

Literacy Strategy Handbook:
Grade 9 Canadian History – WWI Unit
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Introduction (Abstract)

This strategy handbook is designed to support literacy development in a Grade 9 history classroom during a unit on World War I. The unit explores various aspects of the war, including its main causes, Canada's decision to enter, trench life and soldier experiences, Canada's involvement, and its conclusion and legacy. The goal of this handbook is to help students develop historical thinking skills while simultaneously developing their literacy skills engaging in reading, writing, communication, critical analysis, and evidence-based reasoning.

To support student engagement and content comprehension, five instructional literacy strategies will be integrated throughout the World War I unit: Think-Pair-Share, Quick Writes, Close Reading/Close Viewing, Readers Theater, and Exit Ticket/Reflection. This handbook will demonstrate how each one can be implemented to explore a separate topic related to World War I. The use of each strategy will be supported by a classroom example, justification of the rationale for choosing this strategy, an aligned NYS Next Generation English Language Arts Standard, related language demands and functions, differentiation and accommodation strategies, and appropriate assessment measures. Scholarly references will also support the justification of each strategy's effectiveness in promoting historical literacy and student engagement.

Literacy Strategy 1: Think-Pair-Share

Overview of Think-Pair-Share Strategy

Think-Pair-Share is a structured, three-step discussion strategy designed to encourage all students to participate in meaningful dialogue. It begins with a "Think" phase, where students independently reflect on a question or prompt. This is followed by the "Pair" phase, where students discuss their ideas with a partner or small group. Finally, in the "Share" phase, pairs

share their insights with the whole class. This method provides students with the time and structure to formulate their thoughts, engage in peer learning, and build confidence in expressing their ideas aloud.

In the context of a history lesson, Think-Pair-Share is especially effective in helping students explore complex historical questions by engaging them in layered reflection, research, and discussion. In this case, the strategy will be used to help students identify, understand, and explain the most significant cause of World War I, supporting the development of critical historical literacy skills such as research, interpretation, explanation, and justification.

Direct Application to the Topic and Grade Level

Here is a Lesson Plan I created to apply the Think-Pair-Share strategy to the topic of exploring the causes of World War 1:

Subject: Grade 9 History; **Unit:** World War 1; **Topic:** Causes of World War I

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify and explain at least four major causes of World War I.
2. Students will collaboratively analyze the impact of these causes using the Think-Pair-Share method to develop critical thinking and communication skills.

Time: The lesson will last approximately 60 minutes, with 20 minutes dedicated to direct instruction and the remaining 30 minutes dedicated to a think-pair-share activity for engagement, collaboration, assessment, and reflection. More specifics are provided in the procedures section.

Materials:

- Projector and PowerPoint slides summarizing the key causes
- Whiteboard and markers to write out the causes and key details
- World War I causes handout/graphic organizer for student completion
- Copies of brief articles that further discuss the role each cause played
- Markers and large sheet of paper for Think-Pair-Share group activity

Procedures: To begin the lesson, I will provide a brief overview of World War I and introduce the major causes using a PowerPoint presentation. This will include alliances (France/UK/Russia vs Germany/Austria-Hungary/Ottoman Empire), nationalism (national pride fueled competition and a desire for power and dominance), militarism (arms race between European powerhouses), imperialism (competition for resources and global power among European nations), and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. - 15 minutes

Additionally, students will engage in a Think-Pair-Share activity:

Think: Prior to the lesson, each student will be given a graphic organizer handout to track key information for each of the major causes. They must jot down their thoughts by filling out the graphic organizer to independently reflect on the causes - Occurs during the lesson

Pair: Next, they will pair up into four groups to discuss their ideas and clarify understanding. Each group will be assigned a specific cause that they must further research and debate the significance of - alliances, nationalism, militarism, and imperialism (the assassination of Franz Ferdinand does not need further analysis as it is interconnected to the other causes). Each group will be given a brief article that dives into greater depth on their specific cause. They must quickly read through it, discuss it, and jot down notes. Ultimately, they will be encouraged to use

this research as well as their own inferences and debates to explain why their topic was a key component in causing the Great War - 20 minutes.

Share: Finally, each group will share their insights with the class by giving a brief presentation. They must share the information and details they learned through their article, as well as their groups thoughts and opinions. If time permits, I will ask them questions as further prompts to dive more into what they learned. This promotes collaborative learning, research, and deeper analysis - 20 minutes (5 minutes per group)

To conclude, I will summarize the discussion points and reinforce how these causes contributed to the outbreak of World War I at the beginning of the next class. I will then assign the assessment piece during that class and dedicate the remainder of that class time to working on it independently.

Justification of the Strategy

Think-Pair-Share is a highly effective instructional strategy for this Grade 9 history lesson because it supports both content learning and literacy development in meaningful ways. First, it promotes active engagement by giving every student the opportunity to independently reflect on the causes of World War I before engaging in discussion. This initial “think” phase ensures that students process the material and generate their own ideas, which is particularly beneficial for learners who may need more time to formulate responses (Mertler, 2003). As Fisher and Frey (2019) explain, Think-Pair-Share introduces an essential “intermediate stage” between asking a question and receiving answers, allowing students to consider their own thinking and refine their ideas through peer discussion. This structured approach often results in more thoughtful and detailed responses during class sharing.

The strategy also encourages collaborative learning by allowing students to share, debate, and compare perspectives with a partner before presenting to the class. These peer conversations help students clarify misunderstandings and reinforce historical thinking through explanation and discussion (Mertler, 2003). Furthermore, Think-Pair-Share builds oral communication skills by requiring students to articulate their views clearly and support their arguments with evidence, both in small groups and during class presentations. This is especially helpful for students who may be reluctant to speak in larger settings, as the strategy creates a safe, supportive space to build confidence. Overall, by promoting interaction, critical thinking, and communication, Think-Pair-Share aligns seamlessly with the learning goals of this lesson and supports adolescent literacy development across disciplines (Fisher & Frey, 2019).

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard Addressed

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9-10R1:

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences; develop questions for deeper understanding and for further exploration.

9-10SL1:

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

9-10SL4:

Present claims, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

9-10W2c:

Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary to express the appropriate complexity of a topic.

Language Function/Demand**NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10R1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences; develop questions for deeper understanding and for further exploration.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **analyze** historical texts to **identify** explicit and implicit information about the causes of World War I. They will **cite** textual evidence from sources to **develop** their presentations for further exploration.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10SL1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will participate in group collaborations to **interpret** the importance of various causes of

World War I. They will build from the lesson and their sources to **explain** the nuances of their cause and **argue** its significance.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10SL4

Present claims, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **examine** the supporting evidence and concisely **present** their conclusions to the class. They will **construct** logical connections between their claims and the evidence and **describe** their findings to enhance their presentation skills.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10W2c

Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary to express the appropriate complexity of a topic.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **justify** their claims with precise, content-specific language (e.g., "alliances" and "nationalism") to **discuss** the text.

Differentiated Instruction

To ensure that all students can successfully engage with the Think-Pair-Share activity and master the lesson objectives, several differentiation and accommodation strategies will be implemented.

For students with varied reading abilities, texts provided during the "Pair" phase will be differentiated by complexity. While the expectation is for students to engage with grade-level

texts, simplified summaries or annotated articles will be available for students who need additional scaffolding. These texts will help make grade-level content accessible while maintaining rigor. Visual supports, such as graphic organizers, concept maps, and diagrams, will further aid comprehension, helping students organize their ideas and vocabulary effectively. These tools will benefit visual learners and support students with diverse processing needs, such as those with learning differences or English Language Learners (ELLs).

For ELLs/MLLs, the “Think” phase will allow extra time for reflection and processing. Students will also have access to home language supports, if needed, to help them engage with the content. Strategic pairing of students, such as matching ELLs with supportive peers or those with stronger language skills, will encourage peer modeling and collaborative learning, building both language proficiency and confidence in communication.

To support students with disabilities, accommodations based on individual IEPs or 504 plans will be provided. This may include targeted prompts, sentence starters, or alternative forms of communication, ensuring that students with disabilities have equitable access to the content and can effectively participate in discussions. For students with processing challenges or those who need additional support in organizing their thoughts, the “Think” phase will allow extended time for reflection.

In terms of learning styles, auditory learners will benefit from verbal summaries and discussions during the “Think” phase, while kinesthetic learners may benefit from using digital tools, such as text-to-speech or speech-to-text programs, to interact with the content. Technology will also be used to support students who need help with reading, writing, or note-taking. By incorporating these differentiated supports, students will have multiple pathways to engage with the content and demonstrate their understanding.

Formative assessments throughout the lesson will allow the teacher to adjust groupings, pacing, and instructional strategies based on student needs in real time. These ongoing adjustments will ensure that all students—regardless of reading level, language proficiency, or disability—are supported in meeting the lesson objectives and engaging meaningfully with the activity.

Assessment Measures

On its own, the Think-Pair-Share activity serves as a valuable form of informal assessment. As the teacher, I will use my observations from the students' discussions and presentations to assess their collaborative skills and understanding of the concepts. I will also be going around the classroom while they are working in their groups to facilitate conversations with them to further assess how well they are understanding the material. Each of these forms of informal assessment will provide greater clarity in terms of their understanding of the material and whether support or reteaching is necessary, and for whom.

Each student will also be required to hand in their individual graphic organizers that they filled out during the lecture as another informal assessment. I will evaluate their notes and return them prior to the next class with suggestions and feedback for key details they missed. This ensures they are on the right track with all the information they need handy, which they will later be assessed on at the completion of the World War 1 unit. That assessment will be a formal test where students must answer multiple choice and short answer questions related to the entirety of the World War 1 unit following its completion.

Lastly, I will be assigning a short essay/research paper during our following class, which will serve as the main piece of formal assessment for this topic. This will require students to

identify and explain the four causes of World War I and each one's significance in their own words. Students will be given one week to complete the paper and will have class time to work on it with my support and feedback. This formative assessment will allow me to gauge individual understanding of the lesson objectives. Students will also be graded on this paper, unlike the informal assessments involved in the think-pair-share activity.

Overall, the lesson and think-pair-share strategy will serve as an opportunity for students to learn and test their knowledge in a low stakes environment prior to the main assessments, the short essay and unit test, giving them time to receive my feedback and be retaught anything they did not immediately grasp. Collectively, these assessments will ensure students are engaged with and understanding the content prior to graded assessment, and provides me with data so I can adjust future lessons to reinforce or expand upon certain aspects as needed.

Literacy Strategy 2: Quick Writes

Overview of Quick Writes Strategy

Quick Writes is an informal literacy strategy in which students respond in writing to a prompt or question at the start of class. The purpose is to encourage students to practice thinking, writing, self-reflecting, and self-correcting. Typically lasting 3–7 minutes, a Quick Write gives students time to reflect, organize thoughts, and articulate ideas before moving into class discussion or deeper analysis. It's a short response to a question on a given topic, which activates prior knowledge, develops fluency, and encourages students to engage with academic vocabulary through low stakes writing rather than a formal assessment.

In a history context, Quick Writes can help students reflect on previously learned material and apply it to new situations or perspectives. This strategy also functions as an informal assessment, allowing the teacher to gauge student comprehension and tailor instruction accordingly. According to Fisher and Frey (2019), Quick Writes support writing development by promoting routine practice, helping students clarify their thinking while reinforcing content-specific vocabulary. Vacca et al. (2014) further note that Quick Writes provide an important scaffold between reading, thinking, and extended writing by offering students a “writing-to-learn” tool that encourages critical engagement with content.

Quick Writes are also highly flexible and developmentally appropriate, especially in Grade 9 classrooms. They support the transition from guided to independent writing and help students build confidence in expressing their ideas in writing. This makes them particularly valuable for fostering historical literacy and preparing students for higher stakes written assessments.

Direct Application to the Topic and Grade Level

Here is a Lesson Plan I created to apply the Quick Writes strategy to the topic of exploring Canada’s decision to join World War 1:

Subject: Grade 9 History; **Unit:** World War 1; **Topic:** Canada’s decision to join World War I

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will be able to infer and explain key motivations behind Canada’s entry into World War I, activating prior knowledge and making historical connections through informal writing.

2. Students will learn content vocabulary and develop skills in critical thinking, writing, comprehension, and self-reflection through the Quick Write and reflection activity.

Time: The lesson will last approximately 60 minutes, with approximately 10 minutes dedicated to a review of last week's material/brief introduction to this week's topic, 10 minutes allocated to the Quick Write activity, 10 minutes for sharing and discussion, 20 minutes for direct instruction, and the final 10 minutes allocated to a reflection on the quick writes activity. More specifics are provided in the procedures section.

Materials:

- Lined paper or notebooks for student responses to the prompt
- Anchor chart or whiteboard outlining vocabulary terms (e.g., *dominion*, *sovereignty*, *imperialism*, *duty*, *patriotism*)
- Quick Write prompt displayed on blackboard/projector
- Modified graphic organizers, digital writing devices, and text-to-speech devices for differentiated support
- Projector and PowerPoint slides for corresponding lesson, following the quick writes
- Reflection worksheet following the lesson

Materials:

- Excerpt from Captain Bellenden S. Huteson's letter (printed or projected on screen)

- Pen/pencil and notebook for students
- Projector/whiteboard for class discussion

Procedures:

Introduction & Review (10 minutes): Begin class by briefly reviewing key takeaways from the previous lesson on the causes of World War I (militarism, alliances, imperialism, and nationalism). Prompt students to consider Canada's historical ties and position within the British Empire in 1914, as a bridge to introduce today's focus (Canada's decision to enter the war). Briefly explain the Quick Write activity and introduce the prompt.

Quick Write Prompt (10 minutes): Display the following writing prompt: *"Based on what you know about the causes of World War I and Canada's status as part of the British Empire, why do you think Canada chose to enter the war? What factors—political, cultural, or emotional—might have influenced that decision?"* Instruct students to write continuously for 7 minutes, without worrying about spelling or grammar. Encourage them to include specific vocabulary from past lessons and make inferences using historical reasoning. Emphasize that this is informal writing to capture initial thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers at this stage.

Optional Sharing (5-10 minutes): Ask for a few volunteers to share their Quick Write responses. Record key ideas or recurring themes on the board and encourage and facilitate any discussions that arise. Keep the discussion flowing even if it exceeds the allocated time: the instruction portion allocates time for discussion as well, which can be condensed if this discussion goes longer than anticipated.

Direct Instruction & Discussion (15-20 minutes): Use students' written ideas as a springboard into the main lesson content, including direct instruction on Canada's political obligations to Britain, popular sentiment toward the war, and early recruitment efforts. Present key information about Canada's motivations, political context, and the role of the British Empire in the decision to enter the war. Facilitate a class discussion to build understanding, encouraging students to connect their Quick Write ideas with new content.

Reflection Activity (10 minutes): Have students revisit their original Quick Write responses. Provide guiding questions such as: *What did I get right in my initial response? What important reasons did I miss? How has my understanding changed?* Students write a brief reflection addressing these prompts, either in paragraph form or using a graphic organizer.

Justification of the Strategy

Quick Writes are a highly effective instructional strategy for supporting literacy development in a Grade 9 history classroom, particularly for complex topics like Canada's decision to enter World War I. This strategy encourages students to engage in low-stakes, informal writing that activates prior knowledge and promotes critical thinking. By writing briefly and spontaneously, students develop fluency and confidence in articulating their ideas without the pressure of formal assessment, which reduces anxiety and fosters a positive writing mindset (Driessens & Parr, 2020).

Furthermore, Quick Writes serve as a formative assessment tool that provides immediate insight into students' initial understandings and misconceptions about the historical content (Fisher & Frey, 2019). This allows the teacher to tailor instruction based on students' needs and scaffold the lesson effectively. The reflective follow-up activity enhances metacognitive skills by

prompting students to analyze their own thinking and make connections between their initial ideas and new knowledge, deepening their comprehension and historical reasoning (Driessens & Parr, 2020).

Additionally, this Quick Writes activity supports the development of discipline-specific vocabulary and historical thinking skills, such as perspective-taking and inference making, as students are encouraged to explain motivations behind Canada's war involvement using key terms and evidence. This low-stakes informal writing will build foundational skills, like constructing historical arguments in writing, preparing students for more formal writing assessments later in the unit. This is particularly beneficial if the quick writes strategy is integrated into following lessons as well, as it can pay huge dividends to use it as a recurring start to each class. According to Vacca et al. (2014), integrating frequent informal writing opportunities like Quick Writes facilitates the transition from thinking and reading to more extended writing, promoting overall academic literacy and engagement.

Lastly, this short activity also provides valuable insight into student comprehension and misconceptions, helping teacher's identify areas where additional clarification or instruction is needed, and adjust their teaching approach accordingly. By regularly implementing Quick Writes, educators can monitor students' progress over time, ensuring that students develop a more nuanced understanding of historical events and concepts, which ultimately leads to greater academic success. Overall, Quick Writes provide an accessible, flexible, and convenient method to develop historical knowledge, foster literacy development, enhance engagement, and support diverse learners in a Grade 9 history classroom.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard Addressed

9-10W2c: Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary to express the appropriate complexity of a topic.

9-10W2a: Introduce and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions.

9-10SL1c: Pose and respond to questions that relate the discussion to broader themes or ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

Language Function/Demand

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10W2c

Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary to express the appropriate complexity of a topic.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will use precise, content-specific vocabulary (e.g., *dominion*, *sovereignty*, *imperialism*, *patriotism*) in their Quick Write to **explain** Canada's decision to enter WWI, which they will **revise** in their post-lesson reflection to **expand** their understanding.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10W2a

Introduce and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **organize** ideas about Canada's motivations for entering WWI in their Quick Write

responses and **construct** reflections that distinguish between initial assumptions and revised understandings based on new instructional content.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10SL1c

Pose and respond to questions that relate the discussion to broader themes or ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **discuss** with their peers and teacher by asking and responding to questions related to Canada's motivations, including political and cultural ties to Britain. Students will **clarify** their own positions and **assess** new perspectives raised by peers.

Differentiated Instruction

To ensure that all students can access content and engage meaningfully with the Quick Writes activity, this lesson incorporates targeted differentiation and accommodations aligned with New York State's ELA expectations for diverse learners.

Text Complexity and Scaffolding:

According to the NYS ELA Standards, by the end of Grades 9-10, students are expected to read and comprehend literary and informational texts at or above grade level. However, because each student brings unique skills and background knowledge to reading, a text that is "complex" for one learner may be accessible to another (NYS Next Generation ELA Standards, *Text Complexity Expectations, 9–10*). In recognition of this, all students will receive scaffolded support as needed to help them engage with grade-level historical content and vocabulary. To do

so, students will be provided with a word bank of content-specific terms (e.g., *imperialism*, *dominion*, *sovereignty*), which will be posted and discussed in advance. They will also be provided with graphic organizers, and the structured prompts for the quick writes will help students organize their thoughts and stay on track when writing (i.e. the prompts provide hints and ideas to reflect on). Likewise, students that need additional support for extended writing will be given the option to use bullet-points or sentence frames.

Support for English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs):

ELLs/MLLs bring a wide range of English proficiency and literacy skills in their home languages. NYS guidance notes that they may demonstrate mastery of ELA concepts bilingually or transfer linguistic knowledge across languages. To support this, students may:

- Use bilingual dictionaries or translation apps.
- Access vocabulary definitions in their home language, where feasible.
- Demonstrate understanding using oral or written responses in English or their home language, especially in formative activities like Quick Writes (NYS ELA Standards, *English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners*).
- Work with peer partners during class discussions to support oral language development and comprehension.

Support for Students with Disabilities:

Children with disabilities are held to the same high standards as their peers, but they may require specialized instruction or accommodations, as documented in their Individualized

Education Programs (IEPs). In accordance with NYS ELA standards, the following supports will be included for those that need differentiated support:

- Speech-to-text tools or typing options for students with fine motor or written expression challenges.
- Visual prompts, anchor charts, and multimedia supports to reinforce understanding.
- Additional time or reduced-length writing tasks for students with processing or attention difficulties.
- Graphic organizers or partially filled-in sentence frames to assist with sequencing and organization.

Lastly, this lesson is intentionally multimodal to engage a range of learning preferences. Visual learners benefit from vocabulary charts, projected prompts, and PowerPoint slides, auditory learners benefit from class discussions and peer-sharing opportunities, and reading/writing learners benefit from journaling and the final reflection phase. To support kinesthetic learners, I could also allow students to move around the classroom during the class discussions, encouraging participation in a "walk-and-talk" style where they share ideas while moving, to reinforce learning through movement. By integrating these accommodations, the lesson ensures that all students can meaningfully engage with the content, regardless of language background, literacy level, disability, or learning style.

Assessment Measures

Assessment for this lesson will be primarily formative, designed to gauge students' understanding of the content, their engagement with the material, and their literacy development

through the Quick Write strategy. The Quick Write serves as an informal assessment tool, allowing students to express their initial thoughts and use content-specific vocabulary before and after instruction. The initial Quick Write, completed before direct instruction, will help assess students' prior knowledge and inferential reasoning skills. I will review these responses to check for historical reasoning, the use of key concepts such as imperialism and nationalism, and the correct application of academic vocabulary. This will provide insight into what students already know and identify any misconceptions that may need to be addressed.

Following the lesson, students will complete a post-instruction reflection, which serves as another informal assessment. This will allow students to reflect on how their understanding has evolved after the lesson and revise their thinking based on the new information provided. I will review these reflections to evaluate students' ability to self-assess and refine their thinking, ensuring that they are able to connect new knowledge with prior understanding. While neither assessment will be graded, they will be used to inform my understanding of student and class-wide comprehension, helping identify areas that may require further clarification. The responses will also be used to develop my review at the start of the next class, ensuring that any lingering questions or difficult concepts can be revisited.

Overall, these formative assessments will provide valuable data on student understanding and engagement, allowing me to adjust instruction as needed. Although not graded, the Quick Write responses and reflections will serve as a foundation for more formal assessments later in the unit, such as a research paper on the causes of World War 1, reinforcing the connection between informal and formal assessment practices.

Literacy Strategy 3: Close Reading/Close Viewing

Overview of Close Reading/Close Viewing Strategy

Close Reading and Close Viewing are two complementary literacy strategies designed to help students engage deeply with both written and visual texts. While they share a common goal of fostering critical analysis, they are applied in slightly different ways based on the type of material being analyzed.

Close Reading involves reading a text multiple times, each time focusing on different layers of meaning. The first reading is for general comprehension, the second for guided questions that promote critical thinking, and the third delves into stylistic elements such as vocabulary and author intent. Following these readings, students will be required to text-dependent questions. This method helps students engage critically with the text and analyze the author's choices and message. For this lesson, students will engage in a Close Reading of a letter written by a World War I soldier. This primary source offers a personal account of trench life, providing a unique opportunity for students to connect emotionally with the historical context. They will analyze the soldier's words to better understand the psychological and physical challenges soldiers faced, as well as the emotional toll of war.

Close Viewing is a similar process but applied to visual media such as films, photographs, or diagrams. In this strategy, students analyze visual material with the same level of attention they would give to a written text. For this lesson, the focus is on extracting historical insights from the images, actions, and accounts presented in the film. Students will examine the soldiers' firsthand experiences, gaining insights into the harsh realities of trench life during World War I, including the conditions in the trenches, the emotional toll of war, and the soldiers'

reflections on their roles in the conflict. By focusing on the historical context, students will gain a more profound understanding of the lived experiences of soldiers during World War I and reflect on how these experiences influenced their attitudes toward the war and their livelihood. Rather than answering text-dependent questions after the viewing, students will write a persuasive essay on the topic, utilizing both the film and the letter from a soldier as sources.

Both strategies allow students to critically examine historical content by asking questions, making inferences, and drawing conclusions. The essay will be the major formal assessment for the unit, requiring students to think critically about these sources, make an argument, and support their arguments with specific evidence from the soldier's letter and the documentary. This will help develop their ability to engage with primary sources, analyze historical contexts, and develop a coherent argument grounded in historical facts. Through Close Reading and Close Viewing, students will connect abstract historical themes to real-world experiences, gaining a fuller understanding of trench life during World War I and developing important historical literacy skills.

Direct Application to the Topic and Grade Level

Here is a Lesson Plan I created to apply the Close Reading/Close Viewing strategy to the topic of trench life:

Subject: Grade 9 History; **Unit:** World War 1; **Topic:** Trench Life and Soldier Experiences during World War I

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will analyze the letter from a World War I soldier and a documentary film to understand the emotional, physical, and psychological challenges soldiers faced during the war.
2. Students will synthesize information from both a written primary source and a visual medium to form a persuasive argument on the impact of trench warfare on soldiers' lives. This will require them to use evidence from both sources to support their claims, extracting relevant details, making inferences, and drawing conclusions. This will also include learning how to interpret the significance of these sources within the broader context of World War I.

Time: This lesson will last the duration of three days worth of classes, approximately 120 minutes in total. The first class will consist of a 10-minute recap of the previous lesson regarding Canada's motivation to join the war, followed by a 20-minute lecture that explains trench life, including concepts like trench warfare, No Man's Land, Medical Care (particularly related to trench foot), Psychological Impact (stress, exhaustion, shellshock), battlefield tactics, and the daily realities of the lives of soldiers. Following that lecture, students will do a 15-minute close reading activity on an excerpt from a letter written by Canadian WWI soldier, Captain Bellenden S. Hutcheson. They will then spend the remaining 15 minutes of class answering text-dependent questions about the letter.

The following class will exclusively have students watch the documentary *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Since the film is approximately 90 minutes long, this will last the duration of the class and take up about half of the following class. Upon finishing the film during the third class, students

will have the second half of that class to work on their persuasive essay, which will be due one week after it is assigned.

Materials:

- Day 1:
 - Copies for each student of an excerpt from Captain Bellenden S. Hutcheson's letter (shown below).
 - Text-dependent questions for close reading of the letter.
 - Whiteboard or digital display to write and organize class discussion points.
 - Writing materials: Pen/pencil, paper/notebook, or computers for essay drafting (Day 1 and 2).
- Day 2:
 - Visual Medium: *They Shall Not Grow Old* documentary
 - Projector/Screen for showing the documentary.

Selected Excerpt for Close Reading:

“The bombardment lasted from 1 p.m. until 10 p.m., with a few periods of lull, and was apparently counter battery work on the part of the enemy. Our guns were not in action. As you surmise, the gun crews had taken refuge in cellars, not anticipating a bombardment of such intensity with heavy stuff. Gas shells and high explosions were intermingled. My work consisted in dressing the wounded, checking hemorrhage, giving a hypo of morphine when necessary and seeing that the injured were evacuated to the rear. The gas used that day was the

deadly sweetish smelling phosgene. It was my first experience with gas in warfare and I wore a mask part of the time and instructed the men to do so whenever there was a dangerous concentration. You ask about my own reaction. It was of course very disconcerting to endeavor to dress wounded while shells were showering debris about, and the possibility of being in the next few seconds in the same plight as the terribly wounded men I was dressing, occurred to me every now and then. The whole thing seemed rather unreal, particularly when it occurred to me, busy as I was, that the killing was being done deliberately and systematically. I felt particularly sorry for the young artillery men, (and many of them were about 19) who were being subjected to the ordeal. I remember one man who had a ghastly wound which would obviously prove fatal in a short time, pleading with me, amidst the turmoil of explosions, to shoot him. Every soldier who has seen action since knows that it requires the highest type of stamina and bravery for troops to lie in a trench and take a heavy shelling without being demoralized and panic stricken, therefore I shall always remember the orderly rescue work carried on by the officers and men of the artillery in the face of the concentrated shelling that occurred that afternoon.”

Procedures:

Day 1: Introduction to Trench Life & Close Reading of a Soldier's Letter

1. Introduction & Recap (10 minutes):

- Begin class with a brief recap of the previous lesson on Canada’s motivations for joining World War I. Revisit key concepts such as militarism, alliances, and Canada’s political and cultural ties to Britain.
- Use the recap as a bridge to introduce today's focus: trench warfare and the experiences of soldiers on the front lines.

2. Direct Instruction on Trench Life (20 minutes):

- Provide a lecture on the daily realities of life in the trenches during World War I.
- Topics to cover:
 - **Trench Warfare:** the layout of trenches, No Man's Land, gas warfare, the challenges of movement, and the constant threat of enemy fire.
 - **Medical Care:** trench foot, the impact of unsanitary conditions on health, and the role of medics.
 - **Psychological Impact:** the toll of stress, exhaustion, shellshock, and the mental strain of constant bombardment.
 - **Battles & Historical Context:** Quickly reference key battles (e.g., Vimy Ridge, Ypres, Passchendaele) and how soldiers' daily lives were shaped by these events. These battles will be explored further in future lessons.
- **Artifacts:** Briefly introduce historical artifacts, including letters from soldiers, to give students a tangible sense of the personal experience of war.

3. Close Reading of Captain Bellenden S. Hutcheson's Letter (15 minutes):

- Provide students with an excerpt from Captain Hutcheson's letter to read.
- **First Reading:** Have students read the letter for general understanding. Ask them to underline or highlight any details about the physical and emotional experiences described.

- **Second Reading:** Instruct students to focus on the emotional tone of the letter.

What can they infer about Hutcheson's mental state and his perception of the violence?

- **Third Reading:** Ask students to analyze the significance of certain details, such as the description of the bombardment, the psychological effect of the violence, and Hutcheson's personal reflections.

4. **Text-Dependent Questions (15 minutes):**

- After the close reading, distribute or display text-dependent questions. Allow time for students to share their responses with the class, facilitating a brief discussion to unpack key ideas.
- Have students answer these questions individually, which should focus on deeper analysis, such as:
 - What does Hutcheson's description of dressing the wounded while under constant shellfire reveal about the mental and emotional strain soldiers faced in the trenches?
 - How does this passage convey the constant threat to his own safety, and what does it suggest about the psychological impact of working in such dangerous conditions?
 - Hutcheson describes soldiers as "young artillery men" who were "19." Why do you think he emphasizes their youth?

- What do you think Hutcheson means by “unreal,” and how does this reflect the psychological strain of trench warfare?

Day 2: Close Viewing of *They Shall Not Grow Old* Documentary

1. Introduction to the Documentary (5 minutes):

- Briefly introduce *They Shall Not Grow Old* and explain that the documentary will offer a visual and emotional experience of trench warfare, supplementing the information learned in Day 1.
- Instruct students to take notes during the film, focusing on key moments that reflect the physical, emotional, and psychological realities of soldiers’ lives in the trenches.

2. Viewing of *They Shall Not Grow Old* (55 minutes):

- Watch the documentary for the duration of class.
- Encourage students to think about the letter from Captain Hutcheson while watching the documentary. They should note similar themes or differing perspectives on life in the trenches, particularly the physical hardships and the emotional toll.

Day 3: Persuasive Essay on Trench Warfare

1. Finish Viewing *They Shall Not Grow Old* (40 minutes):

- Finish the remainder of the documentary.

- Encourage students to reflect on the key takeaways from the film, particularly in relation to their previous close reading of the soldier's letter. Ask students to think about how the film deepens their understanding of trench warfare and soldier experiences.

2. Essay Assignment Introduction (10 minutes):

- Assign the persuasive essay on trench warfare, instructing students to use both the letter from Captain Hutcheson and the documentary as primary sources to support their arguments.
- The essay prompt: How did trench warfare impact soldiers' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being? Use evidence from both the letter and the documentary to support your argument.
- Provide students with a clear outline for the essay, including:
 - Introduction: Briefly introduce trench warfare and the significance of soldiers' experiences.
 - Body: Use specific examples from both sources to support claims about the impact of trench warfare.
 - Conclusion: Reflect on how these experiences shaped soldiers' lives and the broader historical context of World War I.

3. Essay Work Time (10 minutes):

- Allow students time to begin drafting their essays.

- Encourage students to think of a thesis during this period. What is it that they wish to argue in their essay?
- Circulate around the room to provide support, clarify questions, and guide students as they organize their thoughts and ideas.
- Remind students that their essays will be due in one week, giving them time to further develop and refine their arguments. They will also be given additional class time throughout the week.

Justification of the Strategy

The Close Reading/Close Viewing strategy is an invaluable instructional approach for promoting literacy development in a Grade 9 history classroom, particularly when exploring complex topics like trench life during World War I. This strategy not only supports the development of historical literacy but also enhances students' analytical thinking and critical engagement with primary and secondary sources. Through the close examination of both written texts and visual media, students gain a deeper understanding of historical events by analyzing them from multiple perspectives, thus making connections between the past and the present.

Close Reading, which involves multiple readings of a text with specific purposes, is particularly effective for encouraging deep comprehension and critical analysis. By engaging students in close reading of a primary source, such as the letter written by Captain Bellenden S. Hutcheson, students are challenged to interpret the text's underlying meaning, tone, and emotional content. Hutcheson's letter provides a personal, first-hand account of the emotional, physical, and psychological toll of trench warfare, which allows students to empathize with soldiers and understand the harsh realities they faced. This process not only develops students'

abilities to analyze historical texts but also helps them develop the skills needed to interpret historical context, intent, and emotional impact (Fisher & Frey, 2019).

Close Viewing, on the other hand, takes a similar analytical approach but applies it to visual media, such as the documentary *They Shall Not Grow Old*. This strategy prompts students to critically engage with historical images and film footage, examining not just what is shown, but how the visuals communicate historical reality. The documentary, which uses restored footage of World War I soldiers and their firsthand experiences, provides an emotional and visual complement to the letter. As students analyze the film, they are prompted to consider the challenges soldiers faced, including the physical dangers, psychological stress, and emotional toll of warfare, while simultaneously developing skills in media literacy. The combination of these two strategies, textual and visual analysis, helps students synthesize multiple forms of historical evidence, reinforcing their understanding of trench life.

Furthermore, this strategy aligns with the goal of promoting historical literacy by encouraging students to engage in critical thinking. Close reading and viewing require students to question, analyze, and evaluate the content they encounter. By asking students to make inferences about the psychological state of soldiers or to evaluate the impact of trench warfare on soldiers' well-being, students are developing their abilities to think critically about historical events and assess their broader significance (Vacca et al., 2014). In doing so, students move beyond surface-level comprehension to construct deeper, more nuanced understandings of history.

Close Reading/Close Viewing also encourages perspective-taking, a key skill in historical thinking. As students examine primary sources and visual materials, they are forced to consider

the perspectives of individuals who lived through the events they are studying. This is particularly important for understanding the experiences of soldiers during World War I, as their accounts challenge students to reflect on how war affects human lives in many ways. By considering these perspectives, students not only learn about historical events, but also engage with the emotions, struggles, and resilience of those involved (Fisher & Frey, 2019).

Lastly, this strategy supports the development of critical writing skills. The persuasive essay as a follow-up assessment encourages students to integrate evidence from both the letter and the documentary in a coherent and structured argument. This exercise reinforces the importance of evidence-based reasoning and helps students practice constructing historical arguments, a skill that will be essential for more formal assessments later in the unit. As Shortman (2016) observed, Close Reading is most valuable when it connects more explicitly with high-level cognitive tasks such as writing and argument construction. Providing students with opportunities to synthesize information through writing thus helps develop both academic literacy and deeper content understanding (Vacca et al., 2014).

Likewise, the findings of Shortman (2016) underscore the importance of intentional, well-supported implementation of Close Reading strategies in secondary classrooms. In her mixed methods study, high school English/language arts teachers across the United States expressed strong support for Close Reading as a valuable instructional approach but acknowledged inconsistencies in their ability to apply it effectively in practice. Many struggled to articulate specific instructional methods or adapt Close Reading to meet the needs of diverse learners. This highlights the need for structured, content-rich applications of Close Reading, such as this lesson that integrates history and literacy. It also highlights a need for emphasis on provisions for differentiation, which is also addressed within this literacy strategy handbook. By providing clear

scaffolds, targeted questions, and varied source materials, educators can ensure that Close Reading is not only meaningful but also accessible to all students, fulfilling its potential as a tool for critical engagement and historical analysis (Mariage et al., 2024).

Overall, the Close Reading/Close Viewing strategy is an effective and versatile tool for fostering historical literacy, critical thinking, and emotional engagement with historical content. By encouraging students to analyze both written and visual texts, this strategy not only enhances their comprehension and analytical skills but also deepens their empathy and understanding of the human experiences behind historical events. As such, it is a highly valuable approach for teaching complex topics like trench life during World War I in a Grade 9 history classroom.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard Addressed

9-10R1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences; develop questions for deeper understanding and for further exploration.

9-10R7: Analyze how a subject / content is presented in two or more formats by determining which details are emphasized, altered, or absent in each account. (e.g., analyze the representation of a subject / content or key scene in two different formats, examine the differences between a historical novel and a documentary).

9-10W6: Conduct research to answer questions, including self-generated questions, or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate. Synthesize multiple sources, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Language Function/Demand

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10R1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences; develop questions for deeper understanding and for further exploration.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **cite** strong and thorough textual evidence from both the primary and secondary sources (the letter and documentary) and **analyze** the emotional, psychological, and physical experiences of soldiers in trench warfare. They will also **infer** logical conclusions based on the content and **address** questions that explore the deeper meaning of the soldiers' experiences and broader themes of war.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10R7

Analyze how a subject / content is presented in two or more formats by determining which details are emphasized, altered, or absent in each account. (e.g., analyze the representation of a subject / content or key scene in two different formats, examine the differences between a historical novel and a documentary).

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **analyze** how the subject of trench warfare is presented in two different formats: the written letter and the documentary film. They will **determine** which details are emphasized, altered, or omitted in each account and **evaluate** how each format affects their understanding of the subject. They will also **examine** the differences between the letter and the documentary.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10W6

Conduct research to answer questions, including self-generated questions, or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate. Synthesize multiple sources, demonstrating

understanding of the subject under investigation.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **conduct** research to answer questions they generate about the soldiers' experiences in World War I, utilizing both the primary text and documentary as sources. They will **synthesize** information from multiple sources to **develop** a deeper understanding of the subject based on the evidence.

Differentiated Instruction

To ensure that all students can access the content and engage meaningfully with the Close Reading and Viewing activity, this lesson integrates differentiated instruction strategies aligned with the New York State English Language Arts (NYS ELA) Standards. By the end of Grades 9–10, students are expected to read and comprehend literary and informational texts independently and proficiently at the grade level. However, due to the diverse skills, backgrounds, and prior knowledge of individual learners, a text that is manageable for one student may present significant challenges for another. As such, this lesson incorporates scaffolding to support all students in engaging critically with historical texts and related multimedia resources (Mariage et al., 2024).

To address the needs of advanced learners, the lesson provides opportunities to analyze additional letters, offering extended perspectives on topics such as trench warfare and its psychological effects. These students will be encouraged to synthesize information and draw deeper conclusions from multiple sources. In contrast, struggling learners will receive structured supports, including simplified versions of texts, summaries, and guided comprehension questions that break down complex content into accessible segments. Additionally, these students will have

access to graphic organizers, sentence frames, and a word bank of key vocabulary to aid comprehension and provide structure for their analysis (Mariage et al., 2024).

As noted in the NYS ELA standards, ELLs/MLLs may demonstrate mastery of concepts bilingually or transfer linguistic knowledge across languages. To support ELLs/MLLs, the lesson will provide opportunities for students to use bilingual dictionaries or translation apps, access definitions in their home language, and demonstrate understanding through oral or written responses in English or their home language. To further support language development, ELLs/MLLs will collaborate with peers in structured discussion groups during the close reading, allowing them to practice speaking and listening skills in a supportive environment (Mariage et al., 2024).

These may include speech-to-text software, extended time, visual supports such as anchor charts and video clips, and the strategic use of tools like sticky notes and cue cards to prompt interaction with the text. These tools act as memory and language scaffolds, encouraging active engagement and helping students organize their thoughts during both oral and written responses (Mariage et al., 2024). The goal is to ensure that students with disabilities can engage with the same high-level content as their peers while receiving the necessary support to succeed.

Additionally, this lesson embraces a multimodal approach, acknowledging that students have different learning preferences. Visual learners will benefit from vocabulary charts, projected prompts, and visual aids. Auditory learners will gain from class discussions, peer interactions, and reflective dialogues, while reading/writing learners will find engagement in journaling and written reflections. Additionally, the audio and visual learners will benefit from watching the documentary, while the reading/writing learners will benefit from the use of the letter as a primary source, giving everyone at least one source for analysis that is suited to their learning

style. To support kinesthetic learners, the close reading portion will include peer discussion that will allow for movement within the classroom. This will allow students to walk and share their ideas. This approach ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage deeply with the material, regardless of their language background, literacy level, or learning style.

Assessment Measures

This lesson incorporates both informal and formal assessment measures to evaluate students' understanding, engagement, and literacy development. The informal assessment measure will be students' responses to the questions that follow the close reading of the historical text. After reading and analyzing the text on trench warfare and its effects on soldiers, students will answer a series of comprehension and analysis questions. These questions are designed to assess students' understanding of key concepts, such as the psychological toll of war, the role of technology in warfare, and the conditions soldiers faced in the trenches. These responses will not be graded, however, I will review these responses to assess students' ability to extract relevant information from the text, analyze its meaning, and articulate their understanding using content-specific vocabulary. This will also allow me to identify any gaps in comprehension or misconceptions, which I can address through targeted instruction.

Following the close reading and close viewing, students will then complete a formal assessment in the form of an essay. This essay will ask students to synthesize the information from the letter and documentary, as well as what they learned during instruction, to develop a persuasive argument about the effects of trench warfare on soldiers during World War I. The essay will require students to demonstrate their ability to organize their thoughts, integrate evidence from the text, and apply historical reasoning to support their analysis. This assessment will be graded based on a rubric that evaluates students' thesis development, use of evidence,

organization, clarity, and the application of critical thinking skills. The essay will serve as a summative assessment of the lesson's objectives and provide a more comprehensive evaluation of students' ability to engage with the historical content, as well as their writing proficiency.

In conclusion, both informal and formal assessments will be used to provide a comprehensive view of student learning. Responses to the close reading questions will allow me to adjust instruction in real time, addressing any lingering questions or challenging concepts in subsequent lessons. Meanwhile, the essay will offer a more formal evaluation of students' understanding, highlighting areas of strength and those needing improvement to inform future instruction. Together, these assessments ensure students are progressing toward the unit's goals and meeting the expectations of the NYS ELA standards.

Literacy Strategy 4: Exit Ticket/Reflection

Overview of Exit Ticket/Reflection Strategy

The exit ticket strategy is a formative assessment tool used at the end of a lesson to quickly gauge students' understanding of the material and encourage reflection on their learning. Exit tickets are short, focused prompts that students complete in just a few minutes before leaving the classroom, providing teachers with immediate feedback on student comprehension and identifying areas where students may need additional support (Fowler, Windschitl, & Richards, 2019).

Exit tickets serve multiple purposes: they offer a snapshot of students' grasp of key concepts, reveal any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge, and promote metacognitive reflection by encouraging students to think about what they have learned and how they learned it (Fowler, Windschitl, & Richards, 2019). This reflection helps students develop awareness of their own

learning processes and supports deeper engagement with the content. For teachers, exit tickets are invaluable for informing subsequent lessons, allowing instruction to be adapted responsively to meet student needs.

The format of exit tickets can vary widely to maintain student interest and accommodate different learning preferences. They might include summarizing a concept in their own words, answering a targeted question, or reflecting on challenges faced during the lesson. Regardless of the format, exit tickets are designed to be brief and accessible, requiring minimal time but providing maximal insight into student learning.

Direct Application to the Topic and Grade Level

Here is a lesson plan illustrating how the exit ticket strategy will be applied to the Grade 9 history unit on Canada's wartime experience during World War I:

Subject: Grade 9 History; **Unit:** World War I; **Topic:** Canadian Wartime Experience (Key Battles and Home Front)

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of Canada's contributions and challenges during World War I, including major battles and home front policies such as conscription and the War Measures Act.
2. Students will reflect on their own learning and engage in critical thinking by identifying what they have learned and any questions or uncertainties they still have. They will develop historical literacy and writing skills by summarizing and evaluating their own learning.

Time: The lesson will last approximately 60 minutes, with 10 minutes dedicated to a review of last week's material/brief introduction to this week's topic, 20 minutes for direct instruction, 10 minutes dedicated to questions and answers and classroom discussions interwoven into the instruction, and the final 20 minutes allocated to the exit ticket/reflection activity. More specifics are provided in the procedures section.

Materials:

- Exit ticket prompt sheets or digital forms
- Whiteboard or digital display for discussion of exit ticket themes
- Writing materials or devices for student responses
- Worksheets or journals to write exit tickets for teacher review

Procedures:

1. Review & Introduction (10 minutes):

- Begin class by briefly reviewing key material from the previous lesson on trench warfare, reinforcing important concepts and vocabulary.
- Introduce the focus of today's lesson on Canada's major battles and home front challenges, setting clear learning objectives. Begin with the major battles, which tie into last week's content.

2. Instruction and Content Delivery (30 minutes):

- Present a lesson on key battles (Second Battle of Ypres, Somme, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele) and home front issues such as conscription, the War Measures Act, and the internment of “enemy aliens.”
- Highlight the importance of diverse groups of Canadians in the war effort:
 1. Discuss the integral but often overlooked role that Indigenous Canadians played in the war effort.
 2. Discuss the critical important of women in the war effort, who served as nurses and factory workers during the war.
- Use a combination of lecture, primary sources, and visual aids (maps, photographs) to engage students and build background knowledge.

3. Questions, Answers, and Classroom Discussion (10 minutes):

- Throughout and following direct instruction, facilitate student questions and discussions to clarify concepts and engage student.
- Encourage students to connect new information with prior knowledge, clarify misunderstandings, and share perspectives.
- This interactive time supports deeper comprehension and critical thinking.

4. Exit Ticket Activity (20 minutes):

- At the conclusion of the lesson, distribute an exit ticket with the following prompt:

““In two to three sentences, describe one important contribution Canada made during World War I. Then, write one question or confusion you still have about Canada’s wartime experience.”

- Students will complete the exit ticket individually, writing concise responses that summarize their understanding and express any areas of uncertainty.
- Instruct students to respond individually and thoughtfully, emphasizing that their responses help both them and the teacher understand their learning progress.
- Collect the exit tickets for review.

Justification of the Strategy

The exit ticket strategy is an effective tool for supporting literacy and learning in a Grade 9 history classroom, particularly when teaching complex topics such as Canada’s role in World War I. This strategy not only functions as a formative assessment to gauge students' comprehension but also encourages metacognition and reflection, which are essential literacy development skills (Fisher & Frey, 2015). By asking students to summarize content and articulate questions or confusions, exit tickets prompt learners to internalize new information, monitor their own understanding, and express areas in need of clarification (Fowler et al., 2019).

One of the greatest strengths of exit tickets lies in their ability to generate real-time feedback for both students and teachers. For students, this feedback loop enhances engagement by reinforcing the value of their ideas and reflections, which is particularly important in history education where students must grapple with cause and consequence, continuity and change, and differing perspectives. For teachers, exit tickets serve as a diagnostic tool, providing insight into

how well students have grasped the key ideas of a lesson. This allows instruction to be adjusted responsively, reinforcing areas of confusion or extending learning where needed (Fowler et al., 2019).

In the context of this World War I unit, the exit ticket strategy allows students to consolidate complex information and practice summarizing these ideas concisely. In this case, students will gain a greater understanding of Canada's involvement in key battles and the societal impact of conscription and internment. In doing so, students develop both content knowledge and disciplinary literacy skills, including the ability to express historical knowledge in clear and thoughtful ways. According to Vacca et al. (2014), strategies that promote writing across the curriculum support both comprehension and critical thinking, especially when used as tools for reflection and informal expression.

Exit tickets also foster a classroom culture of reflection and individuality. When students are encouraged to identify lingering questions or uncertainties, they become active participants in the learning process. This is particularly important in a history classroom, where interpretation and inquiry are central to building historical understanding. By articulating what they do not yet fully understand, students engage in metacognitive practice, a process that has been shown to improve learning outcomes across subject areas (Zimmerman, 2002).

Additionally, the flexibility and low-stakes nature of exit tickets make them especially effective for differentiated classrooms. Specifics will be explained later, but in general the exit ticket strategy allows students of varying abilities to respond at their own level, using language and ideas that reflect their current understanding. This inclusive nature ensures that all students

can participate meaningfully in literacy-building activities without the pressure of formal assessment.

Finally, the exit ticket used in this lesson prompts students to not only recall factual knowledge but also to reflect critically on the material. Asking students to identify one significant Canadian contribution to the war and one area of confusion fosters both summary and inquiry. This format aligns with the goals of the NYS Next Generation ELA Standards, which emphasize evidence-based thinking, question development, and reflective writing (NYS Education Department, 2017).

Overall, the exit ticket strategy is a powerful and versatile tool for promoting historical literacy, metacognitive awareness, and responsive instruction. It allows teachers to gain valuable insight into student understanding while helping students develop their capacity for reflection, synthesis, and critical engagement with historical content.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard Addressed

9-10R2: Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text.

9-10W2c: Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary to express the appropriate complexity of a topic.

9-10SL1c: Pose and respond to questions that relate the discussion to broader themes or ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

Language Function/Demand

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10R2

Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **identify** central themes related to Canada's wartime experience and **analyze** how these themes evolve throughout the lesson, especially through the study of key events and battles. They will **synthesize** information from instruction, including sources and visual aids, to **summarize** the complexities of Canada's involvement in World War I.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10W2c

Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary to express the appropriate complexity of a topic.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **apply** specific content vocabulary (e.g., conscription, War Measures Act, internment) during discussions and in their exit ticket reflections to **explain** Canada's complex wartime experience. This precise language will allow students to **communicate** their understanding of the topic and **summarize** key concepts using historical terminology.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10SL1c

Pose and respond to questions that relate the discussion to broader themes or ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **answer** prompts and **ask** questions related to areas of uncertainty regarding

Canada's wartime experience. They will **reflect** on these questions and **analyze** their own conclusions based on what they have learned. This process encourages students to **engage** with broader themes, **refine** their understanding, and **discuss** Canada's role in the war.

Differentiated Instruction

To ensure that all students can access the content and engage meaningfully with the Exit Ticket/Reflection activity, this lesson integrates a variety of differentiated instruction and accommodation strategies. One reviewing the exit tickets, I will be mindful that each student brings a different set of skills, prior knowledge, and life experiences to the classroom. That is why my incentive concepts are based on effort and engagement, rather than writing skill or knowledge. All I am looking for is for the students to be trying and thinking. Beyond that, I will provide scaffolding and support in a way that ensures each student can access the content. The goal is not only to meet the standards of reading comprehension but also to support students as they build historical literacy and critical thinking skills.

For students who might struggle with the complexity of the content, such as English Language Learners (ELLs) or students with lower reading proficiency, the lesson will provide simplified versions of the content, along with additional supports to ensure understanding. For instance, ELLs will be encouraged to ask for clarification for unfamiliar terms, and will be given access to bilingual dictionaries or translation apps to assist, allowing them to access the material in both English and their home language. As the NYS ELA standards note, ELLs may demonstrate mastery in their home language before transferring linguistic knowledge to English. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding through oral responses in their native language or in English, ensuring that linguistic diversity is recognized and supported. Structured peer discussions will be employed to allow ELLs to practice speaking

and listening in a low-pressure environment, helping them engage with the content while simultaneously developing their English language skills.

Students with disabilities will be provided accommodations as outlined in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These accommodations may include additional time to complete the exit ticket activity, the use of speech-to-text tools, or access to visual prompts such as anchor charts and multimedia resources. For students with reading difficulties, the exit ticket may be paired with graphic organizers to assist with the synthesis of ideas, as well as sentence starters to guide the structure of their written responses. The aim is to help all students access the material on the same level as their peers, while providing the appropriate support to meet their individual needs and help them succeed.

My teaching approach also considers that students have different learning preferences. Visual learners will benefit from the use of the PowerPoint, which will include photographs, maps, and diagrams related to Canada's involvement in World War I. Auditory learners will engage with the content through discussions and peer interactions, while reading/writing learners will benefit from the written reflections. Kinesthetic learners will benefit from movement during peer discussions, which will allow them to engage physically with the material while talking through their ideas.

By incorporating these varied instructional strategies and accommodations, the Exit Ticket/Reflection activity ensures that all students can participate meaningfully, demonstrate their understanding, and reflect on the content, regardless of their language proficiency, learning needs, or individual differences. The flexibility in response formats, support systems, and peer interactions helps to foster an inclusive classroom environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Assessment Measures

This lesson relies on formal and informal assessment measures to evaluate students' understanding, engagement, and literacy development. The informal exit ticket strategy will serve as the primary formative assessment to gauge students' understanding of Canada's wartime experiences during World War I. The exit ticket prompts students to summarize one significant contribution Canada made during the war and identify any lingering questions or areas of confusion. This will allow me to assess students content comprehension, usage of key terminology, writing skills, and their metacognitive reflection, supporting the development of critical thinking and historical literacy.

The exit tickets will be reviewed to identify common misconceptions or areas where students require additional support, informing my future instruction. For example, if multiple students express confusion about conscription or the significance of a particular battle, I can revisit those topics in subsequent lessons. The responses will not be graded for correctness but evaluated based on participation and effort, encouraging students to engage honestly with the material. Since these will not be graded, I will also use tactics to incentivize students to put in greater effort. For starters, I will offer positive reinforcement by acknowledging thoughtful or insightful responses during class discussions. Additionally, students who show high levels of engagement and effort on their exit tickets will be rewarded with small incentives, such as extra participation points or recognition. I could also offer a class-wide incentive such as a movie day at the end of the unit (something on the topic of World War I) if every student submits a quality response that shows effort and thought were put into their reflections. This approach will motivate students to invest more in their learning while maintaining a low-stakes environment.

In addition to the exit tickets, informal assessment will also occur during classroom discussions and the question-and-answer periods throughout the lesson. As students engage in conversations about Canada's wartime contributions and experiences, I will actively listen for key insights, the use of appropriate historical terminology, and the depth of their critical thinking. Asking follow-up questions and prompting students to clarify or expand on their ideas will allow me to gauge their understanding in real-time. These discussions offer immediate feedback on how well students are grasping the content, and I can adjust my teaching on the spot if any misconceptions arise. This form of assessment helps create an interactive learning environment where students can develop their speaking and listening skills while deepening their understanding of historical concepts.

Lastly, students will complete a quiz on this lesson during the following day of school. This will be the formal assessment used to gauge students' understanding of the content and to grade their learning of the material. Since this topic is the most comprehensive of the World War I unit, I believe students would benefit from it having its own separate quiz rather than being included in the comprehensive unit test. Essentially, this quiz will serve as a small portion of that unit test, and thus, students will not be required to recomplete questions related to this topic on that test. This will make that test less daunting and allow them to focus their studying on the other four lesson topics in the unit (discussed within this handbook). As for the quiz itself, the questions will all be related to Canada's wartime contributions and experiences, including topics like conscription, the War Measures Act, the internment of "enemy aliens", the role of Indigenous Canadians in the war effort, and the importance of women during the war. There will also be questions about each of the major battles where Canada played a key role in World War I: Second Battle of Ypres, Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele. Students will be provided with

the PowerPoint slides from my instruction after completing their exit tickets and will be required to study the material to prepare for the quiz the following day.

Literacy Strategy 5: Close Reading/Close Viewing

Overview of Reader's Theater Strategy

Reader's theater is an instructional literacy strategy that involves students performing dramatic readings of scripts to build reading fluency, comprehension, and oral language skills. Unlike traditional drama, reader's theater requires no memorization or elaborate costumes; students focus primarily on vocal expression and collaboration as they read aloud. This strategy encourages repeated practice of the script, which enhances reading accuracy, intonation, and confidence while promoting engagement with the text (Lo, Lu, & Cheng, 2021).

In a reader's theater activity, students are assigned roles within a scripted dialogue or narrative related to the lesson content. Through rehearsing and performing together, they develop teamwork and communication skills. The minimal use of props or costumes allows the focus to remain on interpreting and conveying meaning through voice, helping students to internalize the content and better understand multiple perspectives presented in the script.

This strategy is adaptable across grade levels and content areas, making it particularly effective in social studies classrooms where historical texts and perspectives can be brought to life through dramatization. For this World War I unit, reader's theater will be used to explore the complex themes of the Treaty of Versailles and its aftermath by having students embody the voices of key historical figures and stakeholders. This active, collaborative approach aims to

deepen students' understanding of the treaty's terms and its profound impact on Germany, the Allied powers, and Canada, thereby enhancing historical literacy and critical thinking.

Direct Application to the Topic and Grade Level

Here is a Lesson Plan I created to apply the Close Reading/Close Viewing strategy to the topic of trench life:

Subject: Grade 9 History; **Unit:** World War I; **Topic:** The Treaty of Versailles and World War I conclusion/aftermath

Learning Objectives:

3. Students will analyze the events leading to the end of World War I, focusing on the immediate aftermath and the lasting effects of the war, including the Treaty of Versailles and evaluate its impact on Germany, the Allied powers, and Canada's role in the postwar world.
4. Students will collaborate to perform a reader's theater script representing the perspectives of major stakeholders involved in the Treaty of Versailles, demonstrating an understanding of differing viewpoints and historical consequences. They will develop oral language and fluency skills through dramatic reading and collaborative discussion.

Time: The lesson will last span two classes, for a total of 120 minutes. In the first class, the lesson will begin with a 10-minute recap of prior lesson content, followed by 20 minutes of teacher-led instruction on the conclusion and aftermath of the war, with particular focus on the Treaty of Versailles. Next will be a 10-minute explanation of the reader's theater activity, during which the script will be distributed. The final 20 minutes will be dedicated to assigning roles,

rehearsal, and collaboration among students in three groups, each of which will practice their own 5–10-minute reader’s theater script covering various aspects of the end of the war.

The second class will start with a 5-minute recap of the content covered, followed by 10 minutes of group rehearsal. The majority of the class will be spent on student performances, roughly 30 minutes. The final 15 minutes will be dedicated to post-performance discussion and reflections.

Materials:

- **PowerPoint and Projector:** Presentation for teacher instruction on summaries of key events leading to the war’s end, the geopolitical consequences of the war, and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The instruction should also provide context on Germany's postwar struggles, the role of the Allied powers, and the emerging role of Canada in international affairs.
- **Reader’s Theater Scripts:** Copies of the reader’s theater scripts representing key figures involved in the aftermath of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles (e.g., Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George). The scripts should cover various aspects of the conclusion of the war, the treaty’s terms, and its lasting effects on global politics.
- **Writing Materials:** Paper, pens, and/or digital devices for students to write their reflections during the post-performance discussion.

Procedures:

First Class:

5. Introduction & Recap (10 minutes):

- Begin class with a brief recap of the previous lesson on Canada's wartime experience during WWI

6. Teacher Instruction on the Aftermath of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles (20 minutes)

- Discuss the overall progress of the war on Europe and the world.
- Briefly highlight key events such as the armistice, the cessation of hostilities, and the subsequent political and economic challenges faced by the major powers.
- Provide an overview of the immediate aftermath of the war:
 - The human, economic, and political devastation caused by the war.
 - The collapse of empires (Austria-Hungary, Ottoman, and German Empires).
 - The emergence of new nations and borders in Europe.
- Focus on the Treaty of Versailles as a central event, explaining its key provisions and how it aimed to address the consequences of the war.
 - Territorial changes, reparations, disarmament, and the creation of the League of Nations.
- Discuss the impact of the treaty on different countries:
 - **Germany:** Humiliation, loss of territory, and the economic burden of reparations.
 - **France:** Desire for security and revenge after massive losses.

- **Britain:** Focus on rebuilding the empire, but with economic concerns.
- **Canada:** Increased autonomy and the beginnings of a separate identity within the British Empire.

7. **Explaining Reader's Theater and Distributing Scripts (10 minutes)**

- Introduce reader's theater and explain the purpose of this activity, which will help students engage with the historical content through performance.
- Distribute the scripts, which represent the perspectives of various stakeholders in the postwar world, such as Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, and David Lloyd George.
- Highlight the focus of the performance: understanding each character's perspective on the Treaty of Versailles, its impact, and the broader aftermath of World War I.

8. **Rehearsal and Collaboration (10 minutes)**

- Divide students into small groups, each representing one of the key perspectives (e.g., the American, French, British, or German viewpoint).
- Allow time for groups to read through their scripts, discuss their character's motivations, and begin rehearsing their lines.
- Encourage students to focus on expressing their character's emotional response to the treaty and the consequences of the war.

Second Class:

1. **Recap of Content (5 minutes)**

- Begin the second class with a brief recap of the key points from the first class, especially the major terms of the Treaty of Versailles and the immediate aftermath of the war.
- Emphasize the lasting impact of the treaty on Germany and the broader European political landscape.

2. Group Rehearsal (10 minutes)

- Allow students 10 minutes for additional rehearsal. Encourage them to refine their delivery and ensure they understand the historical context of their character's perspective.
- Circulate and assist groups with phrasing, vocal delivery, and historical accuracy.

3. Student Performances (30 minutes)

- Each group will perform their reader's theater script in front of the class. Each performance should take approximately 5–10 minutes.
- Remind students to pay attention to their delivery, ensuring they reflect their character's historical viewpoint on the treaty and the aftermath of the war.

4. Post-Performance Discussion and Reflection (15 minutes)

- After all performances, facilitate a discussion with the class. Focus on the different perspectives presented in the performances. For example:
 - *What were the main concerns of each character regarding the treaty and its aftermath?*

- *Did any performances reveal new insights or aspects of the historical situation?*
- *Based on what you know about how the treaty shape the postwar world, what unintended consequences did the characters fail to consider?*
- Have students write brief reflections on how the reader’s theater activity helped them understand the complexities of the war's aftermath and the Treaty of Versailles. Encourage them to consider how their role shaped their understanding of the events.

Justification of the Strategy

Reader's Theater (RT) is a highly effective strategy for engaging students with complex historical content, promoting active learning, and fostering historical literacy. In this unit on the conclusion of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, RT helps students gain a deeper understanding of the geopolitical consequences and varying perspectives of key nations and figures involved in the postwar negotiations. By participating in RT, students read and perform scripted dialogues that represent the viewpoints of figures like Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, and David Lloyd George. This role-playing activity allows students to step into the shoes of historical figures, considering their motivations, fears, and goals, which makes historical events more tangible and memorable.

RT also enhances student engagement by turning passive learning into an active, performance-based task. Research suggests that RT can motivate students by incorporating performance and collaboration, which appeals to a wide range of learning styles (Lo et al., 2021). Lo et al. also highlight that RT offers a dynamic and interactive medium for engagement,

particularly for students who may find traditional learning approaches less appealing. By embodying these historical figures, students gain an understanding not only of the events themselves but also of the complexity behind them. This fosters critical thinking and encourages students to analyze the long-term effects of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany, the Allies, and the emerging role of Canada.

In addition to its benefits in historical comprehension, RT promotes the development of oral language and communication skills (Lo et al., 2021). As students rehearse their lines, they improve their fluency, intonation, and expression, refining their vocal delivery and articulation. These skills are important not only for the performance but also for academic success across disciplines. The collaborative nature of RT, where students must work together to ensure their performance is historically accurate and engaging, further reinforces these communication skills. The opportunity to work as a team also strengthens teamwork and collaboration, important skills for both academic and future professional environments.

RT can also increase student motivation, especially among those who struggle with traditional reading and writing tasks. Hautala et al. (2024) found that RT significantly motivates students, particularly boys who may be reluctant to engage in reading. The excitement of performing in front of peers and taking on the role of a historical figure can help students engage with the material in a more meaningful way. This aspect of RT helps students connect emotionally with the content, which in turn improves their comprehension and retention.

Lastly, the use of RT aligns with the NYS Next Generation English Language Arts Standards, particularly those related to reading comprehension, speaking, and listening. By engaging students in performing historical narratives, RT helps students develop essential skills

like interpretation, critical analysis, and effective communication. This strategy provides an approach to learning that is both engaging and academically enriching, making it an ideal strategy for teaching the complex historical content of World War I. Overall, RT enhances historical literacy and fosters the development of critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills among students.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard Addressed

9-10R2: Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text.

9-10SL1c: Pose and respond to questions that relate the discussion to broader themes or ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

Language Function/Demand

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10R2

Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **identify** the central ideas and themes of the Treaty of Versailles, including the concept of reparations and territorial changes, and **discuss** these ideas in the post-performance reflection. They will **analyze** how the treaty's provisions are shaped by the political and economic interests of the major powers involved.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **analyze** how the key figures involved in the Treaty of Versailles develop their arguments and negotiate the treaty's terms. Through their performances, they will **address** the dynamics of the discussions and **explain** how these interactions shaped the treaty's final provisions.

NYS Next Generation ELA Standard: 9-10SL1c

Pose and respond to questions that relate the discussion to broader themes or ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

Language Function/Demand:

Students will **engage** in a dialogue about the broader impact of the Treaty of Versailles on global politics and its long-term consequences during the post-performance discussion. They will **ask** and **answer** questions about how different countries' interests were addressed and **challenge** ideas presented by peers to collectively clarify their understanding of the treaty's significance.

Differentiated Instruction

To ensure that all students can access the content and engage meaningfully with the Reader's Theater activity, this lesson integrates differentiated instruction strategies that align with the New York State ELA standards. As specified in the NYS ELA Standards, by the end of Grades 9-10, students are expected to read and comprehend literary and informational texts at or above grade level. However, because each reader brings different skills, experiences, and prior knowledge to the act of reading, a text that may be complex for one student could be more accessible to another. Therefore, scaffolding and support will be provided throughout the lesson to ensure all students can engage meaningfully with the historical texts and related materials.

For advanced learners, the lesson will offer opportunities to engage with more challenging roles within the Reader's Theater scripts to deepen their critical analysis. They will also be asked more challenging questions by myself in the post-performance discussion. These learners will be encouraged to explore complex topics such as the psychological and political implications of the Treaty of Versailles and its long-term impact on global geopolitics. In addition, they will be encouraged to act as leaders within their groups to support their peers.

Struggling learners will receive scaffolding in the form of simplified roles and more guided discussion questions that break the historical content into more manageable chunks. These students will also have access to graphic organizers, sentence frames, and a word bank of key vocabulary (e.g., sovereignty, imperialism, reparations) to help structure their analysis and comprehension. These tools will make abstract historical concepts more tangible and provide support in crafting thoughtful responses. By breaking down the material into smaller, more digestible pieces, these learners will better grasp core ideas and participate fully in the activity.

To support English Language Learners (ELLs) and Multilingual Learners (MLLs), the lesson will provide opportunities to use bilingual dictionaries, translation apps, or language supports (e.g., home language glossaries) to enhance vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. I will also personally assist them with any words they are unfamiliar with or have questions about, and will encourage their group members to offer additional support in collaborative settings. To further develop language skills, structured peer collaboration will allow ELLs/MLLs to practice speaking and listening in a supportive, low-stakes environment.

For students with disabilities, the lesson will include specific accommodations based on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These accommodations may include speech-to-text tools, extended time for completing tasks, and the use of visual aids, such as anchor charts,

multimedia resources, and projected prompts, to reinforce key concepts. Partially filled-in sentence frames and graphic organizers will also help students with disabilities organize their thoughts and ideas in a more structured way. These accommodations ensure that students with disabilities can engage with the same high-level content as their peers, while receiving the necessary support to succeed in the activity.

In keeping with the multimodal approach emphasized by the NYS ELA standards, this lesson recognizes that students have diverse learning preferences. Visual learners will benefit from vocabulary charts, projected prompts, and visual aids that reinforce key concepts and provide context for the historical material. Auditory learners will gain from class discussions, peer interactions, and reflective dialogues, while reading/writing learners will engage in journaling and written reflections to synthesize their understanding. For kinesthetic learners, the reader's theater performance will serve as a physical outlet for students to express their learning through role-playing and dramatization. Additionally, the lesson will incorporate a PowerPoint, which will include photographs, maps, and diagrams to benefit audio-visual learners. Likewise, reading and writing learners will benefit from the post-performance reflection. This approach ensures that all students can engage deeply with the material, regardless of their language background, literacy level, or learning style. By offering diverse opportunities for interaction, reflection, and response, the lesson encourages all students to develop both language proficiency and critical thinking skills in line with the NYS ELA Standards.

Assessment Measures

This lesson incorporates three informal assessment measures to evaluate students' understanding, engagement, and literacy development. The performance itself will serve as the first informal assessment of student engagement and understanding. By observing how actively

students participate in the performance (e.g. whether they are engaged in the reading, demonstrating comprehension through their delivery, or making connections to the historical context), I will be able to gauge their understanding of the material in a more dynamic, interactive setting. Students who struggle with comprehension or engagement may show hesitations in their reading or lack the confidence to participate fully, signaling areas that require additional support. On the other hand, students who demonstrate deep engagement through thoughtful character portrayal or nuanced readings will show their ability to interpret the material critically and reflect on its significance. This assessment will offer a holistic view of students' ability to apply their understanding of the content in an active, collaborative context.

The second informal assessment measure will be the post-performance class discussion. Following the Reader's Theater, the performing students will engage in a discussion with myself and the other students where they will share their perspectives on their script content and answer questions about the material. During this discussion, I will listen to how well students are able to articulate their understanding, answer questions that deepen their analysis, and incorporate new ideas or perspectives introduced by their peers. This will help me assess students' ability to engage critically with historical content and to refine their understanding based on peer input. Additionally, I will evaluate students' use of content-specific vocabulary and their ability to make connections between the historical themes addressed in their Reader's Theater performance and broader concepts related to the war and other lessons we had in this unit.

The final informal assessment measure will be the individual reflections written by the students after their performances. These will be similar to the exit ticket from last lesson, requiring students to reflect on the themes and concepts presented during the activity. These will be brief reflections on how the reader's theater activity helped them understand the complexities

of the war's aftermath and the Treaty of Versailles. These responses will not be graded, but I will review them to assess students' understanding of the historical content, their ability to analyze complex ideas, and their use of appropriate vocabulary. This will also allow me to identify any misconceptions or gaps in comprehension, which can be addressed through further discussion and targeted instruction. This will be the final lesson in the World War I unit, which will be followed up by a recap class before the unit test, so this is a critical assessment tool to analyze the areas in need of recapping/further instruction before the test.

Additionally, the unit test will be the formal assessment related to this lesson, which will cover a variety of topics on WWI. As this is the final topic for this unit, the following class will include a unit recap on all the topics discussed in this handbook. Students will then write the test during the next class period. The final portion of that test will require students to write a short essay on the Treaty of Versailles where they must describe three ways that the treaty was significant to global affairs following the war. The test will also feature some multiple choice and short answer questions related to the content of this lesson, but this essay will serve as the primary formal assessment piece for this topic, requiring students to reflect on and explain what they have learned and articulate it in an essay format.

Together, these assessments will provide valuable insights into student learning. The responses to the reflection questions will allow me to gauge individual comprehension and provide immediate feedback, while the post-performance discussion will offer a deeper understanding of students' ability to synthesize and articulate their learning in a collaborative setting. These assessments will help inform my instructional decisions during the recap lesson prior to the test and ensure that all students are progressing toward the goals outlined in the NYS ELA standards. Finally, the unit test will serve as a comprehensive formal assessment for the

content of this lesson, as well as the other lessons within the unit. This will be a key grading piece for students and be the most comprehensive measure of their learning for the unit.

Conclusion/Reflection

Creating this literacy handbook has been an invaluable learning experience, helping me develop a deeper understanding of how to design lessons that not only align with standards but also have a meaningful impact on student learning. As I worked through the process of developing these lessons, I realized just how much planning and intentionality is needed to blend literacy strategies with historical content. This challenge forced me to think critically about what would best support my students' engagement and content comprehension, ensuring that each strategy was purposeful and aligned with the NYS ELA standards.

The strategies I selected (Think-Pair-Share, Quick Writes, Close Reading/Viewing, Exit Ticket/Reflection, and Reader's Theater) were intentionally designed to engage students, develop their literacy skills, and deepen their content comprehension throughout the World War I unit. One aspect I found particularly powerful was the use of Quick Writes and Exit Tickets as a way for students to quickly process and reflect on their understanding of the content and develop their writing fluency. This strategy allows students to express their thoughts without the pressure of formal assessments and would provide me with immediate feedback on their comprehension and writing abilities, allowing me to make necessary adjustments in subsequent lessons. In general, the use of assessments that would provide immediate feedback for me to make adjustments became a major priority as I worked through this handbook. For example, each of my lessons involved some sort of discussion portion and some form of writing assessment that would provide that immediate feedback. I also included a brief recap of the previous lessons into my

planning, so that I could take the time to reteach areas of confusion or importance before progressing to the next topic.

As I progressed through the process of planning and creating these lessons, I found that my comfort level grew. At the start, it was overwhelming, as I was diving into lesson plan development for the first time, with limited classroom experience. It was hard to know what would truly be effective, and I struggled with determining how much time to allocate to each part of the lesson. However, the teacher feedback I received was invaluable. I really appreciated the constructive comments that helped me refine my lessons and strategies. As a result, I became much more confident not only in writing these assignments but also in thinking about how to structure lessons that would benefit my students' learning. The segmented approach of developing 1-2 strategies per week helped me build my understanding incrementally, which ultimately made the process less overwhelming and more manageable.

One of my strengths throughout this project was my ability to use creativity in lesson planning. As someone who enjoys writing, research, and historical content, I found it easy to get excited about planning engaging lessons for my students. I consider myself to be a creative person, and this helped me come up with innovative ways to integrate literacy strategies like Think-Pair-Share, Quick Writes, and Reader's Theater into my history lessons. While I didn't have prior experience designing lesson plans, my creativity allowed me to think outside the box to utilize these strategies in ways I hoped would engage students in both the literacy and content components of the lessons. I tried to always maintain the mindset of what would I find engaging if I were still a Grade 9 history student?

Additionally, my ability to accept feedback and adapt to it was a key factor in my growth. The process of revising my next strategy based on feedback was crucial to refining my approach

and improving my planning. Lastly, my passion for the content was a big strength for me as well. I've always had a huge passion for history, and that passion made it easier to identify engaging content topics. I also love writing, so this handbook assignment was right up my alley.

That said, I faced several challenges throughout this process. One of the biggest hurdles was my lack of practical experience in a classroom setting. I didn't have firsthand exposure to how students with varying needs might respond to the strategies I was planning, especially students with exceptionalities or English Language Learners (ELLs). I found myself spending a lot of time researching best practices, reviewing the NYS ELA standards, and consulting lectures and textbooks to figure out how I could best support these diverse learners. This part of the process didn't come naturally to me, and I was often unsure of the most effective ways to accommodate students' needs in terms of literacy development and content comprehension. Learning how to integrate these strategies in ways that would truly accelerate all students' learning regardless of their language proficiency or learning exceptionalities was a challenge I had to overcome with considerable effort.

Despite these challenges, I learned a lot about the importance of being adaptable in my teaching. I realize that no single strategy will work equally well for all students, and that flexibility is key when determining which tactics will be most effective for a particular group. Moving forward, I know I need to continue honing my ability to assess my students' needs quickly and adjust my instruction based on their responses and engagement. This experience confirmed to me that teaching requires continuous professional learning and the ability to adapt lessons on the fly to meet the evolving needs of students. It also made me recognize that I need to work on refining my ability to meet the needs of diverse learners, particularly students with

exceptionalities or those who are not fluent in English. I now have a greater understanding of the importance of using scaffolding techniques and providing ongoing support for these students.

This process also highlighted the importance of integrating literacy development into my subject. This is such a critical component to a child's development and does not need to be relegated to simply occurring in English/language classes. As a history teacher, it is important for me to do more than just teach history, I also need to be mindful of my students' literacy development, which was a major takeaway not only from this assignment but from this course in general. I now have a much greater recognition of strategies that address different aspects of literacy: phonemic awareness, vocabulary, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. I have learned how strategies like Quick Writes and Close Reading not only helped students engage with the content but also fostered their growth in vocabulary and fluency. These activities I have created for this handbook are lesson plans that I hope to one day incorporate into my own teaching because I recognize how invaluable it is to plan ahead and have lessons that encourage students to process and communicate their understanding of the material and also support their reading comprehension and overall literacy skill development.

In conclusion, this process of creating the literacy handbook has been an invaluable learning experience. While I still have room for growth, I am confident that the skills and strategies I've developed will continue to support my students' literacy and content knowledge in future lessons. This experience has reaffirmed my belief that teaching is a dynamic, iterative process that requires ongoing reflection, adaptation, and a commitment to professional growth. I look forward to building on these insights and continuing to grow as an educator.

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