



Text Dependent Analysis – Instructional Prompt Guide

Grade 8 Annotated Student Responses Based on the Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions

The Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) grade-span Learning Progressions (LPs) are designed to be used as an instructional tool. The TDA LPs are structured in grade spans (3-5 and 6-8) with four levels, *Beginning*, *Emerging*, *Developing*, and *Meeting*. The levels describe the typical path we see in student responses as the student moves toward demonstrating more sophisticated understanding of analysis. The LPs include descriptions of student work which characterize each level from a beginning TDA writer to one who is meeting the expectations of text dependent analysis essay writing. The TDA LPs can be used by teachers to identify student strengths and needs based on what a student **can** do at a specific point in time. This informs the teacher's instructional decision-making about moving student comprehension, analysis and writing to the next level.

How to Use this Guide

The Text Dependent Analysis Instructional Prompt Guide contains the following sections: text complexity, instructional text-dependent analysis prompt, example proficient student response as written by the teacher, grade-level text, annotated student work, and possible instructional next steps.

- Text complexity includes the quantitative and qualitative measures of the text and the identified reading elements/structure for analysis. This information guides the teacher when choosing appropriate texts for instruction.
- The instructional prompt uses the reading elements as identified in the previous section.



- The example proficient student response, as written by the teacher, reflects the teacher's expectation for an eighth grade student's proficient response to the instructional prompt. This critical step allows the teacher to uncover if the text offers enough evidence and complexity for students to use when responding to the prompt, the appropriateness of the prompt in relation to the text, and to verify the use of the identified reading elements (grade-level curriculum).
- The annotated student responses use the learning progression levels (*beginning*, *emerging*, *developing*, and *meeting*) to identify the student's strengths and areas of need regarding the underlying components of text dependent analysis (*reading comprehension, analysis, and essay writing*).
- The last section following each response provides the teacher with possible instructional next steps to meet the student's areas of need.

| Text Complexity | |
|---|---|
| Text | <i>Caged Bird</i> by Maya Angelou |
| Complexity (Lexile and Qualitative analysis) | Lexile level: 660 (Grade 7; 955-1155) Qualitative level: Moderately complex Note: Although the Lexile score is below grade 7, the meaning/purpose of the text adds to the complexity as there are multiple levels of meaning that are difficult to identify, are subtle and implicit. Additionally, the language features contain abstract and figurative language which may present difficulty for students. |
| Reading Elements/Structure for analysis | Author's word choice/techniques and Theme ¹ |
| Instructional Text Dependent Analysis Prompt | |
| In the poem, <i>Caged Birds</i> , the poet uses descriptive language to describe two birds in different settings. Write an essay analyzing how the poet's descriptions develop the theme of the poem. Use evidence from the poem to support your response. | |
| Example Proficient Student Response as Written by the Teacher | |
| <p>In the poem, <i>Caged Birds</i>, by Maya Angelou, the poet describes two birds in different settings. One bird is free and can do whatever it wants while the other bird is trapped in a cage and cannot do anything but sing, showing that he has hope he will be free one day. The theme of the poem is that even individuals in difficult situations can survive and thrive. This theme is revealed as a result of the poet's descriptive language.</p> <p>The author begins the poem by describing the free bird's setting using words and phrases such as "leaps" and "dips" as it flies and "dares to claim the sky". This descriptive word choice allows the reader to experience the freedom of the open world that is available to the free bird. This description of the free bird first helps the reader visualize the great life the caged bird must have had before it was captured. In contrast, the caged bird's situation is described with words such as "narrow cage", "bars</p> | |



of rage”, clipped wings, and tied feet. The description of the caged bird allows the reader to imagine the restrictive setting that the caged bird is experiencing. Yet, the caged bird still “opens his throat to sing”. Despite this difficult situation that the caged bird is experiencing, the theme that those in a difficult situation can survive and thrive is illustrated.

The descriptive words also provide insight into the characterization of the caged bird. The caged bird’s song is “fearful” and he longs for freedom which is in the distance. The “caged bird sings of freedom” which shows that despite its fear, the tune that is heard in the distance is a song that reveals its hope and its inner strength. These descriptive words show hope where none can be seen that despite its difficult situation, the caged bird can be strong and can survive as the caged bird

The use of words that reflect the lives of the birds allows the reader to see that the caged bird as more than just being a captive. The author uses words such as, “stands on the grave of dreams”, “shadow shouts on a nightmare scream”, yet it still continues to sing in such a way that “his tune is heard on the distant hill.” This description allows the reader to know that this persistence in singing is its answer to fear and the pressures of being caged. These descriptions show strength in adversity and that surviving in a difficult situation can still allow an individual to thrive.

The descriptions of the birds in the poem, *Caged Bird*, allow the reader to understand how the birds symbolize people in difficult situations. Even when individuals face hardships, they can still be survivors who can show resilience and strength. Maya Angelou uses this poem to demonstrate the theme that even individuals in difficult situations can survive and thrive.

Text: *Caged Bird* by Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown





but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

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Student responses are analyzed and annotated for possible instructional next steps based on the Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions.

| Example A | TDA Learning Progression Annotations |
|---|---|
| Student Response | Reading Comprehension: Meeting |
| <p>"The Caged Bird" is by the poet Maya Angelou. Her poem entails the lives of two birds-one that is free and another that is trapped inside its cage. The poet's word choice and figurative language forms the theme of the poem. The theme shown throughout the poem is that 'Having hope fuels perseverance.' (Theme-the central message in a passage; Figurative Language-Language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation.)</p> <p>Reading the stanzas about the caged bird, the one thing he does appears every stanza. "...his wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing. The caged bird sings with a fearful trill of things unknown but longed for still and his tune is heard on the distant hill for the caged bird sings of freedom." The repetition of these two sentences are crucial to the theme of this piece. When reading about the caged bird, the image given by the word choice is cruel and unpleasant. Despite such descriptions, at the end, the caged bird's hope of one day being free is powerful. So powerful that even though he is bound, he uses the last option he has left-his voice- to continue singing of freedom again and again.</p> <p>With the poem focusing on a free and trapped bird-the entire poem is a metaphor for freedom. "A free bird leaps on the back of the wind and floats downstream till the current ends and dips his wing in the orange sun rays and dares to claim the sky." "But a bird that stalks down his narrow cage can seldom see through his bars of rage..." The free bird has freedom given to him and doesn't know the luxury he has. The caged bird on the other hand has not the chance of being free, yet he relies on the hope of freedom to keep him going on to the day that he is able to fly without restraint.</p> <p>To conclude, the poet's choice of words and figurative language helps to develop the theme of "having hope fuels perseverance." The repetition of certain lines and the uses of metaphors really bring home that message. Though, thinking that the poem is solely about birds is thinking from face value. When actually, the birds are also metaphors and represent a person who is trapped and another who is free. While the piece itself doesn't say what kind of 'cage' the bird is in, the cage could be slavery, abuse, or an addiction.</p> | <p>An understanding of the prompt is demonstrated in the introduction by identifying word choice and figurative language as a means of conveying the theme. These expectations are demonstrated throughout the response.</p> <p>Relevant key details (as evidence about the descriptions) are included throughout the essay. The key details support the inferences made about the theme and demonstrate an understanding of the poem.</p> |
| | <p>Analysis: Meeting</p> <p>The student quotes specific lines that appear in two stanzas as text evidence. An insightful inference is made about these lines (<i>the image given by word choice is cruel and unpleasant</i>) and then describes how the caged bird's singing of freedom demonstrates its perseverance. Although this is not specifically stated in the paragraph, the student implies this point by identifying the repetition used by the poet to demonstrate the connection of the word choice to the theme.</p> |



| | <p>The student connects the evidence and inferences to the theme through the elaboration; however, the explanation is somewhat lacking in clarity and coherence. In other words, the student makes assumptions that the person reading their essay would know which words they are trying to draw out to convey the theme. This is evident in the last paragraph where the student references the poet's choice of words and figurative language but does not provide explicit evidence. Although there are inconsistencies in drawing coherent connections, the student provides an insightful analysis.</p> | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| | <p>The final paragraph includes an insightful generalization through the description of the birds representing people and the ways in which “caged” can be interpreted. This metaphor could have been further developed throughout the essay.</p> | |
| | <table><tr><th>Essay Writing: Meeting</th></tr><tr><td><p>The student provides a coherent organizational structure that moves beyond formulaic writing. The purpose is clearly stated through the thesis statement and these points flow throughout the essay. The conclusion restates the thesis and provides a final insight (metaphor of birds).</p></td></tr></table> | Essay Writing: Meeting |
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Academic and subject specific vocabulary is included and is pertinent to the essay allowing for comparisons and explanations to clarify the student's analysis.

Possible Instructional Next Steps:

The focus for instruction should help students move along the Learning Progression continuum. This student demonstrates that s/he is meeting in the underlying expectations of reading comprehension, analysis and essay writing. The student would continue to benefit from deepening their analysis through their explanation and elaboration. The following suggestion will help the student continue with this skill.

1. Instructing for deepening the explanation and elaboration requires students to provide insight that demonstrates a depth of comprehension and critical thinking. Teach students how the textual nuances used by authors matter and how they are a mirror to the world. A possible strategy for breaking down the steps of literary analysis includes:

- Identify a quote from a text that is significant for the meaning of a theme, character, or other literary element that is the focus for a text dependent analysis prompt.
- Provide students with the quote and have them brainstorm ideas about the quote and to free write their thoughts about it.
- Draw the students' attention to specific words in the quote and how they affect meaning. Students free write about why they think those words are significant and what denotations and connotations each word has for them.
- Ask the students to identify any significant moves they see the writer make in the quote, such as tone shifts, patterns, literary strategies or devices. Students then free write examples of one or two of these literary techniques, label them, and explain their effect on the meaning in the quote.
- Help students to understand that the literary analysis allows for a generalization. Have students generate how the quote connects to the outside world or other texts or provide them with connections. Students then explain how the connections might contribute to their understanding of the meaning of the quote.
- Model how to create a well-organized literary analysis essay by using the information from this process.



| Example B | TDA Learning Progression Annotations |
|---|--|
| Student Response | Reading Comprehension: Meeting |
| <p>In the poem "Caged Birds" by Maya Angelou the poet describes to birds but in different settings .It is about one bird is free and can do whatever it wants while the other bird is trapped in a cage and can not do anything but sings showing that he has hope he will be free one day .The theme is having hope in difficult situations .</p> <p>The caged bird has hope even though he is in a difficult situation which is him being trapped . " his bars of rage his wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing ". This quote shows that the bird is trapped and has no way to escape . Since he is trapped he sings because he is hanging on to the hope that someday he will be freed . It shows that it is possible to have hope in difficult situations . It represents people who are able to find the joy out of the things . People who see the glass half full rather than people who see the glass half empty . The bird is trapped but it looks on the brightside hoping that one day it will be free .</p> <p>The cage bird has more of a meaning than just birds being trapped . It shows personification on the bird and how the bird wishes to be free but the hope keeps him from giving up ."The caged bird sings with a fearful trill of things unknown but longed for still and his tune is heard on the distant hill for the caged bird sings of freedom free of everything rather than having things way you done or keeping you from being freed . " The personification is birds are not able to sing like actual humans . The noise they do make is more of a chirp that is very pleasant . The hope drives the bird because like a human the bird uses hope to build the strength to sing even if you are scared or just a little bit unsure on the situation . It shows more symbolization of the birds because they represent people who are free and do not have problems with worrying or having to be freed versus people who are trapped , scared , but still hang on to every ounce of hope they have .</p> <p>In conclusion the birds do not represent only birds. They represent people who are hanging on to hope in any difficult situation they might be in . Also you can look on the brighterside of things more than looking at it as a complete disaster . The bird shows that he looks at the glass half full while holding on to the hope he has . Maya Angelou makes this poem to represent a deeper meaning . She uses it to show that people who are trapped hold onto hope because it may be the only thing they have .</p> | <p>An understanding of the prompt is demonstrated throughout the response by identifying specific stanzas and forms of figurative language that are used by the poet to convey the theme of the passage.</p> <p>A one-sentence summary is included in the introduction. Key details about the descriptions are provided as evidence. The student connects the evidence to the inferences in order to demonstrate an understanding of the text.</p> |
| | <p>Analysis: Developing</p> <p>The quotes included as text evidence are generally relevant to the theme. The student quotes full stanzas. Since this is a poem in which every word is significant, the student would benefit from narrowing the evidence to a word or phrase that best depicts the language and theme used by the author.</p> <p>The student makes inferences about the selected evidence. Irrelevant information is also included which distracts from the analysis. For example, in the second body paragraph the student quotes the third stanza and explains that the description</p> |



| | |
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| | <p>is about personification (<i>the personification is birds are not able to sing like actual humans. The noise they do make is more of a chirp that is very pleasant. The hope drives the bird because like a human the bird...</i>).</p> <p>The student generally draws a connection between the text evidence and inferences through some elaboration; however, the explanation is lacking in clarity and coherence. In other words, the student makes assumptions that the person reading the essay would know which words the student is trying to draw out in order to convey the theme. Although there are inconsistencies in drawing coherent connections, the student provides an insightful analysis, including generalizations (e.g., <i>represent people who are free...</i>, <i>shows that he looks at the glass half full...</i>).</p> |
| | <p>Essay Writing: Emerging/Developing</p> <p>The organization is generally coherent and contains multiple paragraphs which focus on the descriptions used by the poet and how they reveal the theme.</p> <p>Transitions from one sentence to the next within the paragraphs are lacking which makes it difficult to follow the student's connections between the evidence and inference,</p> |



and the explanation and elaboration. Although the student uses academic vocabulary (personification, symbolization) they are not grammatically correct within the response.

Possible Instructional Next Steps:

The focus for instruction should help students move along the Learning Progression continuum. This student demonstrates that s/he is meeting the underlying expectation for reading comprehension, emerging/ developing for essay writing, and emerging for analysis. The instructional focus for this student should be to strengthen the ability to analyze text, and more specifically, to provide clear inferences related to the selected evidence and to fully connect the evidence and inferences about the reading elements through a clear explanation and elaboration². Additionally, the student demonstrates a basic writing structure and style for grade eight and would benefit from additional instruction. The following suggestions will help the student move along the continuum.

- 1. Selecting strong evidence** will allow for a clear connection between the two elements/ structure identified in the prompt. This requires modeling and practice. Teachers should begin by explaining to students that accurate and precise evidence allows others to see how it specifically connects to the prompt without rereading large sections of text. During instruction, as students provide evidence from a passage, the teacher will want to pose questions such as:

- *Which specific word(s) in that quote make you think about the theme (or reading element)?*
- *Can you explain how the word(s) or sentence shows or supports this idea?*
- *How does the quote specifically illustrate the theme (or reading element) that is being analyzed?*

After students have selected evidence from a reading, they should have an opportunity to engage in collaborative discussions to come to consensus about which word(s)/sentence(s) specifically support the prompt.

- 2. Instructing for explanation and elaboration** requires moving students beyond the “*this shows that*” or, in this case, making statements that seem to be disconnected from each other. One way to help students connect their reasoning is to teach them how elaboration answers questions for the reader. Providing students with a list of questions that focus on elaboration will help them deepen their analysis and make these necessary connections between statements. Examples could include the following, but should be established based on the expectations of the prompt:

- *Why do you think the author included that information?*
- *Why do you think that is so?*
- *What are some typical characteristics and behaviors you would expect of _____?*
- *What would you expect to happen if _____?*





3. Instructing students on the use of skillful transitions, both at the beginning and within the paragraph, will create writing that is smooth and fluent. This writing instruction can begin with generating a list of transitions, clarifying their use (transition words to help move the reader from one thought to another, from one idea to another), and explaining the purpose of different types of transitions. Examples of transition words can include:

| Examples of Possible Transition Words/Phrases (not grade level specific) | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| Adding information | Giving examples/clarifying | Showing a contrast | Showing a comparison/similarity | Showing a time sequence | Showing a cause/effect |
| Giving more information | Stating an example | How something is different | How something is the same | Time order that something occurs | Results of some action |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • and • not only... • but • also • moreover • furthermore • in addition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for example • for instance • specifically • in particular • the first example is • the second example is | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • but • however • on the other hand • otherwise • instead • in contrast • although | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • likewise • similarly • in the same way • just as • as • too • again • thus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first • second • finally • in conclusion • in summary • meanwhile • to sum up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • so • as a result • therefore • thus • as a consequence • consequently |

<https://www.sausd.us/cms/lib5/CA01000471/Centricity/Domain/106/7th%20transitions.pdf>

The teacher can provide students with a paragraph that has underlined basic transitions. Students work together to replace these transitions with more sophisticated words. Students share their selections and explain why the new sophisticated transitions improve the flow of the paragraph.



| Example C | TDA Learning Progression Annotations |
|--|---|
| Student Response | Reading Comprehension: Meeting |
| <p>The poem, "Caged Bird" written by Maya Angelou, is about a free bird and the struggles of a caged bird telling the reader about the differences in their lives. In this poem, Angelou uses vivid descriptions to develop it and its impact upon the reader. This poem teaches the reader that some people have it better than others and everyone needs to find their own happiness.</p> <p>As one group of stanzas states, "A free bird leaps on the back of the wind and floats downstream." In this it shows that the bird with the freedom has no worries and no idea what captivity is like. This bird has it the best out of the two and has almost unlimited ways to find happiness.</p> <p>As another stanza says, "But a bird that stalks down his narrow cage can seldom see through his bars of rage his wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing." This shows the other side of the story where the bird is stuck living a life of pain and misery. This bird has to do the little things it can do to stay happy which is to sing.</p> <p>Another example is when the poem says, "But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams." This means that the bird in captivity has almost zero chances to change its life or to do what it wants to. That bird also has no chance of escaping its imprisonment. But the captive bird still tries to find ways to enjoy itself by doing the only thing it can do, which is singing for everyone to hear.</p> <p>In the poem "Caged Bird" written by Maya Angelou it tells the story of two total opposites. One of them being free and the other being held captive. Angelou then uses exemplary descriptions to develop the poem and its impact upon the reader. This poem uses comparisons of the two birds as one being a slave and the other a free person able to do whatever they want.</p> | <p>An understanding of the prompt is demonstrated throughout the response by identifying the word choice and explaining its meaning relative to the evidence and passage.</p> <p>Relevant words/sentences as evidence are included throughout the essay. The key details support the inferences made about the theme and demonstrate an understanding of the text. However, the theme statement provided (<i>some people have it better than others and everyone needs to find their own happiness</i>) is somewhat superficial for this poem.</p> <p>Analysis: Developing/Meeting</p> <p>Although the student provides relevant evidence from the poem (<i>But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams.</i>), and appropriate, inferences (<i>This means that the bird in captivity has almost zero chances to change its life or to do what it wants to. That bird also has no chance of escaping its imprisonment.</i>), the explanation and elaboration only partially explain the meaning of the descriptive language relative to the theme (<i>But the captive bird still finds ways to enjoy itself by doing the only thing it</i></p> |



| | |
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| | <p><i>can do, which is singing for everyone to hear</i>). This statement which serves as the analysis does not fully explain how the selected words demonstrate the theme. The lack of a thorough explanation also stems from the superficial theme selected for this poem.</p> <p>Additionally, providing a generalization would allow for a deeper analysis.</p> |
| | Essay Writing: Developing/Meeting |
| | <p>The organization is coherent and contains multiple paragraphs which focus on the poet's word choice.</p> <p>Basic transitions are used from paragraph to paragraph (<i>As one group, As another, Another example</i>) and repetitive sentence beginnings are used within the paragraphs (<i>In this it shows..., This means...</i>).</p> <p>The grammar and spelling are appropriate.</p> |



Possible Instructional Next Steps:

The focus for instruction should help students move along the Learning Progression continuum. This student demonstrates that s/he is emerging in the all the underlying expectations – reading comprehension, analysis, and essay writing. Therefore, the instructional focus for this student should be moving the student from emerging to developing in each of these areas². The following suggestions will help the student move along the continuum.

- 1. Teaching students how to determine the theme** will help to deepen the students understanding of the theme. In this case, the student has determined a theme statement, rather than simply providing a topic; however, the one provided misses the deeper meaning of the poem. One way to help students understand how to determine a theme statement could begin with:
 - Read a text with the students and have them generate topics about the text (e.g., survival, love, trust, risk)
 - Model the writing of a statement about the topic based on the text, such as *The poet believes that individuals in difficult situations can survive and thrive*. This statement should not include the specific characters.
 - Finally, the theme statement is drawn from eliminating the first several words so that the theme statement is: *Individuals in difficult situations can survive and thrive*.
 - Students need to know that theme statements should not be vague or generic (e.g., survival is important).
 - After modeling, pair students to generate their own theme statement from the topics that have been generated.
- 2. Instructing for explanation and elaboration** requires moving students beyond *this means*. Often students provide an explanatory statement that helps explain the meaning of the evidence but lacks one or two additional statements that elaborate upon the meaning of what is being analyzed. Teach students the meaning of elaboration and how it answers questions for the reader. Providing students with a list of questions that focus on elaboration will help them deepen their analysis. Examples could include the following, but should be established based on the expectations of the prompt:
 1. *Why do you think the author included those specific words (e.g., grave of dreams, nightmare screams)?*
 2. *What do those specific words imply?*
 3. *What do those words tell you about the caged birds?*
 4. *How do the actions of the caged birds explain the theme identified?*

In this case, asking these questions will allow the students to construct a stronger elaboration. The teacher asks the questions above to guide student responses that may include the following:



As one stanza states, *But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams*. Explanation...This means that the bird in captivity has almost zero chances to change its life or to do what it wants.

Elaboration...

1. The bird has no chance of escaping its imprisonment.
2. The words used by the author, *grave of dreams* and *nightmare screams*, imply isolation and fear compared with freedom.
3. But the captive bird still finds ways to enjoy itself by doing the only thing it can do, which is singing for everyone to hear.
4. The final words of the stanza, *so he opens his throat to sing*, emphasizes the theme that despite the isolation of the caged birds, they still seek to find their own happiness.

3. Instructing students on the use of skillful transitions, both at the beginning and within the paragraph, will create writing that is smooth and fluent. The teacher informs students that transitions are words or phrases that are like a bridge between ideas. Transitions keep the reader from getting lost and confused. Transition words and phrases can act as “bridges” by:

- helping lead the reader to the next event (Suddenly, Immediately)
- alerting the reader that additional information is forthcoming to support what has already been stated (Next... then...)
- introducing a contrasting idea (But, However, On the other hand)

The teacher can begin by introducing a piece of text without transitions. For example, in the following piece of student writing about the *Secret Communication of Wolves* the transitions have been removed.

Much communication is done through body language. Postures have been evolved to reduce conflict and aggression among pack members. Facial expressions are the most obvious. Bared teeth with ears erect and pointed back can indicate a threat by a dominant male. A closed mouth, slit-like eyes, and ears pulled forward (and close to their head) will indicate subordinate behavior. Wolves use their tail position to communicate emotion. Threatening wolves hold their tails high, almost perpendicular. Submissive wolves lower themselves before dominant pack members. Lower class members have their tails tucked between their legs. A wolf that has been defeated in a fight can avoid being attacked by its victorious companion by taking a posture like a pup begging for food.

During the first round, groups of students are provided with commonly used transitions such as:

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
| <i>Also</i> | <i>Meanwhile</i> | <i>Next</i> |
| <i>Suddenly</i> | <i>Then</i> | <i>Many</i> |
| <i>Lastly</i> | <i>While</i> | <i>First</i> |



and are asked to determine which transitions should be used and why.

A second round is conducted in which students are provided with more complex transitions such as:

Consequently

Most likely

Immediately

Moreover

Generally

Similar to

Initially

Such as

In contrast

and are asked to determine which transitions should be used and why.

A third round can be conducted in which students are provided with a wide variety of transition words and are asked to enhance the paragraph.



| Example D | TDA Learning Progression Annotations |
|--|---|
| Student Response | Reading Comprehension: Beginning |
| <p><i>Caged Bird</i>, a poem by the late Maya Angelou, shows a theme in the story. In this story, we find out that the theme is Freedom and Imprisonment. There are many ways to identify the theme of a story, and the following will show a few examples on how to find such a thing.</p> <p>One way <i>Caged Bird</i> shows its theme is by its plot. The poem is about a bird that is locked inside a cage, where it is held prisoner to not only within the cage, but its own abilities as well. The bird constantly trills, or tweets, as it yelps for help, in a way that a human cries or a dog howls. This can be shown in the quote:</p> <p><i>"The caged bird sings with a fearful trill of things unknown but longed for still and his tune is heard on the distant hill for the caged bird sings of freedom."</i></p> <p>By the end of the poem, the bird still remains stuck within its own boundaries, and the reader is left with no positive conclusion, and the bird remains trapped in its prison.</p> <p>Another way <i>Caged Bird</i> shows its theme is by the tone of the story. The tone in the story is very depressing. The way the story describes the bird's burden is very dull. It also shows a transition from the bright world the free bird experiences from its own eyes. Then it cuts to the burden of a life the caged bird is forced to deal with in the story. This can be shown in the following excerpt:</p> <p><i>"A free bird leaps on the back of the wind and floats downstream till the current ends and dips his wing in the orange sun rays and dares to claim the sky."</i></p> <p><i>But a bird that stalks down his narrow cage can seldom see through his bars of rage his wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing."</i></p> | <p>The student identifies that theme is to be analyzed; however does not acknowledge the second element of description (word choice or figurative language). Rather the student states that the theme is shown by the plot, tone, and character (protagonist). Additionally, the student identifies the theme as a topic (<i>Freedom and Imprisonment</i>) rather than a statement specific to this poem and related to the topic provided.</p> <p>The described meaning of the poem contains inaccuracies and misconceptions demonstrating a weak understanding of the deeper meaning of the poem.</p> |
| | <p>Analysis: Developing</p> <p>The entire poem is included in the response; therefore, it is unclear which words contribute to the theme of the passage. Since this is a poem in which every word is significant, the student would benefit from narrowing the evidence to a word or phrase that best depicts the language and theme used by the author.</p> <p>The first body paragraph provides a summary of the poem and includes an inference (<i>where</i></p> |



| | |
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| | <p><i>it is held prisoner to not only within the cage, but its own abilities as well</i>); however it is unclear which part of the stanza led the student to make this inference and no explanation is provided to elaborate on its contribution to the theme. Additionally, the student provides unnecessary information (<i>in a way that a human cries or a dog howls</i>).</p> <p>A final statement is made at the end of the paragraph in an attempt to analyze; however, it is somewhat disconnected and superficial (<i>no positive conclusion, and the bird remains trapped in its prison</i>).</p> <p>Similar patterns of writing can be seen in the following paragraph in which the student makes a variety of disconnected statements about the tone of the poem and provides two stanzas as a means of proving these inferences.</p> <p>Definitions of protagonist and antagonist are provided with specific phrases to illustrate these character types. However these are unrelated to the expectations of the prompt.</p> <p>The final body paragraph provides specific evidence of a theme related to Representation of Imprisonment; however no inferences, and</p> |
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| | consequently, no explanation and elaboration are provided. |
| | <p>Essay Writing: Developing</p> <p>A basic organizational structure is used in which the introduction identifies the text and acknowledges the prompt.</p> <p>Each paragraph focuses on specific text evidence in an attempt to support the expectations of the prompt.</p> <p>Appropriate transitions are used at the beginning of paragraphs. Transitions within the paragraph would strengthen the flow of ideas.</p> <p>The grammar and spelling are appropriate.</p> |
| <p>Possible Instructional Next Steps:</p> <p>The focus for instruction should help students move along the Learning Progression continuum. This student demonstrates that s/he is beginning in the underlying expectations for reading comprehension and analysis, and developing for writing. Therefore, the instructional focus for this student should be moving the student from beginning to emerging in reading comprehension and analysis². The following suggestions will help the student move along the continuum.</p> <p>1. Comprehending the entire text requires teaching students comprehension strategies. Teaching students to briefly summarize the text can be an effective comprehension strategy. Using the gist strategy will help students identify overall meaning of the text and make connections across the text.</p> <p>Teachers guide students step-by-step through a gist strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read one stanza with the class. • Students identify the most important idea(s) in the poem. • Share and provide feedback. Students justify their selections. • Students identify the most important information about the ideas. | |



- Students write a gist in 10 words or fewer. Display several student gists and provide feedback. Use this time to teach students how to evaluate and improve their gist statements.
- Ask students why they believe their gist contains the most important information.
- Guide students toward overall comprehension using the graphic below.

Which of the two birds is the most important to focus on in this poem?



Why is that bird the most important?



What is the poet's overall meaning of the poem considering the most important bird identified?

2. Teaching students how to determine the theme starts with ensuring that students know the difference between a topic and a theme statement. Theme is a difficult concept to grasp. Unlike the concreteness of setting or plot, theme is subtle and subjective. *11 Essential Tips for Teaching Theme in Language Arts* by Dana Truby suggests ways to help students understand how to determine a theme statement. Listed below are five of the essential tips posted on the We are Teachers website.

- Plan a reading lesson with discussion around a question that students may already be grappling with, such as *What does it mean to be a good friend?* or *What is heroism?* Connecting literature themes to character development and students' lives will allow discussions to resonate deeply with students. One goal with teaching theme, explains Jodi Libretti of the Great Books Foundation, is to encourage students "not only to think about ways that they can live, but the type of person they want to become."
- Before students can identify and work with the theme of a story, they need to have a strong grasp of the details, especially character and plot, as well as other techniques used by authors, such as symbolism. When working with theme, students need to synthesize all that information into an overarching message.
- Clarify the difference between theme and main idea. Many students have difficulty differentiating between the main idea and the theme. The theme is the underlying message that the author wants to convey, whereas the main idea is what the story is mostly about. Teach these concepts separately and together. You might practice identifying themes and main ideas using Pixar shorts or the stories your students read in previous years in order to have a common reference point. After you review as a class, give students a list of themes and main ideas and challenge them to work in pairs to determine which provides the author's message and which is a statement about the story.



- Move from the simpler to more complex as students deepen their understanding of theme. Invite students to work in groups to identify the theme of a fairy tale. Next, have students change the ending to the tale in different ways and work together to identify how the new ending affects the theme. Finally, have students write their own plots to match a given theme.
- Throughout lessons related to theme, ask essential questions that are open-ended, thought-provoking, and important in helping students develop their understanding of the theme. Questions like *Why do people behave honestly?* and *What makes a good friend?* are ones that you can return to throughout the year to analyze how students answer.

<https://www.weareteachers.com/11-tips-for-teaching-about-theme-in-language-arts/>

3. Selecting strong evidence will allow for a clear connection between the two elements/structure identified in the prompt. Students know that they need quotes from the text; however, they often select superficial or unrelated quotes, or in this case they do not select the specific words and phrases that best illustrate their claim. Explain to students that text evidence is proof that their claim is accurate. During instruction, as students provide evidence from a passage, the teacher will want to pose questions such as:

- *Which specific word(s) in that quote make you think about the theme (or reading element)?*
- *Can you explain how the word(s) or sentence shows or supports this idea?*
- *How does the quote specifically illustrate the theme (or reading element) that is being analyzed?*

After students have selected evidence from a reading, they should have an opportunity to engage in collaborative discussions to come to consensus of which word(s)/sentence(s) specifically support the prompt. There are various structures that can be employed for collaborative discussions. One example, *Concentric Circles*, has “students in two circles, one inside circle and one outside circle. Each student on the inside is paired with a student on the outside, facing each other. In this case, students are asked to discuss the first question identified above. The pairs of students discuss their responses with each other. Then the teacher signals students to rotate – students on the outside circle move one space to the right so they are standing or sitting in front of a new person. The teacher poses the second question and the process is repeated” (<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/>). The teacher may pose as many questions as appropriate allowing students to discuss the evidence necessary to explain the elements being analyzed.



4. Making inferences about the evidence and ensuring an understanding of how the description conveys the theme requires teaching the student to look for relationships between word choice and theme. Although the student has provided evidence and inferences it is unclear how and why the student made these inferences. Provide students with a thinking organizer to select specific evidence, make an inference about the evidence, and explain its meaning relative to the other reading element. The teacher then models for students how to take the organizer information to construct a clear explanation of what the text means relative to the reading elements.

| Explicit Evidence | Inference | SO WHAT? |
|--|---|---|
| <i>His wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing.</i> | The caged bird is treated cruelly and is in a terrible situation yet it still finds joy in singing. | <i>The seeking of joy by the caged bird conveys the theme that having hope allows for survival and being able to thrive despite difficult situations.</i> |

5. Instructing for explanation and elaboration requires students to know that the purpose of elaboration is to support and develop the main points. Two elements are necessary for elaboration – *sufficiency* and *relatedness*. *Sufficiency* is the amount of detail – is there enough detail to support the topic? *Sufficiency* requires enough detail that is adequate and offers strong support. However, sufficiency is not enough. The power of the elaboration is determined less by the quantity and more by the quality. *Relatedness* means that the details used must be relevant and substantial to support the analysis. In other words, elaboration is telling the reader more by using elaboration strategies. These strategies include:

- Examples – specific information about an idea;
- Definitions – statements that define the meaning of the reading elements;
- Commentary – explanation of how the example demonstrates the reading elements;
- Generalization – connecting the evidence and commentary to a broader idea that is applied to a other situations.

<https://unc.academia.edu/KathleenCali>

<https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-elaboration-writing-739396>

6. Instructing students on the use of skillful transitions, both at the beginning and within the paragraph, will create writing that is smooth and fluent. This writing instruction can begin with asking students to share their own definition of transition with the teacher recording their responses. Definitions will vary but most can be applied to writing. Helping students create their own understanding of transitions will help to facilitate their importance in writing. *Teaching Transitions in Writing: Tips for Helping High School Students Write Coherently with Better*





Transitions by Trent Lorcher suggests ways to help students understand transitions in writing. Below is an example of a lesson posted on the *Bright Hub Education* website.

- 1) Explain that transitions have different functions. Instruct students to copy down the following examples of how transitions in writing function.
 - to show time – *one day later...*
 - to clarify cause and effect – *as a result...*
 - to show location – *to the right...*
 - to introduce examples – *for example...*
 - to add more information – *in addition...*
 - to contrast information – *otherwise...*
 - to conclude – *in conclusion...*
 - to compare – *much like...*
- 2) Give students a writing sample, one with good transitions.
- 3) Instruct students to identify transitions and the function they serve. This is best done in groups of 3-4.
- 4) Discuss answers.

Discussion about transition includes:

- Good writing presents and connects ideas in a clear, logical manner.
- When used appropriately (please emphasize when used appropriately; otherwise, transitions bog down the reader—ironic, you must agree), transitions clarify connections for the reader and make writing coherent.
- Effective transitions are more than just a list of words your middle school teacher gave you.

<https://www.brighthubeducation.com/high-school-english-lessons/11377-teaching-transitions-in-writing/>

¹ See TDA Series: Close Reading lesson for instructing students in comprehending and analyzing the text, *Caged Bird*.

² See TDA Series: Replacement Unit for instructing grade 8 students on understanding word choice and theme.

