

**Pelham Public Schools
PLC Team Reflection Form
2014-15**

Area of Focus:	Develop and redesign classroom activities and assessments to align with the Common Core curriculum and the new 2016 NYS Common Core ELA Regents exam which all future 11 th graders will be taking, beginning with the current 10 th grade class.
Meeting Date:	9/16/14
Team Goal(s):	Begin to plan activities and assessments
Team Members Present:	Serafin, Wasnetsky & B. Powers
Team Members Absent (List Reason):	None

1. What did you hope to accomplish during this meeting?
We hoped to brainstorm ideas and begin to research the components needed for classroom activities and assessments.
2. Topics / Meeting Outcomes:
We spent the first half of the meeting figuring out all of the paperwork. We were only able to brainstorm our goals for the year and plan out a timeline for the rest of our sessions, especially taking into consideration the time sensitive nature of our project.
3. Questions/Concerns:
Our goal is to create quality activities and assessments, which will be used to educate all students, and the overwhelming paperwork takes time away from this important task.

Please email this form to your principal after each PLC Session.

**Pelham Public Schools
End-of-Year PLC Team Reflections
2014-15**

Area of Focus:	Develop and design classroom activities and assessments to align with the Common Core curriculum and the new 2016 NYS Common Core ELA Regents exam which all future 11 th graders will be taking, beginning with the current 10 th grade class.
Team Goal(s):	Midterm & Final Exam Development
Team Members:	R. Serafin, N. Wasnetsky & B. Powers

1. In what ways did your goal(s) connect with the Strategic Plan?
The design of the new exams will help students to be successful on future Common Core tests, while at the same time provide critical thinking and writing skills which will allow students to meet current and future challenges. The new exams will allow students to evaluate and meet their educational goals and hopefully allow students to meet new standards of excellence.
2. In what ways has your PLC experience improved student learning?
Students will have been introduced to nonfiction texts while preparing for success on the new NYS Common Core ELA Regents exam in 2016 and beyond.
3. In what ways has the PLC experience affected you as learners?
The process has led us to a greater understanding of the Common Core standards and goals, while also allowing us to better understand the ways in which we can prepare our students to be successful in a 21 st century learning environment.
4. What are your initial thoughts about a PLC focus area for 2015-16?
Giving us the time to develop and integrate meaningful projects and assessments is a great example of time well spent. This practice should continue.

English 10

Midterm

January 29, 2015

Directions: Closely read each of the **five** sources provided and write a source-based argument on the topic below. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response.

Topic: Should English classrooms focus on the reading of fiction **or** nonfiction texts?

Your Task: Carefully read each of the five sources provided. Then, using evidence from **at least three** of the texts, write a well-developed argument regarding the reading content in English classrooms. Clearly establish your claim, distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims, and use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least three of the texts to develop your argument. Do not simply summarize each text.

Guidelines:

Be sure to:

- Establish your claim regarding the reading content in English classrooms
- Distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims
- Use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least three of the texts to develop your argument
- Identify each source that you reference by source number (for example: Source 1, Source 2, etc.)
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Texts:

Source 1 – 6 Reasons You Should “Waste” Your Time Reading Fiction

Source 2 –Research Says Nonfiction Reading Promotes Student Success

Source 3 –Can Reading Fiction Improve Empathy?

Source 4 – Reasons for Using and Teaching Nonfiction

Source 5- Malala Yousafzai: By the Book

Source 1

6 Reasons You Should “Waste” Your Time Reading Fiction

By Marc Cortez (May 16, 2011 in [Culture](#))

A while back, I asked people to answer the question “What Have You Enjoyed Reading Lately?” And several people responded with some really good books. But one thing that really stood out to me from the responses was the complete lack of fiction. In all the responses, not a single fiction title.

There could be many reasons for the non-fiction tilt of the responses. But it did make me wonder if there’s still a sense that reading fiction is ultimately a waste of time – or, at least, significantly less valuable than reading real books. If so, here’s my best shot at offering 6 reasons that I think reading fiction is important.

1. Fiction reveals truth.

There’s something about a good story that reveals truth in ways that non-fiction cannot. A good story makes us experience truth. Although non-fiction is great for conveying information, fiction can make that same information sink into our bones in powerful ways.

2. Fiction strengthens the imagination.

We often fail to appreciate the importance of the imagination. At best, it’s a diversion. At worst, it distracts from real concerns and takes time away from what truly matters. But imagination is the skill of seeing the world as it could be. And, when we’re facing a world ravaged by problems, what could be more important than the ability to see what could be?

3. Fiction manifests beauty.

Like any art form, good fiction has a unique ability to display beauty. The right combination of words, a powerful metaphor, a well-described scene, each of these uses the written word to display beauty in ways that no other art form can. And, although non-fiction has the same ability to manifest beauty through the written word, there’s something in the beauty of narrative that’s impossible to capture in any other medium.

4. Fiction expands horizons.

We are storied beings; our stories define us. If you want to understand another person fully, you need to know his or her story. That’s one reason that biographies sell so well. They are a window into a different world, a world other than my own. Fiction does the same. A good story draws us in, unveiling reality from a new perspective. For a short time, I can “become” a modern housewife, a 19th century slave, or something else dramatically removed from my own experience. Fiction expands my window on reality, letting me see reality through another’s eyes. And by drawing me in and making me part of the story, it reveals these new perspectives in ways that non-fiction typically doesn’t.

5. Fiction makes better writers.

One pragmatic issue to consider is that reading fiction makes you a better writer. Fiction authors use language differently than non-fiction writers. And any good writer needs exposure to a variety of writing techniques. Indeed, I’d suggest that any writer should seek exposure to a wide range of literary genres – poetry, fiction, history, philosophy, religion, etc. Each reveals a new way of writing that can expand the tools available to the aspiring author. And, in this way, good fiction shapes good writers.

6. Fiction is fun.

It would be easy to conclude that merely being “fun” isn’t a good enough reason for reading fiction. Why not? Reading good fiction is fun. Enjoy it.

Source 2

Research Says Nonfiction Reading Promotes Student Success

Bryan Goodwin and Kirsten Miller

The average child in the United States spends roughly 4 hours and 29 minutes a day watching TV, 2 hours and 31 minutes listening to music, and 1 hour and 13 minutes playing video games. And how much of their leisure time do they spend reading nonfiction?

Less than 4 minutes a day.

That's the finding from a national study sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Sure, children are *reading* outside school—about 25 minutes a day, according to the study. But most of that reading appears to be fiction. Another study found that juvenile fiction outsells nonfiction by more than 4 to 1.

Even in classrooms, nonfiction appears to be in short supply. Duke conducted a study of 20 first grade classrooms and found that informational texts constituted, on average, just 9.8 percent of texts in classroom libraries. The mean number of informational books per child was just 1.2 in low-income districts and a still relatively paltry 3.3 in high-income districts. On average, students spent just 3.6 minutes with informational text each day. Lower-income students fared worse, logging just 1.9 minutes of exposure to informational text (for example, during student reading, teacher read-alouds, or writing activities) during an average school day.

A New Emphasis on Nonfiction

The new Common Core language arts and literacy standards attempt to correct this imbalance by placing more emphasis on reading nonfiction—starting with an equal emphasis on literature and informational text in elementary school. At nearly all grade levels, students are expected to develop research skills across content areas with a strong focus on nonfiction, including literary nonfiction; essays; biographies and autobiographies; journals and technical manuals; and charts, graphs, and maps.

For many schools and districts, the Common Core standards' greater emphasis on text complexity, reading comprehension, and nonfiction likely represents a sea change. Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang found low to moderate alignment—a range of 10 to 48 percent overlap—between states' existing language arts standards and the Common Core standards, with an average alignment of only 30 percent.

In light of this new emphasis, we should ask what the research says about the benefits of reading nonfiction. Is it really worth tearing kids away from *The Hunger Games*, the Harry Potter books, or *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*? After all, with multimedia consuming so much of students' time, shouldn't we be happy they're reading at all?

What Students Read Matters

For years, we've known that the amount of independent reading students do contributes to their reading skills. Students who read more tend to learn more vocabulary, become more proficient readers, find reading more enjoyable, and thus continue to read more and become ever better reader. Poor readers, on the other hand, tend to read less and lose ground. Over time, these differences create a widening gulf in learning. Students at the 90th percentile of reading volume (reading 21.1 minutes a day) encounter 1.8 million words a year, while students in the 10th percentile (reading less than one minute per day) read only 8,000 words a year.

Only in the past decade, however, have researchers begun to uncover that it's not just *how much* students read that matters, but also *what* they read. In particular, students need to read and comprehend informational texts as often—and as fluently—as they do fictional texts.

In the Common Core State Standards, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers cite a compelling research base supporting the shift to more complex, nonfiction texts. They note, for example, that students who are able to answer questions related to complex text have a high probability of earning a C or better in an introductory-level college course in U.S. history or psychology.

One reason reading nonfiction may be so important is that it helps students develop their background knowledge, which itself accounts for as much as 33 percent of the variance in student achievement . Background knowledge becomes more crucial in the later elementary grades, as students begin to read more content-specific textbooks that often include headings, graphs, charts, and other text elements not often found in the narrative fiction they encountered in the lower grades.

Teachers may find that this shift pays off in terms of student enthusiasm. Researchers have noted one other benefit of nonfiction reading: the potential to motivate young children to read by tapping into their interests. This may, in fact, be the most important insight to be gleaned from research. Although students may continue to find fiction appealing, nonfiction doesn't have to be boring. On the contrary, allowing students to explore and pursue their interests within a broad array of informational texts can help them to see that the real world can often be just as surprising and intriguing as make-believe.

Source 3

Can Reading Fiction Improve Empathy?

By [RICK NAUERT, PHD](#) *Senior News Editor*

An emerging theory suggests exposure to narrative fiction can improve an individual's ability to understand what other people are thinking or feeling—in other words, it can improve his or her ability to feel empathy for others.

Dr. Raymond Mar, a psychologist at York University in Canada, said, "we understand stories using basic cognitive functions, and there is not a special module in the brain that allows us to do this. Understanding stories is similar to the way we understand the real world."

The fiction genre often includes stories about people, their mental states, and relationships. And in fiction, even stories with inanimate objects may have human-like characteristics.

In a presentation at the American Psychological Association's Annual Convention, Mar said, "When people read stories we invoke personal experiences. We're relying not just on words on a page, but also our own past experiences."

"We often have thoughts and emotions that are consistent with what's going on in a story," he said.

According to Mar, social outcomes that could come out of being exposed to narrative fiction can include exposure to social content, reflecting on past social interactions, or imagining future interactions.

The stories often help us to gain insight into things in the past that relate to a character in a story, and resonate with our experiences.

"Even though fiction is fabricated, it can communicate truths about human psychology and relationships," Mar said.

According to one study, over 75 percent of books typically read to preschoolers frequently reference mental states, and include very complex things such as false-belief or situational irony.

"Children between the ages of three and five years old acquire a theory-of-mind, in other words, an understanding that other people have thoughts, beliefs, and desires that may differ from their own," Mar said.

"Around the same ages, children also begin to understand what characters in stories are feeling and thinking."

In 2010, Mar and colleagues published a study which found that parents who were able to recognize children's authors and book titles predicted their child's performance on theory-of-mind tests.

Theory-of-mind tests included testing if a child is able to understand that someone may prefer broccoli over a cookie, and how that is unique from their own desire for the cookie.

"There are aspects of joint-reading between parents and children that seem to be important to the process," Mar said.

There may be discussions of mental states, and more discussions during joint-reading than throughout other moments of daily life between a parent and child.

These discussions may play a significant role in a child's development.

A recent study Mar highlights shows that reading a child a tale about honesty led the child to act more honestly when presented with an opportunity to lie or cheat.

Mar's study in 2006 illustrated that fiction predicts an individual's ability to infer mental states from photographs, and the result has been replicated by a number of other studies.

Studies have shown that narrative fiction correlates with better mental-inference ability and more liberal social attitudes.

"Experiences that we have in our life shape our understanding of the world," Mar said. "And imagined experiences through narrative fiction stories are also likely to shape or change us. But with a caveat — it's not a magic bullet, it's an opportunity for change and growth."

Source 4

Reasons for Using and Teaching Nonfiction

By K. Bucher M. E. Manning Pearson Allyn Bacon Prentice Hall

Updated on Jul 20, 2010

Young adult nonfiction is often ignored in schools. However, a number of reasons exist to make nonfiction part of the curriculum and to encourage recreational nonfiction reading.

Reading nonfiction helps adolescents develop information literacy. This is a much needed skill in modern society where students can no longer memorize everything in school that they will need to know as adults. Instead, they must develop the skills to locate, evaluate, and use information. In other words, they must become information literate. To do this, adolescents need the ability to:

- see the parts within the whole and their relationship,
- solve problems and think analytically,
- work in groups and communicate with others, and
- work independently and assume responsibility

To help adolescents become information literate, educators must use reading and writing strategies and critical thinking skills that focus on nonfiction. For example, in nonfiction, adolescents find tables, charts, graphic organizers, maps, drawings, diagrams, timelines, and other visual representations of information. To survive in contemporary society, adolescents need to develop the skills and abilities to decode the information found in these visuals. Also, researchers argue that, although most educators use fiction in the classroom, high-stakes tests contain more nonfiction than fiction passages for students to read and analyze.

Several studies have found a link between the reading of nonfiction and the development of literacy skills. Generally, students who read magazines and nonfiction books have higher average reading proficiencies than those who do not. Also, nonfiction that presents concepts and vocabulary in a concrete way can help teach literary skills and can provide a bridge to textbooks for non-native as well as native English speakers.

There are still other benefits of using nonfiction with young adults. Nonfiction:

- helps adolescents learn and understand content-related vocabulary,
- provides current information in a more interesting way than textbooks,
- may be more appealing visually than a textbook,
- is effective in moving adolescents from the Internet to the library,
- generally has a clear focus in less than 200 pages, and
- can provide a pleasurable reading experience.

“Malala Yousafzai: By the Book”

SUNDAY BOOK REVIEW | NYT NOW (AUG. 19, 2014)

The activist and co-author of “I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World” relished “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,” the first book she read in the hospital when recovering from an attack by the Taliban.

What book are you reading right now?

I’ve been reading “Of Mice and Men,” by John Steinbeck, which is on the school curriculum. It’s a short book, but it is filled with so much. It really reflects the situation of 1930s America. I was fascinated to learn how women were treated at the time, and what life was like for poor itinerant workers. Books can capture injustices in a way that stays with you and makes you want to do something about them. That’s why they are so powerful.

What’s the last truly great book you read?

“The Alchemist,” by Paulo Coelho. I like it because it is hopeful and inspiring. It tells the story of a boy who embarks on a journey to find a treasure, but as he goes along, he learns from every part of his journey and every person he meets. In the end, he finds his treasure in a very interesting place. His story tells you that you should believe in yourself and continue your journey.

Who are your favorite contemporary writers?

Deborah Ellis (author of “Parvana’s Journey”) and Khaled Hosseini (“The Kite Runner”). Both tell stories about young characters in circumstances, having to make hard choices and having to find strength. They accurately depict war-torn regions. I like writers who can show me worlds I know nothing about, but my favorites are those who create characters or worlds which feel realistic and familiar to me, or who can make me feel inspired. I discovered Deborah Ellis’s books in the school library after my head teacher encouraged me to go beyond the school curriculum and look for books I might enjoy. This wasn’t long after I arrived in Britain, and I was missing my friends terribly. Reading about Afghanistan made me feel like being back at home. This is the power of books. They can take you to places which are beyond reach.

What books would you recommend for young people hoping to understand the plight of girls and women in Pakistan today?

“Mud City,” part of the “Parvana’s Journey” series by Deborah Ellis. I was gripped by this series and couldn’t drag myself away from it. Ellis beautifully captures childhood in war-torn Afghanistan and Pakistan. The stories are very moving.

Is there one book you wish all girls would read? One all students would read?

All girls: “The Breadwinner,” by Deborah Ellis. The book tells the story of a young girl who takes on the challenge of saving her family. I think it’s important for girls everywhere to learn how women are treated in some societies. But even though Parvana is treated as lesser than boys and men, she never feels that way. She believes in herself and is stronger to fight against hunger, fear

and war. Girls like her are an inspiration. “The Breadwinner” reminds us how courageous and strong women are around the world.

All students should read “The Kite Runner.” It shows you should not judge other people by external things. And it shows loyalty and friendship.

Were there particular books that helped you get through the recovery process after the attack on you by the Taliban?

“The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” was the first book I read in the hospital. I had been having headaches and couldn’t read or focus properly for a while. It is a lovely book, and it was given to me by Gordon Brown — he sent me 25 books, and this was my favorite.

Which books might we be surprised to find on your bookshelves?

“A Brief History of Time,” by Stephen Hawking. I read it during a period when life in Swat was very hard. I distracted myself from the fear and terrorism by thinking about things like how the universe began and whether time travel is possible. I enjoy science, and I’m a very curious person. I always want to know the reason behind everything, big or small.

What are your childhood memories of books and reading?

One of the first books I read is called “Meena,” about a girl who stood up for women’s rights and education in Afghanistan. I also read a biography about Martin Luther King Jr., written for children.

But I didn’t read a lot of books when I was young. In our country, many children don’t attend school or learn how to read. Those who do usually read only textbooks. In our classes, we focused more on history, science and mathematics than literature. Many people couldn’t afford books. Most books were secondhand, used by many children before. In Pakistan even schools own very few books. I was lucky to have a father who valued education and thought it was important that I knew how to read. I read eight or nine books in Swat, and I was considered to be a bookish girl! One of the most memorable moments in my life was when I was asked to open the Library of Birmingham, Europe’s largest new library. I had never seen so many books and all of them freely available to members of the public. If only children in Pakistan had such easy access to books! People of Birmingham are very lucky to have such a wonderful library.

English 10
Final Exam
June 2015

Part A: Text-Analysis Response

Directions: Closely read the text provided below, answer the multiple choice questions (10 points) and write a well-developed, text-based response of one to two paragraphs (20 points). In your response, identify a central idea in the text and analyze how the author's use of one writing strategy (literary element or literary technique) develops this central idea. Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis. Do not simply summarize the text.

Guidelines- Be sure to:

- Identify a central idea in the text
- Analyze how the author's use of one writing strategy (such as characterization, point of view, conflict, setting, symbolism, irony, tone, etc.) develops the central idea
- Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Passage from *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau for Text-Based Response

When I first took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence day, or the fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but it was merely a defense against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough weatherstained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed¹ door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them...

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front² only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartanlike³ as to put to rout⁴ all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness⁵ of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it

¹ Planed-made smooth or even

² To front- to confront or face toward

³ Spartan- marked by strict self-discipline or self-denial; marked by simplicity, frugality, or avoidance of luxury and comfort

⁴ To rout- to force out; to uncover

⁵ Meanness- the state of lacking distinction or being worthy of little regard

were sublime⁶, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion....

Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumbnail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder⁷ and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary, eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion...the nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy⁸ and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless⁹ expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our lives to improve them, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride upon the railroad; it rides upon us....

⁶ Sublime- outstanding; inspiring awe

⁷ To founder- to fail

⁸ Unwieldy- difficult to handle

⁹ Heedless- not paying careful attention

Multiple Choice Questions: Place your final answers on the answer sheet provided.

1) Thoreau went to the woods

- a) Looking for riches
- b) To simplify his life
- c) To become a teacher
- d) To learn about Sparta

2) According to Thoreau, an honest man does not need

- a) Arithmetic
- b) Simplicity
- c) Food
- d) Telegraphs

3) If you bought Thoreau a birthday present, which of the following do you think he would prefer?

- a) A video game
- b) A hammer and nails
- c) A meal in a fancy restaurant
- d) A ticket to the opera

4) A paradox is a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense but the statement has some truth to it. Which expression is an example of a paradox?

- a) "Keep your accounts on your thumbnail."
- b) "Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary, eat but one."
- c) "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."
- d) "Our life is frittered away by detail."

5) Thoreau's theme could best be expressed as

- a) Simplify, simplify
- b) Be honest
- c) Life is precious
- d) Eat less

Complete the text-based response on the paper provided. Please label it Part A.

Part B (70 points)

Directions: Write the essay as described in “Your Task” on the paper provided. Be sure to read the guidelines carefully.

Your Task:

Write a critical essay in which you discuss two works of literature from the perspective that is provided for you in the Critical Lens. Choose from the books read for your English Class this year. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement and support your opinion using specific references from the selected pieces of literature.

Critical Lens:

“ A story must be great enough to tell; it must have something more unusual to relate than the ordinary experiences of every average man and woman.”

-Thomas Hardy (adapted)

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Provide a valid interpretation of the critical lens that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis
- Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it
- Choose two books from those read for class this year that you believe best support your opinion
- Specify the titles and authors of the selected books
- Use the criteria suggested by the critical lens to analyze the literature selected
- Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to appropriate literary elements (for example: theme, characterization, setting, point of view, etc.) to develop your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a unified and coherent manner
- Follow the conventions of standard English