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CONNECTING WITH THE COMMON CORE

This book responds to the Common Core State Standards' goals of helping students develop the skills necessary to be successful in college and career. Through focused analysis, comparison, and synthesis of two texts, students will strengthen their understanding of literary conventions and build on analytical and argumentation skills. The texts selected for this book represent the high-quality, complex, and engaging new literature that is being produced in today's middle-grade publishing. These contemporary titles are easily relatable to the 21st-century child's experiences and knowledge, creating deeper connections between reader and text and giving the young reader a sense of ownership over the material.

The Common Core State Standards call for emphasis on assignments that encourage students to think critically, analyze deeply, and cite extensively from texts. Under the Common Core Standards, students are expected to progress in their level of comprehension and acquire appropriate academic vocabulary. In addition to building their reading and writing skills, students must also develop their listening and speaking skills in ways that will prepare them for the academic rigor of college.

To increase college readiness, Language Arts assignments are moving away from personal response and toward critical analysis based on information from texts. To prepare for the work they will encounter in college, students must become skilled at developing a strong claim and defending it with evidence from texts. To that end, *Using Paired Novels to Build Close Reading Skills* provides students with opportunities to interact with reading material deeply and in a variety of ways. Comparison activities strengthen students' understanding of the novels themselves, as well as the craft of writing. These activities prompt students to examine how each author approaches literary elements such as characterization, theme, and point of view, and to draw conclusions based on the similarities or differences. In order to complete the tasks in these activities, students will need to reflect on their understanding of one book before making connections to the other – a process that will naturally support comprehension skills. The activities in this resource focus on two specific novels – *Counting by 7s* and *All the Broken Pieces* – but this same approach can be similarly applied when analyzing and comparing literature in general.

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The activities in this book provide opportunities for individual and collaborative experiences. The individual activities build reading and writing skills by prompting students to develop analytical arguments and cite evidence from the texts. The collaborative activities help students develop critical speaking and listening skills in the context of literary analysis.

Ultimately, we want our children to develop a love of books and to become life-long readers. They can and should be encouraged to make personal connections to the texts and express their feelings about the stories they read. In fact, these types of connections often form the starting point for activities with more academic rigor. To provide students with freedom to interact with texts in more personal and creative ways, we have included Interactive Literature Notebook assignments as well as creative collaborative activities that are intended to enrich the reading experience and foster deeper personal enjoyment of the novels while still providing the foundation for deeper critical engagement.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Section I (Units 1–5)

The purpose of this book is to provide you with a variety of activities that connect the two novels in ways that will foster deeper critical and analytical thinking in your students. Section I contains worksheets to be completed after both novels have been read. This section is divided into five units, which are based on the following literary elements: **Characterization** (pages 8–15), **Plot** (pages 16–25), **Setting and Genre** (pages 26–32), **Theme** (pages 33–49), and **Craft and Structure** (pages 50–61).

Unit features include . . .

* Teacher Instructions

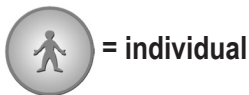
The first page of each unit provides you with an overview of the concept, the relevance to student learning, and brief descriptions and suggestions for each activity in the unit.

* Quick Guide to the Concept

The top portion of this page provides your students with an introduction to the literary concept around which the unit is built, along with a list of related vocabulary words. The bottom portion contains a list of suggestions for **Interactive Literature Notebook** entries. The Interactive Literature Notebook can be used to allow students to think creatively about the reading and make personal connections to the novels. Some of the ideas can apply to both books, while others are specific to one or the other novel. You can assign a specific topic to your students or allow them to pick from these suggestions. More detailed instructions for the Interactive Literature Notebook can be found on page 6.

* Unit Activities

Each unit contains **individual** and **collaborative** activities that support your students' understanding of literary elements and author's craft. Most of the activities also emphasize the use of textual evidence in the form of summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting. In addition, some are meant to be used as **linked** assignments, with one activity laying the foundation for the next. In some cases, a collaborative activity allows students to brainstorm ideas and discuss the books together before completing a more challenging task in an individual worksheet. Alternately, an individual activity may provide students with an opportunity to reflect on the reading and then practice listening, speaking, and paraphrasing skills in a linked collaborative activity. Look for the following icons in the upper-right corner of each activity page:



= individual



= collaborative



= linked

Section II (Units 6–8)

In this section, you will find activities to use during the reading of the individual books. These activities are divided into three groups: those that can be used with either novel, those intended to be used with *Counting by 7s*, and those intended to be used with *All the Broken Pieces*. These activities are meant to supplement the single-novel study activities you may already use. You may want to have students keep all of their single-novel worksheets in a folder and refer back to them when they are completing the novel-comparison activities. This will provide your students with opportunities to review the material, refresh their memories of the books, and practice using notes as a reference for a current assignment.

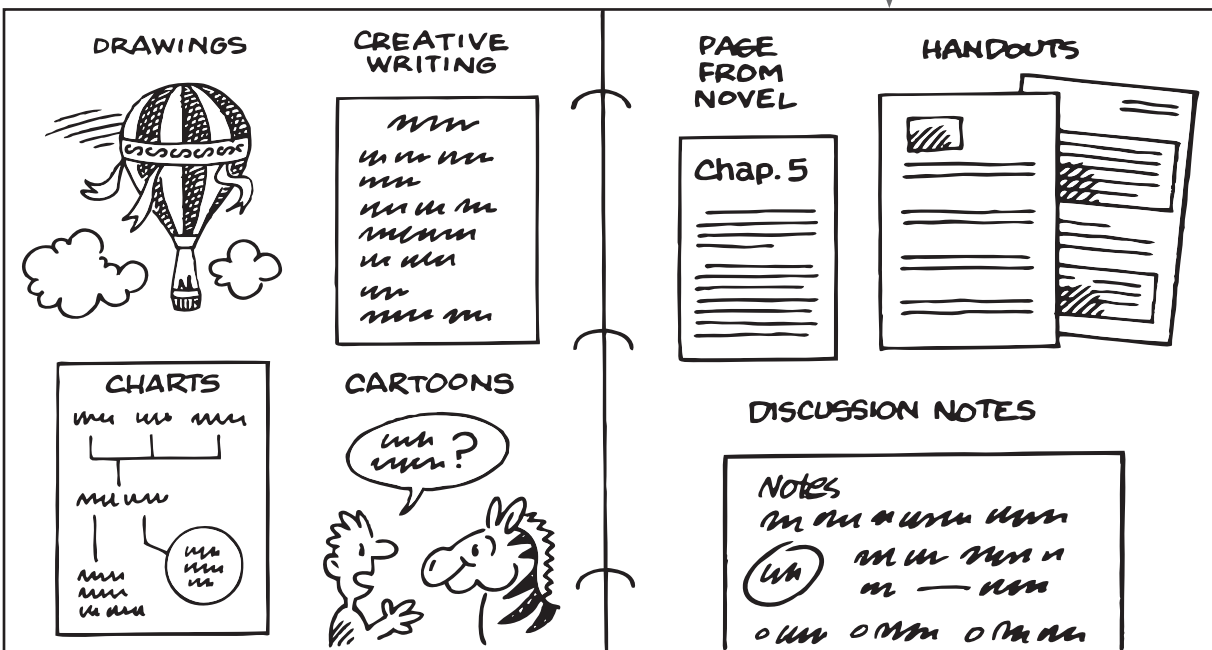
WHAT IS AN INTERACTIVE LITERATURE NOTEBOOK?

An Interactive Literature Notebook is a notebook that combines learning materials with personal response. For each student, his or her notebook will serve as a place to record and organize the information learned about the elements of literature. The response pages also encourage a deeper level of creativity and personal reflection toward the novels being analyzed and discussed in class.

For this resource, students may use a composition book, a spiral notebook, or a three-ring binder, depending on teacher preferences and needs. Instruct students to organize their notebooks as follows:

On the RIGHT side of the notebook:

Students record new information they are learning about literary elements and writer's craft.



On the LEFT side of the notebook:

Students create a personal-response page. This encourages students to process and apply the concepts in ways of their choosing.

TIP: Leave a blank page at the beginning and have students keep a table of contents as they go so they can easily find information in the future.

Interactive Literature Notebooks help your students hone the organizational skills they will need to be successful learners in high school and college by developing their competence in note-taking and record-keeping. These notebooks are excellent tools for visual as well as linguistic learners, and they give all students experience in connecting visual and multimedia components with text.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS

Counting by 7s

Holly Goldberg Sloan (2013)

In this touching novel, 12-year-old Willow is devastated by the sudden loss of her adoptive parents, but she finds love, support, and acceptance in a group of virtual strangers who come together to help her. Willow, who has always felt like an outsider, is a genius with an unusual way of viewing the world. The novel's secondary characters are equally interesting and well developed, and each makes a unique and important contribution to Willow's growth.

First-person narration captures Willow's unconventional take on the world, as well as the depth of emotion she experiences during tragedy. The author also intersperses chapters written in third-person to give readers insight into the secondary characters and events happening outside Willow's experience. Readers will connect with the story's themes of supportive friendships, acceptance, perseverance, and new beginnings.

Awards and Honors

- *New York Times* Best Seller
- An Amazon Best Book of the Year 2013
- B.E.A. Buzz Book Award 2013
- A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year 2013
- Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award Nominee 2014–2015

Note: Page numbers in this guide refer to the 2014 paperback edition published by Puffin Books, Penguin Young Readers Group, New York.

All the Broken Pieces

Ann E. Burg (2009)

All the Broken Pieces is a work of historical fiction told through free-verse poetry. Matt is a young boy who came to the U.S. as a refugee at the end of the Vietnam War. Although he now has a loving and supportive adoptive family, Matt is haunted by memories of the family and home he has lost, as well as the violence he witnessed. He faces prejudice and resentment but also finds love, support, and understanding that help him work toward overcoming tragedy.

This fast-paced and memorable novel provides an opportunity for learning about the impact of the Vietnam War on veterans, families, refugees, and those left behind in Vietnam. The first-person narration along with the poetic form gives readers insight into the emotions and thoughts of a refugee of war. Burg explores the transformative power of opening up to others.

Awards and Honors

- ALA Best Books for Young Adults 2010
- Booklist Top Ten First Novels for Youth 2009
- Booklist Top Ten Historical Fiction for Youth 2009
- Cybil's Awards Finalist 2009
- Winner of the 2010 Jefferson Cup

Note: Page numbers in this guide refer to the 2009 paperback edition published by Scholastic, Inc., New York.

Name: _____



GETTING TO KNOW THE CHARACTERS

Look closely at how the authors help us get to know the main characters. Use evidence from the novels to support your answers.

	Willow	Matt
How do the protagonists describe themselves?		
Quotation to support answer		
How do the protagonists act at the beginning of the novel?		
Quotation to support answer		
How do other characters view the protagonists at the beginning?		
Quotation to support answer		
How do the protagonists act at the end of the novel?		
Quotation to support answer		
How do other people view them at the end?		
Quotation to support answer		

Name(s): _____



DISCUSSING LABELS

Share your answers from the worksheet "More Than a Label" (page 14) before completing this worksheet.

After sharing your answers from your character charts with each other, select one character from each book. Decide on a new *positive* label that also fits this character.

Character: _____ From: *Counting by 7s*

New Positive Label: _____

Explanation: _____

Character: _____ From: *All the Broken Pieces*

New Positive Label: _____

Explanation: _____

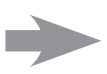
PRACTICE SPEAKING AND LISTENING!

Speaker 1: _____
 (name)

Speaker 2: _____
 (name)

Answer the following question aloud and support your opinion with examples from the novels.

How can labeling other people cause problems?



Listen to Speaker 1's answer. Use your own words to summarize your partner's claim.

then



Listen to Speaker 2's answer. Use your own words to summarize your partner's claim.

Answer the following question aloud and support your opinion with examples from the novels.

How can labeling yourself cause problems?

Name(s): _____



FEELING BROKEN

An author chooses a title that reflects the meaning of the book. A title may even have several meanings. Think about the title *All the Broken Pieces* and the different meanings this title could have. How does this title capture the theme of the novel? Could this title also apply to *Counting by 7s*? Work together to analyze the passages listed below.

Read the poem on pages 22–23 of *All the Broken Pieces*. (It begins, “I close my eyes.”)

1. What is the poem about? _____

2. What does Matt mean by “broken pieces” in this poem?

Now read Chapter 22 in *Counting by 7s* (pages 131–138).

3. How is Willow’s experience and reaction similar to Matt’s? Give examples and at least one quotation.

4. By the end of the novels, are these characters still “broken”? Explain and give an example for each character.

Matt: _____

Willow: _____

5. Would “All the Broken Pieces” work as a title for *Counting by 7s*? Explain.

Name: _____



TAKING THE ANALYSIS FURTHER

In the previous activity, you worked with a group to analyze how Matt and Willow are “broken.” Think about the ways this idea of being “broken” applies to other characters. Using evidence from both novels, identify how this theme is developed with other characters.

Identify from each novel two secondary characters who are “broken.”

	Character	Why?	Quotation and Page Number
All the Broken Pieces	1.		
	2.		
Counting by 7s	1.		
	2.		

Are these characters still broken (or *as* broken) by the end of the novels? Explain.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

This theme of being emotionally broken is developed throughout both novels. On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that explains what point you think these authors are making by presenting these broken characters. What do they want readers to realize? End your paragraph by explaining how you came to this conclusion?

Name: _____



FORM FLIP (cont.)

Do you think the reader's experience would be very different if these novels were written in different forms? To get a better understanding of the way form affects story, first try to rewrite a short passage from each book in a different form.

Novel: Counting by 7s **Scene:** chapter 26, where Willow runs away to the library

Rewrite this scene as a poem. Try using key words and phrases from the passage to help you get started.

Novel: All the Broken Pieces **Scene:** page 65, where Matt considers running away

Rewrite this part of the novel as if Matt were describing his thoughts in a paragraph, not poetry. Think about how he would explain his reasons and what other details he would include about his mother.

Do you think these books would work as well if they switched forms? For each, circle **Yes** or **No**. Then explain your answers.

Counting by 7s **Yes** **No** Why or why not? _____

All the Broken Pieces **Yes** **No** Why or why not? _____
