

**B.E.S.T.
KNOWLEDGE
READS**



AMONG THE SIERRA NEVADA, CALIFORNIA (1868)

Albert Bierstadt, German, 1830–1902

Oil on canvas

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC



GREAT MINDS



B.E.S.T. Knowledge Reads

KINDERGARTEN-GRADE 8

In addition to careful reading of core and supplementary texts, the *Wit & Wisdom* learning design emphasizes the need for students to read a volume and range of texts for four key purposes:

- 1 To systematically build knowledge and vocabulary through sustained study of a topic
- 2 To address the need for students to both stretch their reading abilities and experience the satisfaction and pleasure of easy, fluent reading by offering a range of texts at different levels of complexity
- 3 To engage and motivate students with opportunities for more knowledge-building texts on module topics
- 4 To provide students with opportunities to use mental habits developed in the Content Stages

The sample texts in the B.E.S.T. standards offer more quality text choices to add to the knowledge students build in each module.

Based on the Content Framing Questions, these B.E.S.T. Knowledge Read questions, sample responses and crucial understandings offer guidance and structure to help teachers apply the Content Framing Questions independently to the B.E.S.T. sample texts.

Time for engaging in these texts is not included in the ninety-minute module lessons, but should be prioritized. Independent work time and Pause Points could be used for such reading, or the reading could be connected to students' work in other disciplines.

GRADE K MODULE 1: *THE FIVE SENSES*

“At the Seaside” by Robert Louis Stevenson

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “At the Seaside”?

Sample Student Responses

- *It's a poem.*
- *It rhymes.*
- *I notice that the speaker is digging.*
- *I wonder who is speaking.*
- *I wonder, “What is a spade?”*
- *I wonder why the speaker in the poem compares the holes she is digging to cups.*

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.K.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understandings

- *The speaker in the poem is digging.*
- *The speaker is on the beach.*
- *The speaker is near the water.*
- *The sea water is filling up the holes as the speaker digs them.*

Reveal: What does looking at rhyme reveal to us? (ELA.K.R.1.4)

Scaffolding Questions

- *What words rhyme?*
- *What do you notice about the rhyming words?*

Crucial Student Understandings

- *Sea rhymes with me.*
- *Cup rhymes with up.*
- *Shore rhymes with more, but there are two lines (stanzas) between shore and more.*

Distill: What is the important message in this text?

Crucial Student Understanding

- *The sea is powerful and fills up the holes the child made on the sand.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of the five senses?

Sample Student Response

- *The speaker is at the sea, feeling the wooden spade and the water rising to fill the holes.*

GRADE 1 MODULE 2: CREATURE FEATURES

The Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Andersen

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about *The Ugly Duckling*?

Sample Student Responses

- *I wonder why the other animals treat the newly hatched duckling poorly.*
- *I notice that the bird was going to give up.*
- *I notice that the bird felt scared.*
- *I notice that when the bird saw the swans, he noticed that they were beautiful.*

Organize: What's happening in this tale? (ELA.1.R.1.1)

Crucial Student Understanding

- *A duckling is treated poorly by others who think he is ugly. The duckling leaves his family and finds a family of swans who accept him.*

Reveal: What does looking at setting reveal to us? (ELA.1.R.3.1)

Scaffolding Questions

- *What is the setting?*
- *How does the author describe the field?*

Crucial Student Understandings

- *The fields are lovely.*
- *There is a lot growing in the fields.*
- *There are haystacks.*
- *"It was lovely summer weather in the country, and the golden corn, the green oats, and the haystacks piled up in the meadows looked beautiful."*

Distill: What is the important message in this text? (ELA.1.R.1.2)

Scaffolding Questions

- *What is the moral of this tale?*

Crucial Student Understandings

- *People should accept themselves for who they truly are.*
- *Do not judge others based on how they look.*
- *We all deserve to find communities where we are loved and respected.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge about animals in fables?

Sample Student Response

- *Some tales have animals as characters with human characteristics. These tales teach a moral or lesson. These fictional stories do not teach us about the creatures as they really are.*

GRADE 2 MODULE 1: A SEASON OF CHANGE

“Gathering Leaves” by Robert Frost

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “Gathering Leaves”?

Sample Student Responses

- *I wonder what the word elude means.*
- *I notice that this is a catchy poem.*
- *I wonder why the poet compares the pile of leaves to mountains.*
- *I wonder if this person is a farmer.*

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.2.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- *A person is gathering old leaves and making piles of leaves in the shed to make room for the harvest.*

Reveal: What does looking at rhyme reveal to us? (ELA.2.R.1.4)

Crucial Student Understandings

- *The poem follows a pattern of rhyme.*
- *The second and the last lines rhyme.*

Distill: What is the important message in this text? (ELA.2.R.1.2)

Scaffolding Question

- *What is the theme of the poem?*

Crucial Student Understanding

- *The process of gathering leaves is hard. At the end, the speaker in the poem has a shed full of dull leaves. The leaves must be gathered for the harvest.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of change?

Sample Student Responses

- *The work of gathering leaves is part of the harvest, part of Earth’s cycle.*
- *Leaves fall every year, in a cycle.*

GRADE 3 MODULE 3: A NEW HOME

“My Doggy Ate My Essay” by Darren Sardelli

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “My Doggy Ate My Essay”?

Sample Student Responses

- It is a poem.
- The poem rhymes.
- The poem has five stanzas.
- The poem is about a dog.
- In the poem the dog cleans a room.
- I wonder if the poem is written by someone who was trying to make up an excuse for not having their homework done.
- I wonder if the narrator’s dog really cleaned the house.

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.3.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understandings

- In this poem the narrator describes how his dog cleaned the narrator’s room. In the beginning of the poem, the dog eats the narrator’s essay. At the end of the poem, we find out that the dog learned how to clean by reading the narrator’s essay “How to Clean My Room.”
- The narrator is trying to convince someone that not only did he write an essay, but his essay was so good it taught his dog how to do human chores. The narrator is making up an excuse because he did not complete his essay.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of poetic type reveal about the poem “My Doggy Ate My Essay”? (ELA.3.R.1.4)

Crucial Student Understandings

- This poem is a rhymed verse poem. I know this because every second and fourth end words rhyme. The poem follows an A-B-C-B rhyme scheme.
- The rhyme gives the poem a playful feeling. The rhyme is used to add humor to the poem.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of the author’s use of personification reveal about how the narrator and the narrator’s parents feel about the dog? (ELA.3.R.3.1, ELA.3.R.1.1)

Crucial Student Understandings

- The author uses personification when he describes the dog doing human tasks such as “fluffed up the pillows” and “swept the floor.”

- *The narrator's dog is very important to the narrator and helps out in difficult situations.*
- *The narrator feels the dog is very smart.*
- *The dog has become so skilled at cleaning, even the narrator's parents are amazed by what the dog can do.*

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text? (ELA.3.R.1.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- *In the poem the narrator demonstrates how humor can be used to help a person out of a tricky situation.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Sample Student Responses

- *This poem builds my knowledge of poetry. I learned that you can use personification in a poem to add humor.*
- *I learned that using rhyme in a poem can make reading a poem fun and help tell a story in a way that is interesting and funny.*

GRADE 3 MODULE 4: ARTISTS MAKE ART

“There Was an Old Man with A Flute” by Edward Lear

WONDER: What do you notice and wonder about “There Was an Old Man with A Flute”?

Sample Student Responses

- It is a poem.
- The poem is very short. It only has one stanza.
- The poem rhymes.
- The poem has one rhyme on the first, second, and fifth lines and a second rhyme on the third and fourth lines.
- The poem is about a man who plays a flute.
- I wonder if the snake was poisonous.
- I wonder if the Old Man was afraid of the snake.
- I wonder if the snake was scared of the flute.

ORGANIZE: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.3.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- In the poem there is a man who is playing a flute. While he is playing a snake slithers into his boot. The man continues to play the flute and ignores the snake. Eventually, the snake runs away.

REVEAL: What does a deeper exploration of poetic type reveal? (ELA.3.R.1.4)

Crucial Student Understandings

- This poem is a limerick. A limerick is a five-line, 1 stanza poem which has one rhyme on the first, second, and fifth lines and a second rhyme on the third and fourth lines. The poem follows an A-A-B-B-A rhyme scheme.
- The rhyme scheme gives the poem a rhythm like a rap or a song. The rhyme is used to make the poem funny, easy to remember, fun to read aloud.

DISTILL: What is the essential meaning of the poem?

Crucial Student Understanding

- The limerick form shows how poetry can be used to entertain and make people laugh.

KNOW: How does this poem build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Sample Student Responses

- *I learned that rhymes can give a poem a rhythm like a rap or a song.*
- *I learned that using rhyme in a poem can make reading a poem fun and help to tell a story in a way that is interesting and funny.*
- *Limericks can bring people together through humor and laughter.*

GRADE 3 MODULE 4: ARTISTS MAKE ART

“Toward Those Short Trees” by Masaoka Shiki

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “Toward Those Short Trees”?

Sample Student Responses

- It is a poem.
- The poem is very short. It only has one stanza, 3 lines.
- The poem does not have rhymes.
- The poem is about a hawk.
- The setting is a Spring day.
- I wonder what the hawk saw.
- I wonder who “we” refers to.
- I wonder if this took place in a field or in the woods.

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.3.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- *The speaker is watching a hawk in nature. The hawk sees something on the ground and flies down into some trees to find it.*

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of poetic type reveal? (ELA.3.R.1.4)

Crucial Student Understandings

- *This poem is a haiku, a type of poem that originated in Japan. A haiku is a three-line poem with seventeen syllables written with a 5/7/5 syllable count.*
- *A haiku often focuses on images or scenes from nature.*
- *Even though the haiku is a simple and direct poem, it can still give the reader a vivid and intense picture of what is happening.*

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text?

Crucial Student Understandings

- *By watching carefully, the speaker captures a moment in nature.*
- *Small moments, such as a hawk descending through the sky, can be beautiful or worth our attention.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Sample Student Responses

- *I learned that a poem can tell a vivid story with only a few words.*
- *I learned that poems do not have to rhyme.*
- *I learned that a poem can paint a picture and still leave room for the imagination.*

GRADE 3 MODULE 4: ARTISTS MAKE ART

“Tula: [‘Books are door-shaped’]” by Margarita Engle

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “Tula”?

Sample Student Responses

- I notice that the poet put the title of the poem in quotation marks and brackets.
- I wonder about Tula. Is Tula the name of the speaker in the poem?
- I wonder how a “portal” carries a person across the ocean.
- I wonder why the speaker’s mother thinks girls who read are ugly.

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.3.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- A girl’s mother stops her from reading, but she knows that her imagination will set her, and others, free.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of the speaker of the poem reveal? (ELA.3.R.1.1)

Scaffolding Question

- How does the speaker develop over the course of the poem?

Crucial Student Understanding

- The speaker imagines characters and settings from books, poems, and plays she is forbidden to read. She discovers, though she is not allowed to read, that ideas and imagination allow her to experience new knowledge.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of the poem type reveal? (ELA.3.R.1.4)

Scaffolding Questions

- What type of poem is this?
- How do you know?

Crucial Student Understandings

- This is a free verse poem.
- It does not have a rhyme scheme. The language has natural pauses and rhythms.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of metaphor reveal? (ELA.3.R.3.1)

Scaffolding Question

- *What is the metaphor in the poem?*

Crucial Student Understandings

- *“Books are door-shaped portals” is an important metaphor in the poem.*
- *The poet describes books as entryways into imaginary worlds that expand our thinking and allow us to escape to places unknown.*

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text? (ELA.3.R.1.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- *No one can restrict our thinking or our imagination. Even when people try to deny knowledge to girls, or any other group, an eager mind is a powerful tool. People can try keep books and ideas locked away, but no one can stop us from imagining and seeking knowledge.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Scaffolding Question

- *How does this text build my knowledge of artists?*

Sample Student Response

- *Writers and poets transport us to across time and space to teach us about what we don't know and to allow us to experience communities and cultures we may never have the chance to see.*

GRADE 4 MODULE 1: A GREAT HEART

“Casey at the Bat” by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “Casey at the Bat”?

Sample Student Responses

- *I wonder: What is a “Ballad of the Republic”?*
- *Who is the “Mudville Nine”? Were they a real baseball team?*
- *Why does the poet call one of the baseball players “a cake”?*
- *Why is the crowd so angry when the umpire calls a strike on Casey?*

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.4.R.1.1)

Scaffolding Question

- *How do the events build over the course of the poem?*

Crucial Student Understanding

- *An eager crowd is watching a baseball game and their team is losing. The crowd has faith that a baseball player named Casey will hit the ball and score. Several players step up to bat and fail. One gets a hit and reaches a base. Then Casey steps up to bat. They want Casey to get a hit so the runner on base can score. Casey is “at ease,” “haughty,” and proud. He’s overconfident and gets two strikes, but the crowd has hope and continues to cheer for him. The tension builds as the umpire calls two strikes. In the end, despite the energy of the fans, the mighty Casey, who was overconfident and smug, disappoints the crowd. He strikes out.*

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of the structure of this poem reveal about the poem’s meaning? (ELA.4.R.1.4)

Crucial Student Understanding

- *The poem is structured to build suspense. Each block of stanzas is a back-and-forth between the batters and the crowd. The reader knows from the beginning that the baseball team is losing and that there is only one inning remaining. The Mudville Nine doesn’t have many chances to come from behind. The poem starts with a focus on the batter, and then the stanzas move the reader from a focus on the batter to a focus on the crowd. The crowd’s energy and emotion rises, until finally, Casey fails at bat, letting the emotional crowd down.*

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text?

Crucial Student Understanding

- *Casey is a “mighty” player who has power over the emotions and responses of the crowd, but he’s arrogant and overconfident, which costs the Mudville Nine, his baseball team, the game.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Scaffolding Question

- How does this text build my knowledge of what it means to figuratively have “great heart?”

Sample Student Response

- *The crowd shows a lot of heart or emotion in their reactions to what is happening on the field. The crowd is passionate, as demonstrated by the descriptions “The rest / Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast” and “from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell.” Casey, on the other hand, does not show great heart. The crowd “saw his face grow stern and cold.” He does not show great heart—and then he pays a price for it.*

GRADE 5 MODULE 4: *BREAKING BARRIERS*

“I, Too” by Langston Hughes

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “I, Too”?

Sample Student Responses

- I notice the poet begins and ends the poem with the same line, changing the verb from “sing” to “am.”
- I notice the speaker describes himself as “the darker brother.”
- I wonder if the speaker is writing during the Jim Crow era.

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.5.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- The speaker, “the darker brother” is sent “to eat in the kitchen / When company comes.” He is segregated because of the color of his skin. However, he keeps his pride and hope that America will reach its promise when he, and all others, will be respected, appreciated, and treated equally.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of the author’s development of the speaker’s perspective reveal? (ELA.5.R.1.3)

Crucial Student Understanding

- The poet begins by singing America, recognizing the speaker’s hope in America’s promise of equality for all. This promise, however, is unrealized by the speaker, who is treated differently because of race. The speaker keeps his hope that America’s promise will be realized, that he will be “at the table,” because he is a part of America’s promise.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of the metaphor of being “at the table” reveal about the poem’s meaning? (ELA.5.R.1.4 and ELA.5.R.3.1)

Crucial Student Understandings

- To be “at the table” represents the rightful place of each American to be equal and included. Being “sent to the kitchen” contrasts with being “at the table” and represents the idea of being segregated from opportunities. Those separating the speaker are turning their backs on the promise that every American has a rightful place “at the table” to access opportunities and to belong.
- The speaker knows that those who deny him equal treatment and respect will “be ashamed.” They have turned their back on the promise of America.

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text? (ELA.5.R.1.2)

Scaffolding Question

- How is the theme of being American developed in the poem?

Crucial Student Understanding

- The speaker embodies America, a nation built on the ideal of one unified people built of many individual perspectives. The poem opens with the speaker singing a song of this promise. Then the speaker describes the reality that this promise is not realized because of his experience with racism. He looks to the future, when he believes the promise of equality will be realized because he is part of America. He is a part of the American promise and holds fast to America's ideal of unity and equity.

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Scaffolding Question

- How does this text build my knowledge of what it means to “break barriers”?

Sample Student Response

- Racism is a barrier for “the darker brother” in the poem. He has hope that he will break the barrier and eventually be treated equally, to have the seat “at the table” the he deserves. He maintains his dignity and his humanity as he is able to “laugh / And eat well, / And grow strong.” He imagines a “tomorrow” when he will break the barrier of being segregated. But he ends the poem in present time, affirming that, already, “I, too, am America”.

GRADE 6 MODULE 1: RESILIENCE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

“Acquainted with the Night” by Robert Frost

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “Acquainted with the Night”?

Sample Student Responses

- I notice that the speaker in the poem is isolated and alone.
- I notice that even though the speaker in the poem encounters another person on the walk, the speaker is alone.
- I wonder if the loneliness and despair of the speaker is because of circumstances like those of The Great Depression.

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.6.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- The speaker in the poem describes a nighttime walk, in the rain, beyond the city lights. When the speaker encounters another person (a watchman) he looks down. When he hears voices, he knows they are not people who are trying to reach out to him, they are not intended to “call me back or say good-bye.” He is totally alone.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of the poetic device of repetition reveal about the poem’s meaning? (ELA.6.R.1.4)

Crucial Student Understanding

- The writer begins and ends the poem with the statement “I have been one acquainted with the night.” Robert Frost uses repetition to show the weariness that the speaker in the poem feels. The refrain of the line “I have been one acquainted with the night” and the repetition of the line “walked out in rain—and back in rain” show that the dark and lonely nights are repetitive in themselves and have made the speaker feel weary, tired, isolated, and alone.

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text? (ELA.6.R.1.2)

Scaffolding Questions

- What theme is developed in the poem?
- How is the theme developed?

Crucial Student Understanding

- The author develops the idea of being isolated as a perhaps inevitable human experience. The speaker is isolated and alone, in contrast to other people. The speaker begins in the rain and in the darkness, beyond “the furthest city light.” The speaker looks down empty streets and avoids contact with others. He describes very intentional movements to keep himself hidden, such as avoiding the watchman’s

eyes and holding still so that others won't hear his footsteps. Making eye contact is one way to connect with others. The speaker begins "acquainted with the night." He is in darkness and alone. He continues to ensure that he remains hidden and alone through the poem, remaining, at the end "acquainted with the night." themselves and have made the speaker feel weary, tired, isolated, and alone.

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Scaffolding Question

- How does this text build my knowledge of resilience?

Sample Student Responses

- The poem suggests that being isolated and "in the darkness" is part of the human experience and that every person must face these feelings alone. The author's use of repetition of "I have" conveys the speaker's familiarity with this experience as the speaker looks back on his life.
- The speaker in the poem tries to find something to comfort him in his loneliness, and even though he does not find it, he shows resolve. He remains alone and searching, but there is resilience in his continued search for connection and for survival as an individual. I wonder whether Americans living in the Great Depression felt this kind of separation from others as they each focused on survival.

GRADE 7 MODULE 3: LANGUAGE AND POWER

“On Women’s Right to Vote” by Susan B. Anthony

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “On Women’s Right to Vote”?

Sample Student Responses

- I notice Anthony begins her speech by directly addressing her “friends and fellow citizens.”
- I notice Anthony quotes the Constitution.
- I wonder why Anthony thinks that situations in which “the Saxon rules the African, might be endured.”

Organize: What is happening in this speech? (ELA.7.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- The speaker has been charged with a crime for casting a vote in the presidential election of 1872 because American women had not secured the right to vote. She is addressing an audience of citizens to make the case that the people of the United States, all the people, form the Union and must have the right to vote. She argues that women and “Negros” are people and citizens, and so all must have the right of citizens to cast a vote.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of diction and syntax reveal about how the speaker establishes and achieves purpose? (ELA.7.R.2.3)

Crucial Student Understandings

- The speaker establishes her purpose through her diction, the choice and use of words and phrases in her speech, and through her syntax, the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences. Anthony’s purpose is to argue that women are citizens of the Union and have the right, afforded in the Constitution of the United States, to vote. She chooses to address her audience as “fellow citizens,” beginning the first sentence of her speech by linking herself and all the women in the audience together as a whole citizenry.
- She goes on to say that when voting she “not only committed no crime, but, instead, simply exercised my citizen’s rights, guaranteed to me.” With this sentence and its arrangement (syntax), Anthony sets up a contrast between voting as a crime when committed by women and voting as the right it truly is for citizens of the United States.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of questioning as a rhetorical device reveal? (ELA.7.R.3.4)

Crucial Student Understanding

- A rhetorical device is a technique used to persuade or influence the audience. Anthony raises the question of her audience, “The only question left to be settled now is: Are women persons?” She closes out her speech with her answer.

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text? (ELA.7.R.2.4)

Scaffolding Questions

- How does Anthony develop her argument?
- What types of reasoning does she use, and how effective are they?

Crucial Student Understanding

- *The essential meaning of this speech is that American women, as citizens of the United States, must have the right to vote. Anthony develops this argument with effective reasoning. Effective reasoning is the ability to create claims and support them with logical evidence. An example of one of the speaker's claims and corresponding evidence: is as follows: Anthony claims that by voting she did not commit a crime. She "simply exercised my citizen's rights, guaranteed to me and all United States citizens by the National Constitution, beyond the power of any state to deny." She then supports this claim with the evidence from the Constitution, that the people of the United States form the Union. Women and others are people. Therefore, as those who form the Union, all people must be able to participate in that formation by voting.*

Know: How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author's craft?

Scaffolding Question

- How does this text build my knowledge of language and power?

Sample Student Response

- *Anthony is a powerful speaker. She questions her situation, in which women are charged with a crime for voting. She develops a strong argument that women are American citizens and the Constitution grants all citizens the right to vote. This speech was one step in the fight for American women to gain suffrage, or to secure the right to vote. This builds my knowledge of how crafting and delivering an effective speech can change society.*

GRADE 8 MODULE 1: THE POWER AND POETICS OF STORYTELLING

“We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks

Wonder: What do you notice and wonder about “We Real Cool”?

Sample Student Responses

- I notice the poet starts the poem with two fragments that identify the subject and the setting of the poem.
- I notice every line ends with “we.”
- I wonder what it means to “sing sin.”

Organize: What is happening in this poem? (ELA.8.R.3.2)

Crucial Student Understanding

- There are seven pool players at a pool hall called “The Golden Shovel.” They have dropped out of school. They stay out late and drink gin. The poem ends with the speaker saying, “We / Die soon.”

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of sound in this poem reveal? (ELA.8.R.1.4)

Crucial Student Understanding

- The rhymes (Lurk late / Strike straight / Sing sin / Thin gin / Jazz June / Die soon) create the sound of a song or of pool cues hitting balls. This direct staccato sound creates a sort of urgent feeling. You get the sense from the sound that this whole situation is an ominous one. The sound of the single syllable words and short lines are almost like drum.

Reveal: What does a deeper exploration of symbols reveal about the poem’s meaning? (ELA.8.R.3.1)

Crucial Student Understanding

- The name of the pool hall is a symbol. A golden shovel might seem luxurious or fancy. You might want one. Like a golden shovel, it might seem luxurious to skip school and drink gin. These teenagers are drawn to this. But a shovel, even if it is plated in gold, is still a tool for digging a hole. Perhaps the poet meant us to consider this symbol because the players are digging themselves into holes, literally (their graves) and figuratively (as they are building no opportunities for themselves).

Distill: What is the essential meaning of this text? (ELA.8.R.1.2)

Scaffolding Question

- What are two themes of the poem, and how are they developed?

Crucial Student Understandings

- *One theme of the poem is the link between education and life. The poem starts with the fact that the seven pool players have not completed school. The poem ends with the prediction that they will “die soon.” This opening and closing of the poem suggest that to have a full life, we must seek knowledge and skills.*
- *A second theme is the conflict between experience and innocence. The pool players are “cool” and rebellious, suggesting they are experienced enough to thwart authority. But their actions and the short but heavy sound of the language reveals that the pool players may not be so sure of themselves. They may even be surprised by the ultimate outcome of their actions.*

Know: : How does this text build my knowledge of ideas, the world, or the author’s craft?

Scaffolding Question

- *How does this text build my knowledge of the power and poetics of storytelling?*

Sample Student Response

- *This is a short, seemingly simple poem, but it carries a strong and heavy message. It builds my knowledge of how poets use language to convey complex ideas, often with the simplest language, artfully arranged.*