

A Common Core State
Standards Aligned Educator's
Guide for

The Memory of Light

Grades 7 and up ISBN: 978-0-545-

Written by Francisco X. Stork

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When Vicky Cruz wakes up in the Lakeview Hospital Mental Disorders ward, she knows one thing: She can't even commit suicide right. But for once, a mistake works out well for her, as she meets Mona, the live wire; Gabriel, the saint; E.M., always angry; and Dr. Desai, a quiet force. With stories and honesty, kindness and hard work, they push her to reconsider her life before Lakeview, and offer her an acceptance she's never had.

But Vicky's newfound peace is as fragile as the roses that grow around the hospital. And when a crisis forces the group to split up, sending her back to the life that drove her to suicide, Vicky must try to find the strength to carry on. She may not have it. She doesn't know.

Guide created by Debbie Gonzales



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Meet the Author:

Francisco Stork is the author of six novels. He lives outside of Boston with his wife Jill. He has two grown children and one granddaughter, Charlotte Annabelle, for whom *The Memory of Light* is dedicated. For more information please refer to www.franciscostork.com.



The Educator Guide Format and Personal Bookmarks

To allow for a deep study of *The Memory of Light*, in this guide the book has been divided into four sections. Each section consists of discussion questions followed by exploratory writing activities.

Personal bookmarks are printed on the following page. Listed on these bookmarks are the four designated chapter groupings and a space allotted for Target Completion Dates. A suggested format for a group or individual novel study is to assign weekly Target Completion Dates for students to finish reading prior to the weekly book discussion session.

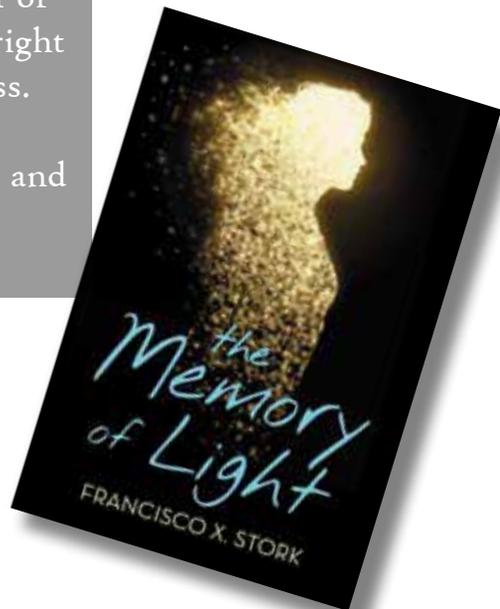
Procedure:

- Print bookmarks on cardstock—one per student in novel study group.
- Trim the edges of bookmark.
- Give to student with these directions:
 - ~ Write their name on bookmark.
 - ~ Copy Target Completion Dates in designated space below assigned chapters to be read.

In your journal, respond to any or all of the Discussion Questions presented in this guide. Use personal experiences to clarify your perspective of the topics.

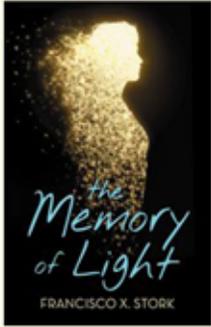
Explore topics such as the healing power of helping others, judging actions as being right and wrong, mental health and happiness.

Should you feel comfortable, please share and discuss your work with others.



Personal Bookmarks

This bookmark belongs to _____



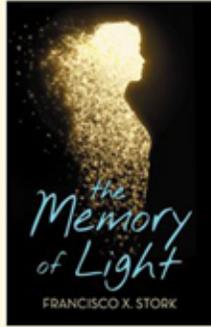
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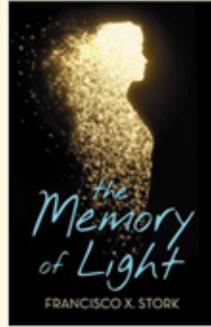
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Chapters 1 to 9
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Chapters 10 to 16
to be read by

Chapters 17 to 26
to be read by

Chapters 27 to Epilogue
to be read by



Discussion Questions - Chapters 1 to 9

“How can you love someone and still try and kill yourself” (pg. 6)?

- Examine Vicky’s question above. Explain why she considers it after her suicide attempt, and not before.
- Reread Vicky’s letter to Juanita found on page 1. Note the number of times she acknowledges the people in her life that she loves. Explain why the love she has for Juanita and her family was not enough to fuel her will to live.
- Discuss the interconnectedness of loving someone and the desire to commit suicide. Explore ways the two topics support and challenge each other.

“Somewhere in me I probably had the strength not to kill myself. But I was tired of looking for strength. Tired of being strong. That’s what I did to make it through . . . each day, go through the motions of being strong. I put on strong every morning. I’m sick of faking strong” (pg. 24).

- Explore what it means to “put on strong.”
- The definition of *fake* is to be an imposter, a fraud, and a cheat. In light of these examples, discuss how faking being strong might be too much to bear on emotional and physical levels.
- The notions of *strength* and *being strong* are referred to six times in the short passage above. Tell how these multiple references serve to expose Vicky’s state of being.

Heart pain is what comes from others, when they love you too much or not enough or the wrong way. Soul pain comes from feeling your life is one big waste. Mind pain is what I can’t figure out. It’s like when you throw body, heart, and soul pain into a blender, then you add a cup of disgust at all that you are, at all you’ve become, at all that you will never be (pgs. 26-7).

- Discuss Vicky’s analysis of the various types of pain. Do you agree with her views? How so?
- Explain why Vicky is unable to “figure out” mind pain.
- The word *disgust* is defined as revulsion, aversion, and hatefulness. Taking these definitions into consideration, examine how adding cupfuls of extreme levels of “disgust” contribute to the desire to commit suicide.

There are times, as I fold the sheets and pillowcases, when my mental playlist is nearly inaudible, the self-accusing songs drowned out by sensations: the salty smell of starch, the warm softness of cotton cloth (pgs. 54-5).

- Considering the depths of hopelessness described in the previous quote, discuss Vicky’s response to linen folding. Explain why physical work seemed to quiet her mind.
- Discuss how, while folding linens, Vicky is able to recall a painful conversation she had with her sister in a logical, in an almost self-affirming way. Explore how the act of working with her hands helps to clarify her thoughts.



Character Analysis

Objective: To explore how lines of dialogue reveal character.

Materials:

- *The Memory of Light*, pages 1 to 80
- The Character Analysis Graphic Organizer (Guide, pg. 7)
- Pencil or pen
- Journal

Procedure:

- Discuss the characters of Vicky, Mona, E. M., and Gabriel. Examine about their varied personalities and the actions that reveal their nature.
- Explore their similarities and differences. Tell how each is similar and different from one another.
- Consider how their character traits serve to add tension and drama to the story.
- Using the **Character Analysis Graphic Organizer** as a guide, decide what each character wants. Search through the text to discover a line of dialogue that best reveals each character's desire.
- Next, examine their needs. Find lines of text that support your impression of each character's weakness.
- Lastly, find one line of dialogue that best depicts each character's true nature.
- Participate in a discussion analyzing the characters, citing lines in the text to support your perceptions. Tell how particular lines of dialogue reveal character.

Explore and list character's desires here.

Explore and list character's weaknesses here.

State most character revealing line of dialogue here.

EXAMPLE:

VICKY	
Wants:	
Needs:	
Citation:	



In your journal, determine which character you feel most compatible with. List reasons why this is so.

Identify the character that challenges you. Justify the reasonings that support your impression.



Character Analysis Graphic Organizer

VICKY

Wants:

Needs:

Citation:

E. M.

Wants:

Needs:

Citation:

GABRIEL

Wants:

Needs:

Citation:

MONA

Wants:

Needs:

Citation:



Discussion Questions - Chapters 10 to 16

There's two of me. The person I carry around like a dead carcass inside of me and the one I show to others. This constant effort to be someone else, to pretend to be lively and give people the kind of person they're expecting, is not so bad here at Lakeview (pg. 83).

- The word *carcass* is synonymous that of a cadaver – a lifeless, corpse-like being. Consider the intensity of the metaphor used in the quote above. Identify with the exhaustion and confusion involved in living life in such grueling emotional extremes.
- Explain the justification of Vicky's perspective in the quote above. Determine how she knows the type of person others are expecting her to be.
- Explore reasons why Vicky felt she needed to pretend to be “lively” at home and school, and why she did not feel the need to do so while at Lakeview.

Happiness had knocked on my door, and I opened it long enough to see that I didn't want what was being offered (pg. 95).

- Explore why Vicky felt numbness when Jaime kissed her.
- Discuss how not caring “about anything anymore” gave Vicky strength.
- List reasons why Vicky rejected Jaime's friendship. Consider how the same reasons fed her desire to attempt suicide.

I helped another person. Me. My words gave someone something they didn't have before. I feel lighter somehow, as if gravity has lost a bit of its grip on me (pg. 104).

- Vicky acknowledged that, though he might be “special,” Gabriel is not better than others. Surprisingly, Gabriel found this statement to be helpful. Explain how and why Vicky's comment convinced Gabriel to contribute during group sessions.
- Explore Vicky's reaction to being considered helpful. Tell why she was surprised by Gabriel's gratitude.
- Discuss how helping someone made her feel lighter, more liberated.

Thoughts are clouds, Vicky. They are not you (pg. 110).

- Clouds are not fixed features in the sky. They're constantly changing in density, structure, and mobility. Considering their transformative nature, discuss the use of clouds as a metaphor for thoughts.
- Explain how belief in dark cloud-like negative thoughts affected Vicky's perception of self-worth.
- Explore the importance of Dr. Desai's words.



“It does not matter much to me what goes on inside your brain. It’s what you do that counts. You’ve done good by me . . .that’s all” (pg. 130).

- Explore E.M.’s reasoning. Do you agree that an individual’s actions are more important than their intent? How so?
- Compare and contrast E.M. and Gabriel’s characters. Consider ways that the two differ. List ways that the two are the same.
- On page 139, Vicky’s father asks, “Do you believe what you did was wrong?” Discuss the complexities of this question. Does the attempt to commit suicide require more than a simple yes or no answer? Explain your answer.

I hug her. I hug her without thinking. I’m doing it without realizing that my arms are around her. This must be what healthy people do with their friends (pg. 155).

- If, as E.M. stated, its what you *do* that counts, explain what Vicky’s impulsive hug says about her state of being at that moment.
- If healthy people hug their friends is a true statment, examine the changes taking place in Vicky. Is she becoming healthy? If so, cite evidence of her transformation from the text.
- Explore reasons why Mona warns Vicky to be careful with E.M., Gabriel, and herself.
- Compare and contrast Vicky and Mona’s characters. Explain how they are similar and different. Could some of their differences serve as a basis for Mona’s warning? How so?



Metaphors & Symbolism

Objective: To analyze how the story draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, and/or religious works.

Materials:

- Reference materials
- *The Memory of Light*
- Journals
- Pencil or pen

Procedure:

- Review the list of spiritual references below.
- Research topics of interest to discover how they relate to or serve as metaphors for characterization, plot, theme, and overall premise of *The Memory of Light*. Some topics to consider might be:
 - ~ Social issues
 - ~ Depression
 - ~ Mental illness
 - ~ Death & Dying
 - ~ Friendship
 - ~ Hope & Healing
 - ~ Strength
 - ~ Courage
 - ~ Light
- Cite references.
- Share your discoveries with the class.

SPIRITUAL REFERENCES:

Virgencita de Guadalupe (pg. 7)
 Lord Ganesh (pg. 73)
 Gilgamesh (pg. 82)
 Huitzilopochtli - Aztec God of War (pg. 114)
 The Bhagavad Gita (pg. 147)
 God (pg. 149, 205)
 The Dalai Lama (pg. 152)
 St. Francis of Assisi (pg. 184)
 The Resurrection (pg. 196)
 The Virgin Mary (pg. 227)
 Gabriel - the archangel (pg. 319)
 Abraham (pg. 320)



Discussion Questions - Chapters 17 to 26

The fight is hard, else you wouldn't need to be brave. It's all caliche, so what's the use of whining about it? (pg. 162)

- Caliche is hardened natural cement like gravel, sand, clay, and silt. Explore E.M.'s use of *caliche* as a metaphor for the challenges of life.
- List the metaphorical rocks in Vicky's life.
- Tell how facing the caliche in one's life can shine light on other people, enough light to help them gain the will to live.
- The word *acceptance* means to acknowledge the presence of, acquiescence, and affirmation. That being stated, consider the role acceptance plays in the control of anger, frustration, and depression.

"There are no 'happy' pills. All the things that are hard in your life remain. All the things you don't like to do, you still don't like. But at least you'll have the energy to do them" (pg. 174).

- Consider this quote in reference to E.M.'s metaphorical use of caliche. Explain how Dr. Desai's message above mirrors E.M.'s earlier statement.
- Discuss how acceptance might affect Vicky's ability to face the hard things she must face - with or without medication.

"Vicky, someday you will receive what you gave today" (pg. 197).

- The word *selfless* is defined as being concerned more with the needs and wishes of others than with one's own. Explain how Vicky's saving E.M.'s life was a selfless act.
- Consider Gabriel's explanation of the mule and racehorse metaphor (pgs. 175-176). Discuss how his words relate to Vicky's actions.
- Discuss the following statement - *It occurs to me, as I kneel next to him, that I have just acted as if life was worth living* (pg. 195). Explore reasons why this realization is surprising to Vicky.
- Make a connection between Vicky's saving E.M. and facing her caliche.

Now he has a fear, almost, of warmth and gentleness, which hurts me, and there's no use denying it. That's one of the rocks ahead of me and I have to face it (pg. 226).

- *Compassion* is defined as kindness, mercy, and grace. Consider Vicky's perception of how her father responds to conflict. Explain how having compassion and acceptance of her father's anger guides her judgement.
- Note that Vicky is owning responsibility for her need to face her father's angry nature. Trace the development of her awareness. Identify the sources of her inner strength.



In your journal, identify and explore your caliche. Describe issues that require you to face, head on, or to gently dig around. List the sources of strength and support you'll need to face the metaphorical rocks in your life.



Arts & Ideas

Objective: Conduct short research projects to explore the author’s use of the arts to add depth and meaning to the story.

Materials:

- Reference materials
- *The Memory of Light*
- Journal
- Pencil or pen

Procedure:

- Review the list of artistic references - movies, books, poetry, writers, artists - below used in *The Memory of Light*.
- Explore references to discover how each communicates the various themes and emotional connections in the story. Write an explanatory essay describing your observations. Some themes to consider might be:
 - ~ Hope or hoplessness
 - ~ Death
 - ~ Loneliness
 - ~ Creativity
 - ~ Inspiration
 - ~ Acceptance
 - ~ Beauty
 - ~ Nature
 - ~ Forgiveness
 - ~ Depression
 - ~ Mental Illness

ARTS & IDEAS

Gwendolyn Brooks - the poet
 Galileo - philosopher, astronomer, physicist
One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (pg. 61)
Tintern Abbey by William Wordsworth (pg. 84)
Jane Eyre (pg. 152)
Wuthering Heights (pg. 152)
Pride and Prejudice (pg. 152)
The Collected Works of Robert Frost (pg. 152)
Saint Francis of Assisi by G. K. Chesterton (pg. 170)
 Poetry written by Emily Dickinson (pg. 185, 266-267)
The Four Loves by C. S. Lewis (pg. 185)
 Van Gogh
Night of the Living Dead (pg. 206)
 Vicky’s poem (pg. 244)



Discussion Questions - Chapters 27 to Epilogue

I feel lonely, I realize. I feel so lonely. I didn't feel lonely the night I tried to take my life. You have to be somewhat alive to feel lonely, and that night I was already dead (pg. 235).

- Discuss the depths of lifelessness Vicky experienced the night she attempted to take her life.
- Explain how the movie *Night of the Living Dead* (pg. 206) serves as an effective metaphor in this scene.
- Explore how feeling lonely is a sign of progress, in Vicky's case.

Just dig around the rocks gently, Vicky. Be a mule. Do what you need to do (pg. 259).

- Explain how Vicky's statement *Let the day come* (pg. 254) is a preparation for the quote above.
- List the metaphorical rocks Vicky must dig around.
- Describe mule-like strength. Tell how being a "mule" is necessary to empower Vicky to "dig around the rocks gently."
- When it comes to facing the consequences of surviving a suicide attempt, examine why being a mule is more beneficial than being a racehorse.

I have depression, I say to myself. Saying "I am depressed" makes it sound like that's all that I am (pg. 267).

- To *have* means to carry or bear something. *Am* is form of the verb "to be," which signifies action or a state of being. Considering these definitions, explain the difference between "having" depression and "being" depressed. Identify the similarities and differences between the two.
- Discuss how understanding the difference between *having* and *being* is a sign of hope and healing for Vicky.

These thoughts are clouds. They come. They go. I am not the clouds or even the sky. I'm the sun that shines on clouds and sky (pg. 271).

- The sun is the premiere life-giving force found at the center of the Earth's solar system. Discuss how identifying with the sun serves as significant progress for Vicky's state of being at this point in the story.
- On page 245, in a prayer to her mother, Vicky states *You're my memory of light*. Explore how this metaphor of light empowers Vicky.
- On page 291, Dr. Desai reminds Vicky that while she cannot control her thoughts, she can control what she says to herself when troubles arise. To this, Vicky privately states, *You are the sun*. Explain how her identification with the light of the sun affirms all that she's been through, as well as preparation for the journey that lies ahead.



Exposition, Resolution & Inspiration Analysis

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.
- Galileo

Objective: To analyze and summarize a theme that develops over the course of the text.

Material:

- The Exposition, Resolution, and Inspiration Analysis Graphic Organizer (Guide, pg. 15)
- Pencil or pen
- Journal
- *The Memory of Light*

Procedure 1 - Discussion:

- **The Exposition:** Examine the Prologue—Vicky’s suicide note (pg. 1). Discover how the note reveals important facts about the story. Discuss how the note shows painful truths about Vicky and her deep-seeded depression. Explain how the note informs the ending of the story.
- **The Resolution:** Consider the Epilogue (pg. 325). Explain how this one line statement -addresses and completes the emotional thrust of the story. Consider the symbolic connection of Vicky’s pet’s name, astronomy, light, and healing. Discuss how the setting and action of this scene prepare for Galileo’s return home.
- **The Inspiration:** Explore the Author’s Note (pgs. 326-327). The word *inspiration* means idea, influence, and vision. Determine ways that Francisco Stork’s message to the reader develops ideas for *The Memory of Light*. Examine how his experience influenced his vision for the plot, theme, characters, and tone of the story. Discuss how Francisco Stork’s personal experience with depression and attempted suicide informed and empowered him to write this book.
- Note the Galileo quotation at the top of this page. Using these words as a guide, examine the Prologue, Epilogue, and the Author’s Note to discover a consistent theme among them. Tell how the Exposition, Resolution, and Inspiration for *The Memory of Light* reflect Galileo’s message.

Procedure 2 - Exploration:

- Use the **Exposition, Resolution, and Inspiration Analysis Graphic Organizer** to brainstorm consistent themes represented in the Prologue, Epilogue, and the Author’s Note. Tell how the themes compliment the Galileo quotation presented above.
- Write an explanatory essay describing your observations, explaining your reasonings using Galileo’s quote as the inspiration for your piece.



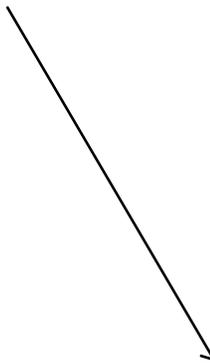
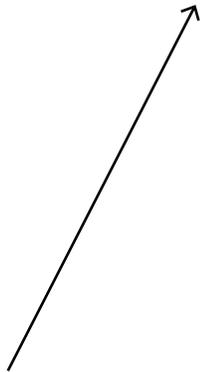
Exposition, Resolution & Inspiration Analysis Graphic Organizer

The Exposition (pg. 1)

The Resolution (pg. 325)

The Inspiration (pgs. 326-327)

You cannot teach
a man anything;
you can only
help him find it
within himself.
~Galileo



Common Core State Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature

		Discussion Questions	Character Analysis	Metaphors & Symbolism	Arts & Ideas	Exposition/Resolution/Inspiration
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.		•			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	•	•			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.		•			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.10	By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.10	By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.			•	•	•



English Language Arts Standards » Writing

		Discussion Questions	Character Analysis	Metaphors & Symbolism	Arts & Ideas	Exposition/Resolution/Inspiration
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7	Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.			•		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7	Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.			•		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.			•	•	•

English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	•	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	•	•	•	•	•

