

Lesson

1

Understanding Encounters: Concept Introduction

Key Question

How do encounters shape ourselves and our world?

Objectives

Content: To analyze and interpret fiction, nonfiction, and art, students will be able to:

- compare and contrast the use of specific techniques various authors use to approach and develop similar ideas; and
- analyze how multiple literary elements interact over the course of the text to develop the theme.

Process: To develop interpretation, analysis, and communication skills in the language arts, students will be able to:

- justify inferences with evidence from the text;
- elaborate in discussion or in writing on how authors use language and literary elements to create meaning;
- apply evidence to support explanations and opinions relative to a question, text, or issue; and
- respond to an analysis of literature, nonfiction, media, or art by developing arguments and elaborating on explanations through writing a variety of texts (e.g., essays, paragraphs), including relevant and sufficient evidence to support claims.

Concept: To develop conceptual thinking about encounters in language arts and additional content areas, students will be able to:

- explain with evidence how encounters may lead to positive or negative outcomes in literature, media, and real-world examples;
- explain how encounters allow for reflection and change using literature, media, and real-world examples;

- explain how encounters may allow for opportunities and threats using evidence from a variety of texts and real-world examples;
- explain how encounters allow for prediction within literature and real-world examples;
- relate encounter generalizations to real-life situations; and
- examine the relationship between encounters and other concepts in multiple contexts.

Accelerated CCSS for ELA

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|----------|----------|----------|
| ■ RL.6.6 | ■ RL.8.2 | ■ SL.6.1 |
| ■ RL.7.1 | ■ RL.8.3 | ■ SL.7.2 |
| ■ RL.7.3 | ■ W.7.10 | |

Materials

- Video: “Pay It Forward Video Clip” (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxB43PxasGA>)
- Video: “The Paradox of Theseus’s Ship (90 Second Philosophy)” (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVAHXiKjgRo>)
- Student copies of “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros (or video of author read aloud available online)
- Chart paper and markers (for small groups of students)
- Handout 1.1: Blank Literary Analysis Wheel
- Handout 1.2: Concept Organizer
- Rubric 1: Product Rubric (Appendix C)

Introductory Activities

1. Introduce the term *encounter*. Ask: *What is an encounter?* Allow for discussion.
2. Explain the etymology behind the word *encounter*: En (in front of) contra (against). The English word *encounter* is derived from the Old French word *encortre*: a meeting, a fight, or an opportunity. The word *encounter* has come to be used in a more neutral way, without positive or negative connotations.
3. Guide students to understand that the word *encounter* in this unit refers to an unplanned experience or meeting—when a person or character meets another person, character, circumstance, emotion, or idea—that brings about a small or big change.
4. Tell students: *Write down the names of 7–8 important people in your life that you “encounter.” What kind of relationship do you have with these individu-*

als? Label these relationships (friend, family, school, work relationship). Then, add a plus sign, your name, and an equals sign (teacher + Brittany = _____). Think about what happens when you encounter each person. How does he or she enhance your life? Students can share their responses within a small group and identify patterns. Ask: *Are there types of people that were mentioned a lot? What roles do these individuals play (e.g., friends are supporters, parents are caregivers, teachers are guides in learning, etc.)?*

5. Then, tell students to think about the types of negative and positive experiences they encountered within the past week. Ask: *How do these encounters affect you? How do they change you? What do these encounters help you realize about yourself? What do they help you realize about the world or others?*
6. Share the clip from the film *Pay It Forward* (see Materials list). Tell students to look for different types of encounters that are mentioned or inferred in the video clip. Afterward, discuss the types of encounters students noticed. Ask: *What effects might encounters have on the individual, others, or society?*
7. Ask students to quickly debate or respond in agreement or disagreement to the following:
 - Encounters and interactions are the same thing.
 - Encounters involve risk.
 - Encounters can be planned.
 - Encounters require action or change.
 - Encounters only involve people.
8. Afterward, ask students to create a generalization about encounters. A generalization is a statement that might be true of all encounters, whether personal, situational, or in stories. You may wish to provide sentence starters, such as:
 - Encounters may lead to . . .
 - Encounters cause . . .
 - Encounters allow for . . .
 - Encounters can be . . .
9. After students share their own ideas, share the following generalizations (that will be used throughout the unit) and ask how their responses relate to them:
 - Encounters allow for reflection and change (internal and external).
 - Encounters allow for prediction.
 - Encounters can result in positive or negative outcomes.
 - Encounters may lead to threats and opportunities.

10. Distribute chart paper to small groups of students. Assign each group a different generalization to write in the middle of its chart paper. Ask groups to create a mini concept map that shows at least five different examples that represent their generalization in another subject area or in their lives. Afterward, conduct a gallery walk for students to view and ask questions about each other's posters.
11. Explain that students will explore encounters throughout the unit as they look at stories, art, videos, and speeches, as well as applications in their own lives. (*Note:* Display the generalizations, as they will be referred to throughout the unit. Consider creating a concept map-working wall so students can add their connections between the content and the concepts they learn in each lesson. Note that some students may have a difficulty with the generalization "Encounters allow for prediction." Make sure they understand that although we cannot predict encounter outcomes, we can determine patterns based on what we know, which allows us to make decisions about encounters from past experiences and predict outcomes.)

In-Class Activities to Deepen Learning

1. Ask students to discuss in small groups: *How do encounters help you learn more about you?*
2. Have students read the short story "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros, or show a video of the story being read aloud. Ask students to look for encounters—both internal and external.
3. Afterward, select from the following text-dependent questions for discussion:
 - What were the encounters that took place within the story? (Sample response: Examples include Rachel's encounters with Mrs. Price's remarks, the sweater, Rachel's humiliation, her ruined birthday, her intense disappointment, her thoughts about her birthday as a day of small change, etc.)
 - Compare the two settings (home vs. school). How are they described differently? What might these two settings represent? (Sample response: Home represents safety and security with family, while school represents growing up in the real world, away from the safety and security of family.)
 - Was Mrs. Price making an honest mistake, or was she treating Rachel unfairly? (Answers will vary; ensure students defend their responses with evidence.)
 - What does the sweater symbolize? (Sample response: The sweater may symbolize encountering a problem one faces while growing up and not really knowing how to handle it.)

- How does the encounter with Mrs. Price lead to positive and negative outcomes? (Sample response: The encounter leads to negative feelings, shame.)
- What does Rachel learn about herself based on her encounter with Mrs. Price? (Sample response: Rachel realizes she is still very much like a child because she does not know how to respond in the embarrassing situation, but this realization is a step toward maturing.)
- Throughout the story, Rachel thinks of her family. How does her encounter with these thoughts affect her? (Sample response: It presents a sense of relief compared to the present uncomfortable situation.)
- Rachel says that 11 is like an onion or rings in a tree trunk. What does she mean by this? (Sample response: She means that 11 is just a layer away from the previous year, and it includes the emotions and experiences of all the other years. It is an addition to your identity, not a separate, new, “older” identity.)
- What is the author’s message about growing up? (Sample response: Growing up is hard and requires being able to advocate for yourself; there is responsibility with growing up.)
- How does this story make you feel? How have you changed after encountering the story? (Students may explain that they have a new perspective on the difficulties that come with growing up. Growing up happens incrementally, not overnight, and through these difficult experiences, a person takes small steps toward maturity.)
- In what ways do external encounters often lead to internal encounters, or vice versa? How is this evident in the story? (Sample response: Rachel’s external encounter with Mrs. Price not really seeing, understanding, or valuing her led Rachel to the internal encounter of intense embarrassment and realizing that the real world is hard.)

Literary Analysis

Distribute Handout 1.1: Blank Literary Analysis Wheel for groups to complete. Explain that students will examine different ways in which various story elements interact (arrows on the wheel indicate interactions), including how encounters within a story can shape the message. Guide students through the following questions using the wheel. If this is the first time using the wheel, you may need to explain some of the categories to students. Begin with individual portions of the wheel (e.g., setting, characters, mood), and then add complexity by combining different elements on the wheel to help students see how elements interact to create a message. Additional information and examples can be found in Appendix A.

1. **Setting + Characters:** How does the setting influence Rachel? (Sample response: The classroom sets the stage for Mrs. Price to “ruin” Rachel’s birthday with the red sweater; Rachel is not at home with those who love and understand her the most.)
2. **Symbols + Plot/Conflict:** How does the introduction of the red sweater propel the plot? (Sample response: The red sweater represents a problem with an authority figure and the struggles of growing up that Rachel does not know how to handle. The sweater incites internal emotional turmoil in Rachel; it spurs the conflict that she has with Mrs. Price.)
3. **Language/Structure/Style + Point of View:** How does the author reveal a reliable 11-year-old narrator through the use language and style? (Sample response: The stream of consciousness style [e.g., “Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page thirty-two . . .”] shows Rachel’s reaction to what an outsider may view as no big deal. Phrases such as “there aren’t any more tears left in my eyes, and it’s just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast” and “pennies in a tin Band-Aid box” reveal details of an 11-year-old who does 11-year-old things, such as scraping her knees; these phrases indicate that she is still a child.)
4. **Characters + Language/Structure/Style:** How does the author’s use of figurative language convey Rachel’s feelings about growing up? (Sample response: The simile of 11 being like an onion or like rings on a tree shows Rachel’s realization that 11 is just an additional part of who she has been.)
5. **Symbol + Characters:** What does her 11th birthday symbolize for Rachel? Why do you think the story was about her 11th birthday and not her 10th, 12th, or 13th? (Students may notice that 11 is a prime number and consists of two of the same digit. The number 11 may symbolize that the child and adult are both number 1, or the idea of a prime and odd number as being an unusual birthday but also the same as any other.)
6. **Language/Structure/Style + Symbol:** At the end of the narrative, Rachel talks about a runaway tiny balloon in the sky. What does the balloon symbolize, and why is this at the end of the narrative? (Sample response: The balloon symbolizes her realization that today is a step toward maturity. As an 11-year-old, the balloon might represent her comfort of childhood and security of family being let go as she makes an incremental step toward being an adult.)

Ask students: *If you have a ship made up of several wooden pieces and you change each piece to a metal piece over time, is it still the same ship? Does it still have its same identity, or is it an entirely new ship?* Explain the paradox of the Ship of Theseus (or show a video clip; see Materials list):

The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same. (Plutarch, 75 A.D.)

Ask: This paradox begs the question: Are we still the same person after we incrementally change over time? How does this relate to growing up as described by Rachel? (Sample response: The change happens so incrementally that we don't realize it; the essence of who we are is really the same; 11 is 10, 9, 8 etc., all at once, yet it is different.)

Choice-Based Differentiated Products

Students may choose one of the following to complete (*Note: Use Rubric 1: Product Rubric in Appendix C to assess student responses*):

- Read another coming-of-age story, such as “Scout’s Honor” by Avi, and complete a Blank Literary Analysis Wheel (Appendix B). Consider the interactions that occur between story elements. What patterns do you notice between the themes and literary elements used in “Eleven” and your selected story? Why do you think the patterns emerged? Create a Venn diagram to show your comparisons.
- If an encounter is an unexpected event or opportunity that may lead to change, and an interaction is an action between different people, places, or things, consider the following question: Do encounters lead to interactions, or do interactions lead to encounters? Using “Eleven” as an example, explain the interactions and encounters and which one led to the other.
- Write a personal narrative about your age that shows an encounter related to the idea of growing up. Include figurative language to develop a positive or negative tone, as well as common internal and external encounters to convey your emotions about the encounter.

Opportunities for Talent Development

- Ask students to research the life of Sandra Cisneros. She has several author talks on YouTube discussing her background and motivation for writing: *Design a book cover that shows how her life story influences the themes of her*

stories and books. What might the title be? How do the colors, images, and title for your book cover represent her life influences?

- Have students consider how the *Pay It Forward* video inspired them: *Think about your own strengths, talents, and daily encounters. How might you use your strengths and opportunities to promote a ripple effect of positive internal and external encounters? Create a plan of action.*

Social-Emotional Connections

- Lead a class discussion: *How do unexpected encounters with our emotions allow for reflection and change? In “Eleven,” Rachel encounters a situation that brings intense disappointment. How did this disappointment bring about change? Was the change an internal or external one?*
- Disappointments are a part of growing up. Have students discuss and complete with a partner: *What are healthy ways to deal with disappointment? What advice might you give Rachel (from “Eleven”) or others for handling disappointing situations? Write a “Dear Rachel” letter to share your thoughts and advice.*

ELA Task

Assign the following task as a performance-based assessment for this lesson: *How does a person’s expectation impact his or her interpretation of an encounter? In a paragraph, respond to this from Rachel’s perspective and include a specific generalization related to encounters.*

Concept Connections

1. Have students reflect in writing or discussion: *How does the story “Eleven” relate to one of the encounters generalizations?*
2. Distribute Handout 1.2: Concept Organizer. Ask students to complete the organizer by applying encounter generalizations to the story they read. Sample responses include:
 - Encounters allow for reflection and change: The encounter between Rachel and Mrs. Price allowed Rachel to reflect on how difficult growing up and handling situations with authority are. The encounter brings Rachel frustration as she reflects that she is not yet grown up enough to know how to assert herself in the situation. The encounter between Rachel and herself [internal reflection] allows for personal growth and awareness.

- Encounters allow for prediction: The encounter with the memories of home allows the reader to predict that Rachel longs for the security of home—a sharp contrast to the harsh reality of the classroom where Rachel is not “seen.”
- Encounters can result in positive or negative outcomes: The external encounter with Mrs. Price led to Rachel’s birthday being ruined and her realization [internal encounter] that even her family is not able to help in this situation; the real world is hard.
- Encounters may result in threats and opportunities: The encounter with humiliation leads to an opportunity for Rachel to realize that growing up is difficult.
- Encounters and _____ : Students may select any concept to link to encounters. For example: Encounters + Awareness: The encounter between Rachel and Mrs. Price allowed for a greater awareness of how transitioning from childhood to adulthood is hard.

Note: It is not necessary for students to make the connection to every generalization.

Assessment

- Examine choice-based differentiated products and rubric criteria, ELA Task responses, and/or Concept Connections. Use Rubric 1: Product Rubric to review the products.
- Have students complete an exit ticket: *What new insight do you have about the encounters you experience on a day-to-day basis? How do those encounters allow for opportunities?*

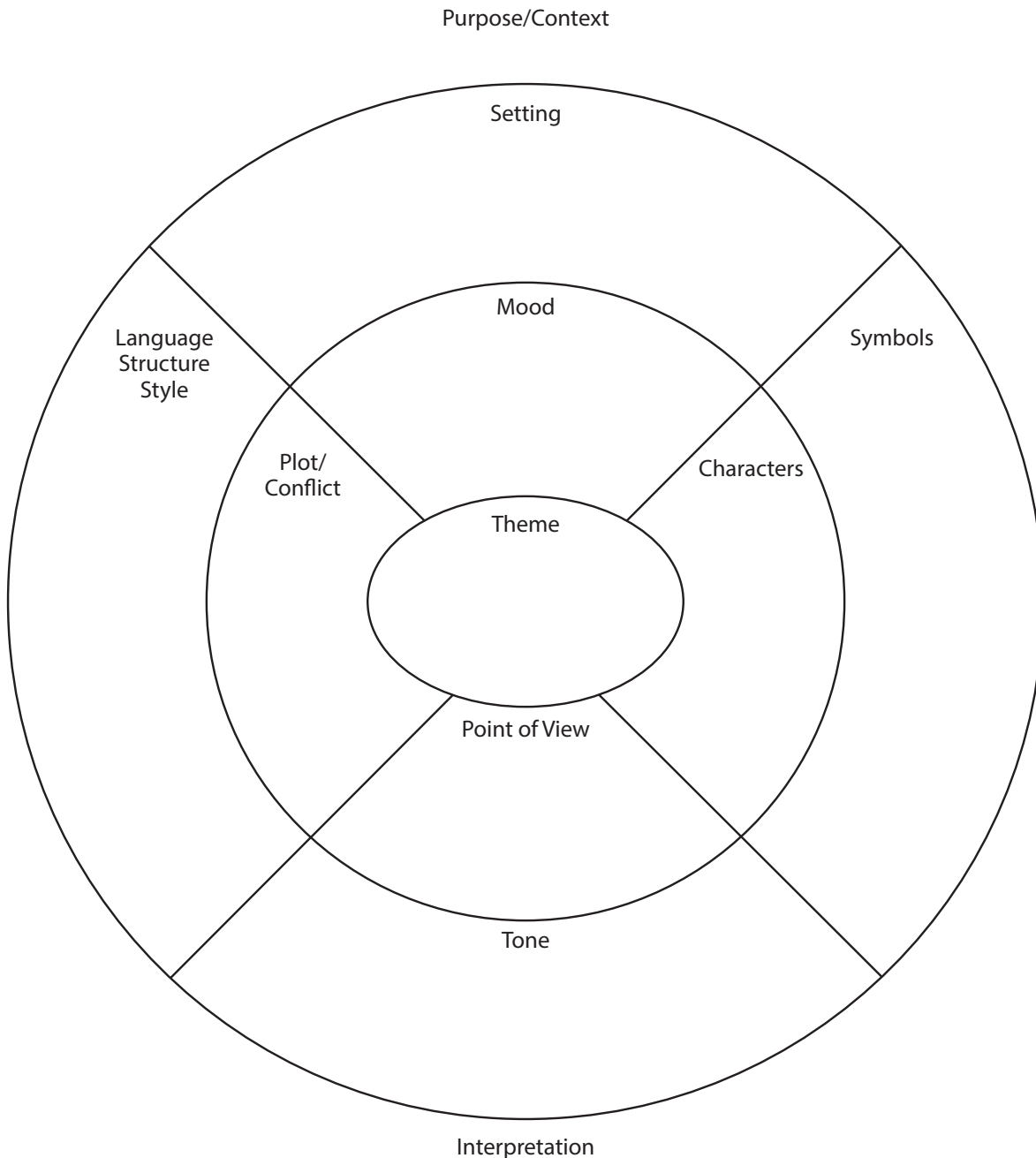
Name: _____ Date: _____

Handout 1.1

Blank Literary Analysis Wheel

Directions: Draw arrows across elements to show connections.

Text: _____



Created by Tamra Stambaugh, Ph.D., & Emily Mofield, Ed.D., 2015.

Handout 1.2

Concept Organizer

Directions: How does each topic exemplify each generalization? What new generalization can you make?

1. Encounters allow for reflection and change.
2. Encounters allow for prediction.
3. Encounters can result in positive or negative outcomes.
4. Encounters may result in threats and opportunities.

Connection to Other Concept		
Connection to Encounters Generalizations (1, 2, 3, 4)		
Lesson Topic		