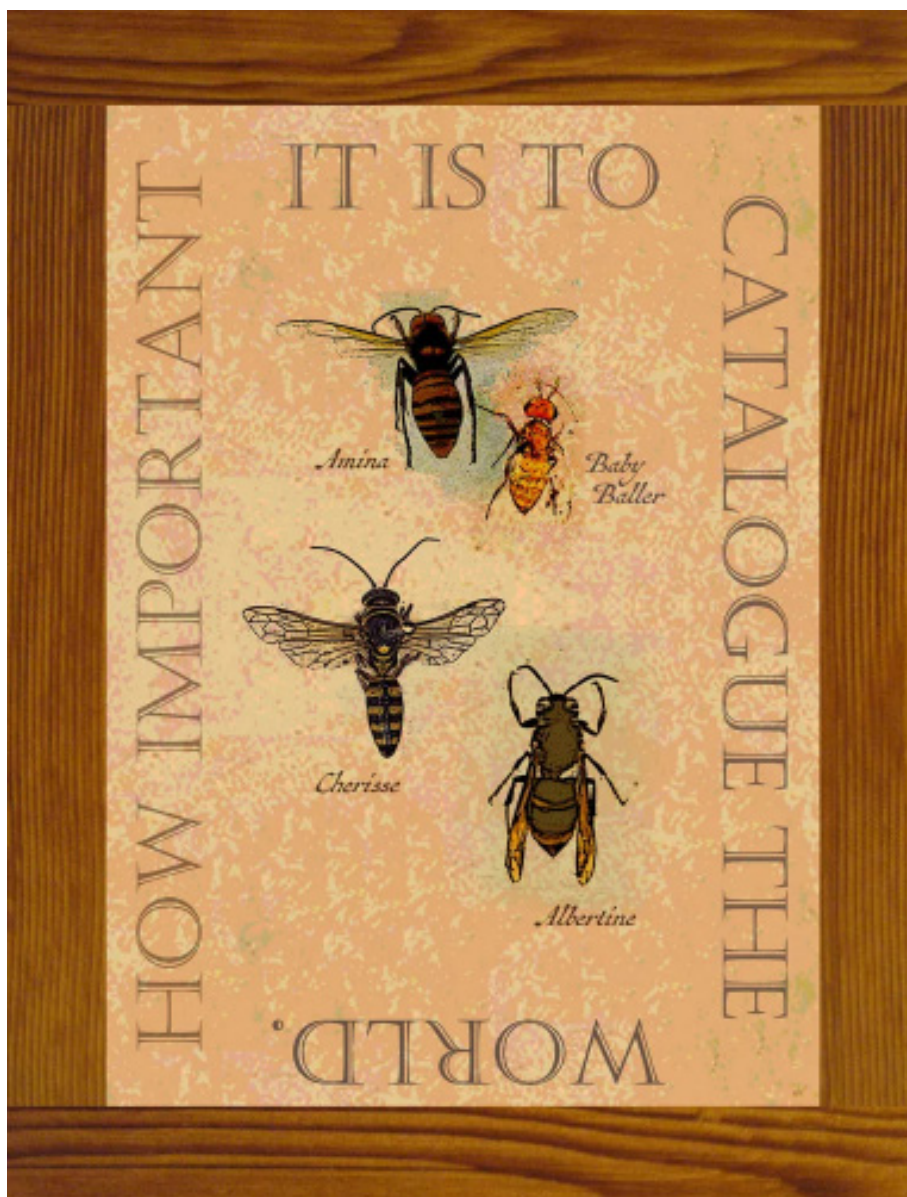
For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn

by **Susan Straight**

Illustration by **J. Michael Walker**

Curriculum developed by **Léna Garcia**

Supplementary curriculum and copy editing by **Athena Villard**



OVERVIEW

Quick Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade Level Appropriateness	* Ages 16+ * Grades 11+
Genre/s	* Fiction * Stream of consciousness
Length	4,047 words
Content Advisories	A pregnant woman and her baby are shot to death.
One Sentence Summary	A grandmother, grieving the death of the pregnant granddaughter whom she raised, meditates on the household objects which tie her family to this Earth.

Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	Topics * Family * Motherhood * Loss * Death * War * Mementos
Topics & Key Themes Overview	Themes * Trauma * Grief * Poverty * Gangs * Gun Violence * Memory * Race * Time
Historic Events / Time Periods for Study	* Sugar-cane plantations in the American south (late 18th century to 1865) * The Vietnam War (1955-1975) * 1970s to contemporary South Central Los Angeles

Lesson Planning	
Complementary Classic and Historic Texts	<p>* Poem: “Stillbirth” by Laure-Anne Bosselaar: http://bit.ly/1o3mgc2 (http://bit.ly/1o3mgc2)</p> <p>* Article: “The (Urban) Legend of Ernest Hemingway’s Six-Word Story: ‘For sale, Baby shoes, Never worn’”: http://bit.ly/1CbggkC (http://bit.ly/1CbggkC)</p>
Author and Artists Information	<p>Susan Straight is an award-winning author living in Riverside, CA.</p> <p>J. Michael Walker is the founding Locavore Lit LA artist and lives in Los Angeles, CA.</p>
Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2</p>

Author Biography

Susan Straight was born in Riverside and still lives there with her family. (She can actually see the hospital from her kitchen window, which her daughters find kind of pathetic; most days, she walks the dog past the classroom where she wrote her first short story at 16, at Riverside City College, which they find even more sad.) She has published seven novels and one middle-grade reader. *Highwire Moon* was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2001; *A Million Nightingales* was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize in 2006. Her short stories have appeared in *Zoetrope: All-Star*, *The Ontario Review*, *The Oxford American*, *The Sun*, *Black Clock*, and other magazines. “The Golden Gopher,” from *Los Angeles Noir*, won the Edgar Award in 2007; “El Ojo de Agua,” from *Zoetrope: All-Star*, won an O. Henry Award in 2007. Her essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Family Circle*, *Salon*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *The Nation*, and other magazines. She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to work on *Highwire Moon*, and a Lannan prize was an immense help when working on *Take One Candle Light a Room*.

Artist Biography

J. Michael Walker is the founding artist of Locavore Lit LA and an exhibiting artist since 1984. J. Michael Walker has participated in more than 100 exhibitions; received a dozen grants, fellowships and residencies; and enjoyed solo shows at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard; el Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, Mexico City; the National Museum of Catholic Art and History, East Harlem, New York City; and the Arkansas Arts Center; among others. As a writer, J Michael is author-illustrator of *All the Saints of the City of the Angels: Seeking the Soul of L.A. on Its Streets* (Heyday 2008), which was awarded Art Book of the Year and Best Non-fiction on the Pacific West; and is co-editor of *Waiting for Foreign: LA Writers on (and in) Guadalajara* (Peregrino Press 2010).

SYNOPSIS

A grandmother, grieving the shooting death of the pregnant granddaughter whom she raised, meditates on the household objects which tie her family to this Earth. In the neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles, this stream-of-consciousness fiction narrative presents an intimate portrait of motherhood, memory, and time.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic and Main Ideas

Mini Research Project: In pairs, research a war fought by the United States. When, where, and why did it take place? Who fought the war, and did they have a choice? Create a mini presentation, which answers the following questions, to share with the class:

What were the consequences—social, psychological, economic, environmental—of the war?

What, if anything, changed after the war and for whom?

How did the war affect the identity of the people who fought? Did it divide and/or unify or do neither?

How was the war fought? What kind of weapons—machine guns, chemical weapons, nuclear weapons—were used and why?

Follow-up Discussion Activity: Is it human nature to go to war? Why or why not? Discuss as a class.

Passage-Specific Themes

Read the following excerpt from the story:

Pernell would shoot them. But he wouldn't even know who to shoot. In Seven Oaks he'd crouched in the canefields when they burned. He'd shoot rabbits, and Albertine had pulled off the skins.

Journaling Activity: In a 10-minute journal entry, write a character profile of Pernell based on what you know about his life from the above passage.

Universal Themes

Writing Activity: In a five- to eight-sentence paragraph, which you will not be asked to share, describe a time when you have grieved.

Small-Group Activity: In small groups, brainstorm a list of the different ways people deal with grief. Divide the list into healthy and not so healthy coping mechanisms.

Next, create an illustrated coping guide, including thoughts, actions, and activities that may help a person who is navigating loss. You may draw on your own experiences, as well as reputable research. Post the guides around the classroom.

Key Vocabulary

Definitions are very context-dependent. Make sure that any definitions you look up or work from are the ones that most correctly fit in the context of the story.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
baller	bougainvillea	bassinet
gumbo	perpetual	shorn
Oaxaca	ember	prostate
burgundy	canefields	entomology
fireflies	velour	chifforobe
Nike Shox	Smithsonian Institute	bowfront

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
arthritis	elfin	Seven Oaks Plantation
	phlebotomist	Buster Browns
	housecoat	W Hotel
	Ernest Hemingway	lantana

Vocabulary Activity Options

1. What is gumbo? Research the dish's history and the story told by each regional variation. Next, create your own gumbo recipe. What would you add or remove to tell your own story through the dish?

Bonus: Prepare your own gumbo recipe as a class. Write a one- to two-page essay about the experience of making the dish. In your essay, be sure to explain how your chosen ingredients tell the class' story.

2. In pairs, research the phlebotomist profession. How, exactly, are phlebotomists trained to draw blood? How do they test and analyze the blood samples, and what do these tests tell them about patients' health?

Option: Invite a phlebotomist to come and speak with the class about what she does and what drew her to the profession. Ask students to prepare questions ahead of time.

3. In small groups, design your own pair of Nike Shox. Next, create a brochure, social media page, or another material to market the shoes. Assign the following roles to group members: designer (designs the shoes), copywriter (creates the copy advertising the shoes), and editor (ensures the copy is proofread and error-free).

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Who do you think shot Amina and why?
2. Why do you think Jhamal closed the car door after Amina was shot? Why do you think he left her to die?
3. Do you think Albertine will finally move to a condo in Fontana? Why or why not?

Text-Dependent Question Options

1. Why do you think Albertine raised her granddaughter, Amina, for her daughter, Cherisse? What might be Albertine's history with Cherisse?

2. Why do you think Albertine's Regal was "towed away by the police"? Cite the text.
3. Why does Josefina think Albertine should keep the Nike Shox? Cite the text.
4. How do you think Albertine's youth at Seven Oaks Plantation shaped her character?
5. What is a stream of consciousness narrative? How do Albertine's free associations allow the reader to better understand her story?
6. Why do you think artist Michael J. Walker chose to illustrate the story with this quote from Cherise and Cherise's character with a wasp? Why do wasps matter in the story? Cite the text.
7. How does author Susan Straight's nontraditional grammar change how the reader experiences her story?

Writing Exercise Options

Narrative

Option One: Imagine you are Jhamal. In a thorough, one-page narrative essay, tell the story of the shooting from your perspective. Include as many sensory details as you can imagine. What did the gunshots sound like, and did you get a glimpse of who fired them? What did Amina look like in the passenger seat, and what were you thinking when you closed the passenger door and ran away?

Option Two: Meditate on the story's title, "For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn." Next, read the following article from *Open Culture*, "The (Urban) Legend of Ernest Hemingway's Six-Word Story: 'For sale, Baby shoes, Never worn': <http://bit.ly/1CbggkC> (<http://bit.ly/1CbggkC>). No matter whom the six-word story is attributed to, how does Straight's title tell a story in six words? Try your hand at writing your own six-word story. In your piece of flash fiction, aim to provide the reader with conflict, action, and resolution, as does a successful short story. Share your story with the class.

Descriptive

Option One: In a five- to eight-sentence paragraph, describe Albertine's house. In this concise paragraph, don't try to explain every inch of her home. Rather, focus on one aspect—like the bassinet, the chifforobe, or Albertine's bedroom—and write a detailed description using concrete images and sensory language to create a sense of place.

Option Two: When Amina is pregnant, why doesn't her baby "drown" in her uterus, as Albertine asks in the story? In a thorough, five- to eight-sentence paragraph, in which you cite at least one reputable source, describe precisely how a baby survives inside the womb.

Analysis

Write a five-paragraph character analysis of Cherisse. In the essay, evaluate her character traits, role in the story, and conflicts she faces in “For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn.”

Here are some questions to get you started:

- What do Cherisse’s relationships with Albertine and Amina tell us about Cherisse’s character?
- Why do you think Straight chose to include Cherisse’s character in the story?
- Do you think Cherisse changes or stays the same over the course of the story?

Complementary Reading Text Option

In the poem “Stillbirth,” the speaker imagines her stillborn daughter were still alive. In “For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn,” Albertine writes about a great-grandson who is killed before he is born.

Stillbirth

By Laure-Anne Bosselaar

On a platform, I heard someone call out your name:

No, Laetitia, no.

It wasn’t my train—the doors were closing,
but I rushed in, searching for your face.

But no Laetitia. No.

No one in that car could have been you,
but I rushed in, searching for your face:
no longer an infant. A woman now, blond, thirty-two.

No one in that car could have been you.
Laetitia-Marie was the name I had chosen.
No longer an infant. A woman now, blond, thirty-two:
I sometimes go months without remembering you.

Laetitia-Marie was the name I had chosen:
I was told not to look. Not to get attached—
I sometimes go months without remembering you.
Some griefs bless us that way, not asking much space.

I was told not to look. Not to get attached.
It wasn't my train—the doors were closing.
Some griefs bless us that way, not asking much space.
On a platform, I heard someone calling your name.

Writing Exercise

Meditate on this line from Bosselaar's poem: "Some griefs bless us that way, not asking much space." How might the poet and Albertine both experience these kinds of grief?

Journal for 15 minutes on the above question, and share your thoughts with a classmate.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

Part One: Handwrite a letter to a loved one who has died. If you haven't lost a loved one, you may write to a well-known public figure—like an artist, activist, or scholar—who has passed. You won't be asked to share your letter.

Part Two: Next, handwrite a letter to yourself from the loved one or public figure. How would they respond to what you've told them about your life or your feelings about their death? What advice might they give you?

Classroom Activity Two

Bring in several mementos, like a keychain souvenir, snow globe, or a seashell. Set a timer for 10 minutes, and ask students to write the first draft of a poem about one of the objects.

Next, ask students to write for another 10 minutes about another memento. Repeat the exercise until students have written a poem about each object. In pairs, share the drafts.

Follow-up Journaling Activity: In a five-minute journal entry, respond to the following question: Why do you think we place meaning in mementos?

Home Activity

Option One: In many Latin American countries, on Day of the Dead, people honor their dead relatives by creating ofrendas, or altars, inside the family home. Traditionally, these ofrendas are decorated with photographs, calaveras (skulls) made of sugar, pan de muerto (bread of the dead), marigolds, and papel picado (brightly colored tissue paper cut into elaborate patterns).

Create an ofrenda for a loved one who has died. Decorate a shoebox with photographs and memories of the person, including mementos—like Albertine collects—the person’s favorite foods, and any other traditional or untraditional decorations you choose. Share your ofrenda with the class.

Option Two: Investigate the statistics on gun violence in South Central Los Angeles and in the United States. Are most gun-related deaths perpetrated by convicted criminals and terrorists or by family and friends, people the victim knows?

Write a two-paragraph response, which you will bring to class, as preparation for an in-class discussion.

Teacher’s Note: Encourage students to support their argument with data from reputable sources, like the U.S. Department of Justice report on firearm violence: <http://bit.ly/2sqA5sg>. (<http://bit.ly/2sqA5sg>)

Guest Speaker

Option One: Invite the author and/or the illustrator to come and speak with the class about this project, their creative processes, and their current endeavors.

Option Two: Invite an entomologist to come and speak with the class about her career path, her job, and why it matters. Ask students to research the field of entomology beforehand and prepare specific questions.

Field Trip

Visit the Entomology Department at UC Riverside. Arrange to sit in on an undergraduate introduction to entomology class, speak with a student about their research, or interview a professor about the department’s history and its contributions to the field of entomology. Remind students to take notes. Ask if it is all right to take photographs.

Follow-up Writing Exercise: Imagine you are a journalist who has been asked to profile UCR’s Entomology Department. Write a one- to two-page article about the department’s history and its contributions to the field of entomology. Supplement your article with your own background research, and be sure to include quotations from the students and professors with whom you spoke, as well as any photographs you took.

TEST PREPARATION COMPONENT

Background

In “For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn,” Albertine’s thoughts hover around the act of shooting a gun. Her husband, a soldier in the Vietnam War, was killed in combat, and her pregnant granddaughter was a victim of what appeared to be gang- related gun violence.

Writing Exercise

Why do you think Albertine, with her multitude of losses, is so fixated on the act of shooting a gun? Give a two-paragraph analysis of her frame-of-thought in regard to her loss. Cite the text.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11-12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.C: Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5: Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A: Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A: Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C: Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E: Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Complementary Reading Text Writing Exercise

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A: Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6: Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.