

# Scary Stories: Exploring Our Fears through the Examination of Contemporary Artwork

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## **Grades**

● 7–8

## **Teacher-In-Residence**

● Cheree Charmello  
Andrews

## **Subjects**

● Arts, Humanities, Social  
Emotional Learning, English  
Language Arts

Carnegie  
Museum of Art

## Goal

To utilize the visual stimulation of contemporary artwork and art-making to help students engage in honest dialogue about historical, contemporary, and potentially traumatizing real-world toxicity as a means of prompting the creation of sensory-based fiction or creative nonfiction narratives in the “scary story” genre.

## Objectives

- Students will be able to utilize the Carnegie Museum of Art’s Arts Engagement Methodology (AEM) to engage in student-centered, inquiry-based dialogue about both composition and personal connections to artwork.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast both the selected artworks and the selected short stories with their personal realities, digging in to analyze and synthesize the literary elements of provided mentor texts.
- Students will be able to create a sensory-based short work of fiction or a creative nonfiction narrative that centers on a personally chosen fear that demonstrates the synthesis of age-appropriate toxicity, foreshadowing, mood, structure, and suspense.

# Standards

## **PA Core Standards for English Language Arts, Grades 7-8**

**Speaking and Listening:** Students present appropriately in formal speaking situations, listen critically, and respond intelligently as individuals or in group discussions.

### **Comprehension and Collaboration—Collaborative Discussion:**

- **CC.1.5.7.A** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CC.1.5.8.A** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**Reading Literature:** Students read and respond to works of literature—with an emphasis on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and making connections among ideas and between texts with a focus on textual evidence.

### **Key Ideas and Details—Literary Elements:**

- **CC.1.3.7.C** Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact and how setting shapes the characters or plot. E07.A-K.1.1.3

- **CC.1.3.8.C** Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. E08.A-K.1.1.3

### **Craft and Structure—Text Structure:**

- **CC.1.3.7.E** Analyze how the structure or form of a text contributes to its meaning. E07.A-C.2.1.2
- **CC.1.3.8.E** Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style. E08.A-C.2.1.2

**Writing:** Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content.

### **Narrative Content:**

- **CC.1.4.7.O** Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, and

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pacing to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. E07.C.1.3.2 E07.C.1.3.4

- **CC.1.4.8.O** Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, reflection, and pacing to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. E08.C1.3.2 E08.C1.3.4

## **Production and Distribution of Writing—Writing Process:**

- **CC.1.4.7.T** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- **CC.1.4.8.T** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach,

focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. National Core Art Standards for the Visual Arts, Grades 7-8

## **Artistic Process | Creating:**

Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.

**Essential Questions:** What conditions, attitudes, and behaviors support creativity and innovative thinking? What factors prevent or encourage people to take creative risks? How does collaboration expand the creative process?

- **VA:Cr1.1.7a** Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.

- **VA:Cr1.1.8a** Document early stages of the creative process visually and or verbally in traditional or new media.

**Essential Questions:** How do artists and designers care for and maintain materials, tools, and equipment? Why is it important for safety and health to understand and follow correct procedures in handling materials, tools, and equipment? What responsibilities come with the freedom to create?

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- **VA:Cr2.2.7a** Demonstrate awareness of ethical responsibility to oneself and others when posting and sharing images and other materials through the Internet, social media, and other communication formats.

- **VA:Cr2.2.8a** Demonstrate awareness of practices, issues, and ethics of appropriation, fair use, copyright, open source, and creative commons as they apply to creating works of art and design.

## **Artistic Process | Responding:**

Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.

**Essential Questions:** How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?

- **VA:Re7.1.7a** Explain how the method of display, the location, and the experience of an artwork influence how it is perceived and valued.

- **VA:Re7.1.8a** Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.

## **Anchor Standard | Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.**

**Essential Questions:** What is the value of engaging in the process of art criticism? How can the viewer “read” a work of art as text? How does knowing and using visual art vocabularies help us understand and interpret works of art?

- **VA:Re8.1.7a** Interpret art by analyzing art-making approaches, the characteristics of form and structure, relevant contextual information, subject matter, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

- **VA:Re8.1.8a** Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

## **Artistic Process | Connecting:**

Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

**Essential Questions:** How does engaging in creating art enrich

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people's lives? How does making art attune people to their surroundings? How do people contribute to awareness and understanding of their lives and the lives of their communities through artmaking?

- **VA:Cn10.1.7a** Individually or collaboratively create visual documentation of places and times in which people gather to make and experience art or design in the community.

- **VA:Cn10.1.8a** Make art collaboratively to reflect on and reinforce positive aspects of group identity.

## Materials

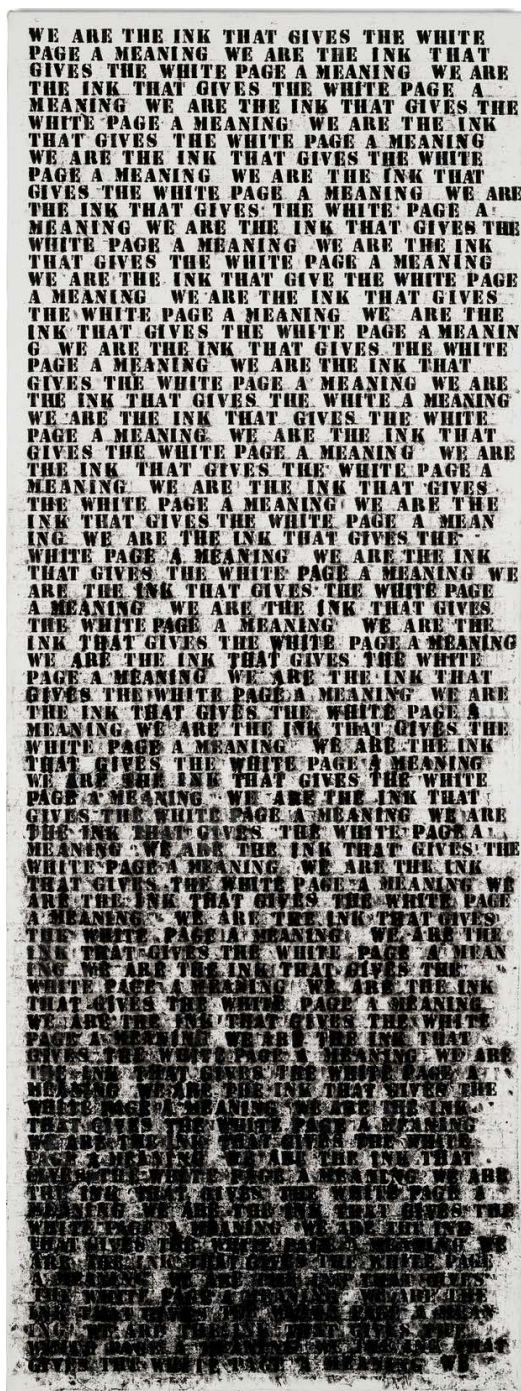
- Clean-up materials, such as wipes
- Fear Bags (one different type per team): Brown paper bags or other vision-obstructing containers that includes a single item typically feared, such as rubber snakes (ophidiophobia), spiders (arachnophobia) rings or something soft with many tiny holes, such as a Pop-it (trypophobia), hairballs from old dolls, (chaetophobia) etc.
- Goth glue (regular glue darkened with black poster paint)
- Line drawing of *No Need of Speech*
- Paper
- Poster paper
- Projections/prints/videos of artworks listed below

# Vocabulary

- Contemporary Elements of Art: Appropriation, Destruction, Hybridity, Performance, Perspective, Text, Time
- Emotional Authenticity  
Considerations: Authenticity, Fear, Grief, Toxicity, Trauma, Triggers
- General Literary Terms: Audience, Creative Nonfiction, Dialogue, Flashback, Foreshadowing, Horror, Imagery, Mood, Pace, Structure, Suspense
- Phobias: Arachnophobia—Fear of spiders; Atelophobia—Fear of having imperfections; Chaetophobia—Fear of hair; Claustrophobia—Fear of being confined in small spaces; Elevatophobia—Fear of elevators; Glossophobia—Fear of public speaking; Ophidiophobia—Fear of snakes; Thanatophobia—Fear of losing someone you love/Fear of the process of dying; Trypophobia—Fear of many tiny holes; Xenophobia—Fear of the unknown/commonly used to describe fear of foreign people and their customs
- Principles of Design: Balance, Contrast, Emphasis, Movement, Pattern, Rhythm, Unity
- Story Structure: Exposition—Who, Where, When; Conflict—Who or what negatively impacts whom; Rising Action—What action does the character take that sets up suspense or danger; Climax—the moment of danger; Falling Action—the outcome of the danger; Resolution—the way the world is for the character now that the problem has been handled as far as they could handle it



# Artworks



Glenn Ligon, *Prisoner of Love #1 (Second Version)*, 1992, Founders Patrons Day Acquisition Fund, 92.56

This piece contains the repetitive, fading text, “WE ARE THE INK THAT GIVES THE WHITE PAGE A MEANING”.

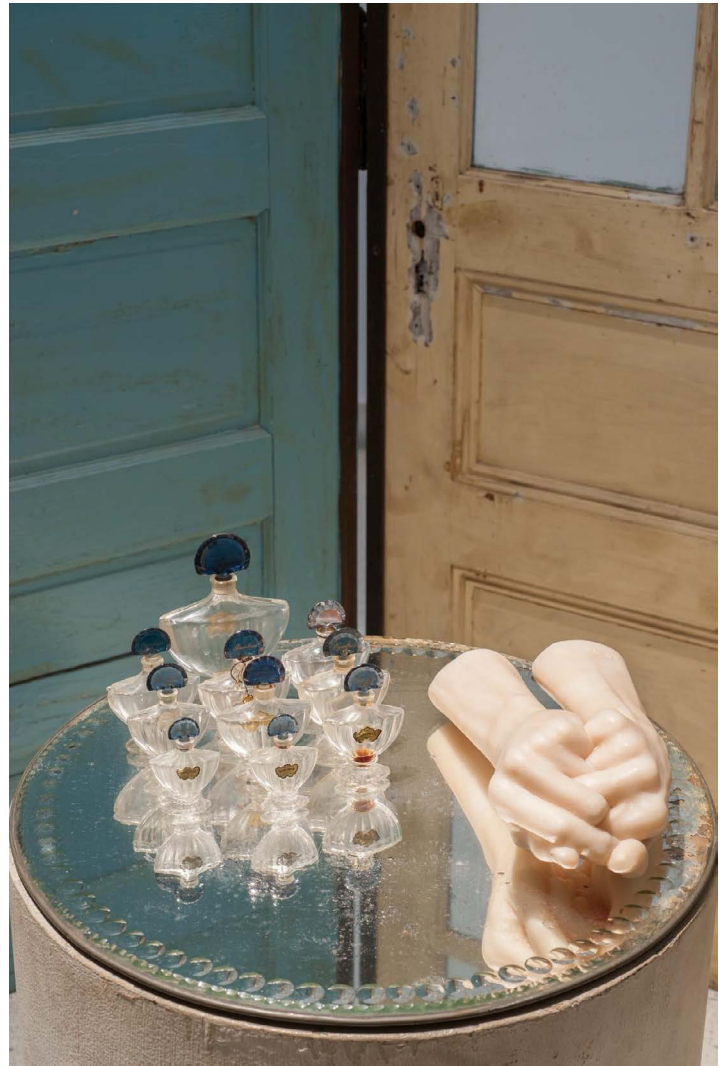
## Artworks



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *No Need of Speech*, 2018, Purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard M. Scaife, by exchange, 2018.49

This is a larger-than-life sized piece, and the dark, subtle tones make good lighting imperative for viewers to detect them. If an actual museum viewing is not available to your students, then I suggest projecting the image as close as possible to the artwork's 90 9/16 × 97 7/16-inch dimension.

## Artworks



Louise Bourgeois, *Cell II*, 1991, Heinz Family Fund, 91.24

The attached photos do not do justice to the size and depth of this mixed media sculpture. If an actual museum viewing is not available to your students, then I suggest filming a 360-view of the artwork, including the differing views when looking through the glass, as well as the way the light from its interior lights the ceiling of the museum.



## Artworks



Susan Rothenburg, *Ten Men*, 1982, Purchased with funds provided by Anthony J. A. Bryan and Pamela Z. Bryan, and A. W. Mellon Acquisition Endowment Fund, 83.13

This horizontally expansive painting also needs to be viewed in good lighting, so a projection is best if not able to be viewed at the museum. This artist's process is very important to note for this unit as well, as Rothenburg is said to have painted 10 people in the process but layered overtop of them.

## Resources

- Due, Tananarive. “The Knowing.” Ghost Summer: Stories, Prime Books, Germantown, MD, 2015.

### Author’s Reading

Trigger warning: This story deals with mortality. There are a few minor swear words.

- Gaiman, Neil. “Click Clack the Rattle Bag.” This is a short, easy-to-read, non-toxic “scary” story.
- Sleator, William. “The Elevator.” 1993. Access to this story is abundant online. Here are two sources that I found to be most useful: 1 | 2

### **Lesson Series Introduction**

This is meant to be a 9-session, 90-minute block creative writing lesson series that has been created by keeping in the forefront of my mind the various forms of trauma that middle-school students often experience, both directly and indirectly. The intention is to push students to face their real fears to help them write a story that is authentic and meaningful to them. It has been my experience that students' writing skills do not truly improve until they buy in to the fact that reality makes for the best fiction—in other words, they need to tap into reality, connecting to themselves before they can convince others that their writing is authentic.

# Lesson

## Day 1

Glossophobia! Atelophobia! What are they? The goal of this lesson is to introduce the following strategies: Team Building/Introduction to Audience-Based Toxicity/Creative Block Avoidance (Creative Thinking Model)/ Teamwork Protocol/ Carnegie Museum of Art's Arts Engagement Methodology (AEM) and to help students begin to openly discuss their fears.

First, set up any necessary storage options, such as labeling work portfolios, and discuss the goal, long-term project options, and expectations for the lesson series.

Next, let students know that the goal of this first lesson is to have them engage with a method of overcoming "writer's block," known as the Creative Thinking Model, use a Gallery Walk Engagement Strategy, learn the Teamwork Protocol, use the Carnegie Museum of Art's Arts Engagement Methodology (AEM), understand the concept of audience-based toxicity, and acknowledge that perfection is not a reality in collaboration, artmaking, or writing. Creation is messy and ever-changing, both in art production and in creative

writing. To expand our skills, we will have to get past glossophobia and atelophobia!

### **Creative Thinking Model**

- Step 1 (Fluency): Silently and individually brainstorm all the terms that come to mind when you think of the word toxic.
- Step 2 (Flexibility): Categorize them. For example, words like vipers and black widows might be grouped under the heading External or Living Things.
- Step 3 (Originality): Rank the categories into toxicity levels by placing the category that is most toxic (i.e., undeniably damaging) in the 1st position. For example, a category such as racism or sexism might take position one.
- Step 4 (Elaboration): Ask for volunteers to share, allowing each student to call on the person who would like to go next.
- Step 5: Once the offerings slow, ask students which of the concepts might be too toxic for differing audiences. Challenge students to think of ways that sensitive topics can be broached,

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even with younger or undereducated audiences.

## **Teamwork Protocol**

- Step 1: Teams will choose a team leader. Team leaders will begin by stating their name and their single biggest fear and the reasoning for it, then will prompt each team member, starting on their right, to do the same. Team leaders will make sure they can properly pronounce each member's name and tell the team what the team's fears seemed to have in common. The team leader will then share out, standing to state the names of members and their commonalities, and explain how the commonality relates to their highest-ranking toxicity level.

Note: A new team leader should be chosen for each session. Teams that work well together can remain intact, but this should be assessed on day 1 so that the expectation can be established with the students.

- Step 2: Give each team leader a set of markers and larger paper or half of a poster sheet. Teams will co-design (as a discussion) a single sentence they agree could be collectively used to represent their commonality

*without* using the actual concept in the sentence. The team leader will write it in all capital letters at the top of the paper/poster.

- Step 3: The team will quietly discuss an image that might well-represent the concept. The team leader may choose to delegate the job of creating a line sketch of the image on the back of the poster, but the leader will be the one who uses Goth glue to darken the lines. (I intend to hang these with a hole punch/string so that they spin freely from the ceiling.)

## **Gallery Walk Engagement Strategy**

- Step 1: Students will silently Gallery Walk, stopping at each poster, adding what they think the “toxic” concept is on a sticky note and placing it on the outer edges of the work.

- Step 2: The team leader will read the contents of each sticky note to the team. If no one seemed to have guessed correctly, or closely enough, team leaders will read their sentence aloud and let the other teams take a verbal crack at it again.



## Lesson

### **Carnegie Museum of Art's Arts Engagement Methodology (AEM)**

- Step 1: Give each team a printout of Glenn Ligon's *Prisoner of Love #1 (Second Version)* and a list of Contemporary Art Terms. Ask students to openly popcorn answers to what they see, think, and wonder about the artwork, respectively.

- Step 2: Use the Teamwork Protocol to discuss what toxic concept might be revealed here, being sure to cover the text, the text structure, and the art form. In other words, as a whole, what is the piece "saying?" How might the title relate to the words and imagery? Considering the Contemporary Art terms, what are you "seeing?" What Principles of Design do you think are present: Balance, Contrast, Emphasis, Movement, Pattern, Rhythm, Unity?

- Step 3: Wrap up the lesson by allowing for a popcorn conversation to examine the following questions: What responsibilities come with the freedom to create? What factors prevent or encourage creative risks? How might this relate to the things we fear most? How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning

about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?

**Extension:** Encourage students to find the scientific name of their biggest fear, those of their classmates, and ones that they find strange.

# Lesson

## Day 2

Thanatophobia! The goal of this lesson is to solidify the students' abilities to independently use the Teamwork Protocol, the Carnegie Museum of Art's Arts Engagement Methodology (AEM), and to explore author's craft through simple annotation techniques, paying close attention to the creation of realistic dialogue.

### **Carnegie Museum of Art's Arts Engagement Methodology (AEM)**

- Step 1: Ask students to take out their copy of the Contemporary Art Terms. On paper, ask them to make three columns labeled as See, Think, Wonder and ask them to freely document responses to each when they view the artwork. Project *No Need of Speech*.
- Step 2: Ask students to use the Teamwork Protocol to discuss their See, Think, Wonder responses. The teacher should listen in and take note of students' comments to paraphrase standouts for the group as a whole.
- Step 3: Distribute the line drawing copy of *No Need of Speech*. Ask the teams to first verbally brainstorm what conversation might have occurred before the moment of silence suggested in the artwork. Document the dialogue on the back of the sheet, using quotation marks and dialogue indicators. Narration is also acceptable to add. Based on that dialog, each student should then independently create a See, Think, and/or Wonder statement for the bubbles of the line drawing for at least one of the characters. Teacher should rotate and monitor for proper dialogue structure.
- Step 4: In open format, ask students to share if they would like to know the date of their death and why or why not.
- Step 5: Tell students that they are going to read and listen to a short horror story. Ask them to annotate in the following way: Place an EYE (i) next to things the author does that helps a reader attach to a sense, like sight, sound, smell, or touch. Place an ! next to anything that the author does that conjures up a feeling, especially mood, fear, or suspense. Place a ? next to anything that is confusing to you, particularly a style choice that you might not have made or a place where you think more was needed. Give copies

## Lesson

of Tananarive Due's "The Knowing." Play the author's reading. Discuss the students' annotations, drawing attention to the construction of dialog.

- Step 6: Remind the team leader that they are always the first to share and will guide the team members, starting at their right, and must consolidate the information or sharing out. Ask the teams to compare and contrast the voice created through the dialogue in "No Need of Speech," what they created for "No Need of Speech," and for the characters in The Knowing. Ask: What parts sound real? Why? How can viewing art help you "hear?"

# Lesson

## Day 3

Claustrophobia! Elevatophobia!

The goal of this lesson is to extend the student's understanding of imagery and how it can be used to authentically use setting as an element of suspense and/or elevation of toxicity. It is also to review what students already know about story structure.

- Step 1: Instruct the students to close their eyes and imagine the setting of where they would be if they were facing their biggest fear. Popcorn share, asking for sensory details when few are given.
- Step 2: Ask students to take out their copy of the Contemporary Art Terms. Give them a See Think Wonder sheet and ask them to freely respond to those responses when they view the artwork. Ask them to also consider what elements they detect. Play video of Cell 1.
- Step 3: Ask students to use the Teamwork Protocol to discuss their See, Think, Wonder responses. The teacher should listen in and take note of students' comments to paraphrase for the group as a whole.

- Step 4: Tell students that they are going to read a short horror story. Ask them to annotate in the following way: Place an EYE (i) next to things the author does that helps a reader attach to a sense, like sight, sound, smell, or touch. Place an ! next to anything that the author does that helps the reader sense the setting. Place a ? next to anything that is confusing to you, particularly a style choice that you might not have made or a place where you think more was needed. Distribute "The Elevator" by William Sleator. Discuss the students' annotations, drawing attention to the different ways that setting is revealed.

**Important note:** Although very short, this story can be triggering, as it contains elements of body shaming and parental verbal abuse. Many teachers modify the original text; I am choosing not to do so, as my aim is to prompt discussion of sensitive topics. We will take the time to unpack them.

- Step 5: Ask the students to each make a sensory item list on a piece of paper (smell, sight, sound, taste, touch) and ask them to use it to write descriptive phrases regarding their visualized fear-facing setting for each.

## Lesson

- Step 6: Tell the students that tropophobia is the fear of making changes. Introduce a revision technique and ask the team leader to dedicate two to three minutes per teammate.
- Step 7: Ask for a share out of both the original and the revision, letting the students decide how they would like to do so.

# Lesson

## Day 4

Xenophobia! Suspense! The goal of this lesson is to immerse students in the feeling of suspense and to discuss what creates it, both in reality and in art and writing.

- Step 1: Ask students to take out their copy of the Contemporary Art Terms. Have them label three columns as See, Think, Wonder and ask them to freely respond to those responses when they view the artwork. Project “10 Men.”
- Step 2: Ask students to use the Teamwork Protocol to discuss their See, Think, Wonder responses. Teacher should listen in and take note of students’ comments to paraphrase for the group as a whole. Ask them to focus on the relationship between the title and the imagery. Let them know that all 10 people are actually hidden in Rothenberg’s painting. Ask: How does knowing this change how you “view” it?
- Step 3: Tell students that they are going to read a short horror story. Ask them to annotate in the following way: Place an EYE (i) next to things the author does that helps a reader attach to a sense, like sight, sound, smell, or touch. Place an ! next to

anything that the author does that helps the reader sense suspense. Place a ? next to anything that is confusing to you, particularly a style choice that you might not have made or a place where you think more was needed. Distribute “Click Clack the Rattle Bag” by Neil Gaiman. Discuss the students’ annotations, drawing attention to the different ways that suspense is built.

- Step 4: Distribute a Fear Bag to each team leader, telling them to assure that no one looks into the bag. The team leader should direct each team member to reach into the bag without looking or talking. They should NOT reveal what they think is in the bag. As a team, the students will use a plot planner (Exposition—Who, Where, When; Conflict—Who or what negatively impacts whom; Rising Action—What action does the character take that sets up suspense or danger; Climax—the moment of danger; Falling Action—the outcome of the danger; Resolution—the way the world is for the character now that the problem has been handled as far as they could handle it) to create a suspenseful story diagram using the emotion and assumption related to reaching into the Fear Bag.

# Lesson

**Extension:** Make available TedEd's on the topic of fear and suspense:

sounds, and have fun-scary treats, such as gummy worms and red juice.

"Why is being scared so fun?" by Margee Kerr

"How to make your writing suspenseful" by Victoria Smith

## Day 5-7

Students will be able to use these sessions for writing and for receiving 1:1 support. Traditional story-building items should be offered, such as plot planners, setting set-up outlines, character profiles, etc., however, these should not be mandatory to complete. Many students will be able to begin without them. Make students aware of what will occur on Day 8 and Day 9 so that they can mentally prepare for sharing.

## Day 8

Students will share a self-chosen portion of their stories in a partnership or triad to apply revision techniques from a set of given revision strips (below).

## Day 9

Host an author's reading party. Allow students to invite guests, if possible. I intend to lower the lights, play eerie

# Assessment

Skill	Standard	4 Advanced	3 Proficient	2 Basic	1 Below Basic
Interaction: Communicating effectively and efficiently with others	CC.1.5.8.A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	While engaged in a leadership role, I was respectful of all members and always remained on task.	While engaged in a leadership role, I was respectful of all members but did not always remain on task.	While engaged in a leadership role, I was not respectful of all members and remained on task.	While engaged in a leadership role, I was not respectful of all members and did not always remain on task.
Higher Level Thinking: Analyzing	CC.1.3.8.E Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.	When given written and verbal tasks, I completed the written work and shared out.	When given written and verbal tasks, I completed the written work, but didn't share out.	When given written and verbal tasks, I did not complete the written work, but did share out.	When given written and verbal tasks, I did not complete the written work and I didn't share out.
Creative Thinking: Pushing past blocks of creativity	VA:Cr1.1.7a Apply methods to overcome creative blocks. VA:Cr1.1.8a Document early stages of the creative process visually and or verbally in traditional or new media.	I completed the Creative Thinking Model when prompted and used it or another means of overcoming and documenting creative blocks when needed.	I completed the Creative Thinking Model when prompted but did not use it or another means of overcoming and documenting creative blocks when needed.	X	I did not complete the Creative Thinking Model when prompted and did not use it or another means of overcoming and documenting creative blocks when needed.
Writer's Craft	CC.1.4.8.O Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, reflection and pacing to develop experiences, events and/or characters; use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.	All elements are demonstrated in my finished story.	One element is missing in my finished story.	Two elements are missing in my finished story.	More than two elements are missing in my finished story.
Revision Techniques	CC1.4.8.T With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.	I revised my work with multiple peers and helped others with their revisions.	I revised my work with at least one peer and helped at least one other peer with their revisions.	I did not revise my work with at least one peer, but did help at least one other peer with their revisions.	I did not revise my work with at least one peer, and I did not help at least one other peer with their revisions.