

Differentiated Instruction for Language Arts

Instructions and activities for the diverse classroom

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction to Differentiated Instruction</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Standards for the English Language Arts</i>	<i>vii</i>
Chapter 1: Getting Started on Differentiated Instruction	1
Lesson 1: Who You Are, What You Want	1
Lesson 2: Learning Styles	5
Lesson 3: Peer Strengths	9
Chapter 2: Reading for Meaning	12
Lesson 4: Dear Diary	12
Lesson 5: IMaginary Dialogue	17
Lesson 6: Fever Chart	20
Lesson 7: Quotation Equation	25
Lesson 8: The Readers' Court	28
Chapter 3: Writing for an Audience	33
Lesson 9: Making a Scene	33
Lesson 10: Adopt a Kindergarten	37
Lesson 11: Random Acts of Poetry	40
Lesson 12: Nature Observation Portfolio	46
Chapter 4: Researching and Communicating Discoveries	50
Lesson 13: Local Issue Project	50
Lesson 14: Senior Profile	53
Lesson 15: Road Trip	57
Lesson 16: When I'm Thirty	61
Chapter 5: Understanding and Creating Multimedia Texts	64
Lesson 17: Novel Trailers	64
Lesson 18: Web Site Evaluation	67
Lesson 19: Propaganda Project	70
Lesson 20: Museum Tour	75

Standards for the English Language Arts

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The vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society. These standards assume that literacy growth begins before children enter school as they experience and experiment with literacy activities—reading and writing, and associating spoken words with their graphic representations. Recognizing this fact, these standards encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. Furthermore, the standards provide ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning. They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction. Although we present these standards as a list, we want to emphasize that they are not distinct and separable; they are, in fact, interrelated and should be considered as a whole.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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Who You Are, What You Want

OVERVIEW

After using prewriting strategies, students write a letter to their teacher describing their personalities and setting short- and long-term goals.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

5, 11, 12

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

verbal/linguistic, intrapersonal

SKILLS

using graphic organizers, self-reflection, writing

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES

Because this is a highly personalized assignment, it will naturally be differentiated. Graphic organizers and sentence stems may be given to struggling writers; more able students may be comfortable creating their own graphic organizers.

WHAT TO DO

1. **Discuss the assignment.** Explain that it's much easier to treat students as individuals when they have shared something about themselves and their goals. Ask students to think about how they view themselves, both inside and outside of school. Then ask them to list short- and long-term goals.
2. **Mind-map.** Ask students to graphically represent their lives by using either a web or a time line, both of which are provided on the activity pages. If students use a web, have them place their name in the center circle and write their characteristics, including personality traits, relationships, roles, hobbies, interests, school subjects, and so on in the surrounding circles. Students should be encouraged to add circles



as needed. They should write the goals in a different color so that they're easily visible. If students choose instead to do a time line, have them start with their birth and draw a line plotting the important events in their life so far, including challenges, accomplishments, moves, births and deaths of family members, friendships, and so on. To note goals, they can place the goals at appropriate points in the future on the dotted portion of the time line.

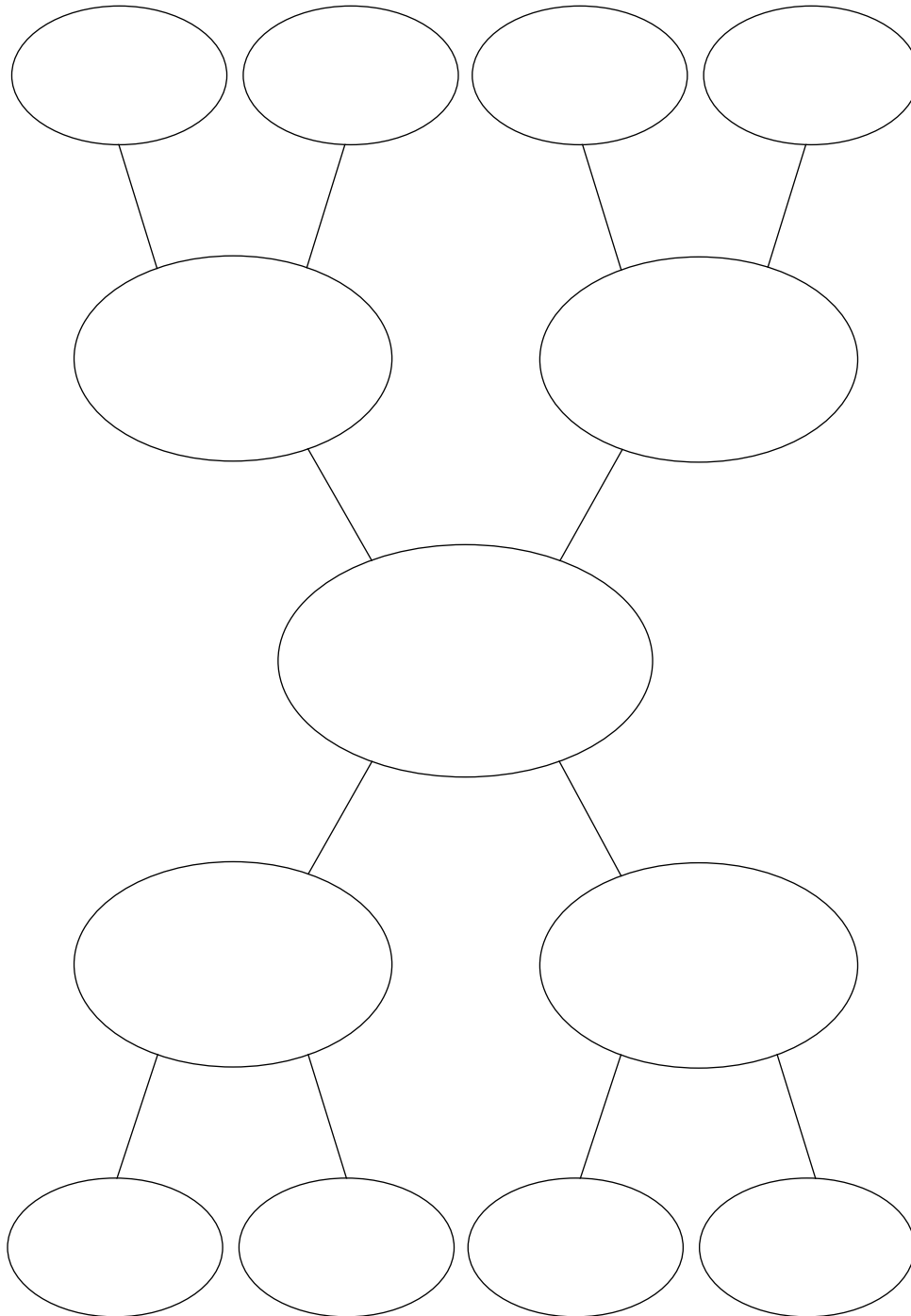
3. **Use web or time line to organize letter.** Using a different colored pen, students should chunk the ideas on their webs or time lines into paragraphs for their letter by drawing circles around everything they want to include in a paragraph.
4. **Draft.** Students should write a draft of their letter, have a peer conference with a partner of their choosing (since these essays will be personal in nature), and make revisions based on peer feedback as well as their own proofreading. The final draft of the letter should be handed in to you.

ASSESSMENT

Because this is writing of a personal nature, it's important to value the students' ideas. Rather than grading this piece, you might write a short letter in reply to the student, discussing how the information he or she provided will help inform your teaching. Of course, the writing will also provide you with a baseline of the student's writing skills.

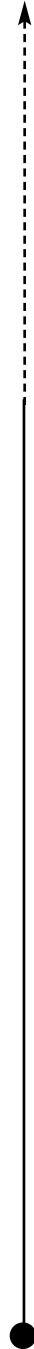
Who You Are, What You Want

Directions: Use the web below to show your teacher how you see yourself. On the web, write your name in the center, then fill in the circles with information about yourself. You might write personality traits, likes and dislikes, relationships, roles, hobbies, and so on. In another color, write some goals you have for yourself in the other circles.



Who You Are, What You Want

Directions: Use the time line below to show your teacher how you see yourself. At the beginning of the time line, write your birth date. Then write important dates and events or accomplishments. On the dotted part of your time line, write future goals and possible dates when you hope to reach them.



Dear Diary



OVERVIEW

Students read a historical novel, list major events from the protagonist's life, research the novel's setting, and produce at least one journal entry from each decade of the character's life.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

1, 2, 4

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

verbal/linguistic, interpersonal

SKILLS

researching, understanding characters and setting, imagining historical events from the perspective of an eyewitness

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

historical novels, computers with Internet access/library

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES

Students may write more or fewer journal entries, depending on the length and the difficulty of the book. Students may vary the depth of research—less able students may draw entirely from events in the book, while more advanced students may choose to do outside research to find out more about the historical time period in which their character lived. Students may work in mixed-ability groups and divide the tasks according to interest. If reading a novel as a whole class, you might also break the class into groups and have each group cover a decade of the character's life.

Visual learners may enhance their entries by drawing their characters at each stage of their life, while kinesthetic learners may do dramatic readings of their journal entries in character, aging as their character does. Students who have difficulty with written assignments might instead present several objects found in their character's attic that symbolize different stages of the character's life.

WHAT TO DO

1. **Discuss setting.** After students have read a novel (historical novels will work best), introduce the idea of setting—the time and place in which a story takes place.

2. **Discuss the assignment.** At the end of this activity, students will have two products: a time line and a diary. Explain that students will make a time line based on events in the book, then add to the time line through research. Finally, they will use the information on the time line to write diary entries from the character's perspective.
3. **Create a time line.** Ask students to fill in a time line of their main character's life, including important events, dates, people, and places from the book they have read.
4. **Research.** Using their preliminary time lines to guide them, students should research the setting of their novel. Less able students could focus on listing the important events in the novel, while more advanced students could also do library research on the historical time period. As an alternative, students could work in small groups and divide up the tasks; some students could choose events and others could research those events. Ask students to add information to their time lines based on their research.
5. **Write.** After gathering information and plotting events on their time line, students should begin journaling on the journal page. They should focus on writing from the perspective of the character at that stage in his or her life—obviously, the voice of a five-year-old would be very different from that of a sixteen- or a sixty-year-old. Encourage students to use lots of sensory images to describe the character's experiences. Remind students to make sure that the character could realistically have been present at the event. For instance, if the character is a chambermaid who never left New England, it would be impossible for her to have witnessed the beheading of Marie Antoinette, even if she lived during the time of the French Revolution. She could, however, read or hear the news in her New England village.
6. **Present.** After finishing the journal, students may read their journal entries to the class or in small groups.
7. **Reflect.** Have students write a journal entry of their own about the experience of stepping into their character's mind. How did it feel to imagine living in that historical time period? What did students learn about the setting of the novel? about the development of the character? If students extended their journal beyond the time frame covered in the book, how did they predict what would have taken place in the character's life?

ASSESSMENT

Students should be evaluated on the accuracy and completeness of their time line. They should be graded on the quality of their journal entries, based on the following rubric. It is a sound idea to discuss the rubric with students before assigning the project so that students know what your expectations are for their work. You may wish to photocopy and distribute the rubric.

Dear Diary Project Rubric

4/EXCELLENT

Diary entries are rich with sensory detail, are factually accurate, and include both historical events and personal experiences for the character. Diary maintains the first person point of view throughout. There are several entries for each decade of the character's life.

3/GOOD

Diary includes some sensory detail, is factually accurate for the most part, and includes a combination of historical and personal experiences from the character's point of view. There may be occasional lapses in first person point of view. There is at least one entry for each decade of the character's life.

2/NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

Diary may retell events without including many sensory details. Some entries may not have basis in events of the book or historical events, or they may be inaccurate renderings of those events. Point of view may be inconsistent. There is one entry for most decades of the character's life.

1/POOR

Diary is a dry listing of events, or it gives an incorrect impression of events. Does not use first person point of view, or uses author's point of view rather than character's. Does not provide an entry for at least half of character's life.

Dear Diary

TIME LINE

Directions: Using the line below, make a time line that begins with your main character’s birth and ends with his or her death. On the time line, write important events that happen in the novel during the character’s lifetime, including both personal and historical events. Include the date and place of each event.

After you have written the main events from the novel, research the setting—time and place—of your novel. Add at least three historical events to the time line, including the date and place of each event.



Random Acts of Poetry



OVERVIEW

Students learn about several different poetry forms and write poems that they place around their school and community. They may also recite poems over the school intercom during morning announcements or at a school assembly.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

verbal/linguistic, musical/rhythmic, intrapersonal

SKILLS

working in a group, memorizing, reciting, writing poetry, analyzing poetry

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

multiple copies of a variety of poems to show poetic forms and conventions

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES

There is a variety of poetic forms available to students of all abilities. Advanced students might try writing sonnets, while students with basic skills could write haiku, acrostic poems, or rhyming couplets. Free verse can be both accessible and highly sophisticated, depending on the subject matter vocabulary.

WHAT TO DO

1. **Brainstorm about poetry.** Start with a class brainstorm of what poetry is. Students are likely to think that poetry always rhymes and has meter, is usually about love, and is hard to understand. On the other hand, students may think that any collection of words can be poetry, that it has no rules or conventions.

After the brainstorm, show students a poem that doesn't fit many of their stereotypes. Ask them to discuss how the poem is different from their expectations. Finally, give students the list of poetry terms on pages 42–43 to help them understand how poets use language.

2. **Read and analyze poems.** Have students break into groups according to ability. Give each group a collection of poems that are challenging but understandable. Ask students to use their glossary of poetry terms to explain how each poem is structured. Then ask them to put the meaning of the poem into their own words, talk about how it makes them feel, and analyze what the poet did to create the feeling of the poem. Have each group complete a poetry discussion sheet on their discussions.
3. **Teach a poem.** Each group should choose one of the poems in their packets and teach it to the large group.
4. **Write poems.** Based on the models in their packets, students should begin drafting their own poems, creating one modeled on each poem in their packets. Small groups can work together to offer writing conferences, using their knowledge of the poems they studied to create group criteria for poems.
5. **Share poems.** When everyone has written their poems, have students place their poems around the school or community. They can be placed on walls, over water fountains, on stairwells, or on bulletin boards.

ASSESSMENT

Students may be evaluated on their group work and on the poems they write. Poetry is somewhat subjective, so it's useful to have students generate criteria for successful poems and use those criteria in your evaluation.

Random Acts of Poetry

LITERARY TERMS/POETIC DEVICES

Directions: Use this glossary to help you analyze and write poems according to your teacher's instructions.

alliteration: repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together

allusion: reference to someone or something that is known in history, religion, or some branch of culture

apostrophe: a technique by which a writer addresses an inanimate object, an idea, or a person who is either dead or absent

assonance: repetition of same or similar vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds, especially in words that are close together

blank verse: verse written in unrhymed iambic pentameter

cadence: natural, rhythmic rise and fall of language as it is normally spoken

caesura: pause or break within a line of poetry

concrete poem: words in a poem arranged on the page to suggest a visual representation of the subject

consonance: repetition of the same or similar final consonant sounds

couplet: two consecutive rhyming lines of poetry

figure of speech: word or phrase describing one thing in terms of another— simile, metaphor, personification, symbol, and so on

free verse: poetry that does not conform to a regular rhyme or meter scheme

hyperbole: exaggeration or overstatement of fact

iamb: a metrical foot made of one short or unstressed syllable and one long or stressed syllable

iambic pentameter: a type of meter in which there are five iambs to a line

(continued)

Random Acts of Poetry

imagery: use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation

incongruity: deliberate joining of opposites or of elements that are not appropriate for each other

internal rhyme: rhyme that occurs within a line of poetry or within consecutive lines

inversion: reversal of normal word order in a sentence or phrase

metaphor: figure of speech making a comparison between two unlike things; can be directly stated, implied, dead, or mixed

meter: pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in poetry

onomatopoeia: use of words whose sounds echo their meaning

oxymoron: figure of speech that combines opposite or contradictory terms in a brief phrase (“sweet sorrow,” “living death,” “deafening silence”)

personification: figure of speech in which an object or an animal is given human characteristics

refrain: word, phrase, line, or group of lines repeated, for effect, several times in a poem

rhyme: similarity in the final sounds of two or more words

simile: figure of speech making an explicit comparison between two unlike things

sonnet: fourteen-line lyric poem, usually in iambic pentameter

tone: attitude a writer takes toward the subject of a work, the characters, or the audience

verse: words written in a rhythmic pattern

Random Acts of Poetry

POETRY DISCUSSION SHEET

Group Members:

Poem and Poet:

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
2. What happens in the poem?
3. What is the tone of the speaker toward the subject of the poem?
4. Does the poem tell a story, describe something, or express a feeling?
5. What is the theme of the poem? What line best expresses the theme?

(continued)

Local Issue Project



OVERVIEW

In small action teams, students discuss local issues in their schools and communities. They decide on a local issue that they'd like to be involved in, research the issue, and launch an education and advocacy campaign.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

4, 7, 8, 11, 12

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, interpersonal, visual/spatial, naturalist

SKILLS

letter writing, researching, speech writing, multimedia presenting, working in groups

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES

Provide students with choices about both the issue they will work for and the means of doing it. Students may use a variety of techniques to research their topics, including local surveys, interviews, library research, and observation. They also have an array of options, including written, spoken, or multimedia tools for presenting their projects. Students may be grouped homogeneously, heterogeneously, or by area of interest.

WHAT TO DO

1. **Discuss the assignment.** Lead a whole-class discussion about the community (either school or city). What do students value about their community? What problems or challenges do they see? You may want to provide examples of people who have made a difference in their communities, either through activism or service, such as Rosa Parks, Mother Teresa, and Cesar Chavez.
2. **Choose an issue.** Before assigning students to groups, provide students with the list of activities on page 52 that they may do for the project. Explain that you will be asking students to set goals, develop plans to meet those goals, and keep track of the work they do.

After breaking into small groups, students decide on a local issue they would like to address, either through community service or through activism. Students might raise money for a local cause, volunteer at a local soup kitchen, or propose a new policy (such as a change in dress code at school, or the creation of a new skate park on the playground).

3. **Generate strategies and develop a contract.** After students have chosen a cause, they develop a contract with you to effect change in their community. They may contract for an A, B, or C, depending on how much work they do, both as a group and as individuals.
4. **Research.** Before taking action, students are responsible for doing enough research to understand their issue.
5. **Make a workable plan.** Groups develop a plan for enacting the change they want to effect.
6. **Implement the plan.** Groups follow their plan to effect change.
7. **Present plan and results.** Groups report on all steps of their project for the whole class.

ASSESSMENT

Use the contract as a basis for assessment. Did the students meet their goals? Did they work well as a group? Did they communicate effectively with all parties involved?

Local Issue Project

CONTRACT

Directions: Follow your teacher's instructions to explore local issues in your school or community. With your group, choose activities from each section of the contract. Break each activity into tasks for individuals to do. Decide what you plan to accomplish and how to do it.

Issue:

Group Members:

Research

Interview school or community members about the issue.

Conduct a survey of classmates or community members.

Search local newspapers for information on the issue.

Attend a school board, city council, or other local meeting and take notes (or watch on local access cable, if available).

Look at other communities' policies on the issue on the Internet.

Plan

Write a proposal to change the policy.

Write a letter to the group in charge, asking for a meeting.

Offer to volunteer your services to an organization.

Develop an education campaign, petition drive, or other action to let people know about your issue.

Implement

Attend a school or community meeting and make your proposal.

Conduct community service, a fund-raiser, a petition drive, or another activity.

Report

Create a PowerPoint presentation.

Write an article, a letter to the editor, or a pamphlet.

Deliver a speech.