

Grade 8 English

Oak Meadow Coursebook

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Grade 8



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Lesson



Baseball in April and Other Stories: Finding Your Voice

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Read Section I in *The Elements of Style*.
- Read three short stories.
- Read the Grammar Tip.
- Choose and use a vocabulary word of the week.
- Summarize the plot of a short story.
- Identify the story's strengths and weaknesses.
- Connect the story to your own life.
- Complete exercises #1 and #100 in *100 Ways*.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Summarize the plot of a short story.
- Identify the story's strengths and weaknesses.
- Reflect on the writing process.

Reading

Read Section I: Elementary Rules of Usage in *The Elements of Style*.

Choose three short stories to read from *Baseball in April and Other Stories* by Gary Soto. You can scan the story titles or the first sentence of each story to help you choose, or you might choose a story at random, or simply read the stories in order. Plan to read one story a day for three days rather than reading all three stories in one sitting. Here is a list of the stories:

- Broken Chain
- Baseball in April
- Two Dreamers
- Barbie
- The No-Guitar Blues
- Seventh Grade
- Mother and Daughter
- The Karate Kid
- *La Bamba*
- The Marble Champ
- Growing Up



Reader's Journal

In this course, you will keep a journal about what you are reading. Many of the lessons will include journal suggestions which will help you reflect on and analyze the literature you are reading. You are also encouraged to use your journal for jotting down thoughts and questions, brainstorming ideas, and keeping track of plot twists and character relationships. Since this is a journal, the writing can be very informal. You don't have to use complete sentences or worry about grammar and style—just write!

This week, write down a phrase or sentence that caught your eye while reading one of the short stories. Copy it down in your journal, along with the book title and the page number. You'll always want to identify where a quote came from so you can find it again, and so you won't accidentally use it without giving credit.

Students will be reminded periodically to use their reader's journal. This is a good habit to encourage in your student as it can benefit reading comprehension and deepen the student's skill in literary analysis.

Vocabulary

Each week, you will choose a “Word of the Week.” You can find your word of the week in your reading, a dictionary, or ask an adult to come up with a word you don't know. The only requirement for the word of the week is that it is a word that is new to you. You will use your reader's journal to keep a list of words throughout the year. Write “Word of the Week” at the top of a page in your journal; since you don't know how many pages this will take up, you might want to put this in the back of the journal. If you turn the journal upside down, the last page of the journal can be the first page of your word-of-the-week list.

For each word of the week, you will write down the word and define it, either using your own words or writing the dictionary definition. Then throughout the week, see how many times you can use the word in a sentence while speaking. Do your best to get others to use the word, as well. For instance, if your word of the week is *recalcitrant*, you might comment that your recalcitrant dog won't come when you call.

At the end of the week, write down one of the sentences you said or heard that used the word of the week. If the sentence was spoken by someone else, make sure to give that person credit!

Lesson



A Wrinkle in Time: Journey to the Unknown

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the first half of Section IV in <i>The Elements of Style</i> . | <input type="checkbox"/> Nominate someone for a “shining light” award. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Continue reading <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> . | <input type="checkbox"/> Write a persuasive argument. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the Grammar Tip. | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete exercises #3, #4 and #47 in <i>100 Ways</i> . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose and use a vocabulary word of the week. | |

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Construct a persuasive argument.
- Utilize relevant details and examples to support an argument.
- Demonstrate skills in revision, editing, and proofreading.

Reading

Read the first half of Section IV: Words and Expressions Commonly Misused in *The Elements of Style* (words beginning with A through I).

Read the following chapters in *A Wrinkle in Time*:

- Chapter 5 The Tesseract 84
- Chapter 6 The Happy Medium
- Chapter 7 the Man with Red Eyes
- Chapter 8 the Transparent Column



Reader's Journal

Write down one quote or description in the story that you particularly liked (write down the title and page number so you can find it later).

Grammar Tip

A Lot of Bother, All Right

The phrase *all right* is properly written as two words, despite the fact that we often see it written as one word: *alright*. This is incorrect, but that doesn't stop it from happening. In fact, in fact, its use is so common that some computer spellcheckers no longer even flag it as a mistake. When you think about it, this expression actually makes more sense as two words. How do you use it? Generally, it's used as a synonym for "okay," or else as a way to accept what someone else has said. Thus, you are really saying that *all is right*.

While spelling and punctuation might take a back seat during the initial rush of writing, all of those spelling and grammar rules that are so gaily ignored during the writing of the first draft will be dutifully brought back and examined, thoroughly and with exacting detail, during rewriting and proofreading. This is why you find so few errors in the published books you read. Not only the writers, but their editors, formatters, and proofreaders all painstakingly eliminate misspellings and punctuation errors before a book or article goes to print.

Another phrase that is commonly written as one word is *a lot*, but like *all right*, *a lot* also makes more sense as two words. In fact, as two words, this phrase can even admit an adjective in its midst to spice it up: *This is a whole lot of bother*. There's no way to do that if the expression is only one word.

While we're on the subject, let's look at another often-abused word. *Another* is one word, a compound word formed by combining *an* with *other*. Examined closely, this makes perfect sense: "I want *another* apple" means simply "I want *an* apple *other* than this one." But used repeatedly in spoken English, the unwary listener might hear it not as *an other* but as *a nother*, creating the nonexistent (and somewhat funny looking) word *nother* in the process. As a result, you will occasionally hear people say things like "I want a whole *nother* apple." This can be highly amusing but has no place in proper English. The sentence should be written as "I want a whole other apple." Becoming used to common mistakes and learning how to avoid them can save you a whole lot of bother in your proofreading later.

Vocabulary

Continue choosing a word of the week. Feel free to let others choose the word (as long as it is a word you don't know). Add the word to your list and record the definition. Use the word in conversation throughout the week, and then write down your favorite sentence.



Think About It: Reflection

A movie version of *A Wrinkle in Time* was released in 2018. If you saw the movie, think about ways in which it matches the story, and where it differs. Why do you think the movie makers changed elements of the story? How do the changes affect the plot or the audience's experience?

Assignments

1. In the chapter titled “The Tesseract,” Mrs. Whatsit asks Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin to name people who have been “lights for us to see by.” Imagine an award is being given for people, both past and present, who shine light into the darkness, or who light the way for others to follow. Who would you nominate for this award and why?
2. In “The Transparent Column,” Charles Wallace, under the influence of IT, is trying to convince Meg that Camazotz is a happy place because no one is ever unhappy there. Meg responds, “Maybe if you aren't unhappy sometimes you don't know how to be happy.” Do you agree with her statement? Why or why not?

Present a persuasive argument for or against Meg's statement. Use logic and appeal to the reader's emotions or underlying beliefs as well. This helps readers connect with what you are saying and better understand your perspective. Write your ideas in a well-organized paragraph. This is not just asking for your opinion; it is asking you to show the reasoning behind your thoughts. Take the time to order your ideas and come up with supporting details or specific examples that explain your reasoning. (An example of a supporting detail might be describing how dogs will often show joyous displays of happiness right after an owner gets home, indicating that missing the owner led to a greater sense of happiness when the owner reappeared.) Pay attention to how ideas are connected with the intentional use of transitions (see the reading on transitions below).

After writing the first draft, revise your paragraph to make sure it expresses your thoughts clearly, and then edit and proofread your final version. This should be a strong example of your best writing.

3. In *100 Ways*, read the following sections and complete the exercises listed:

- Wordiness and Word Economy/Exercise #3 and #4
- Style/Exercise #47 (use *A Wrinkle in Time* as your reference book)
- Transitions (rather than doing Exercise #12, you will apply the knowledge of transitions to assignment #2 above)



Up for a Challenge?

Revisit the persuasive argument you constructed for assignment #2 and rewrite it from the other side of the argument. It may help to first consider how someone might argue against (refute) the statements you've made. This can help you get into the mindset of the "opposition" so you can authentically portray the reasoning.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to track how your skills are developing over time and identify skills that need more work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Use a new word in conversation and writing				
Construct a persuasive argument				
Identify relevant details or examples to support an argument				
Demonstrate revision and editing skills				
Demonstrate proofreading skills				

For Enrolled Students

When this lesson is complete, share your work from lessons 3 and 4 with your Oak Meadow teacher. If you have questions about how to share your creative project, contact your teacher.

Lesson



The Giver: The Receiver

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Continue reading *The Giver*.
- Choose and use a vocabulary word of the week.
- Compile a list of euphemisms and reflect on their use.
- Reflect on and describe a safe environment.
- Complete exercise #8 in *100 Ways*.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Identify euphemisms and analyze the use of them in the story.
- Reflect on a story theme and relate it to real life.
- Demonstrate effective use of verbs and verb phrases.

Reading

Read chapters 8–15 of *The Giver*. Take notes as you read so you can easily organize your thoughts and examples for your responses to the questions at the end of this unit.



Reader's Journal

Write down one quote or description that you particularly liked (write down book title and page number so you can find it later).

Vocabulary

Continue choosing a word of the week. Add the word to your list and record the definition. Use the word in conversation throughout the week, and then write down your favorite sentence.



Think About It: Reflection

A movie version of *The Giver* was released in 2014. If you watched it, think of ways in which the book and the movie differ. How does having a picture of the characters in your mind already affect your enjoyment of the book?

Assignments

1. Throughout *The Giver*, there are many terms, or euphemisms, that are used to refer to other things. For instance, the word “released” is used instead of “killed.” What are some of the other euphemisms that are used in the community? Why would these terms be used instead of the word for what the thing actually is? How does the use of euphemisms relate to what the story is about?
2. Jonas’s community was considered a safe environment, and the people of the community had chosen to give up their freedom and individuality in order to be there. Do you think this was a safe environment in which to live? Why or why not? If not, how would you describe a safe environment? What does that mean in the modern world?
3. In *100 Ways*, read the following sections and complete the exercises listed:
 - Word Choice: Verbs/Exercise #8



Up for a Challenge?

Throughout time, there have been communities build on utopian principles, where groups of people attempt to structure a society so that everything is perfect. Research utopian societies, in fiction and history. Can you find any commonalities between them? Why did they appeal to people? How did they succeed? Why did they fail?

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to track how your skills are developing over time and identify skills that need more work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Use a new word in conversation and writing				
Identify euphemisms				
Reflect on story themes and relate it to real life				
Demonstrate effective use of verbs and verb phrases				

For Enrolled Students

When you have completed your work, share it with your Oak Meadow teacher along with your work from lesson 7.