Essay Workshop: From evidence bank to polished literary essay

NBE3U, Unit 5: Stories Now, Lesson 14. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

A literary essay turns a reader's insight into an argument others can test. Today we build a thesis from our theme statements, organize evidence, and revise and edit toward a published piece that respects the communities and communication styles in the text.

What students do: Students turn theme statements into arguable theses, outline a 1,000 to 1,300 word literary essay on their circle novel, draft body paragraphs with integrated quotations, and revise and edit using a checklist that includes respectful terminology.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
D2.7	produce revised drafts of a variety of texts, including increasingly complex texts, written to meet criteria identified by the teacher, based on the curriculum expectations and respecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communication styles
D3.7	produce pieces of published work to meet criteria identified by the teacher, based on the curriculum expectations and respecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communication styles
C1.4	make and explain inferences of increasing subtlety about texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, supporting their explanations with well-chosen stated and implied ideas from the texts

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning to plan and draft a literary essay on a contemporary novel. • We are learning to revise and publish to clear criteria.	• I can write an arguable thesis. • I can organize evidence into a logical outline. • I can integrate short quotations and explain them. • I can revise and edit using the checklist, including terminology.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Essay Workshop deck.

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- **Handouts:** Thesis and Outline (page 1), Revision Checklist (page 2).
- **Students:** Evidence banks, theme statements, circle novels.
- **Summative:** Unit 5 Summative Tasks (essay rubric).

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–10	**Thesis**	From theme.	Write.	Arguable thesis.
10–25	**Outline**	Structure.	Plan.	
25–55	**Draft**	Body paragraph.	Write.	Integrated quotations.
55–70	**Revise**	Checklist.	Peer review.	
70–75	**Plan**	Next steps.	Write.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Paragraph frames; a shorter essay (800 words) with teacher approval.
- **ELL:** Transition word bank.
- **Challenge:** Bring in one secondary source: the author's own interview.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Thesis, outline and draft paragraph	Revised drafts (D2.7), published work (D3.7), inferences (C1.4)

Essay: key points

- **Thesis:** Arguable, specific, and about how the novel makes meaning: “Through ___, [author] shows that ___.”
- **Structure:** Introduction (context, author and Nation, thesis); three body paragraphs; conclusion (significance).
- **Evidence:** Short, integrated quotations with page numbers; more explanation than quotation.
- **Terminology:** Use the author's own terms for their Nation; First Nations, Métis, Inuit; no outdated terms except in quotation, explained.
- **Publishing:** MLA format, a works cited entry for the novel, proofread aloud.

Teacher notes

- The essay is due after the seminar (Lesson 15); set a date. Conference with students who are stuck.

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- Respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit communication styles in an essay means, for example: naming Nations as authors and communities name themselves, quoting characters and authors accurately, not generalizing, and acknowledging what the writer doesn't know.
- The model paragraph analyses a public domain historical text (Zitkála-Šá, 1900) so no contemporary text is reproduced; students write on their circle novels. Johnson, Zitkála-Šá and Eastman are historical writers (they died in 1913, 1938 and 1939). We read them as historical context: Indigenous writers who answered settler audiences a century ago. The course's contemporary voices are First Nations, Métis and Inuit creators chosen by the teacher.

Coming up

Lesson 15, Literature Circle Seminar.

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