



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# Grade 8: Module 1: Unit 1

## Overview



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## Unit 1: Building Background Knowledge: War Coming Close to Home

In this first unit, students will build their close reading skills as they consider the crisis of war coming close to home. They begin the novel *Inside Out & Back Again*, by Thanhha Lai, focusing on how critical incidents reveal the dynamic nature of Ha, the main character, whose Vietnamese family is deciding whether to flee during the fall of Saigon. The novel is poignantly told in diary entries in the form of short free-verse poems. Students will consider how text structure, figurative language, and specific word choice contribute to a text's meaning as they closely read selected poems. Their study of the novel is paired with reading a rich informational article, "The Vietnam Wars," which gives students key background knowledge about the history of war in Vietnam. Students build their skills using context clues, and also begin the routine of "QuickWrites," receiving explicit instruction and then

practicing writing strong paragraphs in which they effectively cite and analyze text. For their Mid-Unit Assessment, students will analyze how key incidents in the novel reveal Ha's character. In the second half of the unit, students continue to read the novel paired with informational text, as they focus in on critical incidents the character experiences leading up to the fall of Saigon. Students begin to more carefully examine how word choice and tone contribute to the meaning of both informational text and specific poems in the novel. For their End of Unit Assessment, students write two strong paragraphs in which they analyze the word choice, tone, and meaning of two texts (an informational audio text and a poem from the novel).

### Guiding Questions And Big Ideas

- **What is home?**
- **How do critical incidents reveal character?**
- *Critical incidents reveal a character's dynamic nature.*
- *Authors use specific word choice to create tone and enhance meaning.*

### Mid-Unit 1 Assessment

#### Getting to Know a Character: What Details in the Text Help Us Understand Ha?

This assessment centers on standards NYSP12 ELA RL.8.1, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, W.8.9, and L.8.4a. Students will read the poem "Birthday Wishes" from the novel and answer selected-response questions to analyze the poem for the author's word choice, tone, and meaning. Questions will include determining word meaning from context. Students then will write a paragraph in response to the following prompt: "Who is Ha? Based on this poem, "Birthday Wishes," and one other poem you have read so far in the novel, describe Ha as a character: her traits, values, or beliefs. Write a paragraph in which you explain your current understanding of Ha, using specific evidence from the text of both poems to support your analysis."



#### End of Unit 1 Assessment

#### Examining How Word Choice Contributes to Meaning and Tone in Literary and Informational Text

This assessment centers on standards NYSP12 ELA CCLS RL.8.1, RI.8.1, RL.8.4, RI.8.4, and W.8.9. For this reading and writing assessment, students will analyze how the tone of each text contributes to the overall meaning. Students will use their strongest evidence from the poem “Saigon Is Gone” from the novel and the audio text “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell” to write two paragraphs in which they analyze each text in a paragraph. They will respond to the following prompt: “In this text, what is the message each author is intending to convey about the fall of Saigon? Explain how specific word choices help create a tone that contributes to the text’s meaning.”

#### Content Connections

- This module is designed to address English Language Arts standards. However, the module intentionally incorporates Social Studies content. These intentional connections are described below.

#### NYS Social Studies Core Curriculum

##### Social Studies Themes in Context:

##### Individual Development and Cultural Identity

- Role of social, political, and cultural interactions in the development of identity
- Personal identity is a function of an individual’s culture, time, place, geography, interaction with groups, influences from institutions, and lived experiences
- Development, Movement, and Interaction of Cultures
- Role of diversity within and among cultures

#### Central Texts

1. Thanhha Lai, *Inside Out & Back Again* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), ISBN: 978-0-061-96278-3. (Students will read Part 1 during the first unit.)
2. Tod Olson, “The Vietnam Wars,” *Scholastic*, February 24, 1995, 16–20.
3. Joseph Shapiro and Sandra Bartlett, “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell,” transcript, National Public Radio, August 31, 2010.



**This unit is approximately 2.5 weeks or 14 sessions of instruction.**

Lesson	Lesson Title	Long-Term Targets	Supporting Targets	Ongoing Assessment	Anchor Charts & Protocols
<b>Lesson 1</b>	Making Inferences: The Fall of Saigon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for an analysis of literary text. (RI.8.1)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can support my inferences with evidence from text.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careful listening to students' inferences</li> <li>Observation of student participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold Call protocol</li> <li>Turn and Talk protocol</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 2</b>	Launching the Novel: Character Analysis of Ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1)</li> <li>I can analyze how specific dialogue or incidents in a plot propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (RL.8.3)</li> <li>I can use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words or phrases (L.8.4)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can cite evidence from the novel to explain how incidents reveal aspects of Ha's character.</li> <li>I can use context clues to figure out word meanings.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answers to text-Dependent questions</li> <li>Students' notes: "Who Is Ha?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Things Close Readers Do</li> <li>Numbered Heads Together protocol</li> </ul>



Lesson	Lesson Title	Long-Term Targets	Supporting Targets	Ongoing Assessment	Anchor Charts & Protocols
<b>Lesson 3</b>	Inferring about Character: Close Reading of the Poem “Inside Out” and Introducing QuickWrites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1)</li> <li>I can analyze how specific dialogue or incidents in a plot propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (RL.8.3)</li> <li>I can use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words or phrases (L.8.4)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can cite evidence from the novel to explain how incidents reveal aspects of Ha’s character.</li> <li>I can use context clues to figure out word meanings.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answers to text-dependent questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Things Close Readers Do (added to)</li> <li>QuickWrite</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 4</b>	Considering a Character’s Relationship with Others: Contrasting Ha and Her Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1)</li> <li>I can analyze how specific dialogue or incidents in a plot propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (RL.8.3)</li> <li>I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone (analogies or allusions). (RL.8.4)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can cite evidence from the novel to explain how incidents reveal aspects of Ha’s character.</li> <li>I can explain how the specific word choices in the poem “Papaya Tree” create tone and help reveal meaning.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QuickWrite 1 (from homework)</li> <li>“Who Is Ha?” small-group anchor charts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Things Close Readers Do (added to)</li> <li>Who Is Ha?</li> <li>Think-Pair-Share protocol</li> <li>Chalkboard Splash protocol</li> </ul>



Lesson	Lesson Title	Long-Term Targets	Supporting Targets	Ongoing Assessment	Anchor Charts & Protocols
<b>Lesson 5</b>	Mid-Unit Assessment: Getting to Know a Character: What Details in the Text Help Us Understand Ha?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can analyze how specific dialogue or incidents in a plot propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (RL.8.3)</li> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1)</li> <li>I can determine the meaning of words and phrases in literary text (figurative, connotative, and technical meanings) (RL.8.4)</li> <li>I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone (analogies or allusions). (RL.8.4)</li> <li>I can use evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (W.8.9)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can make inferences that deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can analyze how critical incidents in the novel reveal aspects of Ha's character.</li> <li>I can cite evidence from the text in my writing that supports my analysis.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QuickWrite 2 (from homework)</li> <li>Mid-Unit Assessment: Getting to Know a Character: What Details in the Text Help Us Understand Ha?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who Is Ha? (reviewed)</li> <li>Gallery Walk protocol</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 6</b>	Building Background Knowledge: Guided Practice to Learn about the History of Wars in Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can determine the theme or central ideas of an informational text. (RI.8.2)</li> <li>I can use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words or phrases. (L.8.4)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can determine the central ideas in one section of the informational text 'The Vietnam Wars.'</li> <li>I can use context clues to determine word meanings.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' questions and notes for section 1 of the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think-Pair-Share protocol</li> </ul>



Lesson	Lesson Title	Long-Term Targets	Supporting Targets	Ongoing Assessment	Anchor Charts & Protocols
<b>Lesson 7</b>	Building Background Knowledge: Small-Group Work to Learn More about the History of Wars in Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can determine the theme or central ideas of an informational text. (RI.8.2)</li> <li>I can use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words or phrases. (L.8.4)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can determine the central ideas in one section of the informational text 'The Vietnam Wars.'</li> <li>I can summarize a portion of an informational text about the Vietnam war.</li> <li>I can use context clues to determine word meanings.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' questions and notes for their assigned section of the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Things Close Readers Do (added to)</li> <li>Jigsaw protocol</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 8</b>	Development of the Plot: Impending Danger and Turmoil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can analyze the development central idea throughout the text (including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot). (RL.8.2)</li> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> <li>I can use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words or phrases. (L.8.4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can cite evidence from the text to explain how the central idea develops over the course of the plot of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can cite evidence from the text to analyze how various sections of the novel reveal aspects of Ha's character.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QuickWrite 3 (from homework)</li> <li>Oral responses to text-dependent questions</li> <li>Double Arrow graphic organizer</li> <li>Exit ticket</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numbered Heads Together protocol</li> </ul>



Lesson	Lesson Title	Long-Term Targets	Supporting Targets	Ongoing Assessment	Anchor Charts & Protocols
<b>Lesson 9</b>	Building Background Knowledge: Vietnam as a “Battleground in a Larger Struggle”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can determine the central idea of an informational text. (RI.8.2)</li> <li>• I can use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words or phrases. (L.8.4)</li> <li>• I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone in informational text. (RI.8.4)</li> <li>• I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can determine the central idea of two key paragraphs of “The Vietnam Wars.”</li> <li>• I can explain how Vietnam was a “battleground in a much larger struggle.”</li> <li>• I can use context clues to determine word meanings.</li> <li>• I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QuickWrite 4 (from homework)</li> <li>• Students’ annotated texts</li> </ul>	
<b>Lesson 10</b>	Building Background Knowledge: The Impending Fall of Saigon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can determine the central idea of an informational text. (RI.8.2)</li> <li>• I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone in informational text. (RI.8.4)</li> <li>• I can use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words or phrases. (L.8.4)</li> <li>• I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can determine the central idea of the section “Doc-Lap at Last” in the informational text “The Vietnam Wars.”</li> <li>• I can objectively summarize informational text.</li> <li>• I can use context clues to determine word meanings.</li> <li>• I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and the whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students’ annotated texts</li> <li>• Three Threes in a Row note-catcher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three Threes in a Row protocol</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 11</b>	Character Analysis: How Do Personal Possessions Reveal Aspects of Characters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can analyze how specific dialogue or incidents in a plot propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (RL.8.3)</li> <li>• I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1)</li> <li>• I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>• I can cite evidence from the poems “Choice” and “Left Behind” to explain how this incident reveals aspects of Ha and her family members.</li> <li>• I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QuickWrite 5 (from homework)</li> <li>• Students’ annotated text</li> <li>• Write-Pair-Share</li> <li>• Jigsaw recording form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jigsaw protocol</li> </ul>





Lesson	Lesson Title	Long-Term Targets	Supporting Targets	Ongoing Assessment	Anchor Charts & Protocols
<b>Lesson 12</b>	Examining How Word Choice Contributes to Tone and Meaning: Close Reading of “Wet and Crying”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1)</li> <li>I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone. (RL.8.4)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can explain how nuances in word meanings contribute to the overall tone of the poem.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QuickWrite 6 (from homework)</li> <li>Write-Pair-Share note-catcher with text-dependent questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Things Close Readers Do (added to)</li> <li>Write-Pair-Share protocol</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 13</b>	Comparing Meaning and Tone: The Fall of Saigon in Fiction and Informational Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary and informational text. (RL.8.1 and RI.8.1)</li> <li>I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone. (RL.8.4 and RI.8.4)</li> <li>I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i>.</li> <li>I can cite evidence from the poem “Saigon Is Gone” to explain the fall of Saigon and the emotional impact of this news on Ha and the other characters in the novel.</li> <li>I can analyze the word choices of two texts about the fall of Saigon and describe how that word choice contributes to the tone and meaning of each text.</li> <li>I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QuickWrite 7 (from homework)</li> <li>Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning note-catcher</li> </ul>	



Lesson	Lesson Title	Long-Term Targets	Supporting Targets	Ongoing Assessment	Anchor Charts & Protocols
<b>Lesson 14</b>	End of Unit Assessment: How Word Choice Contributes to Tone and Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text. (RL.8.1 and RI.8.1)</li><li>• I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone. (RL.8.4 and RI.8.4)</li><li>• I can use evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (W.8.9)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can analyze how the word choice in both informational and literary texts affects the meaning and tone.</li><li>• I can cite evidence from text to support analysis of literary and informational text.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• End of Unit 1 Assessment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Things Close Readers Do (reviewed)</li></ul>



Optional: Experts, Fieldwork, And Service

**Experts**

- Invite experts to speak to the class about the history of Vietnam, the Vietnam War, or the fall of Saigon.
- Locate refugees from Vietnam to come and answer the questions students generate.

**Fieldwork**

- N/A

**Service**

- Coordinate a local refugee center to inquire about service opportunities

Optional: Extensions

- Social Studies teachers may complement this unit with a focus on similar Guiding Questions, which were developed from the NYS Social Studies Core Curriculum; see Guiding Questions above.

Preparation and Materials

- Students keep class notes in a journal. This could be a composition notebook or one section of a binder.
- Throughout this module, students will need a folder to collect and store all teacher-provided tote-catchers, text-dependent question handouts, and graphic organizers.
- Teachers are encouraged to keep a model journal alongside students, in order to model note-taking and QuickWrites.
- Teachers also are encouraged to “test drive” each Quick Write in advance. See teaching note in Lesson 4.