

# An Educator's Guide to *The Cat at the Wall*

An Educator's Guide for Grades 5, 6 and 7

Prepared by We Love Children's Books

*Note: The activities in this guide align with standards for English Language Arts for Grades 5, 6 and 7 but standards for other grades may also apply.*

## About the Book

A cat sneaks into a small Palestinian house on the West Bank that has been commandeered by two Israeli soldiers. The house seems empty, until the cat realizes that a little boy is hiding beneath the floorboards. Should she help him? After all, she's just a cat. Or is she? She was once a regular North American girl, but that was before she died and came back to life as a cat. When the little boy is discovered, the soldiers don't know what to do with him. It is not long before his teacher and classmates come looking for him, and the house is surrounded by Palestinian villagers throwing rocks, and the sound of Israeli tanks approaching. As the soldiers begin to panic and disaster seems certain, the cat knows that it is up to her to diffuse the situation. But what can a cat do? What can any one creature do?

## About the Author

Deborah Ellis is the celebrated author of more than twenty books for young people. She is best known for her Breadwinner books — a series that has been published in 25 languages and earned more than one million dollars in royalties to benefit Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan and Street Kids International. She has won the Governor General's Award, the Ruth Schwartz Award, the University of California's Middle East Book Award, Sweden's Peter Pan Prize, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, and the Vicky Metcalf Award for a Body of Work. She recently received the Ontario Library Association's President's Award for Exceptional Achievement, and she has been named to the Order of Ontario. She lives in Simcoe, Ontario.

## Praise for the Book

"Quietly moving, full of surprises and, with Clare's colloquial and spirited voice, highly readable." — *Kirkus Reviews*

"There are no black and whites here, only ordinary people caught in the tangle of history, misunderstanding, and fear."  
— *Booklist*

"The ultimate message that everyone has a story and that everyone has a chance at redemption is a hopeful one . . . a useful fictional counterpart to Ellis' nonfiction work." — *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

## Pre-Reading Questions and Activities

Read the title of the book and the publisher's blurb on the back cover. Examine the front cover. What can students tell about this book from the artwork? Does it help convey a mood? What do students think this book will be like — funny, serious, suspenseful, etc.? Why?

One of the major themes of *The Cat at the Wall* is perspective and how our point of view shades how we see things. A good way to illustrate this idea to students is by showing them a few classic optical illusions. Search “optical illusions for kids” on the internet and print out several to share. Ones that are particularly effective include “The Rubin Vase”, “My Wife and My Mother-in-Law” and “The Rabbit-Duck”. These illusions contain more than one image, so while everyone is looking at the same picture, there is more than one image that they see. It is an impactful way to show that there can be more than one way to look at something.

As a class, locate Israel on a map. Identify the locations of Bethlehem, the West Bank and where the wall of the book's title is located. How would students feel if they lived in a community surrounded by a wall?

Arrange for your Social Studies/History teacher to come and speak to the class about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in order to provide background for this book.

Discuss with students the following questions: Why does a classroom or school have rules? How are these rules enforced in your class or school? How do these rules prepare students for the world outside the classroom?

## Vocabulary

Have students keep a list of unfamiliar or interesting words and phrases that they encounter in their reading. Can they derive a definition for the word or phrase from context? Have them consult reference materials for the precise meaning of the word or phrase, the part of speech and pronunciation. Come together as a class to share words and compare lists. What phrases and words appeared on lists most frequently? Analyze how these specific word choices impacted the tone of the story. Are there any words where the meaning is still unclear?

## Post-Reading Discussion Questions and Activities

### Research Project: The West Bank Wall

As a class, look at images of the West Bank Barrier or “wall” online, to give students an impression of what it is really like. Then, working with an adult if necessary, have students use resources from the library and internet to write a short research paper on the history of the wall. What is the wall and what is it intended to do? What have been the results of building the wall? What has been the impact on the communities it separates? Have students break into pairs to share their work and revise based on peer feedback. After students have completed their papers, discuss their research, as well as the role of the wall in this novel. What does Clare as a cat say about the wall? What does Aaron say about it? What happens to Omar's parents as a result of the wall?

## A Tale of Two Bethlehems

In *The Cat at the Wall*, Clare lives her life in two different Bethlehems — one in Pennsylvania and one in the Middle East. Come together as a class to compare and contrast how the author presents these settings to the reader. What words, phrases and descriptions of life in the Palestinian sector of Bethlehem stand out to students? Discuss how the setting helps communicate the tone of the story.

## Different Views of “Desiderata”

“Desiderata” is a critical element of this book. It helps illustrate Ms. Sealand’s philosophy. Come together as a class and read the poem aloud. Clare called it the punishment poem, but is it really? What role does it play in the life of Omar and his classmates? How would they describe it? Does Clare change her mind about it through the course of the story?

## Things Desired

When speaking about “Desiderata”, Ms. Sealand says, “the words of the poem will challenge you to think about who you are and who you want to be.” Have students write an opinion piece analyzing this statement from Ms. Sealand, and how it applies to the poem. What does the title of the poem mean? What parts of this poem do students feel are most inspiring, or speak most to them as individuals? What does the poem say to them about how to live their lives?

## Clare and Her Grandmother

Come together as a class and discuss Clare’s feelings for her grandmother. Instruct students to use evidence from the text as support for their statements during discussion. Conclude the discussion by examining the passage where Ms. Sealand and Clare recite “Desiderata” together. As they finish reciting the poem, how does Ms. Sealand remind Clare of her grandmother? What does this similarity say about Ms. Sealand’s point of view? What does Clare mean when she says, “The universe was *not* unfolding as it should. The universe was a big freaking mess where good people got killed and where people like me were able to keep on living.”

## Same Uniform, Different People

We get to know the two IDF (Israel Defense Force) soldiers through Clare’s observations when she is in the house with them and Omar. Have students make a list of the character traits for each soldier, drawing on the following categories: what they say, what they do, what they say about each other, Clare’s observations and opinions about them. Come together as a class and compare and contrast the two soldiers. What are their backgrounds, motivations for being in the army, attitudes towards the Palestinians, hobbies, and goals in life? How are they the same? How are they different? Do the Palestinians see any difference between these two soldiers? Between these soldiers and the rest of the army?

## Themes and Big Ideas

Come together as a class and discuss the themes of this book and how they are developed over the course of the story. Have each student select one for further analysis and reflection and write an essay about it. Have them track the development and presentation of the theme through the story, using evidence from the text. How does this theme relate to their own life? How does the theme tie into the overall plot and message of *The Cat at the Wall*?

## Story Structure and Meaning

Come together as a class to discuss the structure of this book. How do the narrative and flashbacks combine to tell the story of Clare as a person and her experiences after her transformation? How does structuring the story this way keep reader interest and build suspense? How does it work to convey the author's message?

## A Fly on the Wall

Why do students think the author chose to tell the story from the point of view of a cat who used to be a girl? Drawing on specifics from the book, discuss the nature of Clare as a narrator. How does a narrator's point of view influence how events are described? When you are done, read the interview in the back of the book where Deborah Ellis explains her decision. What advantages does this approach have? What disadvantages?

## More Than One Side

One of the major themes of this novel is the difference that an individual's point of view can make when interpreting events. Like an optical illusion, people looking at the same situation can view it differently. This issue of perspective is present throughout the book. Sometimes it is a straightforward question — what did Ms. Sealand mean when she waved? Other times it is a more complex issue — like the relationship between the two IDF soldiers and Omar. As a class, compile a list of examples of instances of conflicting perspectives. What is the significance of each of these events in relation to the book as a whole?

Next, have students choose a situation in their life where there is more than one side or point of view. Have them write an essay describing the situation, comparing and contrasting both points of view. Have students revise their work before creating a final copy.

## What the Cat Did

While she is in the house with Omar and the soldiers, Clare uses her human intelligence to communicate with others and to influence events. As a class, discuss what things she does that are “cat-like” and what things she does that are not. How do people react to these behaviors? How do her actions drive the action of the story and shape the plot?

**Dateline: Bethlehem**

Discuss with students the role of a reporter in communicating the news, and how a reporter's point of view will affect how any news story is reported. Come together as a class and review the events at the end of *The Cat at the Wall* as they unfolded, from the home invasion by the soldiers to the peaceful end of the riot. How might those events look from different perspectives? Next, ask students to imagine that they are reporters in the Middle East and they have been assigned to write a story about these events. What is their point of view for reporting this story — Israeli, Palestinian or some other perspective? Working independently, have each student write an article describing what happened. Come together as a class and share what they have written. What is the most common point of view selected? What is the most uncommon? How does the perspective influence the story?

**Writing as Activism**

In the “Conversation with Deborah Ellis” at the back of the book, the author discusses her history of activism, which began when she was a teenager. Do students feel this book can be considered a form of activism?

*Visit the Common Core State Standards website to read about the individual standards listed here:*  
[corestandards.org/the-standards](http://corestandards.org/the-standards)

**Additional Questions****Before and After**

What did students know about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before they were introduced to the topic and read the book? What are some of the things they learned about it while reading this book? Do readers need to know a lot about it to understand the story? Did students have to know about the conflict to get the message of the story? What aspects are they interested in learning more about?

**A Cat's Eye View of People**

As a cat, Clare gains a unique perspective on the situation in Bethlehem. She is an objective bystander, able to observe everyone from close up and report their points of view. In what ways does she say that people are the same? In what ways are they different? Which seems more significant, the things they have in common or the things that are different?

**The Same but Different**

Many elements of this story are repeated, but with a twist or difference — such as the way that Clare lives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and as a cat lives in the Bethlehem that is in the Middle East. Or two things will be related, but very different — such as Clare and her sister; or the two soldiers, Simcha and Aaron. Or events will have two very different interpretations — such as when the Ms. Sealand waves to Clare, or the Israeli soldiers end up in a house with Omar. As a class, make a list of these pairs of things that are “the same but different”. Discuss what this means in the greater context of this book.

## Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down?

Is Clare a sympathetic or unsympathetic character? How do you think the author intended you to feel about Clare? Why do you think the author created Clare to be like this?

## Foreshadowing: A Glimpse of Things to Come

Review the concept of foreshadowing with the class. Break the class into pairs and have them review the book to find examples of foreshadowing in the text. Come together as a class and compare findings. Discuss examples where this technique is used effectively to increase the impact of the story.

## Philosophical Questions

The following passages are brief, but powerful. Come together as a class and discuss the following:

On the first day of school, Ms. Sealand says, “Human beings tell each other stories to try to bring order to chaos.” What do students think this means? How does it apply to this story?

Aaron says to Simcha, “You Americans come over here and join the IDF and think it’s the Wild West. It’s not that simple.” What do you think he meant by that? What does it tell the reader about Aaron? What does it tell the reader about Simcha?

## The Cat Came Back

*The Cat at the Wall* has a very open-ended conclusion. What happens next? Have students write a story continuing Clare’s adventures. Will she find Omar? Will she “turn back” into a human? Will she go to live with Aaron? Will she continue to help bring peace in small ways? When students have finished their first drafts, have them revise their work based on peer and teacher feedback. Have students type their final stories into the computer and assemble them into an anthology to be distributed to all members of the class.

## Internet Resources

Learn more about the world of Deborah Ellis, award-winning author, feminist and peace activist, by exploring her official website: [deborahellis.com](http://deborahellis.com).

Visit this link for the full text of “Desiderata”: [cs.columbia.edu/~gongsu/desiderata\\_textonly.html](http://cs.columbia.edu/~gongsu/desiderata_textonly.html).

*Education World*’s lesson: “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Through Children’s Eyes” is a great resource for information, teaching ideas and a good summary of the conflict for younger students: [educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/israeli-palestinian-conflict-through-childrens-eyes.shtml](http://educationworld.com/a_lesson/israeli-palestinian-conflict-through-childrens-eyes.shtml).

Check out the *CIA World Fact Book* website for information about the West Bank: [cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/we.html](http://cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/we.html).

## Standards Used In this Guide ~ Grades 5, 6, 7

### GRADE 5

#### Reading

##### Key Ideas and Details

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Determine a theme of a story, drama or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

##### Craft and Structure

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

Explain how a series of chapters, scenes or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama or poem.

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

#### Writing

##### Text Types and Purposes

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

- Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
- Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

- Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations or other information and examples related to the topic.
- Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details and clear event sequences.

- Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description and pacing to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- Use a variety of transitional words, phrases and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
- Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

## **Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach.

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.



## Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work and provide a list of sources.

## Range of Writing

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 discipline-specific tasks, purposes and audiences.

## Speaking and Listening Comprehension and Collaboration

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.
- Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions

## Language

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., photograph, photosynthesis).
- Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

## GRADE 6

### Reading

#### Key Ideas and Details

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

#### Craft and Structure

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting or plot.

Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

### Writing

#### Text Types and Purposes

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
- Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- Use words, phrases and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

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

- Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables) and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

- Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations or other information and examples.
- Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

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

- Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing and description to develop experiences, events and/or characters.
- Use a variety of transition words, phrases and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
- Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

### **Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach.

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.

### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

## Range of Writing

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 discipline-specific tasks, purposes and audiences.

## Speaking and Listening Comprehension and Collaboration

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines and define individual roles as needed.
- Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text or issue under discussion.
- Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

## Language Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- 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.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., audience, auditory, audible).
- Consult 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.

- 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).

## GRADE 7

### Reading

#### Key Ideas and Details

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text

Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

#### Craft and Structure

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.

Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

### Writing

#### Text Types and Purposes

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- Use words, phrases and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons and evidence.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

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

- Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables) and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations or other information and examples.
- Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

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

- 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.
- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing and description, to develop experiences, events and/or characters.
- Use a variety of transition words, phrases and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
- Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

## **Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

## **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

## **Range of Writing**

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 discipline-specific tasks, purposes and audiences.

## **Speaking and Listening Comprehension and Collaboration**

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.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines and define individual roles as needed.
- Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.
- Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.

## **Language Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- 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.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., belligerent, bellicose, rebel).

- 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.
- 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).

## GRADES 6-8

### Writing for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

#### Text Types and Purposes

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments or technical processes.

- Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables) and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations or other information and examples.
- Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.



## Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection and research.

## Range of Writing

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes and audiences.

