

Shifting to the **Common Core**

Grades 6–8 English/Language Arts

Augustyn King Erickson Sebranek





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Thoughtful Learning

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Shifting to the Common Core

Course Objectives

This material helps students learn to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information, developing the depth of knowledge that the Common Core State Standards require in all subjects.

In *Shifting to the Common Core*, students will . . .

- Use close-reading strategies to capture the meaning of complex texts.
- Quickly outline complex texts, summarizing main points.
- Cite textual evidence in a variety of forms.
- Use STRAP analysis to fully understand writing prompts.
- Evaluate and critique logical arguments within texts.
- Weigh the effectiveness of support.
- Evaluate the use of literary devices.
- Evaluate arguments and sources of information.
- Construct logical arguments, drawing evidence from texts.
- Synthesize information from multiple sources to build meaning.
- Create effective informational and persuasive writing.
- Write effective responses to on-demand prompts.

By developing these deeper-thinking skills, students improve their comprehension across the curriculum, raise their grades, and increase their success on Common Core assessments.

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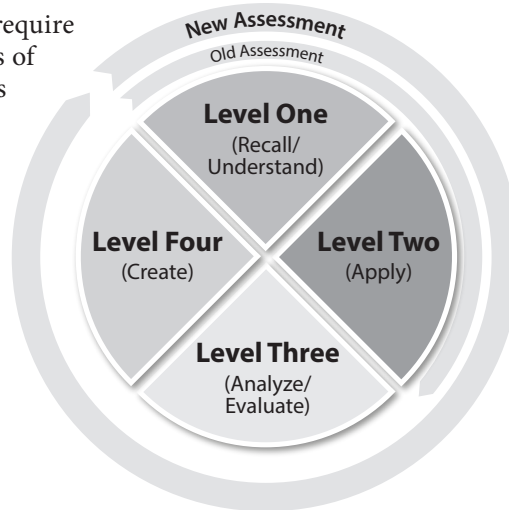
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Dear Educator:

You and your students are navigating a time of great change brought about by the Common Core State Standards and the assessments that measure them. This book will help you and your students succeed.

The Common Core State Standards require students to demonstrate deeper levels of thinking, and as a result, assessments are shifting. Previous high-stakes assessments tested what students could recall, understand, and apply—the first levels of thinking on the chart to the right. The new assessments measure those levels but go much deeper. To succeed on the new assessments, students must demonstrate the ability to carefully analyze information, evaluate it, and synthesize effective responses.



This book teaches your students these three important skills:

1. Analyzing what they read, see, and hear
2. Evaluating information and testing it for reliability
3. Synthesizing arguments by drawing evidence from texts and using it in new forms

In this way, *Shifting to the Common Core* goes far beyond other courses. Instead of just practicing sample test questions, students learn the specific strategies and skills they need to think more deeply. *Shifting to the Common Core* helps students succeed in school, score higher on Common Core assessments, and go farther in college and career.

Thank you for helping your students think more deeply, and thank you for using *Shifting to the Common Core*.

Sincerely,

Chris Erickson
Author

**Common Core
English/Language
Arts College and
Career Readiness
Anchor Standards**

R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.10,
W.7, W.8, W.9

R.1, R.2, R.5, R.7, R.8,
R.10, W.7, W.8, W.9,
SL.2

R.1, R.2, R.5, R.6, R.8,
R.10, W.1, W.2, W.7,
W.8, W.9

R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.6,
R.10, W.1, W.2, W.4,
W.5, W.6, W.7, W.8,
W.9, SL.2

R.4, R.5, R.10, L.4, L.5,
L.6

R.1, R.2, R.5, R.6, R.7,
R.8, R.9, R.10, W.1, W.2,
W.8, W.9, SL.2, SL.3

Sampler

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Understanding the CCSS and the New Assessments

This page answers frequently asked questions about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the new assessments created to test compliance with these standards.

What are the CCSS?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of standards for English/language arts and math that have been adopted by most states. In addition to focusing on knowledge content, these standards also emphasize skills required for college and career readiness: critical thinking, innovation, communication, problem solving, and using information and technology.

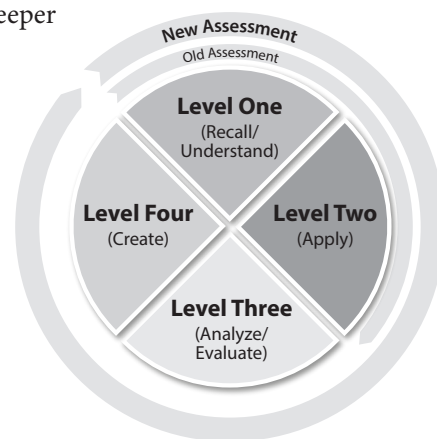


What are PARCC and Smarter Balanced?

Two organizations have received federal “Race to the Top” grants to develop assessments that measure the full range of skills required by the Common Core State Standards. One organization is called PARCC, which stands for the Partnership for Assessing Readiness for College and Careers. The other organization is called the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The tests developed by these organizations use a combination of traditional testing methods, innovative technology, and written responses to measure students’ abilities.

How do these tests differ from previous high-stakes tests?

The new assessments go beyond previous tests to assess greater depths of knowledge. Previous assessments tested depth of knowledge at levels 1 and 2: recalling information and applying it in straightforward ways. The new assessments test these levels as well as levels 3 and 4: analyzing information received in a variety of forms and synthesizing it into new forms. These assessments use innovative testing strategies, new technology, and human scoring to test these deeper levels of thinking.



30 Minutes to Success

In this book, you'll find spreads organized with instructional material on the left and activities on the right. Follow this simple plan to fit these modules into your lesson schedule:

- 10 minutes for presenting the instruction on the left
- 10 minutes for students to complete the activity on the right
- 10 more minutes for class discussion afterward

Instruction (10 minutes)

**CCSS.ELA/Literacy
CCSS Standards**
R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.10,
W.1, W.2, W.3, W.10

Analyzing Controlling Sentences

In informational reading, a controlling sentence is one that sums up the main point of a selection.

How can I recognize controlling sentences?

Watch for the following types of controlling sentences:

- A **thesis statement** provides the focus for a whole article or essay. This statement usually appears in the opening paragraph or paragraph. In the example to the right, the thesis statement is underlined.
- A **topic sentence** provides the focus for a paragraph. This statement often appears at the beginning of the paragraph, but it can also appear anywhere in the paragraph or be implied.

How can I infer an implied controlling sentence?

If a paragraph or article does not include a specific controlling sentence, you can write one of your own. For example, the following middle paragraph does not contain a topic sentence.

In 1969, the Cuyahoga River, a tributary to Lake Erie, caught fire. The apocalyptic vision of burning water shook human complacency. At the time, heavy industrialization along the shoreline had caused massive fish die-offs. Phenolphthalein water from factories caused algae blooms that robbed the water of oxygen, killing indigenous species. Some environmentalists declared the lake "dead." People responded, Cleveland launched an initiative to clean the Cuyahoga and upgrade the city's sewer system. In 1972, Congress passed the Clean Water Act, regulating levels of pollution. It took over two decades for the lake to recover, but by the late 1990s, indigenous species had rebounded.

To infer a topic sentence, ask (and answer) the following questions:

What is the topic?	What is said about it?	What controlling sentence can I infer?
Lake Erie	Humans have impacted it in bad and good ways.	Lake Erie demonstrates how human activity can destroy or save a Great Lake.

Activity (10 minutes)

Activity 2: Reading Literary Criticism

1. Use **502R** to closely read the article that follows. Write down your observations.
2. Write down any controlling sentences that you find.
3. The fourth paragraph lacks a controlling sentence. Infer one and write it.

Edgar Allan Poe: Inventor of Mystery

by Andrew Wiestenberg

When most people think of the great American author Edgar Allan Poe, they focus on his haunting Gothic stories. Poe's contribution to the mystery genre is just as deep. Long before Sherlock Holmes or Miss Marple—and certainly before C.S.I.—Poe wrote three stories that set up the template for all mystery stories that followed.

The Murders in the Rue Morgue

In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe introduced the now-standard formula. The tale centers on a brilliant amateur detective (C. Auguste Dupin), told by a shrewd companion, and features a mystery that the detective solves before explaining his thought process. In this tale, the red-haired culprit exhibits superhuman abilities that baffle all but the great detective.

The Mystery of Marie Rogêt

Poe's second mystery story, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," advanced the formula even further. For one thing, it features the same detective team in a new adventure, thus establishing the formula for a series of episodes. The story also was "ripped from the headlines"—based on a sensational real crime of the time. In this story, Poe further developed the concept of "rationalism"—the use of logic and psychology to get into the minds of criminals.

The Purloined Letter

Poe's final mystery, "The Purloined Letter," begins with the now-famous Dupin discussing his most celebrated cases, as many later detectives would do. A client arrives and seeks to pay for his services, turning Dupin from an amateur sleuth into a professional detective. In this story, Dupin is driven not just by fame and fortune, but by the sheer thrill of battling a brilliant criminal mind. Here, the tropes that shaped Holmes and Poirot were fully formed.

For Arthur Conan Doyle once wrote that each of these three stories by Poe "is a not from which a whole literature has developed." Doyle, Agatha Christie, and hundreds of other mystery writers got such heading the tree that Poe planted. Their progeny Poe died penniless, though—a tragedy looking on the criminal. But by inventing the mystery genre, Poe left the world much richer than he had found it.

Discussion (10 minutes)

Where will I find answers?

An answer key appears after lessons in each level (6–8 and 9–12). You'll also find model student responses to prompts and rubrics for scoring student writing.

ELA Answer Key

Activity 1: Reading Biographical Nonfiction

1. **Survey:** (Sample answer) The activity title and article title show that this is biographical nonfiction. It focuses on Edgar Allan Poe and his hard life. The headings show it is organized chronologically. The third part focuses on his death, with a picture of his tombstone.
2. **Question:** (Sample answer) Len Downing wrote this article. It is about how Poe'sough life influenced his dark writings. Downing wrote it to explore Poe's past. The article also appears here to help teach close-reading skills.
3. **Read, Reread, and Review:** (Sample answer) I'm most surprised by how Poe was known best as a writer and that he struggled as a writer and died penniless. I'm also sad about how he lost his wife. The article made him seem really human and relatable.

Activity 2: Reading Literary Criticism

1. **502R:** (Sample answer) The title and the caption of the photo show that Edgar Allan Poe invented the mystery genre. I always associated him more with scary stories. The three headings show that he wrote three mystery stories.
2. **Thesis statement:** Long before Sherlock Holmes or Miss Marple—and certainly before C.S.I.—Poe wrote three stories that set up the template for all mystery stories that followed.
- Topic sentence:** In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe introduced the now-standard formula.
- Topic sentence:** Poe's second mystery story, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," advanced the formula even further.
- Inferred topic sentence:** (Sample answer) "The Purloined Letter" established the other critical elements of the mystery genre.

Activity 3: Reading Historical Fiction

1. **Inferred main point:** (Sample answer) Poe's writing ability made him a myth in much of his life but a legend after his death.
2. **Descriptions:** (Sample answer) "black-ringed eyes," "red-tinged fingers," "uncolored hair," "disheveled young man," "cheeks bloomed red," "eyes were feverish and burning."
3. **Anecdotes:** (Sample answer) "You flatter away words on paper, scraps of mind scribbled and crumpled and doiled around your untidy desk, a trail of paper crumbs that has led the reader to your door."
4. **Quotation:** (Sample answer) "... total dedication of duty, utter lack of respect for the uniform, complete contempt for the West Point, for this court, and for the judge presiding over it." "Respect yourself enough to look up when you are being court-martialed." "Am I court-martialed yet?"

Activity 4: Reading Poetry

1. **Inferred theme:** (Sample answer) Human love ends in loss, but love can survive even after death.
2. **Development of theme:** (Sample answer) Throughout "Annabel Lee," Poe uses natural imagery: sea, clouds, chill wind, and night tides. "That the wind came out of the cloud by night / Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee." This imagery creates a physical feeling of grief. Poe also uses religious imagery, saying that angels in heaven and demons under the sea cannot separate him from Annabel Lee. The repetition of the words "kingdom by the sea" returns the poet always to the place where his love is buried.
3. **Response to writing prompt:** (Sample answer)

Loss in the Kingdom by the Sea

Edgar Allan Poe suffered much loss in his lifetime, and his works reflect that struggle. In "Annabel Lee," for example, he writes about a young man mourning the loss of his beloved. The poem uses a repeated refrain like a haunting memory, and it draws upon natural and supernatural imagery to describe the man's grief. Poe's purpose is to show that human love is more powerful than death and that willpower can help a person stand against great odds.

The poem focuses on natural imagery, setting the scene in a "kingdom by the sea." As the young man thinks about his lost love, he remembers the sea, clouds, and chill winds. The weather even plays a part in the death of the man's beloved. "That the wind came out of the cloud by night / Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee." This death by cold or disease is like the death of Poe's own wife by tuberculosis.

Supernatural forces also are at work here. This tragic death isn't just from cold. "The angels, not half so happy in heaven / Went envying her and me..." The young man feels that his beloved is gone because of a divine injustice. "And neither the angels in heaven above / Nor the demons down under the sea / Can ever dissever my soul from the soul / Of the beautiful Annabel Lee." Though he has lost Annabel Lee, he says that his own love can stand against the power of nature and of the supernatural.

This theme reflects Poe's own struggles in life. In the article "The Brief, Hard Life of Edgar Allan Poe," Leo Downing reports that Poe's father abandoned him when he was one year old, and his mother died when he was two. He was raised by a wealthy family but never adopted by them. He got himself discharged from the military twice. Though he is one of the greatest American writers, he never made much money in his lifetime and was better known for his work as a critic. In his essay "Edgar Allan Poe: Inventor of Mystery," Andrew Wiestenberg points out that Poe invented the mystery genre, making other writers extremely wealthy without benefiting much himself. It must have seemed that supernatural forces were working against him. Still, Poe went on. In "Count Dracula," "The Hound of the Baskin's," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and many other stories, Poe wrote about the dark side of human nature, the dirty little musings of a useless little mind. That same writing, however, made Poe famous after his death.

The young man's grief is powerful in "Annabel Lee," but his determination not to forget is even more powerful. The moon and the stars and the night tides all remind him of his lost love. In fact, to force one "Shower" his soul from her. That's the kind of determination Poe learned in a life full of loss.

Instructor's Note

The instructional strategies introduced on the left-hand pages in this book can be applied to any materials within your specific content area. If you wish, you can demonstrate these strategies using readings and examples from your own classroom in conjunction with, or as an alternative to, the examples provided in this book.

Analyzing, Evaluating, and Synthesizing

To comply with the Common Core and succeed on the new assessments, students need to develop three deep-thinking skills.

What thinking skills should my students learn?

Your students need to learn strategies for analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing:



1. **Analyzing** involves closely considering information, breaking it into its parts, exploring how each part works, and discovering how the parts connect to form a whole. This book teaches specific strategies for analyzing text, vocabulary, and prompts in the English/language arts.



2. **Evaluating** involves judging the value or worth of information, deciding if it is true, desirable, logical, meaningful, and reliable. This book teaches specific strategies for evaluating arguments, counterarguments, and logic in English/language arts.



3. **Synthesizing** involves connecting information in new ways, creating logical arguments, and innovating solutions to complex problems. This book teaches specific strategies for synthesizing narratives, descriptions, explanations, and arguments in English/language arts.



“Learn as
much by
writing as
by reading.”
—Lord Acton

Shifting to the Common Core: English/Language Arts 6–8

The Common Core State Standards emphasize deeper thinking skills: analyzing information, evaluating its worth, and synthesizing new information by drawing on multiple sources. This chapter helps middle school students develop these deeper-thinking skills. Students will learn specific strategies for analyzing texts, vocabulary, and prompts; evaluating arguments; and synthesizing responses.

Lesson Preview

- **CCSS ELA Anchor Standards**
- **Analyzing Texts**
- **Analyzing Controlling Sentences**
- **Analyzing Supporting Details**
- **Analyzing Themes**
- **Analyzing Vocabulary**
- **Evaluating Arguments**
- **Evaluating Sources**
- **Evaluating Logical Fallacies**
- **Evaluating Faulty Persuasion**
- **Evaluating Writing**
- **Analyzing Writing Prompts**
- **Synthesizing Responses and Essays**
- **Drawing Evidence from Multiple Sources**
- **Writing Persuasively**

Common Core State Anchor Standards for Reading

Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Common Core State Anchor Standards for Writing

Text Types and Purposes

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10 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 tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Common Core State Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and that the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Common Core State Anchor Standards for Language

Conventions of Standard English

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Knowledge of Language

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Assessment of Common Core English/Language Arts

On the Common Core assessments, students will need to complete the following tasks:

- 1. Reading:** Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.
- 2. Writing:** Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences.
- 3. Speaking and Listening:** Students can employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences.
- 4. Research/Inquiry:** Students can engage in research and inquiry to investigate topics, to analyze, integrate, and present information.

This assessment measures student progress on the Common Core State Anchor Standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy CCRA Standards

R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5,
R.6, R.7, R.8, R.9, R.10,
W.7, W.8, W.9, W.10

Analyzing Texts

Success on the new common core assessments begins with close reading of complex informational and literary texts. Close reading is focused, intentional, and detail oriented.

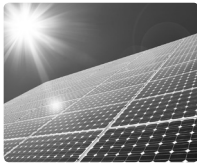
How can I read closely?

To read closely, you should follow a close-reading strategy such as **SQ3R**—**S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite, and **R**evue:

Harnessing the Sun

by Patricia Clark

Every second, the sun pours more energy onto our planet than the human race consumes in a whole year. Tapping into even a small proportion of that energy can solve a host of problems. Thankfully, multiple technologies help us to gather that power:



Solar energy is the most obvious way to tap the sun's power. Some systems use sunlight to heat buildings, while others convert sunlight into electrical energy.

- **Pros:** Solar systems are eco-friendly and well tested.
- **Cons:** Solar systems can be costly and don't work when the sun doesn't shine.



Wind power is also a way to harness the sun's energy because wind is created by the uneven heating of the earth's atmosphere. Windmills of many varieties can harness the wind's energy.

- **Pros:** Windmills do not produce carbon emissions.
- **Cons:** Windmills can harm birds and do not function on still days.



Hydroelectric energy uses the flow of water to generate electricity. The sun's energy drives the water cycle, which drops precipitation at high altitudes and sends water pouring toward the seas.

- **Pros:** Hydroelectric dams produce a powerful, reliable source of carbon-free fuel.
- **Cons:** Dams disrupt fish migration patterns and change whole ecosystems.



Wave energy harnesses the movements of ocean waves and currents. Once again, this motion comes from the heating of wind, water, and ground (as well as the spin of the earth).

- **Pros:** The constant motion of the ocean provides much power at coastlines where human populations are concentrated.
- **Cons:** Wave-harnessing devices can block waterways and look unsightly.

1. **Survey** the whole selection, noting titles, headings, paragraphs, illustrations, captions, and any other formal features.
2. **Question** the selection, asking who wrote it, what it is about, why it is presented, and who was intended to read it.
3. **Read** the selection once all the way through, writing controlling sentences and noting key details. After reading literary selections, write down a possible theme or statement about life.
4. **Recite** the main points and details, or the theme.
5. **Review** the selection a final time, making sure that the main points, key details, and theme are accurate.

Activity 1: Reading Biographical Nonfiction

1. **Survey:** Write comments about the title, headings, and photos.
2. **Question:** Who wrote this article? What is it about? Why is it presented?
3. **Read, Recite, and Review:** Reflect on how your first ideas were confirmed or changed.

The Brief, Hard Life of Edgar Allan Poe

by Leo Denning

Edgar Allan Poe often wrote of suffering and loss, two conditions he repeatedly endured in his brief, hard life.

Hardship began early on. Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809, the son of two actors. A year later, his father abandoned him, and two years later, his mother died of tuberculosis. Young Edgar was sent to live with the wealthy Allan family of Virginia, who gave him his middle name but never adopted him. Poe lived with the Allans in Virginia and England, where he was schooled before returning to the United States.

Early Career

Poe also had trouble in school. In 1826, Poe enrolled in the University of Virginia but ran into debt problems. He claimed that his foster father had provided insufficient funds, but gambling troubles plagued the young Poe. Quitting the university, Poe left the Allans and worked as a clerk and reporter in Boston.

Bad luck followed Poe into the military. In 1827, he enlisted in the United States Army for a five-year term. He rose to the rank of sergeant major of artillery but sought an early release. Poe found a replacement and repaired his relationship with his foster father in order to secure his release. Afterward, Poe enlisted in West Point. This, too, turned out to be a poor fit. He purposely neglected his classes and assemblies in order to force a court-martial.

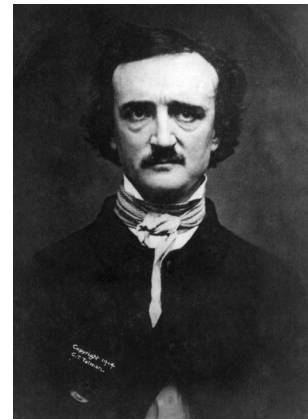
Poe as a Writer

During his time in the military, Poe had published three books: *Tamerlain and Other Poems*; *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlain and Minor Poems*; and *Poems*. After leaving the military, Poe returned to publishing but focused on nonfiction, establishing himself as a sharp-tongued literary critic. He worked on the *Southern Literary Messenger*, *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, *Graham's Magazine*, *The Evening Journal*, and the *Broadway Journal*.

Poe also continued to write fiction, though it received less notice than his work as a critic. Then, in 1845, Poe published "The Raven," which brought him instant international acclaim. The poor poet, however, received only \$9 for his masterpiece.

Tragic Ends

The final blow came two years later, when Poe's young wife, Virginia, died of tuberculosis. Poe himself followed in 1849, dying penniless on the streets of Baltimore. A rival became executor of his estate and sought to defame him, writing, "Edgar Allan Poe is dead . . . but few will be grieved by it." Poe's short, hard life contrasts to the brilliant works he has left to the ages.



Daniel M. Silva / Shutterstock.com

CCSS.ELA-Literacy CCRA Standards

R.1, R.2, R.5, R.8, R.10,
W.7, W.8, W.9, W.10

Speaking and Listening

You can identify a main idea in spoken word or audio through active listening. Listen for a main point early. If one isn't stated outright, use a formula like the one below to infer the main idea. This process is simplified by taking notes of important ideas.

Analyzing Controlling Sentences

In informational reading, a controlling sentence is one that sums up the main point of a selection.

How can I recognize controlling sentences?

Watch for the following types of controlling sentences:

- **A thesis statement** provides the focus for a whole article or essay. This statement usually appears in the opening paragraph or paragraphs. In the example to the right, the thesis statement is underlined.
- **A topic sentence** provides the focus for a paragraph. This statement often appears at the beginning of the paragraph, but it can also appear anywhere in the paragraph or be implied.

Lakes in Our Hands

At the end of the last ice age, a continental glacier a mile deep melted, retreating from North America. Massive flood waters poured down the Mississippi and Ohio basins and gushed out the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Not all of the freshwater escaped, though. Some of it sank into deep hollows carved by the bellies of the glaciers themselves. The glaciers withdrew, leaving lakes behind. These enormous bodies of water are geologically very young. They didn't exist during the last ice age, and they might cease to exist before the next one. Though gigantic glaciers originally carved the Great Lakes, their fate now lies increasingly in the tiny hands of human beings.

How can I infer an implied controlling sentence?

If a paragraph or article does not include a specific controlling sentence, you can write one of your own. For example, the following middle paragraph does not contain a topic sentence.

In 1969, the Cuyahoga River, a tributary to Lake Erie, caught fire. The apocalyptic vision of burning water shook human complacency. At the time, heavy industrialization along the lakeshore had caused massive fish die-offs. Phosphorus-laden water from factories caused algae blooms that robbed the water of oxygen, killing indigenous species. Some environmentalists declared the lake "dead." People responded. Cleveland launched an initiative to clean the Cuyahoga and upgrade the city's sewer systems. In 1972, Congress passed the Clean Water Act, regulating levels of pollution. It took over two decades for the lake to recover, but by the late 1990s, indigenous species had rebounded.

To infer a topic sentence, ask (and answer) the following questions:

What is the topic?

Lake Erie

What is said about it?

Humans have impacted it in bad and good ways.

What controlling sentence can I infer?

Lake Erie demonstrates how human activity can destroy or save a Great Lake.

Activity 2: Reading Literary Criticism

1. Use **SQ3R** to closely read the article that follows. Write down your observations.
2. Write down any controlling sentences that you find.
3. The fourth paragraph lacks a controlling sentence. Infer one and write it.

Edgar Allan Poe: Inventor of Mystery

by Andrew Westerberg

When most people think of the great American author Edgar Allan Poe, they focus on his brooding Gothic stories. Poe's contribution to the mystery genre is just as deep. Long before Sherlock Holmes or Miss Marple—and certainly before C.S.I.—Poe wrote three stories that set up the template for all mystery stories that followed.

The Murders in the Rue Morgue

In “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Poe introduced the now-standard formula. The tale centers on a brilliant amateur detective (C. Auguste Dupin), is told by a stalwart companion, and features a mystery that the detective solves before explaining his thought process. In this tale, the red-haired culprit exhibits superhuman abilities that baffle all but the great detective.

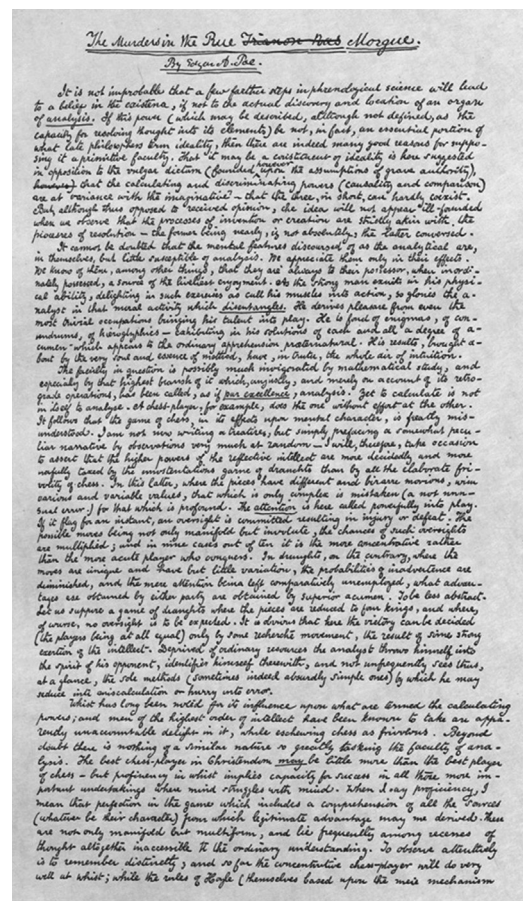
The Mystery of Marie Rogêt

Poe's second mystery story, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” advanced the formula even further. For one thing, it features the same detective team in a new adventure, thus establishing the formula for a series of episodes. The story also was “ripped from the headlines”—based on a sensational real crime of the time. In this story, Poe further developed the concept of “ratiocination”—the use of logic and psychology to get into the minds of criminals.

The Purloined Letter

Poe's final mystery, “The Purloined Letter,” begins with the now-famous Dupin discussing his most celebrated cases, as many later detectives would do. A client arrives and seeks to pay for his services, turning Dupin from an amateur sleuth into a private detective. In this story, Dupin is driven not just by fame and fortune, but by the chess match of battling a brilliant criminal mind. Here, the tropes that shaped Holmes and Poirot were fully formed.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle once wrote that each of these three stories by Poe “is a root from which a whole literature has developed.” Doyle, Agatha Christie, and hundreds of other mystery writers got rich tending the tree that Poe planted. Their progenitor Poe died penniless, though—a tragedy bordering on the criminal. But by inventing the mystery genre, Poe left the world much richer than he had found it.



This handwritten original manuscript of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” is the beginning of the mystery genre. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Shifting to the Common Core

Course Objectives

These materials help students gain the skills they need to comply with the Common Core and to succeed on its assessments. Students will learn to analyze the information they receive, evaluate it, and synthesize responses that demonstrate deep levels of knowledge.

In *Shifting to the Common Core: English/Language Arts*, students will . . .

- Use close-reading strategies to capture the meaning of complex texts.
- Quickly outline complex texts, summarizing main points.
- Cite textual evidence in a variety of forms.
- Use STRAP analysis to fully understand writing prompts in the assessment.
- Evaluate and critique logical arguments within texts.
- Weigh the effectiveness of support.
- Evaluate the use of literary devices.
- Construct logical arguments, drawing evidence from texts.
- Synthesize information from multiple sources to build meaning.
- Write effective responses to on-demand prompts.

In *Shifting to the Common Core: Mathematics*, students will . . .

- Understand the mathematical problem-solving process.
- Use known/unknown analysis to understand mathematical prompts in the assessment.
- Identify constants and variables in each situation.
- Analyze formulas to determine which apply.
- Recognize patterns and reasoning in mathematical expressions.
- Use mathematical modeling to predict calculated values.
- Evaluate and critique mathematical reasoning.
- Argue for specific problem-solving approaches.
- Create new mathematical expressions in order to solve problems.
- Model using mathematics.