*English Instructional Plan – Theme Analysis 6-8*

**Primary Strand: Reading 6.5, 7.5, 8.5**

**Integrated Strand/s: Communication and Multi-modal Literacies 6.1, 7.1, 8.1 Writing, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7**

**Essential Understanding:**

* Understand that the author uses images to craft a message and create characters

**Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes:**

* Determine a theme(s) and explain how it is developed through specific details.
* Explain plot as the development of the central conflict and resolution

**Primary SOL: 6.5a** The student will identify the elements of narrative structure, including setting, character, plot, conflict, and theme. **7.5a** - The student will describe the elements of narrative structure including setting, character development, plot, theme, and conflict and how they influence each other. **8.5a** The students will analyze how authors’ development of characters, conflict, point of view, voice, and tone convey meaning.

**Reinforced (Related Standard) SOL:**

* 6.7 The student will write in a variety of forms, to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective, with an emphasis on narrative and reflective writing.
* **7.7** The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective, with an emphasis on persuasive and expository.
* **8.7** The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective, with an emphasis on persuasive and expository.

**Academic Background/Language:** Students will need to understand theme and be familiar with vocabulary related to the elements of plot, including conflict, exposition, initiating event, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

## Materials:

* Suggested text for modeling: *Babushka’s Doll*, by Patricia Polacco, or another picture book or short story with clear plot elements (previously used in the plot lesson)
* Suggested text for classwork: “Eleven,” by Sandra Cisneros, or another short story with a clear theme ([Common Lit Website](https://www.commonlit.org/))
* Theme Scheme questions
* Image of a cross section of an iceberg for display

## Student/Teacher Actions: What should students be doing? What should teachers be doing?

* Teacher will display image of an iceberg as seen above and below water and ask students to consider how the picture could represent the theme of a story. Students will respond in writing and then discuss as a class.
* Teacher will lead students to the idea that the iceberg that shows above the water could represent the events of the story and that the part underneath could represent the theme, which a viewer (or reader) has to take a closer in-depth look at in order to find out what is really going on beneath the surface details.
* Teacher will lead discussion of theme by pointing out that stories are a way of exploring ideas and that the theme represents the lesson that can be learned from a character’s experiences that can be applied to our lives. Teacher will explain that understanding theme has to start with understanding the plot and the central conflict, but the reader has to *analyze* those story events to determine how those situations are relevant in real life.
* Teacher will remind students that themes are not generic topics (like “family” or “growing up”), but statements about those topics that the author makes. (Ex., The story *is* about family, but what is the author *saying* about family?)
* Teacher will introduce the Theme Scheme questions (from *The Handbook of Reading Interventions*, 2013) as two sets of questions that will help students think about a story’s plot and determine its theme. The first four questions will focus us in on the important details from the story that will help us to determine the theme: the main character, the conflict, the resolution.
* Teacher will display the first four questions (part 1 on the handout) and model how to answer them using a picture book read previously, *Babushka’s Doll*. Teacher will state, “*Now that we are clear on the content of our story, we will use the next set of questions to help us to determine the theme. The first two questions will help us think about the consequences of the character’s actions and experiences. Then we will have two sentence starters that will help us come up with theme statements.*”
* Teacher will model answering the two questions (numbers 5-6 on the handout) and then using the two prompts to determine a theme that is specific to the story (number 7 on the handout) and that is applicable to everyone (number 8 on the handout).
* Teacher will point out that we are using these questions explicitly right now, but that gradually they will just become internalized and be a part of the way students analyze theme in their heads.
* Teacher will tell students that they will now try this process out to analyze the theme of “Eleven,” which they read previously. Teacher will direct the students to skim the story so it is fresh in their minds, focusing in on what the main character’s central conflict was and what the character did in response to that conflict.
* Teacher will instruct students to work in partners, to answer questions 1-4. As students work on these questions, teacher will circulate and confer with students as needed.
* Teacher will check in with the whole class at this point to discuss the responses and make sure they are on the right track before moving on to part 2.
* When done, teacher will then instruct students to answer questions 5-8 as they work to determine the theme. Again, teacher will circulate, monitor, and provide support as needed.
* Teacher will bring the class together to discuss their responses and to determine the theme of the story.
* Teacher will ask students to consider (either in writing or via small group discussion) the theme and its relevance to our world by displaying the following prompts: 1. When is it important to (theme)? 2. In what situations is it easy/difficult to (theme)?

**Assessment (Diagnostic, Formative, Summative)**

* Teacher should confer with students as they read the story and answer the questions, prompting them to add in needed detail or coaching them to answer questions with which they struggle.
* Teacher can collect Theme Scheme questions for formative data
* Exit activity can be used to assess student understanding of the specific theme

**Writing Connections:**

* Students will use the theme of the story found today as the starting point for a new narrative that addresses the same or a common theme.

## Extensions and Connections (for all students)

* Later in the unit, students can use the Theme Scheme questions to identify themes of several different stories and share themes found.
* Students can look for examples of this theme in other texts or in real life situations and report back to the class.
* Have students read the start of another story, give them a theme, and have them construct the ending of the story to address that theme. Students can compare their ending with their given theme to the original ending with a different theme.

## Strategies for Differentiation

* Pair readers strategically to provide support for struggling readers
* The sentence stems and questions provide support for determining and explaining the theme. Once students internalize them, they will no longer be needed and can be removed from further theme analysis.
* The teacher may target specific groups of students for support during work conferencing.
* Work with a selected small group while rereading and completing the organizer.

*Note: The following page is intended for classroom use for students as a visual aid to learning.*

Student worksheet containing the following:  Theme Scheme Questions:
Part 1: The story
1. Who is the main character?  Rachel, a student who just turned 11
2. What is the main character's conflict or problem?
3. What did the main character do about the conflict?
4. And then what happened?
Part 2: The theme
5. Was what happened good or bad?
6. Why was it good or bad?
7. The main character learned that he/she should...
8. We should...