

# Words Matter

| English Language Arts | Content Area |         | Grade Level   |             |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------|---------------|-------------|
|                       | Science      | History | Middle School | High School |

Approximate Time Needed: Six weeks

| UNIT OVERVIEW  |  | KEY STANDARDS   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>How is it that words can mean so much more than their dictionary definitions? How can a single word choice or a pattern of word choices impact the meaning of a text?</p> <p>Students explore these essential questions in this literary analysis unit, which centers on how words carry multiple layers of meaning and how authors purposely choose words to convey deeper meanings. Students develop their textual analysis skills through a gradual release of responsibility, beginning by collaboratively analyzing the impact of word choice on tone and meaning in rich texts such as Pat Mora’s “Same Song,” Robert Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays,” and Sandra Cisneros’s “Eleven.” After additional small-group practice and instruction on how to develop a focused thesis and structure an explanatory essay on a complex topic, students individually complete a final performance task in which they explain the effect of George Orwell’s diction in his essay, “Shooting an Elephant.”</p> <p>The unit is designed with the intent for students to transfer the skill of identifying and explaining the intentional word choices authors make to craft a message.</p> |  | <p><b>Common Core</b></p> <p>L.9–10.5</p> <p>L.9–10.5.b</p> <p>RL.9–10.4</p> <p>RL.9–10.1</p> <p>W.9–10.2</p> <p>W.9–10.9</p> |
| COMMON ASSIGNMENTS   | LDC TEACHING TASK  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-Assessment: Multiple choice questions on content and terms</li> <li>Constructed Response: Analysis of tone in a text</li> <li>LDC Explanatory Essay: Analysis of tone in George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant”</li> </ul>  | <p>Task Template IE19 – Informational or Explanatory</p> <p>How does Orwell use diction to convey tone? After reading “Shooting an Elephant,” write an essay in which you explain how Orwell’s diction conveys the narrator’s complex attitude toward his surroundings and predicaments, such as the natives, the British, authority figures, or the very act of shooting the elephant. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your explanation with evidence from the text.</p> |   |
| <p><b>AUTHORS</b> Bethany Bieth, Colleen H. Burns, Sally B. Capistrant, Tara Henderson, Danny Hollweg, Richie J. Kowalewski, Jennifer McDermid, Sherri McPherson, Eddie Mullins, Alison G. Raymer, Nicole Renner, Micele A. Sturm, Kelly Whitney, and Sarah Whitney</p>  |  |   |

## About the Common Assignment Study

The Common Assignment Study (CAS) represents an effort to strengthen instruction through the integrated development of curriculum, instructional supports, and embedded assessments. Led by teachers in Colorado and Kentucky, CAS produced multiple high-quality instructional units in science, history, and English language arts. As new academic standards and assessments are being adopted across the states, CAS showcases teachers' pivotal role in translating these larger initiatives into rigorous and relevant classroom experiences for their students.

The CAS instructional units—which include classroom activities, assessments, and rubrics for scoring student work—were developed using the Understanding by Design framework. Each unit was strengthened by integrating a Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) module to help scaffold and support the development of students' content literacy. Over a two-year period, the teachers developed, taught, and revised the units with the support and leadership of The Colorado Education Initiative and The Fund for Transforming Education in Kentucky; the subject matter expertise provided by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity; and the research support of the Center for Assessment. Throughout the study, which was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Westat provided technical assistance and support and collected student work samples and scores from each unit.

The units contain shared elements (“common assignments”) that were collaboratively developed and used by teachers in both states. However, teachers maintained flexibility and autonomy to tailor the units to meet local needs and make contextualized instructional choices. Teacher-leaders have taken active roles in facilitating the collaborative design process. Teachers have reported that newly developed tools and strategies have better engaged their students and provided them with richer opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the material. Research for Action has studied the implementation of the CAS units and gathered feedback to improve how districts and schools can use CAS resources to support the integrated use of teacher-developed curricula, instructional supports, and embedded assessments.



[www.commonassignment.org](http://www.commonassignment.org)

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[scale.stanford.edu](http://scale.stanford.edu)



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**LDC Task and Module—Explanatory Essay Analyzing Tone in George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant”**

Desired Results

|   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Established Goals/ Standards</b></p>  | <p><b>Common Core State Standards</b></p> <p><b>L.9–10.5:</b> Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p><b>L.9–10.5.b:</b> Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.</p> <p><b>RL.9–10.4:</b> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).</p> <p><b>RL.9–10.1:</b> Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</p> <p><b>W.9–10.2:</b> Write informational/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</p> <p><b>W.9–10.9:</b> Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p>   |  |   |   |
| <p><b>Transfer</b></p>  | <p><i>Students will be able to independently use their learning to ...</i></p> <p>identify and explain the intentional word choices authors make to craft a message.</p>   |  |   |   |
| <p><b>Meaning</b></p>   | <p><b>Understandings/Big Ideas</b></p> <p><i>Students will understand that ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words carry multiple layers of meaning.</li> <li>• Authors purposefully choose words to convey deeper meanings.</li> <li>• Writers use strong and thorough textual evidence to support their analysis of explicit and implied meanings in a text.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Essential Questions</b></p> <p><i>Students will keep considering ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is it that words can mean so much more than their dictionary definitions?</li> <li>• How can a single word choice impact meaning? How can a pattern of word choices shape the meaning or tone of a text?</li> <li>• How do writers draw evidence to support analysis of text?</li> </ul> |   |   |
| <p><b>Acquisition</b></p>   | <p><b>Know (Content)</b></p> <p><i>Students will know ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How an author uses diction purposefully (RL.9–10.4), including connotation, denotation, colloquialisms, etc.</li> <li>• How to introduce and organize an explanatory essay. (W.9–10.2)</li> <li>• How to connect evidence to explanatory claims in an essay. (W.9–10.9)</li> </ul> <p><b>Do (Skills)</b></p> <p><i>Students will be skilled at ...</i></p> <table border="0" data-bbox="423 1522 1492 1913"> <tr> <td data-bbox="423 1522 969 1913"> <p><b>Research/Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading closely and citing specific textual evidence to support conclusions. (RL.9–10.1, RI.9–10.1)</li> <li>• Summarizing the key supporting details and ideas. (RL.9–10.2)</li> <li>• Interpreting how word choice shapes tone, mood, and/or meaning. (RL.9–10.4, RI.9–10.4)</li> <li>• Reading and comprehending literary and informational text independently and proficiently. (RL.9–10.10, RI.9–10.10)</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="969 1522 1492 1913"> <p><b>Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing explanatory texts to examine and convey concepts clearly and accurately. (W.9–10.2)</li> <li>• Producing clear and coherent writing. (W.9–10.4)</li> <li>• Strengthening writing by planning, revising and editing. (W.9–10.5)</li> <li>• Drawing evidence from literary text to support analysis. (W.9–10.9)</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table> |  | <p><b>Research/Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading closely and citing specific textual evidence to support conclusions. (RL.9–10.1, RI.9–10.1)</li> <li>• Summarizing the key supporting details and ideas. (RL.9–10.2)</li> <li>• Interpreting how word choice shapes tone, mood, and/or meaning. (RL.9–10.4, RI.9–10.4)</li> <li>• Reading and comprehending literary and informational text independently and proficiently. (RL.9–10.10, RI.9–10.10)</li> </ul> | <p><b>Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing explanatory texts to examine and convey concepts clearly and accurately. (W.9–10.2)</li> <li>• Producing clear and coherent writing. (W.9–10.4)</li> <li>• Strengthening writing by planning, revising and editing. (W.9–10.5)</li> <li>• Drawing evidence from literary text to support analysis. (W.9–10.9)</li> </ul> |
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## Words Matter Unit Overview

### Acceptable Evidence of Results

| Assessments   | Evaluative Criteria   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Pre-Assessment: Multiple choice assessment on terms and content</li><li>2. Formative Assessment: Constructed response analysis of tone in a text</li><li>3. LDC Explanatory Essay: Analysis of tone in George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant"<br/>How does Orwell use diction to convey tone? After reading "Shooting an Elephant," write an essay in which you explain how Orwell's diction conveys the narrator's complex attitude toward his surroundings and predicaments, such as the natives, the British, authority figures, or the very act of shooting the elephant. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your explanation with evidence from the text.</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Answer key (number correct out of five)</li><li>2. 4-point holistic rubric</li><li>3. LDC explanatory rubric</li></ol> |
| <b>Supports/Scaffolding</b><br><i>See unit plan below.</i>  |   |

### Learning Experiences and Instruction

| Unit Texts and Materials | Central Text  |
|--------------------------|---|
|                          | "Shooting an Elephant" by George Orwell (short story)   |
|                          | <b>Supporting Texts</b>   |
|                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros (short story)</li><li>• "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden (poem)</li><li>• "Same Song" by Pat Mora (poem)</li><li>• List of optional texts for Unit Section 3: Group Analysis</li></ul> |

## Words Matter Unit Overview

### Unit Plan—Section 1

| Section | Activity Progression  | Associated Documents   | Estimated Length  |
|---------|---|--|---|
| 1A      | <b>Pre-Assess</b><br><b>Pre-Assessment:</b><br>Multiple Choice questions on tone and mood   | <a href="#">“Words Matter” Pre-Assessment Teacher Version</a><br><a href="#">“Words Matter” Pre-Assessment Student Version</a>   | 10–20 minutes   |
| 1B      | <b>Unit Intro Activities</b><br><b>Unit Intro Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Teacher Guide for explanation of each activity.</li> <li>Use all three or select those most appropriate for your classes.</li> </ul> | <a href="#">“Words Matter” Unit Intro Teacher Guide</a><br><a href="#">“Words Matter” Unit Intro Activities PowerPoint</a>   | Variable; no more than two standard class periods   |
| 1C      | <b>Building Content Knowledge</b><br>Direct instruction and activities to support the unit’s key concepts: connotation vs. denotation, tone, and mood   | <a href="#">Denotation vs. Connotation PowerPoint</a><br><a href="#">Connotation and Denotation Activities 1 and 2</a><br><a href="#">Flavors of a Word: Tone-Mood Activity</a><br><a href="#">Tone and Mood Instructional Resources PowerPoint</a><br><a href="#">Tone Words List</a> ↗<br><a href="#">Mood and Tone Words List</a> ↗<br><a href="#">Tone-Mood Worksheet: Intervention Practice</a> | Variable depending on the needs of your class. About one to three standard class periods. |

### Unit Plan—Section 2

| Section | Activity Progression  | Associated Documents   | Estimated Length |
|---------|---|--|------------------|
| 2A      | <b>Whole Class Close Reading</b><br><b>Close Reading Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Same Song” by Pat Mora (poem)</li> <li>“Those Winter Sundays” by Robert Hayden (poem)</li> </ul> <b>Seminar:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros (short story)</li> </ul> <p><i>Ideally, these three activities/texts should be done in this order, as they build in complexity and lead directly into the mid-unit formative assessment in Section 2B.</i></p> | <a href="#">“Same Song” Text Only</a><br><a href="#">Close Reading: “Same Song” Activity and Resources</a>     | 45 minutes       |
|         |   | <a href="#">Close Reading: “Those Winter Sundays” Activity and Resources</a>                                   | 45 minutes       |
|         |   | <a href="#">“Eleven” Seminar Plan</a><br><a href="#">Weigh the Words: “Eleven”</a>                             | 45–90 minutes    |
| 2B      | <b>Mid-Unit Formative Assessment</b><br><b>Short Constructed Response:</b><br>Students choose one text from Section 2A and write a constructed response analysis that mimics the final essay they will write in Section 4. Holistic rubric included in the assessment document.   | <a href="#">Mid-Unit Formative Assessment</a><br><a href="#">Mid-Unit Formative Assessment Student Version</a> | 25–40 minutes    |

## Words Matter Unit Overview

### Unit Plan—Section 3

| Section | Activity Progression  | Associated Documents  | Estimated Length |
|---------|---|---|------------------|
| 3       | <p><b>Small Group Close Reading</b></p> <p>Teachers offer three to five text choices (select from our suggested list or use your own)</p> <p>Students form groups based on text selection and go through discussion and analysis activities together, as outlined in the “Group Work Protocol” document. This section is a key step in the unit’s gradual release of responsibility to help students prepare for the independent work in Section 4.</p> | <p><a href="#">Annotated List of Suggested Texts: Unit Section 3</a></p> <p><a href="#">Group Work Protocol: Unit Section 3</a></p> | 90 minutes       |

### Unit Plan—Section 4

| Section | Activity Progression   | Associated Documents   | Estimated Length   |
|---------|--|--|--|
| 4       | <p><b>LDC Module</b></p> <p><b>LDC Module: “Shooting an Elephant” explanatory essay</b></p> <p>How does Orwell use diction to convey tone? After reading “Shooting an Elephant,” write an essay in which you explain how Orwell’s diction conveys the narrator’s complex attitude toward his surroundings and predicaments, such as the natives, the British, authority figures, or the very act of shooting the elephant. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your explanation with evidence from the text.</p> <p>Note: See LDC Module in CoreTools entitled <a href="#">“Words Matter: Diction and Orwell’s ‘Shooting an Elephant’”</a> for instructional details.</p> | <p><a href="#">“Shooting an Elephant” Text</a></p> <p>“Shooting an Elephant” LDC Module (<a href="#">CoreTools version</a>)</p> <p><a href="#">Dialectical Journal: Teacher Version</a></p> <p><a href="#">Dialectical Journal: Student Version</a></p> <p><a href="#">Protocol for Bridging Activity</a></p> <p><a href="#">Bridging Activity: Student Version</a></p> <p><a href="#">Class Model Instructions</a></p> <p><a href="#">Essay Planning</a></p> <p><a href="#">Body Paragraph Outlining</a></p> <p><a href="#">Ideas Under Control Organizer</a></p> <p><a href="#">Teacher Instructions for Revision Mini-Tasks</a></p> <p><a href="#">Revision Guide</a></p> <p><a href="#">Delineate Evaluate Explain Tool</a></p> <p><a href="#">Focus for Editing and Revising</a></p> <p><a href="#">Revising: Sentence Variation Models</a></p> | Three weeks (see CoreTools module for pacing of individual mini-tasks) |

## Common Assignment 1

# Multiple Choice Assessment of Unit Content and Terms

### Table of Contents

#### 1. Teacher Materials

- a. [“Words Matter” Pre-Assessment](#)

#### 2. Student Materials

- a. [“Words Matter” Pre-Assessment](#)



## Pre-Assessment—Teacher Version with Answer Key

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**Instructions:** Read the following poem carefully. Then answer questions 1–5.

### Identity

Let them be as flowers,  
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,  
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

5 I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed,  
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle  
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone,  
to live, to feel exposed to the madness  
of the vast, eternal sky.  
10 To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea,  
carrying my soul, my seed, beyond the mountains of time  
or into the abyss of the bizarre.

I'd rather be unseen, and if  
then shunned by everyone,  
15 than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,  
growing in clusters in the fertile valley,  
where they're praised, handled, and plucked  
by greedy, human hands.

I'd rather smell of musty, green stench  
20 than of sweet, fragrant lilac.  
If I could stand alone, strong and free,  
I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.

"Identity" by Julio Noboa Polanco, from *The Rican, Journal of Contemporary Thought*. Copyright 1973 by Julio Noboa Polanco.

1. What word most closely describes the feeling or atmosphere created for the audience in the poem?
  - a. Motivated
  - b. Depressed
  - c. Insulted
  - d. Lighthearted

## Words Matter: Common Assignment 1



2. What word has the closest meaning to the underlined word in line 8?
  - a. Insanity
  - b. Foolishness
  - c. Excitement
  - d. Obsession
  
3. What two words best describe the tone of the poem?
  - a. Condescending and passionate
  - b. Fearful and happy
  - c. Somber and serious
  - d. Threatening and optimistic
  
4. Why does the author use the word “harnessed” to describe the flowers in line 3?
  - a. To show that the flowers are tied with rope
  - b. To show that the flowers are trapped
  - c. To show that the flowers are tough
  - d. To show that the flowers are happy
  
5. Which term or phrase best expresses the meaning of the word “seed” as used in line 11?
  - a. Body
  - b. Common sense
  - c. Scent
  - d. Spiritual being

### “Identity” Pre-Assessment Answer Key

1. A
2. C
3. A
4. B
5. D

## Words Matter: Common Assignment 1

### Pre-Assessment



**Instructions:** Read the following poem carefully. Then answer questions 1–5.

### Identity

Let them be as flowers,  
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,  
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

5 I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed,  
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle  
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone,  
to live, to feel exposed to the madness  
of the vast, eternal sky.  
10 To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea,  
carrying my soul, my seed, beyond the mountains of time  
or into the abyss of the bizarre.

I'd rather be unseen, and if  
then shunned by everyone,  
15 than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,  
growing in clusters in the fertile valley,  
where they're praised, handled, and plucked  
by greedy, human hands.

I'd rather smell of musty, green stench  
20 than of sweet, fragrant lilac.  
If I could stand alone, strong and free,  
I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.

"Identity" by Julio Noboa Polanco, from *The Rican, Journal of Contemporary Thought*. Copyright 1973 by Julio Noboa Polanco.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What word most closely describes the feeling or atmosphere created for the audience in the poem?
- Motivated
  - Depressed
  - Insulted
  - Lighthearted
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What word has the closest meaning to the underlined word in line 8?
- Insanity
  - Foolishness
  - Excitement
  - Obsession

## Words Matter: Common Assignment 1

### Pre-Assessment



- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What two words best describe the tone of the poem?
- Condescending and passionate
  - Fearful and happy
  - Somber and serious
  - Threatening and optimistic
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Why does the author use the word “harnessed” to describe the flowers in line 3?
- To show that the flowers are tied with rope
  - To show that the flowers are trapped
  - To show that the flowers are tough
  - To show that the flowers are happy
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Which term or phrase best expresses the meaning of the word “seed” as used in line 11?
- Body
  - Common sense
  - Scent
  - Spiritual being

## Unit Intro Activities and Building Content Knowledge

### Table of Contents

#### 1. “Words Matter”

- a. [Teacher Guide](#)
- b. [Activities PowerPoint](#)

#### 2. Denotation vs. Connotation

- a. Teacher Materials
  - i. [Teacher Instructions for Shift the Mood with Connotation and Denotation \(Activity 2\)](#)
  - ii. [Denotation vs. Connotation PowerPoint](#)
- b. Student Materials
  - i. [Connotation and Denotation Activities 1 and 2](#)

#### 3. Tone and Mood

- a. Teacher Materials
  - i. [Flavors of a Word Activity Instructions](#)
  - ii. [Tone and Mood Instructional Resources PowerPoint](#)
- b. Student Materials
  - i. [Flavors of a Word: Tone-Mood Activity and Example](#)
  - ii. [Tone Words List](#) ↗
  - iii. [Mood and Tone Words List](#) ↗
  - iv. [Tone-Mood Worksheet: Intervention Practice](#)
  - v. [Identifying Tone and Mood Worksheet](#)



### Unit Intro Teacher Guide

The [Unit Intro PowerPoint](#) contains three activities that you can use to introduce the idea of the power of individual words and combinations of words. You may use all three or just a selection, but all of them lead into the teaching of connotation, tone, and mood while reinforcing the Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions of this unit.

You may wish to begin with a brief discussion of the Essential Questions prior to doing any of these activities, or you may introduce the EQ after these activities.

#### Slide 1: “To This Day”

- Play the video for students once and allow them to simply watch.
- Play it one more time and ask them to jot down words they feel are powerful. As the slide says, students can determine what they mean by “powerful.”
- Then prompt discussion about the messages in the video and why the words they chose are powerful or influential.

*Note: If you are short on time, skip the first viewing.*

#### Slides 2–5: “Words Matter” Word Splash

- Student instructions given on slide 2.
- Adjust time if needed, but it should be a quick activity.
- Ask a few students to share their book jacket blurbs, encouraging the whole class to listen carefully for how they used the words from the word splash and how they added their own to develop a story.
- Prompt students to think about what kind/genre of story is being created and how they know from the words and the way they are used.
- Project the original source of these words and discuss:
  - Why would Gingrich make this suggestion?
  - Do you think the strategy was effective? Why? (Etc.)

#### Differentiation Options

- Project a piece of student writing to make it easier to examine their diction.
- Co-author the piece with the whole class and explore the words together.

#### Slides 6–8: Words and Women

- Student instructions are on the slides.
- For each image, ask which of the words from the class-generated list apply to the picture. What words, if any, would need to be added to the list? Which words definitely do not apply?
- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you use the Patrick Swayze drag queen image on slide 8, **please be prepared to handle any potentially sensitive conversations that arise** about gender expression, sexual orientation, etc. Be alert to student “jokes” that could offend other students in the room.



## Unit Intro Activities PowerPoint

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### “To this day”

As you watch this video, your task is to jot down any words you feel are *powerful* throughout. You get to define what *powerful* means for you. And then we will discuss as a class why these words seem influential.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltun92DfnPY>

1

**Access the full PowerPoint here:**

<http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Words-Matter-Unit-Intro-Activities.ppt> 



## Teacher Instructions for Shift the Mood with Connotation and Denotation (Activity 2)

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Before students complete Activity 2, you may need/want to model the process with a sentence or two (any sentence will do).

After the students have written their new version of the paragraph, use the following protocol to unpack the experience.

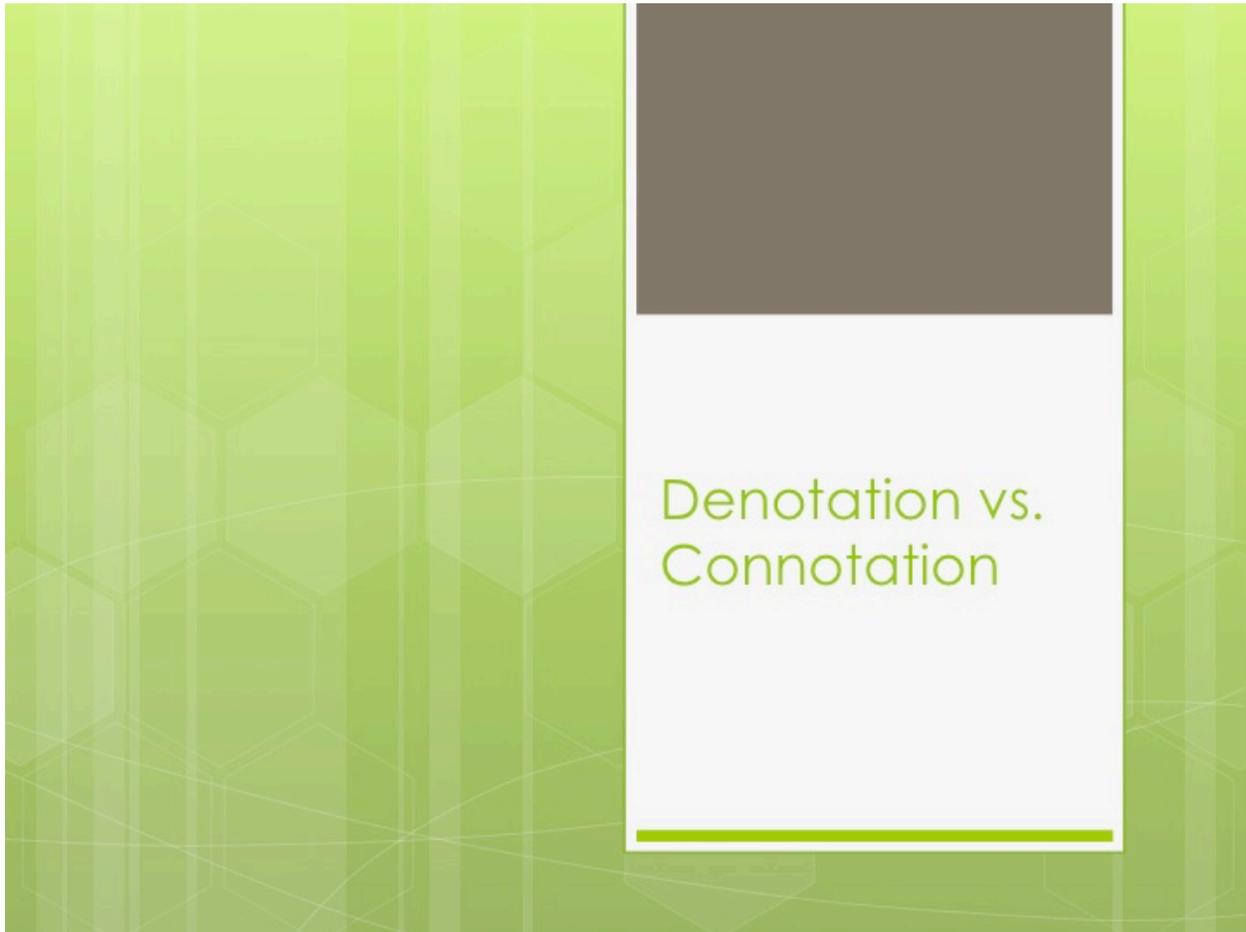
1. Have students exchange their drafts with a partner.
2. Independently, peer readers should score their partner's drafts using the holistic rubric.
3. Both peer readers should also attempt to identify the mood the original writer intended to establish.
4. Both peer readers should then gather back together to discuss their impressions of the original mood as well as how their partner used connotative words to change the mood.
5. Turn back to whole-group discussion to hear about how different moods were established through specific diction. Encourage students to read portions aloud and call out/explain specific examples.

This activity is intended to take 30–40 minutes.



## Denotation vs. Connotation PowerPoint

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**Access the full PowerPoint here:**

<http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Connotation-vs-Denotation-2014.pptx> ↗





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

### Shift the Mood with Connotation and Denotation

**Directions:** Change the following underlined words to words that have the same *denotation* but a different *connotation* to create a different mood in the paragraph. Make sure your new mood stays consistent throughout the paragraph. You may need to change other words to fit the context of the new mood. Write your new paragraph in the space below.

**Identify the mood you are trying to create:** \_\_\_\_\_

Emily entered the empty room. As she glanced at the curtains, their red color held her eye for a moment. At first, she failed to notice the chair between the two windows, but as she looked down, she was surprised to find a coin in the center of the plush cushion. The silver shined from the dark blue velvet. Before she picked it up, she looked around in hesitation. Was somebody watching? She wasn't sure. So it should not have been a surprise to her when, as she reached for the coin, she heard a loud thud behind her.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 | Paragraph uses word connotation to keep consistent mood throughout the paragraph; word choice is above standard.                 |
| 3 | Paragraph uses word connotation to keep a somewhat consistent mood throughout the paragraph with some slight variations in mood. |
| 2 | Paragraph uses word connotation inconsistently; mood in paragraph is unclear   |
| 1 | Little use of connotation; no set mood is evident.   |



### Instructions for Flavors of a Word Activity

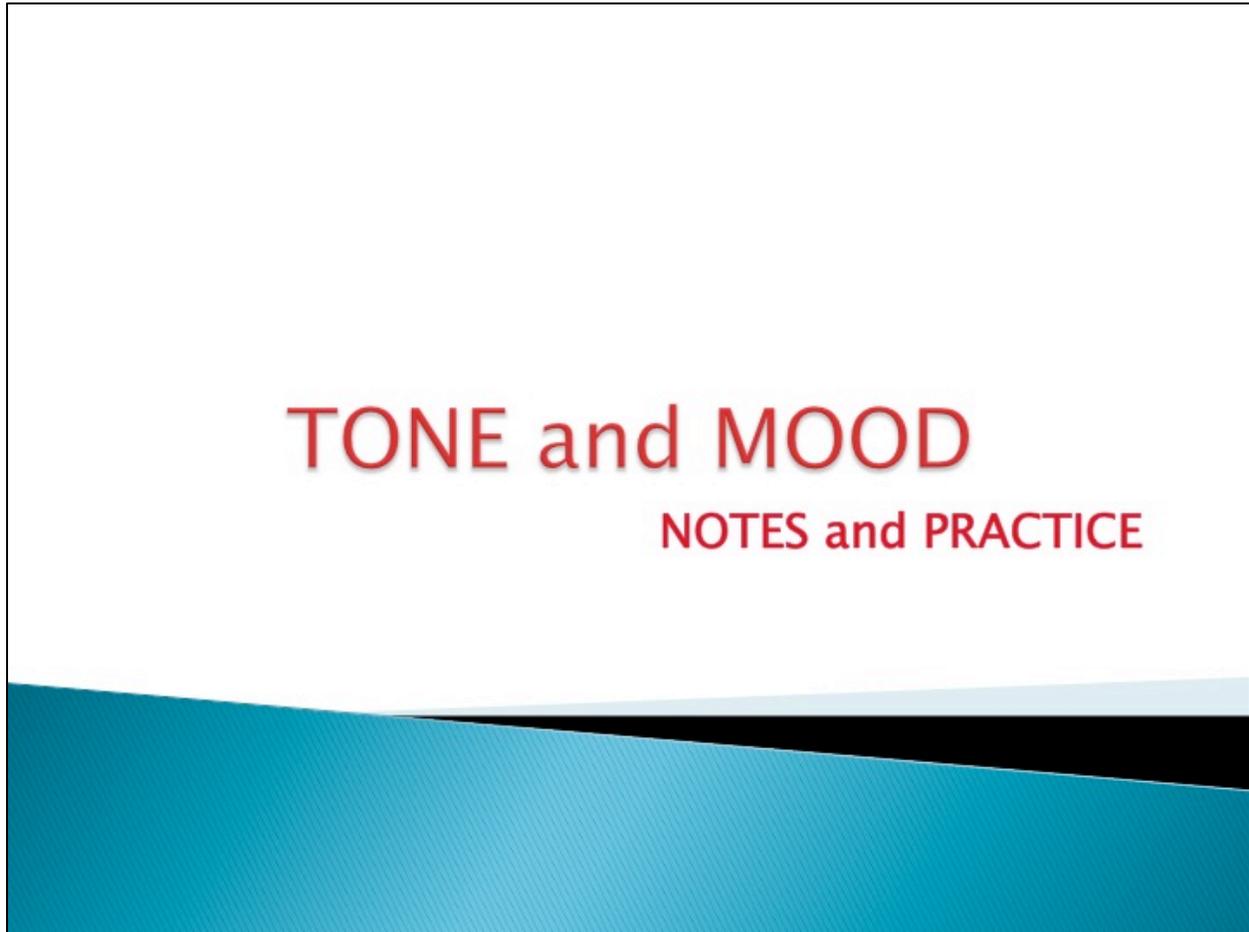
---

1. Give each student a blank copy of the ice cream cone image (Flavors of a Word Tone and Mood Activity). Assign each student a basic tone word like “happy” or “sad,” and have them write their word into the rectangle within the cone.
2. On the first layer of the ice cream cone, have students write a concise definition of the word.
3. On the top three “scoops,” have students add three synonyms that could be used in place of the original word to add more nuance.
4. You can also have students color in each scoop to represent the tone or emotions associated with each word.
5. You can provide a Tone and Mood Words List to help students fill out their ice cream cone graphic organizer. There also is a completed example provided to clarify what students are being asked to do.



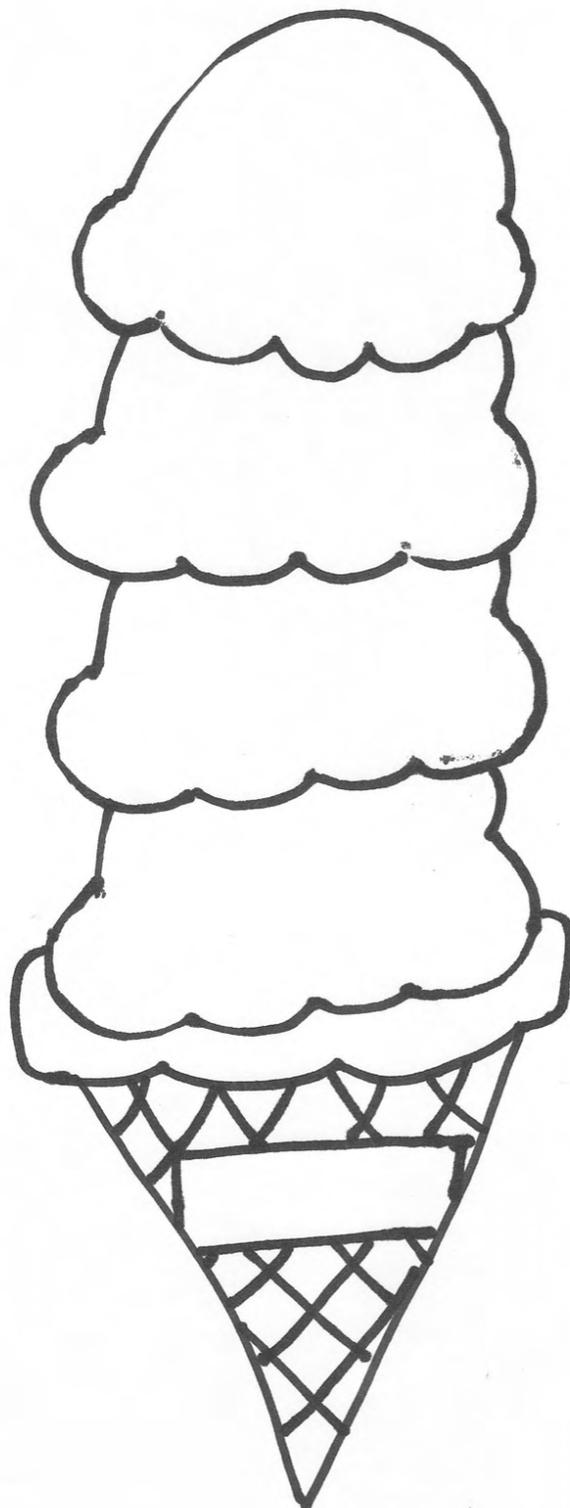
## Tone and Mood Instructional Resources PowerPoint

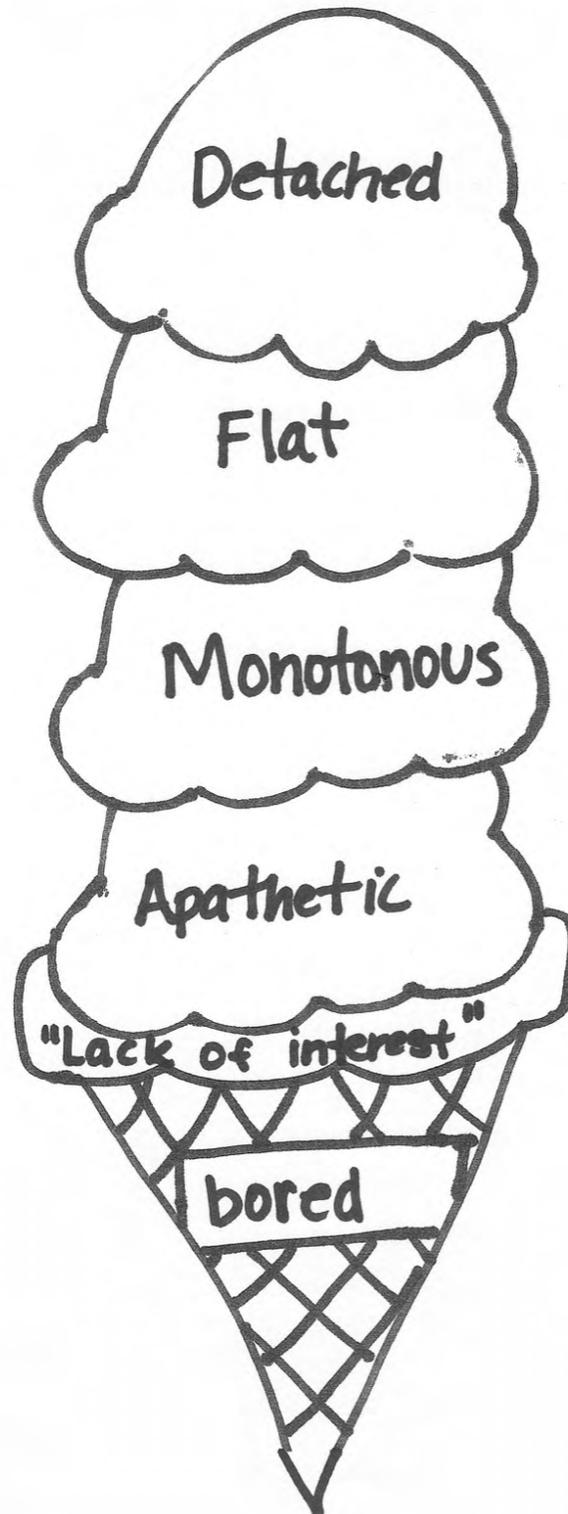
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**Access the full PowerPoint here:**

<http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Mood-and-Tone-Instructional-Resources.pptx> 







**Watch out! Tone and mood are similar!**

**Tone** is the author’s attitude toward the writing (his characters, the situation) and the readers. A work of writing can have more than one tone. An example of tone could be both serious and humorous. Tone is set by the setting, choice of vocabulary, and other details.

**Mood** is the general atmosphere created by the author’s words. It is the feeling **the reader gets** from reading those words. It may be the same, or it may change from situation to situation.

| Words That Describe Tone |                | Words That Describe Mood |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Amused                   | Matter-of-fact | Fanciful                 |
| Angry                    | Resigned       | Frightening              |
| Cheerful                 | Optimistic     | Frustrating              |
| Horror                   | Pessimistic    | Gloomy                   |
| Clear                    | Playful        | Happy                    |
| Formal                   | Pompous        | Joyful                   |
| Gloomy                   | Sad            | Melancholy               |
| Humorous                 | Serious        | Mysterious               |
| Informal                 | Suspicious     | Romantic                 |
| Ironic                   | Witty          | Sentimental              |
| Light                    |                | Sorrowful                |
|                          |                | Suspenseful              |

**Read more about it!**

Authors set a **TONE** or **MOOD** in literature by conveying an emotion or emotions through words. The way a person feels about an idea, event, or another person can be quickly determined through facial expressions, through gestures, and in the tone of voice used.

**MOOD: (sometimes called atmosphere) the overall feeling of the work**

Mood is the emotions that you (the reader) feel while you are reading. Some literature makes you feel sad, others joyful, still others, angry. The main purpose for some poems is to set a mood.

Writers use many devices to create mood, including images, dialogue, setting, and plot. Often a writer creates a mood at the beginning of the story and continues it to the end. However, sometimes the mood changes because of the plot or changes in characters.

Examples of MOODS include: suspenseful, joyful, depressing, excited, anxious, angry, sad, tense, lonely, suspicious, frightened, disgusted

**TONE: the way feelings are expressed**

Tone is the attitude that an author takes toward the audience, the subject, or the character. Tone is conveyed through the author’s words and details. Use context clues to help determine the tone.

In literature an author sets the tone through words. The possible tones are as boundless and the number of possible emotions a human being can have. Has anyone ever said to you, “Don’t use that tone of voice with me?” Your tone can change the meaning of what you say. Tone can turn a statement like, “you’re a big help!” into a genuine compliment or a cruel sarcastic remark. It depends on the context of the story.

## Words Matter: Unit Intro Activities and Building Content Knowledge

### Identifying Tone and Mood



For each example identify the tone, what context clues are used to convey the tone, and the overall mood of the sentence.

1. Bouncing into the room, she lit up the vicinity with a joyous glow on her face as she told about her fiancé and their wedding plans.

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood: \_\_\_\_\_

2. She huddled in the corner, clutching her tattered blanket and shaking convulsively, as she feverishly searched the room for the unknown dangers that awaited her.

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Bursting through the door, the flustered mother screamed uncontrollably at the innocent teacher who gave her child an F.

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Drawing the attention of his classmates as well as his teacher, the student dared to experiment with his professor's intelligence by interrogating him about the Bible.

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood: \_\_\_\_\_

5. He furtively glanced behind him, for fear of his imagined pursuers, then hurriedly walked on, jumping at the slightest sound even of a leaf crackling under his own foot.

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Gently smiling, the mother tenderly tucked the covers up around the child's neck, and carefully, quietly, left the room making sure to leave a comforting ray of light shining though the opened door should the child wake.

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood: \_\_\_\_\_

7. The laughing wind skipped through the village, teasing trees until they danced with anger and cajoling the grass into fighting itself, blade slapping blade, as the silly dog with golfball eyes and flopping, slobbery tongue bounded across the lawn.

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood: \_\_\_\_\_

## Whole Class Practice Activities

### Close Reading and Analysis

#### Table of Contents

1. “Same Song”
  - a. Teacher Materials
    - i. [Instructions for “Same Song”](#)
    - ii. [“Same Song” Resources](#)
  - b. Student Materials
    - i. [“Same Song” Text](#)
2. “Those Winter Sundays”
  - a. Teacher Materials
    - i. [Instructions for “Those Winter Sundays”](#)
  - b. Student Materials
    - i. [“Those Winter Sundays” Text](#)
3. “Eleven”
  - a. Teacher Materials
    - i. [Seminar Plan: “Eleven”](#)
  - b. Student Materials
    - i. [Weigh the Words: “Eleven”](#)



## Close Reading Strategy: “Same Song”

### Teacher Instructions

The idea is to use this as a beginning activity, getting kids to focus on a single word and to defend their choices. The terms “connotation” and “denotation” and other terms shouldn’t be explicitly used in this part, so that the focus is strictly on which word is the most important. Examples of different connotations, etc. tend to come out of the student discussions and the teacher can make those connections then, although the majority of the discussion should follow a shared-inquiry model, where the teacher refrains from giving or implying a “right” answer.

### Materials

Each student will need a copy of the poem they can write on and at least two different colors of highlighters

### Steps

1. Read the poem out loud.
2. Comprehension check discussion: What is happening? Ask students to summarize the action in the poem. Keep this at the literal level—if students jump to interpretation, ask them to hold that thought.
3. Instruct students to choose a SINGLE word in the poem that they feel is the single most important word. Students must choose individually—no discussion—and highlight the word they choose. If the word appears more than once in the poem, they need to decide which of the times it appears is the most important. Teacher circulates to check for understanding of process, making sure every student has chosen a word.
4. Whip around: Each student states which word they chose. No explanation, just the word. The rest of the class highlights the words on their paper with their second-color highlighters. At least one student also needs to record how many times any given word is selected (using tick marks). This recording may also be done with a document camera, overhead projector, smart board, etc.
5. Top three: Based on the whip around, the class should narrow the list of chosen words to the top three. The tick marks could be the initial factor, but let kids have a chance to challenge or defend choices—with explanations as to why.
6. Once the top three have been decided, students who had chosen words that didn’t make the cut need to decide what their choices are from those three (and other students can revise their choices, if desired).
7. What’s the winner? Different ways this could be approached (the teacher may want to paraphrase the rationale using our key terms— connotation, tone, etc. or ask guiding questions using those terms):
  - Large group discussion: Have students present their positions and explanations and challenge and defend choices, culminating in a series of votes to establish a class consensus.
  - Small group debate (good with lower-level kids): Have kids divide into small groups based on their choices to brainstorm reasons why their word is the most important and why the other two choices aren’t. Then the groups “debate” each other with group members shifting groups if another group actually convinces them to change their mind. This activity may end in a class consensus.
8. Optional written follow-up: Have students write a single paragraph in which they explain what word they think is the most important and why. Stress that if they disagree with the class consensus, that is OK.

### Alternative Approach

After steps 1–4, give students a chance to discuss/explain their choices. Then, rather than narrowing the list and voting on a “winner” for most important word, open up the discussion to patterns of diction, connotation, and meaning in the poem. Prompt students to discuss the meaning of the poem and HOW Pat Mora develops that meaning with her language. See “‘Same Song’ Resources” on the next page of this document for some initial ideas.



## “Same Song” Resources

### Summary/Denotation

In the poem “Same Song” by Pat Mora, the narrator’s twelve-year-old daughter wakes up early to do her hair and to put makeup on. She cares about appearance. In spite of her efforts, she is still not happy with the way that she looks. The narrator’s sixteen-year-old son doesn’t wake up early or care about putting makeup on, but he jogs at night, works out to build his muscles, and he still doesn’t the way he looks either.

### Connotation and Poetic Devices

- “plugs, squeezes, curls, strokes, smooths, outlines”: ritual, process, almost obsession (every line begins with a verb like a list of steps)
- “mirror, mirror on the wall”: allusion to Snow White, implies insecurity, too much concern with appearance like the evil queen (“Who is the fairest of them all?”)
- “frowns”: disappointed, frustrated
- “not fair”: continues the allusion, shows girl’s insecurity but also a sense of injustice, as in “It’s not fair!”
- Repetition/listing: her face, her eyes, her skin; suggests a careful procedure, looking in detail
- “cold dark”: literally late night conditions but also fear, danger
- Repetition/listing: “biceps, triceps, pectorals, one-handed push-ups, one-hundred sit-ups”; suggests the same careful procedure as the girl’s hair and makeup ritual
- Imagery: “strokes Aztec Blue shadow on her eyelids,” “smooths Frosted Mauve blusher on her cheeks”
- Parallelism: Both kids “stumble,” “peer into the mirror,” “frown”; shows connection between the two—different rituals, same problem (same song)



## “Same Song”

By Pat Mora

While my sixteen-year-old son sleeps,  
my twelve-year-old daughter  
stumbles into the bathroom at six a.m.  
plugs in the curling iron  
squeezes into faded jeans  
curls her hair carefully  
strokes Aztec Blue shadow on her eyelids  
smooths Frosted Mauve blusher on her cheeks  
outlines her mouth in Neon Pink  
peers into the mirror, mirror on the wall  
frowns at her face, her eyes, her skin,  
not fair.

At night this daughter  
stumbles off to bed at nine  
eyes half-shut while my son  
jogs a mile in the cold dark  
then lifts weights in the garage  
curls and bench presses  
expanding biceps, triceps, pectorals,  
one-handed push-ups, one hundred sit-ups  
peers into that mirror, mirror and frowns too.



### Close Reading Strategy: “Those Winter Sundays”

#### Teacher Instructions

This strategy asks students to think about tone and mood in a poem by looking only at the words from the poem listed in alphabetical order, rather than the poem itself. It is followed by a close reading of the actual poem.

The strategy is described below; for more detail, watch this video of the strategy in action from The Teaching Channel: <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/poetry-pre-reading-strategies>. If there is a problem with the link, go to the Teaching Channel via Google. Once on this site, type in “Approaches to Poetry: Pre-Reading Strategies.”

#### Pre-Reading Analysis of Diction

1. Pass out the alphabetical word list for Robert Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays.” Make sure you do NOT give students the actual poem at this point.
2. Have students individually highlight the top five words (the words they feel stand out the most as powerful and/or important).
3. As a whole class, have students share words and have class make connections among words and make inferences about poem’s tone, context, potential meaning, etc. To connect with the learning goals of this unit, you could also have students discuss the connotations/denotations of the words they are sharing.
4. Then in partners, have students continue to work on finding patterns (still using alphabetical order word list).
  - Teacher monitors partners and engages them in their thoughts, process, ideas, inferences, etc.
5. Share as a whole class (teacher discretion).

#### Optional Pre-Reading Extension: Jumbled Lines

In partners, give students jumbled sections of the poem (teacher can jumble the lines of poem in any way). In partners, students work to put the lines in order. This helps students examine structure and how structure of words overall conveys tone and meaning.

#### Reading and Analysis of Complete Poem

Give students the actual poem. Discuss and analyze for diction and tone. If additional support is desired, visit the annotated version of the poem here: <http://poetry.rapgenius.com/Robert-hayden-those-winter-sundays-annotated#note-1282050>.



ached angers austere banked blaze  
blueblack breaking call chronic clothes cold  
cold cold cracked did dress driven early ever  
father fearing fires good hands hear he'd him  
him his house I I I I'd indifferently know know  
labor lonely love's made my my no offices  
one out polished put rise rooms shoes slowly  
speaking splintering Sundays thanked wake  
warm weather weekday well were what what  
when who with would



**“Those Winter Sundays”**  
By **Robert Hayden** 

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?



|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Seminar Plan</b>         | <b>“Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros</b>                        |
| <b>Big Ideas and Values</b> | Power of education, qualities of good readers and writers |

**Pre-Seminar Content Steps**

**Share the following background with students:**

Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago in 1954, the third child and only daughter in a family of seven children. She studied at Loyola University of Chicago (B.A. English 1976) and the University of Iowa (M.F.A. Creative Writing 1978). She has worked as a teacher and counselor to high-school dropouts; as an artist-in-the schools where she taught creative writing; a college recruiter; an arts administrator; and as a visiting writer at a number of universities including the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sandra Cisneros is the author of several books including *The House on Mango Street*, *Caramelo*, *Loose Woman*, and most recently, *Have You Seen Marie?*. Sandra is the founder of the Latino MacArthur Fellows (Los MacArturos). She has been honored with numerous awards including the MacArthur Fellowship, two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, and a Texas Medal of the Arts.

Sandra has been writing for more than 45 years, publishing for more than 35, and earning her living by her pen for more than 18 years. Her books have been translated into more than 20 languages and published internationally.

**Pre-Seminar Close Reading**

Read the text aloud or have students read independently, and have them complete the “Weigh the Words” graphic organizer. Depending on your students, you may choose an approach:

- Do the entire organizer as a whole class.
- Model a few entries then release responsibility to students to finish.
- Have students complete the entire organizer in small groups or independently.

**Pre-Seminar Process Steps**

**Prepare students to participate in seminar discussion. Students should be seated in a circle where everyone can see each other’s face.**

**Explain the process and purpose of the seminar:**

1. A Paideia seminar is a thoughtful discussion where we work as a group to understand important ideas.
2. Our main purpose for discussing this text is to better understand the power of words and the impact words can have on one person’s life.
3. During the discussion, I want you to focus on the details in this text. You do not need to raise your hands in order to speak. Simply, wait for a natural opportunity to talk.
4. We will practice listening by using others’ names and paraphrasing what we hear others saying. We will agree and disagree in a calm, courteous, and thoughtful way, focusing on ideas rather than people. Remember to use the phrases you learned earlier this year.
  - I disagree with that idea because...
  - When you said \_\_\_\_\_, did you mean\_\_\_\_\_?
  - I see your point, but have you considered\_\_\_\_\_?
5. As the facilitator, my job is to ask challenging, open-ended questions. I will take notes during the discussion to help me keep up with the talk turns and flow of ideas.
6. During the discussion we will conduct a little self-assessment. As a group goal, I would like for everyone to refer to the text when speaking. Also, I would like for you to choose an individual goal from this list:



- Use others' names
- Ask an open-ended question
- Build on someone's ideas
- Look at the person speaking

Write your personal goal at the top of your copy of the text.

7. Read the text in front of you, and as you read, make annotations/notes in the margins.
8. Before we begin discussing the text, go back through it and number each sentence. *Teacher's note: this is a sneaky way to get students to give the text a second reading.*

### Seminar

#### Opening Question

What word or phrase in the text is most important? Why?

*Teacher's Note: go around the room round-robin style so that every student speaks once. This increases student accountability in the discussion and helps students overcome the initial fear of speaking to the whole group. If a student is not ready to answer, they may "pass," but you must be sure to return to each student and get a response before moving on to core questions.*

#### Core Questions

- What does Rachel mean by "it's too late"?
- Look at the descriptive words (including synonyms) that are used for the sweater. Why do you think Cisneros chose to use those words?
- What tone is conveyed through the repetition of the phrase "not mine"?
- How do some words convey a childish tone?
- How do some words convey an adult tone?
- How does the narrator convey a timid tone?
- What is the narrator's attitude toward the undefined "they" mentioned in the first paragraph?

#### Closing Question

- How does the narrator elicit a sense of empathy from the audience?

### Post-Seminar Process Steps

#### Assess individual and group participation in seminar discussion.

1. Thank students for their participation. Ask students to reflect on their success in meeting their personal goals and briefly describe in writing to what extent they met the goal. Ask students to also note why they performed as they did.
2. Ask someone to share their self-assessment and reflection.
3. Ask students to rate the group's performance from 0–5, with 5 meaning perfect and 0 meaning we really need improvement. Students should use a hand signal to show their number.
4. Ask someone to discuss why they gave the group the number they did.
5. Explain to the group that the goal is continuous improvement in our speaking and listening skills. Then discuss what the group should work on together next seminar.



### Post-Seminar Content Steps

1. Introduce students to our LDC prompt:

How does Orwell use diction to convey tone? After reading “Shooting an Elephant,” write an essay in which you explain how Orwell’s diction conveys the narrator’s complex attitude toward his surroundings and predicaments, such as the natives, the British, authority figures, or the very act of shooting the elephant. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your explanation with evidence from the text.

2. Connect today’s discussion with previous lessons/texts during the “Words Matter” Unit.
3. Lead directly into **unit formative assessment**. Allow students to choose to write their formative assessment piece about **any of the three texts from Unit Section 2**. If your students are really struggling, requiring them to write about “Eleven” may lead to more successful efforts since they have just completed an activity and a seminar on the text.



**Weigh the Words: “Eleven”**  
**By Sandra Cisneros**

| <b>Column 1</b><br>Identify words/phrases that have weight or importance (connotative). | <b>Column 2</b><br>Write your understanding of the meaning of the word or phrase (both denotation and connotation). |
|---|---|
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |



**Directions:** Consider the weight of each word or phrase identified on the first part of the organizer, and select a few of the words with the most weight or impact to process. List those in the column on the left. Decide what effect the use of that word or phrase has on the overall tone or mood of the text, and record your answer in the column on the right.

| Words/Phrases | How does the word/phrase contribute to the tone or mood of the text? |
|---------------|--|
|               |  |
|               |  |
|               |  |
|               |  |

**Prompt:** Now, focusing on the author’s craft (style of writing), identify the one word or phrase from the text that most strongly impacts the author’s message; explain how the weight of the word or phrase—its importance and impact—contributes to the overall tone or mood of the text.

## Common Assignment 2

# Constructed Response Analysis of Tone in a Short Text

### Table of Contents

#### 1. Teacher Materials

- a. [“Words Matter” Pre-Module Formative Assessment](#)
- b. [Holistic Writing Rubric for Pre-Module Formative Assessment](#)

#### 2. Student Materials

- a. [“Words Matter” Unit: Pre-Module Formative Assessment](#)
- b. [Holistic Writing Rubric for Pre-Module Formative Assessment](#)



### Pre-Module Formative Assessment

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#### Prompt

How does an author purposefully use diction to convey tone? After reading from our collection of fiction (“Those Winter Sundays,” “Same Song,” or “Eleven”), choose ONE of these selections and write a Short Constructed Response in which you explain the speaker or narrator’s attitude toward an aspect of life. Be sure to support your explanation with evidence of specific diction that demonstrates the speaker’s attitude/tone.

#### Teacher Notes

The purpose of this formative assessment is twofold:

1. To assess what concepts you may need to reteach before beginning the LDC Module, potentially including diction, connotation, and tone
2. To identify areas of focus for your writing instruction during the LDC Module

Likely areas of focus:

- Developing a strong thesis statement/controlling idea
- Embedding quotes from the text
- Explaining evidence
- Connecting diction to tone/speaker’s attitude
- Describing tone/attitude in specific terms (beyond “happy” and “sad”)

Although this assignment is meant to generate a single draft that will not be revised, it should not merely be collected, scored, and entered as a data point. Teachers should analyze student work and look for patterns of strengths and weaknesses that will help inform how you teach the LDC module. Consider all of the skills that students will need to successfully complete the final LDC essay; do not limit your analysis to the three points addressed in the holistic rubric for this formative assessment. You may find, for instance, that your students are very strong at intuitively identifying the speaker’s attitude toward life but that they fail to identify specific diction that reveals that attitude. Alternately, your students may call out several instances of significant diction but fail to draw inferences about the speaker’s overall attitude. Or you may find that students are still speaking about tone in very general terms, in which case they may need additional work with the mood and tone word lists and intervention activities.



### Holistic Writing Rubric for Pre-Module Formative Assessment

#### **Score 4: The response is effective in its explanation of tone**

- Thoroughly explains the speaker's attitude/tone toward an aspect of life
- Strong evidence of diction that demonstrates speaker's attitude/tone
- The response maintains a clear and effective organizational structure

#### **Score 3: The response attempts to explain the speaker's attitude toward life**

- Writer identifies a speaker's attitude toward an aspect of life
- Utilizes relevant evidence of diction to support speaker's tone
- The response maintains a sufficient organizational structure

#### **Score 2: The response provides an incomplete or simplistic explanation**

- Attempts to identify the speaker's attitude toward life, but may not necessarily be accurate
- Evidence is uneven or not evident
- There is no clear or coherent organizational structure

#### **Score 1: The response is irrelevant or blank**

## Words Matter: Common Assignment 2



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Block: \_\_\_\_\_

### **“Words Matter” Unit: Pre-Module Formative Assessment**

How does an author purposefully use diction to convey tone? After reading from our collection of fiction (“Those Winter Sundays,” “Same Song,” or “Eleven”), choose ONE of these selections and write a Short Constructed Response in which you explain the speaker or narrator’s attitude toward an aspect of life. Be sure to support your explanation with evidence of specific diction that demonstrates the speaker’s attitude/tone.

Use the space below for your Short Constructed Response.



### Holistic Writing Rubric for Pre-Module Formative Assessment

**Score 4:** The response is effective in its explanation of tone

- Thoroughly explains the speaker's attitude/tone toward an aspect of life
- Strong evidence of diction that demonstrates speaker's attitude/tone
- The response maintains a clear and effective organizational structure

**Score 3:** The response attempts to explain the speaker's attitude toward life

- Writer identifies a speaker's attitude toward an aspect of life
- Utilizes relevant evidence of diction to support speaker's tone
- The response maintains a sufficient organizational structure

**Score 2:** The response provides an incomplete or simplistic explanation

- Attempts to identify the speaker's attitude toward life, but may not necessarily be accurate
- Evidence is uneven or not evident
- There is no clear or coherent organizational structure

**Score 1:** The response is irrelevant or blank

## Small Group Practice Activities

# Close Reading and Analysis

### Table of Contents

#### 1. Teacher Materials

- a. [“Words Matter” Protocol for Group Work](#)
- b. [Text Suggestions for Group Work—Brief Descriptions](#)

#### 2. Student Materials

- a. [“If You Were” Analysis Outline](#)



### Protocol for Group Work

#### Teacher Instructions

In this portion of the unit, students will work in small groups to analyze a text for diction and tone, as a transition from the whole class activities in Sections 1 and 2 to the individual work of the LDC Module in Section 4. The following protocol is a suggested approach. If you choose to diverge from this approach, make sure students have some sort of concrete process to structure their collaboration.

Allow students to choose a text from a limited set of options. We have developed an annotated list of suggestions that can be found on the next page. Adjust the number of texts offered to correspond with the number of students in your class; you want approximately five students on each text, so if you have a class of 35, offer seven texts (or offer fewer and form multiple groups for texts that are popular).

#### Student Grouping Options

1. Groups defined by students' text selection (e.g., all students who choose "On the Rainy River" form a group).
2. Teachers choose groups based on a quick read and sort from formative assessment at the end of Unit Section 2.

#### Student Protocol

1. Students read their chosen text, initially working for comprehension. Before moving on to step 2, students need to be able to explain to the teacher what the text is about and answer text-based questions. Teacher may choose to provide text-specific guiding questions for comprehension. Depending on your students, this could be done for homework, silently in class, or collaboratively/aloud in groups.
2. Notecards: Students in each group individually (no discussion) complete a notecard:  
Side 1:
  - Definitive word from the entire piece
  - Definitive sentence from the entire pieceSide 2:
  - Explanation of how their word and sentence choices convey (a) tone(s)
3. Whip around:
  - a. Every person shares their word (nothing else—no discussion)
  - b. Every person shares their sentence (nothing else—no discussion)
  - c. Every person shares their explanation (nothing else—no discussion)
4. Discussion using sentence stems:
  - a. One pattern I see is \_\_\_\_\_ with words like \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Some words fit together, like \_\_\_\_\_, and make me feel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. These sentences fit together because they create \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. These sentences could convey a \_\_\_\_\_ tone because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e. These explanations could be pieced together to explain \_\_\_\_\_ about the author's tone.
5. Each group completes the "If You Were" Analysis Outline to turn in.
6. Each group shares its Analysis Outline with class to get feedback.

#### Group Analysis Outline Extension Activity

Following small group discussions, student groups take turns presenting their analysis outlines to the rest of the class (document camera, interactive white board, poster, etc.). This activity will give the group an opportunity to receive feedback from their peers and to share out.



### Text Suggestions

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This list provides very brief descriptions of selections that can be used for small group analysis in the “Words Matter” Unit. Lexile levels provided from [lexile.com](http://lexile.com) when available. Reading levels provided by Google. Please take these levels with a grain of salt. Please be sure to consider the qualitative, quantitative, and reader background when looking at these levels.

#### “Shame” by Dick Gregory

- Short non-fiction selection dealing with race.
- Basic reading level according to Google.

#### “Learning to Read” by Malcolm X

- Non-fiction selection that attacks Malcolm X’s own illiteracy while he is in prison.
- Intermediate reading level according to Google.

#### “Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question” by Diane Burns

- Poem relating the stereotypes of Native Americans.
- Basic reading level according to Google.

#### “Sonnet 130” by William Shakespeare (“My Mistress’s Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun”)

- Poem that seems to be disparaging the mistress, but the couplet shows that is not the case.
- Intermediate reading level according to Google.

#### “White Man’s Burden” by Rudyard Kipling

- Poem written in 1899. Originally, this poem was intended for the United States and encouraged them to take up the burden that England and other nations had during imperialism (an expansionist point of view). It was then re-issued for Queen Victoria’s diamond jubilee.
- Intermediate reading level according to Google.

#### “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning

- Poem where the narrator strangles his lover to preserve the moment when he realizes she loves him.
- Intermediate reading level according to Google.

#### “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien

- Short story from *The Things They Carried* where the narrator is drafted during the Vietnam War and is trying to decide whether to go to Canada or not. He ultimately decides not to go to Canada and calls himself a coward because he goes to the war.
- 880 lexile from [lexile.com](http://lexile.com).

#### Opening of *Native Son* by Richard Wright

- First part of “Fear” where Bigger Thomas kills a rat in his family’s apartment. His mother yells at him and calls him unflattering names.
- 700 lexile from [lexile.com](http://lexile.com).

#### Chapter 16 of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou

- Chapter where Marguerite is working for Mrs. Cullinan, who calls her Mary because Margaret is too long. There is conflict over the name and a racist slur.
- 1070 lexile from [lexile.com](http://lexile.com).

#### “A Celebration of Grandfathers” by Rudolpho Anaya

- Essay discussing the older people of New Mexico, specifically Anaya’s grandfather.
- Basic reading level according to Google.



**“If You Were” Analysis Outline**

Group Names: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. If you were going to write an essay in which you explain how the author used diction to convey tone, what would your thesis be?

2. If you were going to write an essay in which you explain how the author used diction to convey tone, what would the topic sentence of each body paragraph be?

Topic Sentence 1:

Topic Sentence 2:

Topic Sentence 3:

3. If you were going to write an essay in which you explain how the author used diction to convey tone, what evidence from the text would you use to support one of your topic sentences?

4. If you were going to write an essay in which you explain how the author used diction to convey tone, what is one conclusion or implication you could draw from your above answers?



## Common Assignment 3

# LDC Task and Module

## Explanatory Essay Analyzing Tone in George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant”

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## Dialectical Journals

### Teacher Instructions

This is an adapted dialectical journal designed to scaffold the reading process of “Shooting an Elephant” toward the LDC module in the “Words Matter” unit, which asks students to explain how specific word choices and connotation develop tone.

Copy several pages for each student or copy one page and ask students to add additional pages on their own paper. Some students may prefer to fill out a digital version. If you have the technology and want to allow students to collaborate, several students could share a Google Doc version.

If students have never used a dialectical journal, model a few rows first. You can use any text—it is probably best to model with something OTHER than “Shooting an Elephant” so you do not unduly influence students’ reading.

You can assign a specific number of entries or allow students to self-regulate, with the reminder that the more entries they complete, the more support they will have for their final essay.

### Differentiation Suggestions

This adapted dialectical journal can be further adapted in several ways to support different levels of readers and/or elicit different responses from students depending on what you know your classes need to focus on. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Change the page layout to “landscape,” and widen certain columns to encourage more detail in student responses.
2. Divide the cells in Column 3 to provide distinct space for denotation/definition and connotations. For example:

| Page # | Word Choice | Denotation and Connotations | How do this word choice and its connotation contribute to the tone? |
|--------|-------------|-----------------------------|---|
|        |             | D:                          |   |
|        |             | C:                          |   |

3. Simplify the Column 4 prompt to “What tone does the author’s diction create?,” and use it in tandem with a tone word list.
4. Have students fill out Columns 1–3 independently, and then use small group discussion to help them fill out Column 4.
5. Pre-identify a few key words from the text, and require students to complete entries on those words (in addition to some student-selected words).



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Block: \_\_\_\_\_

## Dialectical Journals

As we read “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell, complete the dialectical journal to analyze the diction and tone of the passage. This will help you gather and analyze evidence for your final essay.

| Page # | Word Choice<br>Pick out significant examples of the author’s diction and any essential vocabulary used. | Denotation and Connotations<br>Define the word(s), and list the connotations. | How do this word choice and its connotation(s) contribute to the tone of the passage? |
|--------|---|---|---|
|        |   |   |   |
|        |   |   |   |
|        |   |   |   |
|        |   |   |   |



| Page # | <b>Diction and Vocabulary</b><br>Pick out examples of the author's diction and any essential vocabulary used. | <b>Denotation and Connotations</b><br>Define the word(s), and list the connotations. | <b>How do this word choice and its connotation(s) contribute to the tone of the passage?</b> |
|--------|---|--|--|
|        |   |  |  |
|        |   |  |  |
|        |   |  |  |
|        |   |  |  |
|        |   |  |  |



## Small Group Discussion for “Bridging the Conversation”

### Instructions and Protocol

#### Context

After closely reading Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant,” it will be important for all students to discuss what they’ve read in a more focused manner. Before writing their essays, students must choose a specific aspect of the story (the natives, British Empire, having to shoot the animal, etc.) and focus on the evidence and implications of the author’s diction toward that aspect. The focus for this activity will come from which aspect they choose.

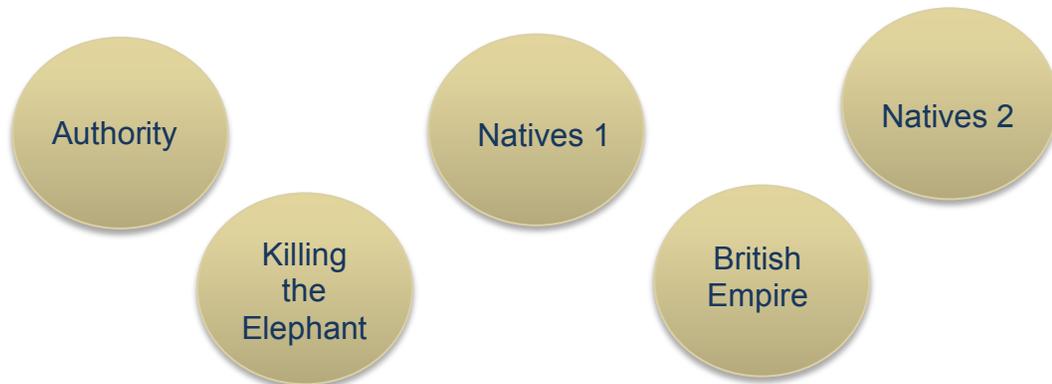
So if you have a group of writers who want to focus on the narrator’s attitude toward the native, then they will make up a “natives” group. If a larger number of students is leaning toward the same direction, just be sure to break that group up into multiple smaller groups so they are more effective at closely reading; annotating; and sharing their evidence, annotations, and thinking on tone specific to their focus.

This mini-task is meant to take place in a single period (50 minutes), helping students organize their notes and thinking on the narrator’s tone in the short story, making for an easier transition to the writing process.

#### Practice

1. After having modeled your own thinking and allowing students to practice their close reading strategies earlier, students now need to decide on the aspect of the surroundings or predicament they want to key in on. Group students according to their choices:

2.



3. The mandate in the groups is as follows: (a) another round of annotation that centers on their particular focus; (b) choosing and documenting key pieces of evidence (diction/words and phrases that lead to a particular tone) connected to that focus and the narrator’s attitude; (c) short response in their task log about the attitude(s) the narrator has toward that focus. You may choose to provide a specific graphic organizer or evidence log for students to use or let them use their own system. (20–30 minutes)
4. Each group is then responsible for reporting out their findings and implications drawn to the whole class. Here, the teacher facilitates the discussion that is based solely on what each group has discovered about the text and their conclusion around the narrator’s tone. (20–30 minutes)

The goal of this mini-task is to facilitate the type of thinking and discussion writers need to have around a particular text, the opportunity to grapple with complex texts and organize their thoughts (or cement a thought). They may have shared ideas, and that is okay, so long as it is student generated through their collaboration with one another. Having students learn from each other is a step in the right direction this early in the year. Plus, we foster that collaborative effort and teamwork in the fall semester, a practice we want them to continue as the year progresses.

This is also a solid formative check for you, as you bounce around the room, listening in on groups and guiding their discussions if necessary.

**Words Matter: Common Assignment 3—LDC Task and Module**  
*Small Group Annotation and Discussion of “Shooting an Elephant”*



You are now in a small group with other students who have chosen the same focus for their essay as you have. Here is what you need to do:

1. Individually annotate the story **again**, this time specifically focusing on diction and other evidence that is **specifically related to your topic**.
2. Record key pieces of evidence that you might use in your essay—that is, examples of diction/words and phrases that develop a particular tone.
3. Write a short response about the narrator’s attitude toward your chosen focus.

Then, get together with your group, and discuss all of the above. Add to your notes as you gain further insights from your peers.

Finally, you’ll share out with the whole class.



## Teacher Instructions and Protocol

### Context

This activity is meant for the “Preparing to Write” portion of the LDC Module, just after the “Bridging the Conversation” section. The purpose is to create a class model of an essay that will holistically earn a score of 3 or higher on the LDC Explanatory Rubric. This “Whole Class Write” is meant to be done over the course of two periods (90–120 minutes total). This activity is adapted from an AP protocol, but it will work for 10th graders.

Since there are no student exemplars for the unit yet, the students work together as a class, facilitated by the teacher, to create a literary analysis on tone that will serve as an exemplar/model they will be writing for Orwell’s short story, “Shooting an Elephant.” However, the text on which they will focus will be one of the texts from Unit Section 2/the formative assessment\*: “Same Song,” “Eleven,” or “Those Winter Sundays.” This class write will echo the type of writing expected for the short story.

*\*The original intent is for the instructor to choose which text, quite possibly informed by a student excerpt that scored well on the formative assessment and that effectively analyzed tone.*

### Steps

1. Give students a prompt that echoes the task for Orwell’s short story, except substitute one of the above texts from Unit Section 2 (“Eleven,” for instance):  
  
How does Orwell use diction to convey tone? After reading “Eleven,” write an essay in which you explain how Cisneros’ diction conveys the narrator’s complex attitude toward her childhood. What conclusions or implications can you draw regarding the narrator’s attitude? Support your explanation with evidence from the text.
2. Divide the class into roughly five groups. Each group writes ONE introductory paragraph and hands to the teacher. Provide a checklist of introductory elements (title, author, brief context, thesis on tone.) The class discusses which introduction was best and revises it if needed. (Blending of multiple paragraphs can occur.) The revised intro is quickly typed up by one student on a laptop, projecting the class progress up to this point. *If possible, each group can have a laptop. This is where Google Docs becomes a useful tool, and the teacher can project the shared document.*
3. During this typing time, the whole class chooses five aspects of tone that would work with this prompt, and each group is assigned a particular attitude of the narrator. Then each group gets together and writes ONE paragraph on their assigned tone. When finished, they type on a computer in the classroom. *If a short period, approximately 50 minutes, students go home at this point. If not, tone paragraphs are copied and pasted onto one document, which gets printed.*
4. Next, hand around the printed copies (one for each student). Students decide as a class what order the paragraphs should go in.
5. They then go back into their groups and each group writes a transition for the paragraph they originally drafted. Teachers should collect the transitions. Each group now writes a conclusion.
6. As before, all conclusions are discussed by whole class, and one is chosen (or blended). Entire essay is copy/pasted together to create the whole class exemplar. Then the teacher can model the grading that would occur with this essay using the rubric.
7. Then a copy is made for each student to have as a model for “Shooting an Elephant,” as they venture further into the writing process.

This activity allows for plenty to be accomplished: analysis of rubric, discussion of the type of thesis required for this analysis, transitions, exemplary elements that make up a proficient and advanced essay. This also allows for a nice reciprocity in the unit, calling on earlier texts the students are familiar with and have already closely read.



## Instructional Plan for “M.E.A.T. Paragraph Writing Strategy” Mini-Task

### Context

The idea behind this mini-task is to provide students with a simple outline to use when drafting each of their body paragraphs for a simple essay. This mini-task can be used outside of the context of a full essay by assigning students a controlling idea and having them write one paragraph that supports that controlling idea, or it can be used to help them construct multiple body paragraphs in support of the controlling idea in an essay they are writing. In either case, it is suggested that you model this process for the students and allow them to practice one M.E.A.T. body paragraph outside of the content you want them to write about.

Explain to students that the body paragraphs are really the **meat** of the essay—the lengthiest part of the essay that serves to support their controlling idea. Each body paragraph should focus on one topic.

It is presumed that students have been taught the basic structure of a five-paragraph (or similar) essay and already know how to write or have already written introductory paragraphs.

It should be suggested to students that, depending on the essay, the topic, and the way they write, more than three body paragraphs may be appropriate.

It should also be noted that this mini-task does not specifically help students write body paragraphs that deal with counterclaims.

Finally, this should be used as scaffolding for students new to basic essay writing or for students who are struggling and need extra help. If students are successful using M.E.A.T. after a few essays, they should then be given less direct scaffolding.

### Suggested Instructional Steps

1. Ask students what function the body paragraphs of an essay serve.
2. Ask students what is similar about the structure of a body paragraph compared to the introductory paragraph and what is different.
3. Situate the body paragraphs for them thusly:

#### **Full Essay Outline**

##### **I. Introductory Paragraph**

- **Hook**
- **Background**
- **Thesis**
- **Transition**

##### **II. Body Paragraph 1 (supporting evidence for thesis)**

##### **III. Body Paragraph 2 (supporting evidence for thesis)**

##### **IV. Body Paragraph 3 (supporting evidence for thesis)**

##### **V. Conclusion**

- **Summary**
- **Restated thesis**
- **Consideration of counterclaims**
- **Conclusion**

4. List the key terms of the M.E.A.T. outline for students and ask them to define each:
  - a. **Main idea** (topic sentence)
  - b. **Evidence**
  - c. **Analysis**
  - d. **Tie-up/Transition**



5. Give students a sample controlling idea and/or a sample introductory paragraph for an essay similar to what you are assigning.
  - Sample Essay Prompt

Between direct democracy and representative democracy, which form of government do you think is a better system for the United States today?
  - Sample Controlling Idea

Representative democracy is a better form of government for the United States than direct democracy.
  - Sample Introductory Paragraph

In ancient societies as well as in some state and local political systems in the United States today, there are examples of citizens practicing the purest form of democracy known to man. This form of government—direct democracy—involves every citizen having a direct say in the law-making process. However, most Americans are much more familiar with representative democracy, which is a system wherein citizens vote for leaders to represent and make laws for the society as a whole. Both systems have always had certain benefits but also many drawbacks. After considering ancient as well as recent uses of direct democracy, there are some clear advantages to having citizens more actively engaged in the making of laws. However, given the complexity of the United States and modern society in general, it's clear that representative democracy is a better form of government for the United States than direct democracy.
6. Have students brainstorm some ideas to support this sample claim that you are modeling. For example:
  - The United States has a very large population.
  - Most Americans don't have the time or ability to understand every single legislative issue.
  - Direct democracy is just as or even more prone to the rise of demagogues than representative democracy.
7. Using the M.E.A.T. template, model for students how to write a **main idea** based on one or more of the brainstorming ideas. For example:
  - The size of the U.S. population is one reason that representative democracy is better for the United States than direct democracy.
8. Ask students to brainstorm **evidence** for the sample main idea. For example:
  - More than 300 million people are living in the United States.
  - The population of Ancient Greece was much smaller than this.
  - The populations of states and localities in the United States that use direct democracy are also much smaller than this.
9. Using the M.E.A.T. template, model for students how to write **evidence** statements. For example:
  - According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are more than 300 million people living in the United States. Even with a much smaller voting age population, more than 100 million Americans voted in the last presidential election.
10. Using the M.E.A.T. template, model for students how to engage in **analysis** of their evidence. For example:
  - It is simply not practical to expect hundreds of millions of people to be able to cast hundreds of votes every year each time an important new law is under consideration. It probably wouldn't be logistically or fiscally possible to provide the needed structures to get all Americans to participate in direct democracy even if we wanted to. On the other hand, ancient Greek city-states had and local communities within the United States that practice direct democracy have much smaller populations, which makes direct democracy feasible.



11. Using the M.E.A.T. template, model for students how to **tie up** this paragraph and/or **transition** from this paragraph to the next. For example:
  - Without question, the size and complexity of American life is a key reason why direct democracy just couldn't work in the United States.
12. Present the full sample/modeled paragraph to students:
  - The size of the U.S. population is one reason why representative democracy is better for the United States than direct democracy. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are more than 300 million people living in the United States. Even with a much smaller voting age population, more than 100 million Americans voted in the last presidential election. It is simply not practical to expect hundreds of millions of people to be able to cast hundreds of votes every year each time an important new law is under consideration. It probably wouldn't be logistically or fiscally possible to provide the needed structures to get all Americans to participate in direct democracy even if we wanted to. On the other hand, ancient Greek city-states had and local communities within the United States that practice direct democracy have much smaller populations, which is what makes direct democracy feasible. Without question, the size of the American population is a key roadblock that prevents direct democracy from working in the United States.
13. Give students the M.E.A.T. graphic organizer and have students practice by writing a **SECOND** body paragraph using the same sample topic or by providing another simple sample topic. Students can either work individually or with a partner to get through the sample. This sample should be collected and scored.  
Then, provide students with three or more M.E.A.T. graphic organizers and have them work on the body paragraphs for their full essay. Encourage them to use the texts, their notes, or their full essay outlines as they work on this. Each M.E.A.T. graphic organizer should be collected and scored before students draft their full essay.

**Words Matter: Common Assignment 3—LDC Task and Module**  
*Final Assessment: Rubric*

INFORMATIONAL/EXPLANATORY TEACHING TASK RUBRIC (TEMPLATE TASK COLLECTION VERSION 2.0)

| Scoring Elements      | Not Yet   |     | Approaches Expectations  |     | Meets Expectations   |     | Advanced   |
|-----------------------|---|-----|--|-----|--|-----|--|
|                       | 1   | 1.5 | 2  | 2.5 | 3  | 3.5 | 4  |
| Focus                 | Attempts to address prompt, but lacks focus or is off-task.   |     | Addresses prompt appropriately, but with a weak or uneven focus.   |     | Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus. D: Addresses additional demands sufficiently.  |     | Addresses all aspects of prompt appropriately and maintains a strongly developed focus. D: Addresses additional demands with thoroughness and makes a connection to controlling idea.  |
| Controlling Idea      | Attempts to establish a controlling idea, but lacks a clear purpose.  |     | Establishes a controlling idea with a general purpose.   |     | Establishes a controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.  |     | Establishes a strong controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.   |
| Reading/ Research     | Attempts to present information in response to the prompt, but lacks connections or relevance to the purpose of the prompt.                               |     | Presents information from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt with minor lapses in accuracy or completeness.   |     | Presents information from reading materials relevant to the prompt with accuracy and sufficient detail.  |     | Accurately presents information relevant to all parts of the prompt with effective selection of sources and details from reading materials.  |
| Development           | Attempts to provide details in response to the prompt, including retelling, but lacks sufficient development or relevancy.                                |     | Presents appropriate details to support the focus and controlling idea.  |     | Presents appropriate and sufficient details to support the focus and controlling idea.   |     | Presents thorough and detailed information to strongly support the focus and controlling idea.   |
| Organization          | Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks control of structure.   |     | Uses an appropriate organizational structure to address the specific requirements of the prompt, with some lapses in coherence or awkward use of the organizational structure              |     | Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address the specific requirements of the prompt.  |     | Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific prompt.  |
| Conventions           | Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions, but lacks cohesion and control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Sources are used without citation. |     | Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources. |     | Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Cites sources using an appropriate format with only minor errors. |     | Demonstrates and maintains a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone consistently appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Consistently cites sources using an appropriate format. |
| Content Understanding | Attempts to include disciplinary content in explanations, but understanding of content is weak; content is irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate.      |     | Briefly notes disciplinary content relevant to the prompt; shows basic or uneven understanding of content; minor errors in explanation.  |     | Accurately presents disciplinary content relevant to the prompt with sufficient explanations that demonstrate understanding.   |     | Integrates relevant and accurate disciplinary content with thorough explanations that demonstrate in-depth understanding.  |



## Final Assessment: LDC Explanatory Essay

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### Background

Earlier in this unit, we explored real-world examples of the power of words and learned how much of that power comes not from a word's dictionary definition but from its **connotation** and **tone**.

Tone refers to an author's attitude as narrator toward the subject of the story and the readers of the story. Since we cannot hear an author's voice, our only clue to how an author feels—their attitude or tone—about what they are writing about is hidden in the text itself. If we analyze the word choice (diction) used, we can often figure out the author's tone. A student's ability to recognize tone can often be the key to understanding the text or not.

### LDC Task

How does Orwell use diction to convey tone? After reading "Shooting an Elephant," write an essay in which you explain how Orwell's diction conveys the narrator's complex attitudes toward his surroundings and predicaments, such as the natives, the British, authority figures, or the very act of shooting the elephant. What conclusions or implications regarding the narrator's attitude can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).



## “Shooting an Elephant” Explanatory Essay Planning

At this point in the unit, you have read Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant,” created a dialectical journal to start your thinking about diction and tone, chosen an area of focus for your essay, and met with a group to generate some initial ideas about the narrator’s attitude toward your area of focus.

Now you will plan the three main components of your essay:

1. Thesis statement
2. Body paragraphs
3. Inferences and conclusions

This is not a detailed outline; it is an opportunity for you to write out your initial ideas.

First, review the prompt one more time:

**Prompt:** How does Orwell use diction to convey tone? After reading “Shooting an Elephant,” write an essay in which you explain how Orwell’s diction conveys the narrator’s complex attitude toward his surroundings and predicaments, such as the natives, the British, authority figures, or the very act of shooting the elephant. What conclusions or implications regarding the narrator’s attitude can you draw? Support your explanation with evidence from the text.

Now, based on your dialectical journal, other annotations, and the group work you just did, generate a rough thesis statement.

1. **Rough thesis statement:** Be sure to identify the narrator’s attitude/tone and briefly describe the type of diction used by the author to achieve this tone.
2. **Body paragraphs:** In this section, you will generate the ideas that will become your body paragraphs. You should focus on explaining the **complexity** of the narrator’s attitude by identifying multiple facets (these multiple facets may become your individual body paragraphs later).
  - What is the narrator’s attitude toward \_\_\_\_\_ (area of focus for your essay)?
  - How is this attitude complex? What are some different facets of the narrator’s attitude?
  - Evidence from the text that supports this analysis (specific diction):
3. **Conclusions and implications:** What conclusions or implications can you draw about the narrator’s attitude?

Evidence from the text that supports this analysis (specific diction and/or actions of the narrator):



**M.E.A.T. Paragraph Writing Strategy (Outlining/Development of Body Paragraphs)**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>M</b>                                 | Write a sentence that explains the <b>main idea/topic sentence</b> of your body paragraph.              |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> |   |
| <b>E</b>                                 | Write one or more sentences that gives <b>evidence</b> to support the main idea.                        |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> |   |
| <b>A</b>                                 | Write one or more sentences that <b>analyzes</b> and explains the evidence you have provided.           |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> |   |
| <b>T</b>                                 | End your paragraph by <b>tying up</b> the ideas of your paragraph to <b>transition</b> to the next one. |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> |   |



### Ideas Under Control

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Thesis Statement:</b> |  |
| <b>Topic Sentence:</b>   |  |
| <b>Connections:</b>      |  |
| <b>Body Paragraph 1:</b> | <b>Does this topic sentence connect to the thesis? What evidence from the text supports your thinking?</b> |
|                          | <b>Does this topic sentence answer the prompt? What evidence from the text supports your thinking?</b>     |



|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Body Paragraph 2:</b> | <b>Does this topic sentence connect to the thesis? What evidence from the text supports your thinking?</b> |
|                          | <b>Does this topic sentence answer the prompt? What evidence from the text supports your thinking?</b>     |
| <b>Body Paragraph 3:</b> | <b>Does this topic sentence connect to the thesis? What evidence from the text supports your thinking?</b> |
|                          | <b>Does this topic sentence answer the prompt? What evidence from the text supports your thinking?</b>     |



GEORGE ORWELL

*Shooting an Elephant (1936)*

*George Orwell (1903–1950) has written some of the most influential novels and essays of the 20th century. His work, including Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four, centers on biting satire, examinations of the dangers of totalitarian political systems, and frightening depictions of future dystopias. As you read, consider the way Orwell presents himself as the narrator through his depictions of his actions and reactions.*

In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people—the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lockups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something

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clamped down, in *saecula saeculorum*, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal byproducts of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism—the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful *in terrorem*. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone “must.” It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of “must” is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow, and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palm-leaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning people as to where the elephant had gone, and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of an elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of “Go away, child! Go away this instant!” and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him



with its trunk, put its foot on his back, and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast’s foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend’s house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelled the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant—I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary—and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd’s approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant—it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery—and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of “must” was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes—faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all



certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the “natives,” and so in every crisis he has got to do what the “natives” expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing—no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with the preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a *large* animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged I could shoot, if he took no notice of me it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steamroller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of “natives”; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind



was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on, and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from earhole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole; actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick—one never does when a shot goes home—but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line on his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralyzed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time—it might have been five seconds, I dare say—he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upwards like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skywards like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open—I could see far down into the caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally, I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet



powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dahs and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. What is Orwell’s argument in this essay? How does he use the story of shooting the elephant to make that argument? Are you persuaded by his argument? Why or why not?
2. Explore Orwell’s use of the lines of argument. Where does he use arguments from the heart, from character, from values, from facts and reason? Which uses seem the most effective? Which seem less effective? Why?
3. Orwell is known for his masterful use of language; choose a section of the essay that you found especially engaging and analyze how Orwell used stylish or figurative language. How does his choice of words affect your reaction to the essay?



## Teacher Instructions

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1. Utilize the “Revision Guide” for specific feedback.
2. As needed, use the Delineate-Evaluate-Explain organizer for students to delineate and evaluate one another’s explanations. This is a literacy strategy that will be utilized as a peer review tool. It is a partner activity where students switch papers. If time allows, have students switch papers again to get more feedback. The +Prompt activity is optional and may not be relevant to this task.
3. As needed, use the “Revising—Sentence Variation Models” and “Focus for Editing and Revising” tools for further refinement.
4. Self Reflective Comments
  - a. This activity can be done using Microsoft Word comments, Google Drive comments, or physical Post-It notes, depending on the available technology.
  - b. After students have completed peer editing and received feedback from both peers and teacher, allow time for students to reflect by “marking up” their own paper. Model a thinkaloud of this process to ensure students understand what they are being asked to do.
  - c. You could also use this step BETWEEN peer feedback and teacher feedback so that students can point your attention to areas where they want you to look closely.
  - d. Give your students clear directions and guidelines, such as:

“This is your opportunity to communicate with me ‘backstage’ about the choices you’ve made in your essay. You might note places where:

    - you’ve tried to draw on key concepts from the readings or course materials;
    - you think you’ve expressed an idea or developed an explanation particularly well;
    - you feel uncertain about whether you’ve gotten your point across;
    - you are struggling with or confused about a particular concept;
    - you’ve incorporated suggestions for revision from me or your peers; or
    - you’d like me to respond to any other issues.

Make sure your questions and comments offer enough information to allow the reader (me) to know how to respond to you—e.g., explain why you’re confused (not just that you’re confused) or why you’ve used the concepts you’ve chosen, refer to specific ways you think you’ve expressed something well, and so on.”



Author's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Essay: \_\_\_\_\_

### Revision Guide

Peer revision is a way for you to get input from someone else on the strengths and weaknesses of your essay. Someone else can often see problems that you can't. The following activity is a guide for peer revision. It focuses on parts of your essay that you may not have thought of as you wrote it. These are elements that can strengthen both the content and the style of your essay.

#### Peer Reviewer Editing Directions

##### Step One:

- Read your partner's essay individually.
- Complete the Delineate, Evaluate, Explain handout.

##### Step Two:

- With your partner, discuss each of the questions below and fill out the revision guide.

#### 1. Thesis Statement

What is the subject of the thesis statement? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the author address the task? *Yes or No*. How can the author revise their thesis statement to address the prompt?

Is the essay focused? *Yes or No* Circle words throughout the essay that refer to the ideas in the thesis.

2. Are there concrete details (specific textual references, usually enclosed in quotation marks)? *Yes or No*  
Underline them.

Are ideas fully developed? Does the author need to add commentary (analysis)? *Yes or No*  
 If needed, use the focused questioning technique.

- 1) Highlight the phrases or clauses that can be elaborated on.
- 2) Create a question about the highlighted portion of the sentence.

#### 3. Sentence Beginnings

In the chart below, write the first four words of every sentence. What patterns, if any, do you see emerging in the writing?

| Sentence Number | First Four Words | Notes about Patterns |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1               |                  |                      |
| 2               |                  |                      |
| 3               |                  |                      |
| 4               |                  |                      |
| 5               |                  |                      |
| 6               |                  |                      |
| 7               |                  |                      |
| 8               |                  |                      |
| 9               |                  |                      |
| 10              |                  |                      |

## Words Matter: Common Assignment 3—LDC Task and Module



4. Are there any awkward or poorly worded sentences that need to be corrected? Highlight or underline them in a different color, and make suggestions for how to improve each.

5. State the writer's strengths and areas for growth in the sections below. Please give specific details and reference the writer's work. Avoid using non-specific words like "good," "nice," and "great job" that do not help the writer improve his/her draft.

What are two areas that are particularly strong about the writer's essay?

What are two areas that could be improved in this essay?

Peer reviewed and edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Author Directions**

After reviewing your essay with your partner, complete the following tasks:

1. Revise your thesis statements based on your partner's answers to question 1.
2. Answer the questions your partner wrote about the highlighted sentences for question 2, and then tie the answer to the topic sentence. This will help add commentary and analysis to your essay.
3. Look at the patterns your partner found in question 3. If you see the same type of sentence beginning, such as always starting with the subject, use the Sentence Variation Models list to vary the beginnings of your sentences.
4. Look at the sentences your partner identified that need to be revised in question 4. Use the Focus for Editing and Revising handout to revise these sentences.
5. Make sure you address the two areas of improvement that your partner identified in question 5.