

Learning Guide 6: Choosing your Core Text

English Inquiry Unit with Mrs. Carmichael

“Inquiry” has been described as a seeking for truth, information or knowledge by asking deep and meaningful questions.

Your inquiry unit allows you to read a major work, a dramatic work, essays, short stories and poetry on a common theme, subject or idea. As you read, you are going to formulate a BIG QUESTION. A Big Question has no simple or easy answer, but is still worth considering and working on. The process of considering a big question helps us to understand ourselves and the world we live in, even if we never find a single true “answer”.

THIS IS NOT A SELF-PACED UNIT. One of the things I would like you to learn is time management, and this does NOT mean handing in rushed work at the end of a course. Each of your assignments will have a due date. You may, of course, work ahead and submit assignments early.

First, you will need to find your “core text”. This will be a novel or a non-fiction narrative that is book length. As you read through your core text, you will complete 5 reader responses. This will help you organize and remember the ideas that occur to you as you read. A list of good choices can be found on the FKSS website. You may choose another book, but I would like you to “stretch” yourself and choose a book that is just a little more difficult than something you would read on your own for pleasure. Any book that is not on the list must be approved by your teacher.

As you read, you will need to develop an inquiry question. A good inquiry question:

- requires thought and revision to create. Your first idea for a question is unlikely to be your final idea.
- has more than one answer
- has a very deep meaning
- requires a lot of information to create a response
- doesn't have a yes or no answer
- takes effort and time to respond to
- is a question you care about exploring

In addition to your core text, you will also be responsible for reading or viewing a piece of drama (movie, play, or script); at least three prose selections; and a selection of three poems that all have something to do with your question. You will complete an assignment on each of them.

Near the end of the course, you will have two major assignments to complete to demonstrate how you have been able to put your ideas together. The first is called a personal essay. A personal essay is much like any other literary response, except that you can use “I” in your writing, and you focus on your own learning and response.

The second is where you “share your learning” with the class in some sort of project. This can be a presentation, a web page, a film, creative writing, a combination of things, or your own idea. It should represent about three solid weeks of work.

Your core text and reader responses

Your core text must be:

- a) book length
- b) at a grade-appropriate reading level
- c) have enough thematic meaning to support an important and meaningful inquiry question
- d) be on the pre-approved list, or approved by your teacher.

Before you begin reading, divide your novel into approximately 5 sections. The easiest way to do this is to take the total number of pages, divide by 5, and then look for logical places to stop and write your reflection near these divisions. For example, let's pretend your book is 600 pages long. Six hundred divided by five is 120 pages. Get a sticky note and put it at the end of a chapter, or other logical place, that is around page 120, then another at page 240, then near 360 and 480. The last reflection will be at the end of the book. Reader Response 0 is based on the first chapter or first 10 pages of your book, whichever works for you.

Although all of your reader responses and your Big Question will count as learning guide 6, your responses need to be handed in as you go, so that I can see that you are on track. Here are the due dates:

	Due	This will be pages . . .
Reader Response 0 (practice)	March 6, 2018	Completed in class (about the first chapter)
Reader Response 1	March 9, 2018	To page
Reader Response 2	March 27, 2018	
Reader Response 3	March 29, 2018	
Reader Response 4	April 3, 2018	
Reader Response 5	April 9, 2018	To the end of the book.

"Big Question": Due March 29

Reader Responses

Don't forget to put the following at the top of every reader response. It is really hard for me to give you the right credit without this.

- your name
 - Reader Response #
 - Your novel
1. What is one quote from this section of the novel worth sharing? (Write down the quote, and Make sure you include the page number.) (2 marks)
 2. Why did you choose this quote? (Two or three sentences. Don't forget to make your point, and then explain what you mean.) (3 marks)
 3. What was the **most important** or memorable part of the section? Why did you choose this selection? Does it show character, reveal setting, develop theme, or help the plot along? (This should be a brief paragraph. You should describe the episode or section that you choose, and then explain why it had an impact on you. This should be around 150 words. (5 marks)
 4. What are **TWO words or facts** you **learned** from this section? These can be single words, phrases, expressions, customs, or ideas. This needs to be **something that applies beyond the book**, to the real world, or to culture. This is information that applies to other things outside of this book: in other words, they are not about characters from the story, made up terms, or pretend events. Explain what they mean, **OR** why did you find them interesting, weird, surprising, or unusual? (Do not copy definitions out of the dictionary. Responses must be in your own words) (2 marks each)
 5. What is a **connection** that you can make to the novel at this point? Does it remind you of anything else? Did you have any strong feelings as you read? Did you enjoy this section? Why or Why not? (You don't have to answer every sub-question for this one, but if you don't think you have any connections, think harder, because "I don't have any connections" gets zero marks.) (5 marks)
 6. What is a **question** that you hope will be answered later in the text? **OR** What do you **predict** will happen next? (1 mark) (Don't do for Reader Response 5. Instead, give your opinion of the ending of the novel).

Some Novel Suggestions. Please do not select a text you have studied in another class.

Non-fiction

Edith Hahn Beer *The Nazi Officer's Wife*

- What was life like for Jews hiding their real identity in Hitler's Third Reich?
- How does hiding our true selves change who we are?

Frank McCourt *Angela's Ashes*

- Can a person overcome the negative effects of a difficult childhood and be a healthy adult?
- What are the effects of addiction on a person and on his or her family?

Rebecca Skloot *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

- Who owns our genetic information and even parts of our bodies?
- Who owns scientific information based on an individual's medical information?

Jeannette Walls *The Glass Castle*

- Can a person overcome the negative effects of a difficult childhood and be a healthy adult?
- How does our childhood affect the kind of adult we become?

Classics

Richard Adams *Watership Down*

- What is the role of allegory and fable in helping us understand our own society?

Jane Austen *Pride and Prejudice*

- How do we balance out responsibilities to our families and our society with our own need for happiness?

Charlotte Bronte *Jane Eyre*

- How do we balance out responsibilities to our families and our society with our own need for happiness?

Emily Bronte *Wuthering Heights*

- How can we move on when someone we love rejects us?
- What happens when someone becomes fixated on gaining the love of somebody else, to the exclusion of everything else in life?

F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*

- What happens when someone becomes fixated on gaining the love of somebody else, to the exclusion of everything else in life?
- How can we move on when someone we love rejects us?

William Golding *Lord of the Flies*

- Which is the better way to manage society: control or cooperation?
- Are people essentially good, or essentially evil, and only held in check by threat of punishment?

Mark Haddon *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

- How do we treat people with different abilities?

Harper Lee *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Why does society tolerate prejudice?
- How can an individual act in a way that is opposed by society?

J. D. Salinger *The Catcher in the Rye*

- How does a psychological breakdown change a person's ability to deal with the world?
- Do people require intimacy, sexual and non-sexual, to function normally?

Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*

- Should we do things because they are scientifically possible, or are some things too dangerous to deal with?
- What responsibilities do adults have towards defenceless innocents in their care?
- What does it mean to be a "monster"?

Other Cultures

Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart*

- What happens when one culture or group tries to take over another?
- How can we judge the morality of actions by people who have different cultural values to our own?
- How do First Nations people balance traditional values with modern ones?

Amy Tan *Joy Luck Club*

- How does traditional culture (in the case, Chinese culture) compare to modern culture?
- What is the importance of the relationship between mothers and daughters?

First Nations Authors

Beatrice Mosionier

April Raintree

- What is society's duty towards children who do not have capable parents?
- Is it appropriate to have children from a minority culture, such as Metis or other First Nations, raised in white middle-class foster homes?
- Why is it important for people to learn to accept who they are?

Eden Robinson

Monkey Beach

- How does growing up within a strong First Nations Community affect a person?
- What happens when we are forced to re-examine our lives?
- How does tragedy bring out the best and the worst in us?

Richard Wagamese

Keeper N Me

- Is it possible become part of a culture as an adult, or do we need to grow up in that culture?
- How can First Nations values co-exist with modern mainstream values?

Joseph Boyden

Three Day Road

- Some aboriginal societies have been seen as primitive. Is it always the right thing to do to integrate people from these cultures into "advanced" society?
- How do First Nations people balance traditional values with modern ones?
- Whose "fault" is it when soldiers are permanently damaged by the effects of war?

Historical Novels

Joy Kogawa

Obasan

- What is life like for refugees?
- How does war change the way we treat people?

Eric Maria Remarque

All Quiet on the Western Front

- How does war change the people who fight?

John Steinbeck

Grapes of Wrath

- How did the Great Depression affect average people?
- How can even the poorest family support each other?

Khaled Hosseini

The Kite Runner

- Is it possible to find redemption when we have betrayed a friend?

Joseph Conrad

Heart of Darkness

- Why do people feel justified in imposing their culture on people with different values and identity?
- What are the effects of imperialism on the oppressors?

Dystopia

Richard Adams *Watership Down*

- How does allegory help us to understand our own society?

Margaret Atwood *A Handmaid's Tale*

- What happens when we base our government or society on a religion or ideology?

Ray Bradbury *Fahrenheit 451*

- How is the free flow of ideas necessary to a fair or democratic society?

Aldous Huxley *Brave New World*

- Do people have the right to be choose a life that others see as unhappy?

John Marsden *Tomorrow when the war began*

- How do unexpected challenges bring out the best and worst in us?

George Orwell *Animal Farm*

- What is the role of allegory and fable in helping us understand our own society?
- How does having power over others corrupt people?
- How does control over information and "truth" allow a government to control people?

George Orwell *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

- Why do people live under a dictatorship?
- How does control over information and "truth" allow a government to control people?
- How mush should we allow government agencies to know about individual citizens?

John Wyndham *The Chrysalids*

- How do we treat people with different abilities?
- Why do we have a need to create a group of "others" outside of our own group?

Sports

Steven Galloway *Finnie Walsh*

- How has hockey become part of the Canadian identity?

- How do our closest and best friends help us to be better people?

W. P. Kinsella *Shoeless Joe*

- Is it possible to redeem our past mistakes?

Bernard Malamud *The Natural*

- Can hard work make up for a lack of talent, or vice versa?
- Is it possible to be on a sports team and still to be mainly out for oneself?

Bestsellers with Substance

Ian McEwan *Atonement: A Novel*

Mark Haddon *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

Yann Martel *Life of Pi*

David Guterson *Snow Falling on Cedars*

Lawrence Hill *The Book of Negroes*

Michael Ondaatje *The English Patient*

Mitch Albom *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

Philippa Gregory *The Other Boleyn Girl*

Timothy Findley *Wars*

Sara Gruen *Water for Elephants*