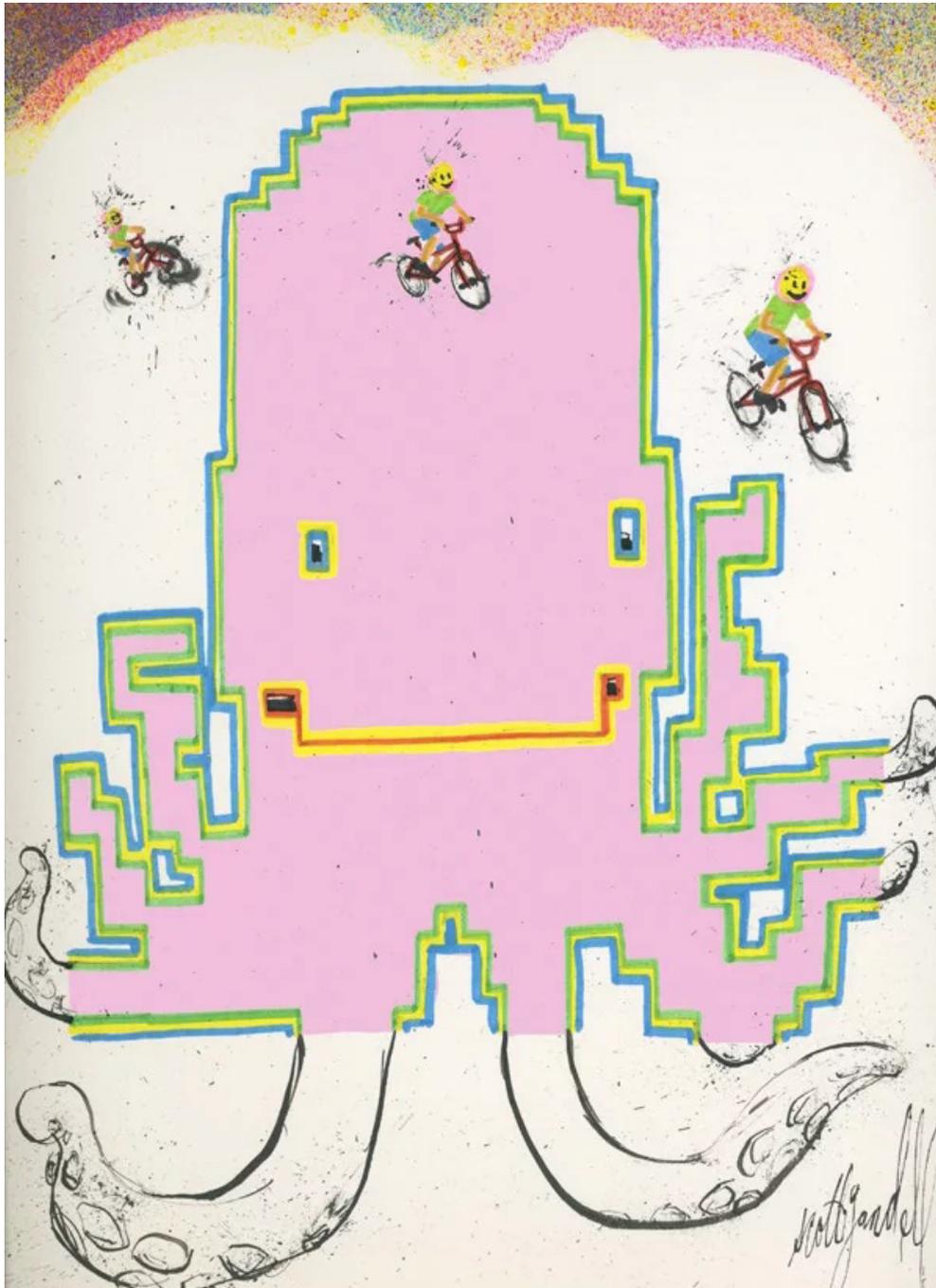


1181 Durfee Avenue: 1983 to 1986

Written by **Michael Jaime-Becerra**

Illustrated by **Scott Gandell**



OVERVIEW

Quick Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade Level Appropriateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ages 13 and up * Grades 8 and up
Genre/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nonfiction * Memoir * Narrative
Length	2,110 words
Content Advisories	Mild profanity
One Sentence Summary	Set against the backdrop of Southern California in the 1980s, this second-person narrative reveal show the author’s love of riding his bicycle and playing video games at local arcades are the foundational experiences of his transition, through independence and freedom, from childhood into adolescence and later adulthood.

Lesson Planning	
Topic/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Adolescence * Video Games * Californian middle class in the 1980s
Key Theme/s Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Coming-of-age * Independence * Joy of childhood * Nostalgia
Historic Events / Time Period for Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evolution of video games * The 1980s * Decline of the Cold War * Space Shuttle program

Lesson Planning	
Complementary Classic and Historic Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Tom Sawyer</i> by Mark Twain * “Slam, Dunk, & Hook” by Yusef Komunyakaa (poem) Music video “Old Bike” by Rob Cantor: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Z4iWAnrMGU * Film E.T.
Author and Artists Information	<p>Michael Jaime-Becerra, a native of El Monte, CA, is a novelist, short story writer, and poet.</p> <p>Scott Gandell is a Los Angeles-based professional artist.</p>

Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4.A, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4.C, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4.D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5.B, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.C, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5.A, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.A, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.B, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.C, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.6</p>
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Author Biography

Michael Jaime-Becerra has received both the International Latino Book Award and a California Book Award. He started out writing poetry and now writes both short stories and novels, including *This Time Tomorrow*. He teaches creative writing at the University of California, Riverside.

Artist Biography

Scott Gandell is a professional illustrator, printmaker, and an entrepreneur. He is a past president of The Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles, and is an alumnus of Art Center College of Design in Pasade-

na. Scott's work has been published in magazines, newspapers, and books. His work has also been exhibited in galleries in the U.S. and Canada and has been acquired by clients and collectors worldwide.

SYNOPSIS

Michael loves three things: BMX bikes, comic books, and playing video games. In this second person point of view account, the narrator guides us through the scenes, people, and geography that make up the landscape of his childhood before he leaves it forever to become a teenager. He reflects with fond nostalgia on the freedom of riding his bike in an eastern suburb of Los Angeles on chilly Saturday mornings, and heading for the local arcades to play beloved video games. Traveling from his parents' home, where his mother runs a makeshift beauty-parlor — diligently avoided by his father — Michael rides along streets and avenues to the arcades, entertainment centers, and corner stores that are home to his favorite pastime. The details of his faithful weekend journeys are lovingly catalogued through the eyes of childhood prior to the advent of the Internet and cell phones. The time period is one in which a kid is still able to fully immerse himself in the present moment — enough to notice the chemical smells of the hair products, the riverbed rain puddles filled with leaves and twigs, and the hypnotizing glow of the video game screens.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

In a journal entry, spend 5-10 minutes answering the following prompt:

What do you think are the fundamental differences between video/computer games and all other games prior to the invention of computers? Consider the difference in the way games are played. What is required for analog games (e.g. board games and party games) versus computer games? How long does each category of game take? Who does one play with? How may these differences affect our ideas about how to interact with each other?

Optional activity extension: In a post-journaling class conversation, share some of your answers with the class. Discuss the ideas that came up in the writing. Can you draw any conclusions or come to a class consensus about the differences between analog games and video/computer games? Do these differences tell us anything about U.S./Californian society today versus the society of the past?

Main Ideas

“1181 Durfee Avenue” incrementally builds up a picture for the reader of Michael’s childhood Saturdays by gently laying out each specific sensory detail of his ritual journey. He is writing about the everyday activities of a pre-adolescent in the 1980s. Why and how does the author make such seemingly mundane places and things seem important, mythical even?

In a short response (one to three strong, thoughtful paragraphs), reflect on a ritual activity that is important to you but might seem insignificant or uninteresting to someone else. With the same reverence the narrator shows in the story, describe a place, object, or activity that was or is extremely important to you. Include sensory details that will allow the reader to imagine what you are talking about clearly, and use language that shows your fondness for your subject. Also include at least a few sentences analyzing and explaining why it is important to you.

Passage-Specific Themes

Read the following passage from “1181 Durfee Avenue”:

“At this point, you’re too young to notice girls, though you already sense that unless you’re on a date or need to entertain younger cousins, you won’t ever really give a shit about mini golf. Instead you will commit the location of the video games inside the arcade to memory. Wall after wall of them, the space dimly lit by the flashing screens of the machines, the air somehow smoky in your recollection. To be at Golfland is to do something outside of your parents’ approval. This is your first taste of rebellion. The thrill feels seedy and vaguely self-destructive, the nascent equivalent of being in a casino, a nudie bar, and a street fight all at once. Each week, you are drawn there with the sort of magnetic, gravitational pull experienced by wayward meteors and doomed astronauts returning to Earth.”

This passage helps the reader gauge the narrator’s age. How does it help us understand that he is maturing into adolescence? Cite specific phrases and sentences from the passage that show he is growing up. You can do this in a one to two-paragraph written response or as part of a small group discussion. (Teacher’s choice).

Universal Themes

Ernest Hemingway once said, “In order to write about life you first must live it.” Do you agree with this statement? Conduct a class discussion.

Optional activity extension: How is that quote related to “1181 Durfee Avenue”? How has this writer taken personal experience and used it to create tension and excitement in the narrative? In a short essay

response, cite specific places in the text that support your answers. This question can also be completed as part of a small group or class discussion. (Teacher’s choice).

Key Vocabulary

Use these terms and choose from the Vocabulary Activities to expand students’ vocabulary and story understanding.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
seized	unwieldy	estranged
compulsive	remotely	nascent
redemptive	veer	acrid
adjacent	stagnant	eddies
preoccupied	rapturous	joystick
unceasing	looming	incremental
salivating	dispatches	pixilated
intriguing	relentless	cacophony
devastating	taunting	

Vocabulary Activities

1. Much of the listed vocabulary is drawn from the narrator’s mental and emotional state. How does Michael feel about his world and his life? Look at the following terms in particular: “compulsive,” “redemptive,” “preoccupied,” “intriguing,” “devastating,” “rapturous,” “relentless,” “estranged,” and “nascent.” First, look up any words that you do not know well. How do these words give the story energy and passion? Discuss in a short essay response.
2. Figurative language refers to vocabulary that engages one of the senses and is used by authors to give the reader the feeling of being in the story. List the words and phrases from “1181 Durfee Avenue” that engage one of the senses through figurative language.
3. Identify and list all of the video game titles in “1181 Durfee Avenue.” Do the names reveal anything about the nature or themes of the games themselves? As a class, speculate on the nature of the games and share if you’ve played any of them. As an extended-activity option, have briefly re-search/find these 1980s games online and try your hand at playing them. Analyze then either write about or discuss the differences between these games from the 1980s and today’s popular video games.

4. Where is the story set? What words or phrases in the text establish and shape the setting? Make a list and share the terms that define setting with the class. Compare and discuss your lists.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Do you play video/computer games? If yes, which ones? Why do you like them? Why are video games so popular compared to other kinds of analog games? Do you play board games or live action role-playing (LARP) games? Hold a class debate on the pluses and minuses of computer/video games versus these other types of games.
2. The author says that he chooses a moment when his mother is busy to tell her he'll "be right back." Why does he trick his mother? Have you ever done something like this? Why
3. Why does the author use the second person to tell the story? What effect does that rhetorical style have on reader understanding?

Text-Dependent Questions

1. This personal essay is set in the 1980s. Provide three textual examples of ways that being a kid in the 1980s was different from being a kid today. Next, find two descriptions within the text which show similarities between childhood then versus childhood today.
2. Why is Michael's Saturday bicycle pilgrimage to the arcades so significant for him?
3. Do the narrator and his friends have more or less freedom than American youth today? Cite evidence from both the text and your own experiences as evidence for your response. Do you feel youth should have more freedom? If so, why do you feel that way?
4. What evidence does the narrator give that he and his friends are on the cusp of transitioning into adulthood? Cite specific places in the text to support your answers.
5. The second-person point of view is rarely used by writers. Why do you think the author chose to use the second-person, and how does it increase the impact of the story on you, the reader?
6. Look at the story's artwork. Why do you think the artist chose to portray the kids on bicycles with happy faces? What does the octopus symbolize?

Writing Exercises

Narrative

Write about an activity you enjoy, or used to enjoy, and describe how it is done. Write your entire narrative in the second person.

OR

Write a narrative description of your regular journey. It can be about your daily path to, through, or from school, your weekend, or some activity you engage in on a frequent basis. It could be part of a journey you take now or something you used to do all the time when you were younger. Once you have selected what/when to write about, include sensory details that bring the reader into the story, and use the second-person perspective.

Descriptive

Describe a video game the way the author described *Punch Out*. Use descriptive phrases to explain the sights, sounds, objectives, and obstacles one encounters while playing this game. (If you do not ordinarily play video games, look a few up see how they are played. Then use your imagination to write about one you researched.)

Analysis

Do you think the author's experiences playing video games as a young person helped him in later life? Why or why not? In a short essay response, provide examples of skills and habits the author learned from his love and pursuit of video game playing that might be useful in adulthood.

OR

What other hobbies, besides video games, do teenagers enjoy that parents typically don't like? Why do parents worry about these activities, and why do teenagers do them anyway? Write about this subject in a short essay response.

OR

What does it mean to become immortal through your achievements? Write an essay comparing and contrasting how the narrator seeks to achieve immortality through winning the game.

Complementary Reading Text

Writing Exercise

Compare and contrast how the authors use their childhood hobbies as an escape from everyday life in "1181 Durfee Avenue" and in "Slam, Dunk, & Hook." How do the authors explain their need to pursue these activities? What role do video games or basketball games fulfill in their lives?

Slam, Dunk, & Hook*By Yusef Komunyakaa*

Fast breaks. Lay ups. With Mercury's
Insignia on our sneakers,
We outmaneuvered to footwork
Of bad angels.
Nothing but a hot
Swish of strings like silk
Ten feet out. In the roundhouse
Labyrinth our bodies
Created, we could almost
Last forever, poised in midair
Like storybook sea monsters.
A high note hung there
A long second. Off
The rim. We'd corkscrew
Up & dunk balls that exploded
The skullcap of hope & good
Intention. Lanky, all hands
& feet...sprung rhythm.
We were metaphysical when girls
Cheered on the sidelines.
Tangled up in a falling,
Muscles were a bright motor
Double-flashing to the metal hoop
Nailed to our oak.
When Sonny Boy's mama died
He played nonstop all day, so hard
Our backboard splintered.
Glistening with sweat,
We rolled the ball off
Our fingertips. Trouble
Was there slapping a blackjack
Against an open palm.
Dribble, drive to the inside,
& glide like a sparrow hawk.
Lay ups. Fast breaks.
We had moves we didn't know
We had. Our bodies spun
On swivels of bone & faith,

Through a lyric slipknot
Of joy, & we knew we were
Beautiful & dangerous.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

Using construction paper and markers or paint, design the cover art for a video game. Draw the hero and the main screen. Write a description of the game to post next to your design that includes the following:

- * What are the visualized characters and elements of the game?
- * What is the game's objective?
- * What are the obstacles in the game?
- * What is the twist?

Post the game designs and descriptions in the classroom as an exhibit. Ask the students to take turns presenting their games to the class.

Work in teams of three or four students to brainstorm, design, and create a guidebook or advice book for pre-adolescents about how to navigate and survive the road to being a young adult.

Consider: What is the most important knowledge, advice, and insight you can give to younger kids that might save them some of the problems and challenges you have gone through?

Avoid the temptation to try to be too humorous or cute. Give real and meaningful advice.

Of course you will not be able to complete an entire book, but do come up with a table of contents, chapter list, and complete at least three full sections of one to three pages each.

Classroom Activity Two

Reflect in your journal on the following two questions:

- * What brings you joy?

* What makes you feel obsessed?

Now, watch the film *The Last Starfighter*.

How does the main character's obsession bring him joy? How is this similar to Michael's obsession and how is it different?

Home Activity

Objects that are closely tied to a specific activity or time in our lives often come to signify the activity itself. They become artifacts from that time in our lives. Bring to class (or bring a picture of) an old object, game, or toy that was very important to you when you were younger. Describe how, when, and where you used it and what it makes you think about when you see it today. Share this information out in small groups.

Guest Speaker

Invite a video game designer, writer, or programmer to speak with the class about their work and why and how they got into their career.

OR

Author Michael Jaime-Becerra and artist Scott Gandell are both Los Angeles locals. Invite the author and/or artist to speak with your class. Jaime-Becerra can speak about experiences and inspiration for the story, and Grandell can talk about his visual interpretation of the story.

Field Trip

Take a class trip to a 1980s style video game arcade (many exist and can be found via a Google search) OR tour a 1980s-style arcade games store in Los Angeles (e.g., the Vintage Arcade Superstore: <http://www.vintagearcade.net>).

OR

Take a class trip to a miniature golf course.

TEST PREPARATION COMPONENT

Activity:

Look up the word “sanctuary.” Create a list of several different sanctuary places a person may visit in Los Angeles County, as well as the qualities that make someplace a sanctuary. Who would visit each location and for what reason? What is required to enter each place?

Writing Prompt:

In a two-paragraph response, explore how Golfland becomes a sanctuary for the speaker in Michael Jaime-Becerra’s “1181 Durfee Avenue.” What does the speaker stand to gain from playing games at Golfland? In your own words, define for your reader what constitutes a sanctuary.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 8-12th grade. Eighth-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4.A Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4.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 or its part of speech.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4.D Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5.B Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.C Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.D Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5.A Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.A Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.B Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.C Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from onetime frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.D Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

Complementary Reading Text Writing Exercise

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.5 Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.