

A quick guide for observing classroom content and practice

Working with appropriate **complex texts**, students should:

Read About It

1. Stories
2. Drama
3. Poems
4. Nonfiction

Think About It

5. Research
6. Analysis
7. Reflection

Talk About It

8. Presentation
9. Collaboration

Write About It

10. Arguments
11. Explanations
12. Narratives

In a **grade 11 or 12 ELA class**, you should observe the teacher integrating the grade level ELA standards and students engaging in a variety of the following standards and practices:

Students engage independently with grade-level literary and informational texts, focusing on:

- Key ideas and details:** strong and thorough textual evidence to support explicit claims from text and inferences drawn; 2+ themes or central ideas; objective summary
- Craft and structure:** impact of author's choices in language (e.g. specific words, rhetorical patterns) and structure of specific parts of text (e.g. where to begin or end, comedic or tragic resolution, new tone or point of view) on meaning and aesthetic or persuasive effect
- Integration of knowledge and ideas:** multiple foundational U.S. texts from same period addressing similar theme or topic, multiple critical lenses (e.g., feminist, psychoanalytic) or renditions (e.g., live performances) interpreting same text

Students engage daily in higher-order reasoning, both orally and in writing, especially by:

- Synthesizing:** drawing on multiple authoritative sources of information in multiple formats to solve a problem or answer a self-generated research question, noting discrepancies and inaccuracies in data and avoiding overreliance on any one source
- Analyzing:** when what is stated differs from what is really meant (e.g., in satire, sarcasm, irony, understatement, notable omission), literary significance of foundational works of American Literature and historical texts (e.g., *The Federalist*)—including rhetorical features and characteristics of legal reasoning
- Evaluating:** assessing arguments skillfully—including attention to their underlying premises; clear, coherent, convincing, and engaging

Students attend closely to language use in their own work and others', focusing on:

- Meanings:** strategies (e.g., consulting resources, analyzing roots) for understanding words and phrases in context—including figurative, connotative and technical meanings, figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox), grade appropriate general academic and domain specific words and phrases
- Conventions:** hyphenation, understanding that conventions can change over time, understanding and addressing cases of contested usage

Students interact frequently, purposefully, and effectively with diverse others, engaging in:

- Discussion:** being prepared, making decisions democratically, choosing roles and goals, clarifying and challenging ideas, maintaining civil discourse, encouraging and synthesizing diverse perspectives, extending scope of conversation with additional research as needed
- Presentation:** clear perspective with acknowledgement of other views, substance and style appropriate to audience and task, strategic integration of digital media, technology to present and link information in dynamic ways
- Collaboration:** using Internet and other technology to create and respond to feedback on individual and shared work, integrating information and ideas from others into own work while maintaining flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and providing citations in standard format

Students engage in writing within a range of time frames for a variety of audiences, producing:

- Arguments:** precise, knowledgeable claims distinguished fairly from counterclaims, valid and nuanced reasoning, articulation of argument's significance, relevant evidence
- Explanations:** significant and relevant facts, concrete details, complex ideas, domain-specific vocabulary, techniques such as simile and analogy, useful formatting and multimedia elements
- Narratives:** figurative and sensory language, narrative techniques (e.g. dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, multiple plot lines); significance of problem, situation, or observation, progression of events, and resolved in conclusion
- All writing:** clear and effective beginning and end, logical and cohesive structure, varied and effective transitions, varied and precise language, anticipation of audience's perspective, style appropriate to audience and purpose

ELA What to Look For The example below features three Indicators from the [Standards of Effective Practice](#). These Indicators are just a sampling from the full set of Standards and were chosen because they create a sequence: the educator plans a lesson that sets clear and high **expectations**, the educator then delivers high quality instruction, and finally the educator uses a variety of **assessments** to see if students understand the material or if re-teaching is necessary. This example highlights teacher and student behaviors aligned to the three Indicators that you can expect to see in a rigorous 11th or 12th grade ELA classroom.

Expectations
(Standard II, Indicator D) Plans and implements lessons that set clear and high expectations and also make knowledge accessible for all students.

What is the teacher doing?

- Selecting appropriate complex texts (e.g., texts with varied structures)
- Asking students to use strong evidence to support an argument and refute a counterargument
- Highlighting the choices an author makes and how they impact meaning and tone

What are the students doing?

- Identifying a lesson's standards or objectives and how they connect to unit goals
- Persisting when engaging with meaningful literacy tasks
- Using rich academic language when speaking and writing

Instruction
(Standard II, Indicator A) Uses instructional practices that reflect high expectations regarding content and quality of effort and work; engage all students; and are personalized to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

What is the teacher doing?

- Highlighting culturally appropriate and effective negotiation skills they observe in students
- Highlighting the impact of a text's structure (e.g., cliffhangers that create suspense)
- Grouping students based on data and adjusting grouping as needed (using both homogenous and heterogeneous grouping)

What are the students doing?

- Making connections between reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Actively incorporating others into discussions of content
- Analyzing the impact of a text's structure (e.g., flashbacks that create mystery)

Assessment
(Standard I, Indicator B) Uses a variety of informal and formal methods of assessments to measure student learning, growth, and understanding to develop differentiated and enhanced learning experiences and improve future instruction.

What is the teacher doing?

- Using multiple formative approaches to assess student learning (e.g., exit slips, classroom discussion)
- Conducting frequent checks for student understanding and adjusting instruction accordingly
- Providing exemplars of work (e.g. mentor texts, student work)

What are the students doing?

- Reflecting on how they are progressing toward goals
- Demonstrating learning in multiple ways (e.g., exit slips, classroom discussion)
- Engaging in challenging learning tasks regardless of learning needs (e.g., linguistic background, disability, academic gifts)
- Engaging in meaningful writing in response to text