

California's ELA/ELD Framework
SEVENTH GRADE

ELA/Literacy and ELD in Action in Grade Seven

Both the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards acknowledge the importance of reading complex texts closely and thoughtfully to derive meaning. In addition, reading texts multiple times can reveal layered meanings that may not present themselves during a single reading. In order to support their students to comprehend specific complex texts, as well as to support their abilities to read closely in general, teachers should prepare close reading lessons carefully and purposefully before teaching. Teachers should select challenging and interesting texts that are worth spending the time on reading and rereading. Teachers should read the texts ahead of time in order to determine why they might be challenging for all students and for particular students (including ELs and students with disabilities), and plan a sequence of lessons that build students' abilities to read the text with increasing understanding and independence. This requires teachers to analyze the cognitive and linguistic demands of the texts, including the sophistication of the ideas or content of the text, students' prior knowledge of the content, and the complexity of the vocabulary, sentences, and organization of the text, not to mention the purpose for reading particular texts.

During instruction, teachers should model how to read texts closely by thinking aloud, highlighting the comprehension questions they ask themselves as they read and the language, as well as ideas that stand out to them. Teachers should provide concrete methods for students to read more analytically and guide them to frequently read complex texts using these methods with appropriate levels of scaffolding. Seventh graders need many opportunities to read a wide variety of complex texts and to discuss the texts they read.

Importantly, for English learners, teachers should explicitly draw attention to text structure and organization and to particular elements of language (e.g., text connectives, long noun phrases, types of verbs, and verb tenses) in the complex texts that helped the author convey particular meanings. Examples of specific elements of language are using text connectives to create cohesion (e.g., *for example*, *suddenly*, *in the end*); long noun phrases to expand and enrich the meaning of sentences (e.g., "The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder." [NGA/CCSSO 2010a: Appendix B, 91]); and complex sentences which

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combine ideas and convey meaning in specific ways (e.g., “Because both Patrick and Catherine O’Leary worked, they were able to put a large addition on their cottage despite a lot size of just 25 by 100 feet.” [NGA/CCSSO 2010a: Appendix B, 94]).

Providing English learners with opportunities to discuss the language of the complex texts they are reading enhances their comprehension of the texts while also developing their awareness of how language is used to make meaning.

Lesson planning should look ahead to year-end and unit goals and incorporate the framing questions in Figure 6.22.

Figure 6.22 Framing Questions for Lesson Planning

Framing Questions for Lesson Planning	
Framing Questions for All Students	Add for English Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the big ideas and culminating performance tasks of the larger unit of study, and how does this lesson build toward them? • What are the learning targets for this lesson, and what should students be able to do at the end of the lesson? • Which clusters of CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy does this lesson address? • What background knowledge, skills, and experiences do my students have related to this lesson? • How complex are the texts and tasks that I will use? • How will students make meaning, express themselves effectively, develop language, and learn content? How will they apply or learn foundational skills? • What types of scaffolding, accommodations, or modifications will individual students need to effectively engage in the lesson tasks? • How will my students and I monitor learning during and after the lesson, and how will that inform instruction? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the English language proficiency levels of my students? • Which CA ELD Standards amplify the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy at students’ English language proficiency levels? • What language might be new for students and/or present challenges? • How will students interact in meaningful ways and learn about how English works in collaborative, interpretive, and/or productive modes?

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ELA/Literacy and ELD Vignettes

The vignettes that follow are intended to provide concrete illustrations of how to implement some of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and CA ELD Standards so that teachers can discuss the examples and use them as they collaboratively plan lessons, extend their learning, and refine their practice.

ELA/Literacy Vignette

Vignette 6.3 illustrates how a teacher might implement the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards during ELA instruction where close reading is the focus of instruction. Vignette 6.4 provides an example of how designated ELD can build from and into the types of lessons outlined in the ELA vignette.

**Vignette 6.3 English Language Arts Instruction in Seventh Grade
“You Are What You Eat:” Close Reading of an Informational Text**

Background

Mrs. Massimo is an English language arts (ELA) teacher and is part of an interdisciplinary team that also includes social studies, science, and math teachers. The team plans lessons together in order to address a variety of genres of literature and informational texts throughout the year, which relate to themes. For the “You Are What You Eat” thematic unit on food, nutrition, and agribusiness, Mrs. Massimo is having her seventh grade students read *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: The Secrets Behind What You Eat (Young Reader’s Edition)* by Michael Pollan. This nonfiction text examines how food is produced in the United States today and what alternatives to those production methods are available. Mrs. Massimo’s seventh grade English class has 32 students, including 2 students with mild learning disabilities, ten English learners at the Expanding level of English language proficiency (most of whom have been in the United States since the primary grades of elementary school), and two English learners at the Emerging level of English language proficiency who have been in U.S. schools for just over a year.

Mrs. Massimo and her team know that middle school is a critical time to prepare students for the increasingly complex texts they will encounter across the disciplines as they progress through secondary schooling. They make strategic decisions about how to address academic literacy in their instruction, and they use the CA ELD Standards to ensure they are attending to the language learning needs of their English learners.

Lesson Context

This lesson occurs in the second week of the unit. Mrs. Massimo has shown students a documentary about processed foods, and the class has engaged in lively discussions about the types of foods they like and/or should be eating to be healthy. In this lesson, she continues to build students’ content knowledge of food and nutrition by focusing on the modern farming industry. She guides them to closely read a short passage from the text by Michael Pollan and facilitates a class discussion about it, prompting them to cite evidence from the text to support their ideas.

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Learning Targets: The students will unpack the meanings in a short text about agribusiness and engage in collaborative conversations about the text.

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: *RI.7.1 - Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text; RI.7.3 - Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events); RI.7.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone; SL.7.1 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.*

CA ELD Standards (Expanding): *ELD.PI.7.1 – Contribute to class, group, and partner discussions; ELD.PI.7.6a – Explain ideas, phenomena, processes, and text relationships based on close reading of a variety of grade-level texts ... with moderate support; ELD.PI.7.6c – Use knowledge of morphology, context, reference materials, and visual cues to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words on familiar and new topics.*

Lesson Excerpts

First, Mrs. Massimo activates her students' background knowledge by reading a short passage aloud as all students follow along with their own copies of the text. The passage is related to what students will read and also contains many of the same words they will encounter (e.g., *agribusiness, fertilizer, chemicals, yield*). This way, Mrs. Massimo intentionally provides her students with modeling of how intonation and prosody for the text sound, as well as how to pronounce unfamiliar words. She also models the use of different types of comprehension strategies, including pointing out general academic and domain-specific vocabulary that is key to understanding the text, asking herself clarifying questions as she reads or stopping to summarize what she's read every so often (i.e., thinking aloud her metacognitive processes).

Next, Mrs. Massimo asks the students to read the next passage independently and to consider some text-dependent questions as they do. She asks them to jot down their responses to the questions, as well as any questions they have about the text and any unfamiliar vocabulary they encounter, in their reading journals. (Previously, Mrs. Massimo has met separately with the two English learners at the Emerging level to ensure they understand the meaning of the questions, as well as to preview the content knowledge embedded in the text they will read.) The questions she asks the students to think about as they read the text for the first time are the following:

- What is this text mostly about?
- What are some key events or details that help us understand what the text is mostly about?
- What are some words necessary for discussing the ideas?

Excerpt from the text (Chapter 3, From Farm to Factory)

It may seem that I've given corn too much credit. After all, corn is just a plant. How could a plant take over our food chain and push out almost every other species? Well, it had some help—from the U.S. Government.

At the heart of the industrial food chain are huge businesses, **agribusinesses**. The same businesses that create new seeds provide farmers with the tools and fertilizer they need to grow lots of corn. Agribusinesses also need cheap corn from which they make **processed food** and hundreds of other products. To get the corn flowing and keep

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it flowing, agribusiness depends on government **regulations** and taxpayer money.

The government started seriously helping corn back in 1947. That was when a huge weapons plant in Muscle Shoals, Alabama switched over to making chemical fertilizer. How can a weapons plant make fertilizer? Because **ammonium nitrate**, the main ingredient in explosives, happens to be an excellent source of **nitrogen**. And nitrogen is one of the main ingredients in **fertilizer**.

After World War II, the government found itself with a tremendous surplus of ammonium nitrate. There was a debate about what the government should do with the leftover bomb material. One idea was to spray it on forests to help out the timber industry. But the scientists in the Department of Agriculture had a better idea: Spread the ammonium nitrate on farmland as fertilizer. And so the government helped launch the chemical fertilizer industry. (It also helped start the **pesticide** industry, since insect killers are based on poison gases developed for the war.)

Chemical fertilizer was needed to grow **hybrid corn** because it is a very hungry crop. The richest acre of Iowa soil could never feed thirty thousand hungry corn plants year after year without added fertilizer. Though hybrids were introduced in the thirties, it wasn't until farmers started using chemical fertilizers in the 1950s that corn yields really exploded.

After students read the text independently, Mrs. Massimo asks them to discuss their notes in triads for five minutes and to come to a consensus on their responses to the questions. This gives them an opportunity to collaboratively unpack the meanings in the text before she narrows in on the key ideas she wants them to focus on next. Mrs. Massimo groups the students into triads, making sure students can work well together and complement each other's strengths and areas for growth (e.g., a student who has an expansive vocabulary paired with one student who is a good facilitator and another who has a deep interest in science). She also ensures that the two English learners at the Emerging level are each in a triad with a *language broker*, that is, another student who can support their understanding by using their primary language.

After their small group discussion, Mrs. Massimo pulls all groups together for a whole group discussion. She has prepared some text-dependent questions to facilitate the discussion, which she asks as follow up questions as the groups share out their responses:

- What is agribusiness?
- How did the U.S. government help launch the chemical fertilization industry?
- Why are chemical fertilizers so important and necessary to agribusiness?

As students share out, she charts their responses on the document reader.

Julissa: Our group said this text is mostly about the big businesses that make processed food. They used the chemicals from the weapons factory to make fertilizers for the farms.

Mrs. Massimo: I see. And what word was used in the text to refer to those big businesses that grow food?

Julissa: (Looking at her notes.) Agribusinesses?

Mrs. Massimo: (Writes *agribusiness* on the board.) Yes, let's make sure everyone writes that down in their notes. That term is critical for understanding the meanings in the text we're reading. Based on your understandings, how should we define *agribusinesses*?

Mrs. Massimo guides the class to define the term in their own words, prompting them to refer to their notes and to go back into the text to achieve a precise definition. Here is what the class generates:

Agribusinesses: *Huge companies that do big farming as their business. They sell the seeds, tools, and fertilizer to farmers, and they also make processed foods.*

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Mrs. Massimo continues to facilitate the conversation, prompting the students to provide details about the text, using evidence they cited while reading independently and in their collaborative conversations. She also clarifies any vocabulary that was confusing and that the students were unable to define in their small group discussions. She anticipated certain words that might be unfamiliar to students (bolded words in the text excerpt) and has prepared short explanations for them, which she provides to students.

When students' responses are incomplete or not detailed enough, she prompts them to elaborate.

Mrs. Massimo: Why are chemical fertilizers so important and necessary to agribusiness?

Sandra: They help the food grow.

Mrs. Massimo: Can you say more about that?

Sandra: It has something in it that the crops need to grow. Nitra- (looks at her text) nitrogen. It was in all the ammonium nitrate they had at the weapons factory. And nitrogen helps the plants to grow. So they had all this ammonium nitrate, and they made it into chemical fertilizer, and that helped the corn—the hybrid corn—grow more.

Mrs. Massimo: Okay, so why was it so important for the agribusinesses to have this chemical fertilizer and for the hybrid corn to grow?

Sandra: Because they need a lot of cheap corn to make processed foods.

Most of the meanings of words in this text can be determined from careful reading of the context. As a review during the discussion of the text-dependent questions, Mrs. Massimo reviews how to learn vocabulary from contextual clues. For example, she shows the students the following sentences from the text and explains that the definition of a challenging word can be embedded within the sentence (in an appositive phrase set off by commas), or in a sentence following the challenging word, for example: *Because **ammonium nitrate**, the main ingredient in explosives, happens to be an excellent source of **nitrogen**. And nitrogen is one of the main ingredients in fertilizer.)*

Mrs. Massimo also points out that the connector *because* introduces a dependent clause—that is, a clause that should be combined with a complete sentence—yet here the clause stands alone as a fragment.

Mrs. Massimo: Why do you think the author chose to do this? Take a look at the text and briefly talk with your group. (Waits for 30 seconds.)

Tom: The sentence that comes before it is a question, "How can a weapons plant make fertilizer?" so he's just answering his question.

Mrs. Massimo: Is that the style we usually see in an academic text we're reading?

Tom: No, it seems like he's trying to make it seem like he's having a conversation with us, like he's being more informal.

Mrs. Massimo: Yes, in everyday conversation, responding to a question and starting with *because* is natural. This passage is helping to define unfamiliar terms and concepts by using a more conversational style. That leaves us with an incomplete sentence, but Pollan is making this choice deliberately. He's really thinking about the audience when he chooses to write like that. He wants to connect with them in a more conversational tone. When you're having a conversation, and even when you write sometimes, you can also make that choice. But you also need to consider your audience and remember that usually, when you're writing for school, you need to use complete sentences.

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Next Steps

After the lesson, Mrs. Massimo again pulls aside her two English learners at the Emerging level to ensure they understood the critical points of the text. She reviews their notes in their journal and has a brief discussion with them, clarifying as needed and reinforcing the meanings of some of the vocabulary used that day.

Later on in the unit, Mrs. Massimo will guide the students to write arguments about topics related to the “You Are What You Eat” theme. As they write, the students will use a rubric to ensure that their arguments support their claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence, maintain a formal style, and use appropriate text structure and organization.

Source:

Lesson adapted from the close reading lesson for grade seven at achievethecore.org and the CA ELD Standards, Chapter Five.

Resources

The original lessons and complete reading text are available at:

<http://www.achievethecore.org/page/31/the-omnivore-s-dilemma-the-secrets-behind-what-you-eat-by-michael-pollan>

Achieve the Core has other CCSS-aligned lessons at each grade level as well as student work samples: www.achievethecore.org