

Rutherford County Schools – Grade 7 ELA Individual Learning Modules

Grade	Course
7	ELA
Unit Focus	
<p><i>Essential Question:</i> What effects do people have on the environment?</p> <p>Students will conduct a close read of an excerpt from <i>Silent Spring</i> by Rachel Carson to identify an author’s claim and analyze how imagery can be used in nonfiction texts to develop claims. Students will write their own argumentative essay in response to the text.</p>	
Standard(s)	
7.RI.KID.1 7.RI.KID.2 7.RI.KID.4 7.RI.IKI.8	7.W.1
Resource(s)	
Texts: "from <i>Silent Spring</i> " by Rachel Carson	
Task(s)	
Day 1 – Read “from <i>Silent Spring</i>” and complete comprehension tasks Day 2 – Close Read Analysis Questions Day 3 – Analyze Craft and Structure – Word Choice: Imagery Day 4 – Introduction to Writing Prompt and Pre-Writing Day 5 – Writing Task	
Expected Outcomes	
<p>At the conclusion of the tasks outlined above, students will demonstrate a deeper understanding of how word choice contributes to the development of central ideas and claims. Students will write their own argumentative essay in response to the text. This will prepare them for more extensive argumentative writing tasks.</p>	
Additional Instructional Resources	
<p>All Rutherford County 6-8 grade students now have access to iReady ELA lessons. These lessons can be accessed via Clever. The following lessons are now available to 7th grade students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Relationship Between Words • Analyzing How Components of Informational Text Fit Together • Analyzing Informational Text Structure • Analyzing Differing Points of View in Literature • Analyzing Author's Point of View • Evaluating Arguments • Analyzing Persuasive Techniques • Historical Fiction Versus Nonfiction • Analyzing How Different Authors Present the Same Information • Comparing Texts on the Same Topic 	

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Day One – from *Silent Spring*

Step One – Read the Text

from *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson

BACKGROUND Pesticides are chemical compounds designed to destroy crop-eating insects. Pesticides can be deadly to many species—including humans—in addition to the insects and other pests they are intended to kill. In 1962, Rachel Carson published Silent Spring, which revealed to the public the dangers of DDT, a pesticide in wide use at the time. The awareness raised by Silent Spring eventually led the United States to ban DDT entirely in 1972. This excerpt comes from the opening pages of the book.

1 There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings.

2 Along the roads, laurel, viburnum and alder, great ferns and wildflowers delighted the traveler's eye through much of the year. Even in winter the roadsides were places of beauty, where countless birds came to feed on the berries and on the seed heads of the dried weeds rising above the snow. The countryside was, in fact, famous for the abundance and variety of its bird life, and when the flood of migrants was pouring through in spring and fall people traveled from great distances to observe them. Others came to fish the streams, which flowed clear and cold out of the hills and contained shady pools where trout lay. So it had been from the days many years ago when the first settlers raised their houses, sank their wells, and built their barns.

3 Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died. Everywhere was a shadow of death. The farmers spoke of much illness among their families. In the town the doctors had become more and more puzzled by new kinds of sickness appearing among their patients. There had been several sudden and unexplained deaths, not only among adults but even among children, who would be stricken suddenly while at play and die within a few hours.

4 There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example—where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices, there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.

5 On the farms the hens brooded, but no chicks hatched. The farmers complained that they were unable to raise any pigs—the litters were small and the young survived only a few days. The apple trees were coming into bloom but no bees droned among the blossoms, so there was no pollination and there would be no fruit.

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6 The roadsides, once so attractive, were now lined with browned and withered vegetation as though swept by fire. These, too, were silent, deserted by all living things. Even the streams were now lifeless. Anglers* no longer visited them, for all the fish had died.

7 In the gutters under the eaves and between the shingles of the roofs, a white granular powder still showed a few patches; some weeks before it had fallen like snow upon the roofs and the lawns, the fields and streams.

8 No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves.

9 This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them. A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know.

Step Two – Comprehension Tasks

Questions

1. What are two animals that attracted visitors to the town?
2. What happened to the animals and the people in the town?
3. What fell on the roofs, lawns, fields, and streams?

Summary Writing

1. Using the chart below, write a gist statement for each section of the text

Section	Gist Statement
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

2. Review your gist statements and use them to help write an objective summary of the text.

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Extension – Research Ideas

1. Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the text? Use the chart below to record your findings.

Detail from Text (Research Topic)	What you learned from your research	Website Used	How does this information help you better understand the text?

Day 2 – Close Read

Step One – Review text and work completed in day 1 activities.

Step Two – Complete Close Read tasks below.

1. In paragraph 1, what does the phrase “heart of America” suggest? Why does Carson use this phrase in the first paragraph?
2. In paragraph 2, mark details the author uses to describe the rich environment of the town.
 - a. Why might the author have used such vivid, descriptive details to describe the town?
 - b. What can you conclude about the town from these details?
3. In paragraph 3, the author uses the words everything and everywhere. Review paragraph 3 and underline these words.
 - a. Why does the author use two words containing the word every?
4. In the book, the excerpt you read is called “A Fable for Tomorrow.” Why does Carson use this title for this section of the book?

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Step Three – Understanding Claims

Essential Question: What effects do people have on the environment?

To complete this analysis, you will build on the gist chart you created in the day 1 comprehension activity.

First – Revisit paragraphs 8-9. What claim is Carson trying to make regarding the effects people have on the environment?

Claim:

Second – Add the third column below to your gist chart from day 1. Consider how each section contributes to the development of the claim.

Section	Gist Statement	How does this section contribute to the development of the claim?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		

Day 3 – Analyze Craft and Structure

Step One – Review the information below concerning author’s word choice.

Author’s Word Choice: Imagery

Imagery is language that includes *images*—words or phrases that appeal to one or more of the five senses. A writer uses imagery to bring his or her writing to life with vivid descriptions of how the subjects look, sound, feel, taste, or smell. A writer’s word choice, or the specific words, phrases, and expressions he or she uses, contributes to memorable imagery. Look at the following examples of imagery, and note the ways in which the individual words help create a realistic image for readers:

- The phrase “sweet, slippery mango slices” appeals to the senses of taste and touch.
- The phrase “glaring lights and wailing sirens” appeals to the senses of sight and hearing.

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Writers also create mood through their use of imagery, word choice, and descriptive details. **Mood** is the feeling created in the reader by a piece of writing. The mood of a work may be described with adjectives such as joyous or frightening. To fully appreciate images and experience the mood of a text, use these strategies:

- determine the specific meanings of unfamiliar words
- consider the **connotations**, or emotional associations, of words, as well as their **figurative**, or nonliteral, **meanings**
- analyze the author’s word choice, and make inferences, or educated guesses, as to why the author may have chosen certain words

As you review the excerpt from *Silent Spring*, notice how Carson uses word choice and imagery to create a mood that helps make her central idea more powerful and compelling.

Step Two – Using the information you just read, complete the practice tasks below.

1. Review the selection. Then, use a chart like the one below to list four images in the text, the sense to which each image appeals, and how that imagery impacts the text (consider mood and/or meaning).

Image	Sense	Impact on Text

2. A specter is a source of terror or dread.
 - a. Why might Carson have chosen to use this word in the last sentence of the excerpt?
 - b. What mood does this word choice create?
3. How does Carson’s use of imagery help to develop the central idea or claim of the excerpt? Cite at least two textual examples to support your response. Use the chart below to record your analysis.
- 4.

Central Idea or Claim (consider gist chart to help you):	
<i>Examples from Text</i>	<i>How examples relate to central idea</i>

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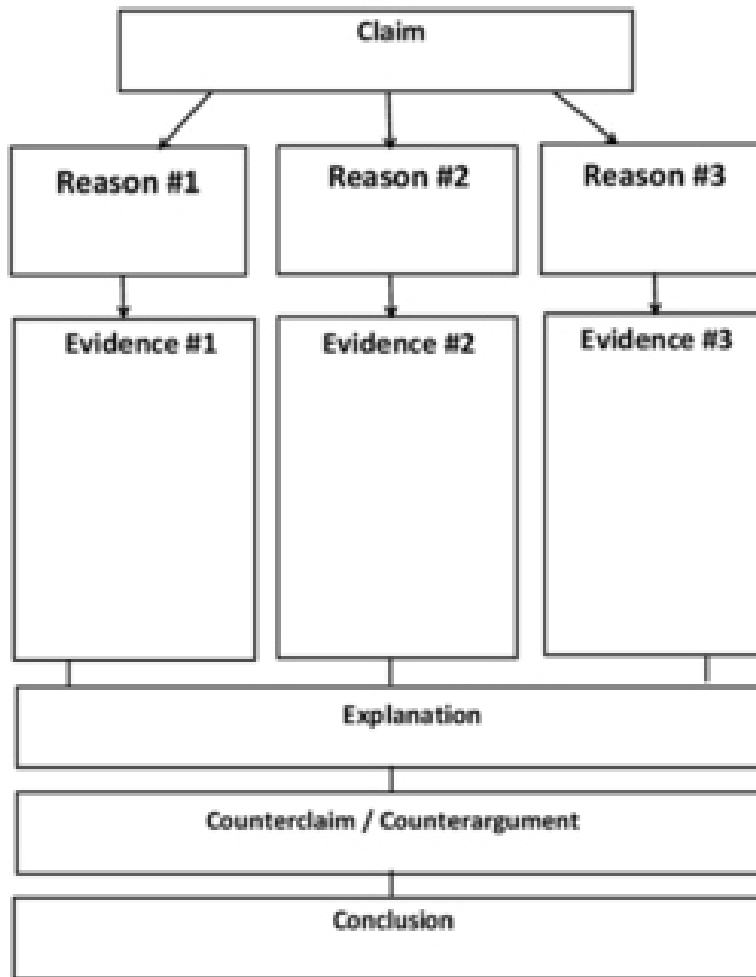
Day 4 – Introduction to Writing Task

Step One – Review the writing task

In *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson paints a harsh picture of the future. Write an argument in which you answer this question: Does Carson’s description inspire readers to take action, or does it discourage action because the problem seems so big?

Step Two – Pre-Writing

First, decide on your position. Then, review the selection to find specific details that support your position, and complete the organizer below to collect your thoughts.



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Day 5 – Write your Essay

Step One – Review the writing task

In *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson paints a harsh picture of the future. Write an argument in which you answer this question: Does Carson’s description inspire readers to take action, or does it discourage action because the problem seems so big?

Step Two – Using your graphic organizer from yesterday and the information below, draft your essay.

As you draft, be sure to do the following:

- State your position clearly in the introduction.
- In the body of your argument, support your position with reasons and evidence, including specific details from *Silent Spring*.
- Address alternate, or opposing, positions, and respond with counterarguments that address these views.
- Use transitional words and phrases to connect your ideas and show the relationships among them.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.