

5 - 7 WEEKS

8th Grade: Unit One

BAD BEHAVIOR

Unit at a Glance

Grade Level: 8th

Essential Question: How do we know what is right? Why do people choose to do wrong?

Length: 5–7 weeks (see [Pacing Guide](#))

Unit Texts: (see [full list of texts](#))

- “Ruthless” by William DeMille (Short Story)
- “How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?” by Anne-Marie Reidy (Informational Text)
- “Button, Button” by Richard Matheson (Short Story)
- “Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl (Short Story)
- “Lather and Nothing Else” by Hernando Téllez (Short Story)
- Supplemental texts included (English + Spanish)
- Independent reading and book club options

Focus Skills: (see [Reading and Writing Skill Arcs](#))

Reading:

- Theme development [RL.8.2]

- Dialogue and events that propel action, reveal character, or provoke a decision [RL.8.3]
- Different points of view that create dramatic irony, suspense, and humor [RL.8.6]

Writing:

- Argument writing [W.8.1]
- Expository writing [W.8.2]
- Writing introductions [W.8.2.A]
- Writing conclusions [W.8.2.F]

Language:

- Verb forms: gerund, participles, and infinitives [L.8.1.A]
- Grade appropriate academic vocabulary [L.8.6]

Speaking and Listening:

- Referring to evidence in discussion to build on or challenge others’ ideas [SL.8.1]
- Expectations for discussion [SL.8.1.B]

Unit Overview

8th Grade Unit 1: *Bad Behavior* is anchored around four engaging short stories that depict characters struggling between right and wrong: “Ruthless,” “Button, Button,” “Lamb to the Slaughter,” and “Lather and Nothing Else.” Among the characters are people who willingly make immoral decisions and people who struggle between which instinct they should follow. Some characters make the immoral choice by reasoning that the end result justifies their bad behavior. To help students further engage with the themes in the unit, they read “How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?,” a nonfiction text that explains Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development. Students also engage in a Related Media Exploration featuring videos and scenarios that explore what we can learn about ourselves by studying moral dilemmas. This unit also includes resources to support teachers in launching an independent reading program or book clubs that run parallel to the core instruction in this unit.

By the end of the unit, students should be able to articulate how authors use different character points of view about what is right and wrong to develop suspense. Students will also receive instruction on the parts of an exemplar paragraph, a strong argument statement, and how to write introduction and conclusion paragraphs. Teachers also have the opportunity to use an optional theme lesson to support students in determining a text’s theme. To demonstrate these skills, they will write a literary analysis essay that uses two of the unit texts to explore the unit’s essential question about what motivates people to do bad things.

WHAT’S INCLUDED

- ✓ 5 Reading Lessons
- ✓ A Set of Supplemental Texts
- ✓ Independent Reading and Book Club Resources
- ✓ A Writing Baseline Assessment
- ✓ 5 Writing Lessons
- ✓ 2 Vocabulary Activity Set
- ✓ 2 Vocabulary Quizzes
- ✓ 1 Grammar and Usage Activity Set
- ✓ 1 Grammar and Usage Quiz
- ✓ 1 Discussion Skill Lesson
- ✓ 1 Class Discussion
- ✓ 1 Related Media Exploration
- ✓ 1 Narrative Essay Prompt
- ✓ 1 Literary Analysis Essay Prompt
- ✓ A Set of Alternative End-Of-Unit Writing Options

Skill Focus:

By the end of 7th grade, students should be able to determine a theme and analyze its development in a literary text [RL.7.2], examine how elements of a story interact [RL.7.3], and study how authors develop and contrast character points of view [RL.7.6]. In this 8th grade unit, students will take these skills to the next level. Students should be able to explain how characters, setting, plot and other story elements develop the theme [RL.8.2]. In 8th grade, students should articulate how dialogue and specific moments in a story reveal something about a character or provoke a character's decision [RL.8.3]. Students should also be able to notice and examine how contrasting character points of view and situational and dramatic irony result in effects such as surprise, humor, and suspense [RL.8.6].

How does RL.2 shift?

7th Grade: Determine a **theme** or central idea of a text and **analyze its development over the course of the text**; provide an objective summary of the text.



8th Grade: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and **analyze its development** over the course of the text, including **its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot**; provide an objective summary of the text.

How does RL.3 shift?

7th Grade: Analyze how **particular elements of a story** or drama **interact** (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).



8th Grade: 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**.

How does RL.6 shift?

7th Grade: Analyze how an author **develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters** or narrators in a text.



8th Grade: Analyze how **differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience** or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) **create such effects as suspense or humor**.

Reading lessons in this unit include scaffolded questions to help students meet grade level reading standards. Each text includes multiple choice questions and optional partner discussions. Four of the five texts include short answer responses that are aligned to RL.8.2 and RL.8.6.

Writing in this unit is focused on helping students write a literary analysis essay that includes paragraphs with strong argument statements and complete introduction and conclusion paragraphs. Students will write this literary analysis essay in response to a writing prompt. This unit also includes three alternative end of unit prompts that can be used in place of or in addition to the recommended prompt.

ARC OF READING INSTRUCTION

Reading Lesson 1	Reading Lesson 2	Reading Lesson 3	Reading Lesson 4	Reading Lesson 5
"Ruthless" by William DeMille (Short Story)	"How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?" by Anne-Marie Reidy (Informational Text)	"Button, Button" by Richard Matheson (Short Story)	"Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl (Short Story)	"Lather and Nothing Else" by Hernando Téllez (Short Story)
Students read to analyze how authors use different points of view and situational irony to affect readers. [RL.8.6]	Students read to analyze how a central idea is developed over the course of a text. [RI.8.2]	Students read to analyze how an author builds suspense through characters' different points of view . [RL.8.6]	Students read to analyze how an author builds suspense through dramatic irony . [RL.8.6]	Students read to determine how an author uses internal conflict to develop a theme. [RL.8.2, RL.8.3]

This unit also includes:

- Optional supplemental texts in English and Spanish that support students in developing reading volume and stamina.
- Independent reading and book club optional to build students' volume and breadth of reading

Unit Test

Coming Soon: Unit Tests will be available for SY 2022-2023 as part of the CommonLit 360 for Schools package of services. For more information, encourage your administrator to email 360@commonlit.org.

ARC OF WRITING INSTRUCTION

Writing Baseline Assessment (Optional)	Writing Lesson 1:	Writing Lesson 2:	Writing Lesson 3:	Writing Lesson 4:	Writing Lesson 5:
In your opinion, is it better to always tell the truth, or is it sometimes acceptable to tell a lie?	Exemplary Paragraph	Writing a Strong Argument	Unit 1 Essay: Planning	Writing Introductions	Writing Conclusions

Prompt (Recommended): What motivates people to do bad things? Use at least two of the following texts to support your answer:

- “Ruthless”
- “Button, Button”
- “Lamb to the Slaughter”

[W.8.2]

Essay (Optional): Narrative

Prompt: You have read the short story “Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl. In the story, Mary Maloney feeds her murder weapon, a leg of lamb, to the officers investigating her husband’s killing. What will Mary feel and do after the officers leave the house? Write the scene in third person, limited to Mary’s perspective. Use details from the story and add your own ideas to show how Mary feels after the eventful evening. [W.8.3]

VOCABULARY, DISCUSSION, AND GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION

Vocabulary

This unit includes **explicit vocabulary instruction** on 15 academic words. Students complete 5 activities for each set of words. Consistent with research, students encounter these words in context. Word usage is reinforced in reading, writing, and discussion activities [L.8.6]. [Learn more here.](#)

Discussion

In all CommonLit units, students discuss the texts they are reading daily. In addition to multiple opportunities for **informal discussion**, there is one **formal whole class discussion** where students explore whether the characters in “Ruthless” and “Button, Button” got what they deserved. Students review discussion expectations and receive explicit instruction on **using evidence to build on or challenge others’ ideas** [SL.8.1, SL.8.1.B].

Grammar Instruction

This unit includes a short lesson and 5 practice activities on **verb forms** [L.8.1.A]. This skill helps students express more sophisticated ideas in writing.



Lessons & Materials

Below, you will find all of the materials needed to teach this unit. To better help you understand the choices and flexibility within the unit materials, individual lessons are tagged as Essential, Recommended, or Optional.

A sample Pacing Guide is available [here](#).

Unit Introduction

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

Start the unit by engaging students with debatable questions and an introduction to the unit's texts and topics. Use this editable slide deck and paired handout to spark curiosity and provide students with an overview of what they will be learning!

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Use the slide deck to facilitate the Unit Introduction handout whole class (20 mins)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Slide Deck](#)
- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)
- [Student Reference Sheet](#)
- [Word Wall](#)

Writing Baseline Assessment

OPTIONAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

Assigning a writing baseline assessment at the beginning of the year is a great way to get to know your class and assess student strengths and weaknesses. This argumentative prompt connects to the major unit themes. It asks students to argue whether or not lying is ever acceptable, using evidence from stories, movies, real world events, or experiences from their own lives.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Distribute the Writing Baseline Assessment on paper or through Google Docs. Set aside one class period for students to compose the essay, ideally in a silent testing environment. Students may use blank paper or a digital notebook to plan their essay. Use the Grade 6-10 Argumentative Writing Rubric to score student essays. Provide direct feedback to students on their essay using the Student Feedback Form. Have students reflect on their writing and set writing goals using the Writing Baseline Assessment Goal-Setting Tool. You may use this tool to kick off 1:1 conferences with students.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Copy: Writing Baseline Assessment](#)
- [Grade 6-10 Argumentative Writing Rubric and Student Feedback Form](#)
- [Writing Baseline Assessment Goal Setting Tool](#)

Vocabulary Activity Set: List 1

ESSENTIAL


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This vocabulary activity set will help students master the 8 high-impact academic vocab words they will see in the stories they read. These 5 activities are great for a quick warm-up activity or homework.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Use the Slide Deck to facilitate Vocabulary Activity 1 whole-class (20 min)
- Flexibly assign the remaining activities as warm-ups, homework, or practice to prepare students for the Vocabulary Quiz.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Vocabulary Activity Set](#)
- Teacher Answer Key*
- [Activity 1 Slide Deck](#)
- [Word Wall](#)

*Not available in PDF. Coming soon in digital form!

Supplemental Texts

OPTIONAL


ABOUT THE SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS:

Each CommonLit 360 Unit is accompanied by a set of supplemental texts that connect to the unit's themes. Texts can be printed or assigned digitally and include questions and activities.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Review the [Guidance for Supplemental Text Sets](#) for ideas on how to implement supplemental texts across the unit.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Thank You M'am](#) (short story): *This text tells the story of a boy who tries to steal a woman's purse to buy himself a pair of shoes and ends up learning a valuable lesson about kindness. Use it to discuss the unit's essential questions: How do we know what is right? Why do people choose to do wrong?*
- [After Twenty Years](#) (short story): *This is a story about an old friendship with a twist ending. Use it to review situational irony and discuss unit themes about good and bad behavior.*
- [Can we teach robots ethics?](#) (informational): *This text explores the morality behind self-driving cars. Use it to discuss unit themes about right versus wrong.*

Independent Reading and Book Club Resources

OPTIONAL


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This set of resources supports teachers in launching an independent reading program or book clubs that run parallel to the core instruction in this unit. It includes a list of books that align thematically to *8th Grade Unit 1: Bad Behavior*, discussion questions, reading response questions, as well as ready-made student-facing logs and handouts.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Start by downloading [Best Practices for Independent Reading](#).
- Check out the [8th Grade Unit 1: Bad Behavior Independent Reading Teacher Guide](#) and make a plan for independent reading.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Copy: Independent Reading Materials](#)

Reading Lesson: “Ruthless” (Short Story)

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

“Ruthless” is a short story about a vindictive man’s plan for revenge. In a shocking twist ending, the man gets a taste of his own medicine. As students read, they will analyze how authors use different points of view and situational irony to affect readers.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Introduce the lesson with the slide deck (5 min)
- Lead students through the reading and questions (35 min)
- Have students complete the independent practice (20 min)
- Facilitate the quick partner discussion (5 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Slide Deck](#)
- Teacher Copy*
- Student Copy*

**Student and teacher copies of this reading lesson are downloadable on [commonlit.org](https://www.commonlit.org) for verified teacher accounts. Navigate to the [text page](#) and click “Download PDF” to access these materials.*

Writing Lesson: Exemplar Paragraph

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This writing lesson reinforces an essential building block: how to write a complete paragraph with an argument, relevant evidence, and explanations. Students will apply the skill in a written response to a prompt for “Ruthless.”

HOW TO FACILITATE:

To assign the interactive digital lesson, click “Assign” and schedule the lesson.*

To facilitate the lesson on paper, access the student copy of the lesson and distribute it to students. (35 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)
- [Student Reference Sheet](#)
- [Think Aloud Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

**The data for interactive digital lessons will show up on your teacher assignment report.*

Vocabulary Quiz 1

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This vocabulary quiz assesses students’ knowledge of the vocabulary words in Vocabulary List 1.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- To assign this quiz digitally, click “Assign” and schedule the quiz. Set aside 15 minutes for students to complete the vocabulary quiz.
- To have students complete the quiz on paper, access the student copy of the assignment materials and distribute it to students.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Vocabulary Quiz](#)
- Teacher Answer Key*

**Quizzes assigned digitally will be scored automatically. To ensure assessment security, a printable answer key is not available at this time.*

Reading Lesson: “How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?” (Informational)

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

“How Do We Tell Right From Wrong” is an informational text that outlines Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory about the three levels of moral development. As students read, they will trace how a central idea is developed over the course of a text.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Introduce the lesson with the slide deck (5 min)
- Lead students through the reading and questions (25 min)
- Have students complete the independent practice (20 min)
- Facilitate the quick partner discussion (5 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Slide Deck](#)
- Teacher Copy*
- Student Copy*

**Student and teacher copies of this reading lesson are downloadable on [commonlit.org](https://www.commonlit.org) for verified teacher accounts. Navigate to the [text page](#) and click “Download PDF” to access these materials.*

Reading Lesson: “Button, Button” (Short Story)

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

In “Button, Button,” a couple is faced with a mysterious and tempting offer that forces them to choose between their own happiness and someone else’s life. As students read, they will analyze how an author builds suspense through characters’ different points of view.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Introduce the lesson with the slide deck (5 min)
- Lead students through the reading and questions (45 min)
- Have students complete the independent practice (20 min)
- Facilitate the quick partner discussion (5 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Slide Deck](#)
- Teacher Copy*
- Student Copy*

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Writing Lesson: Writing a Strong Argument

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This writing lesson aims to help students write stronger arguments that clearly respond to a prompt with concise language. Students will apply the skill by writing arguments for two prompts about "Button, Button."

HOW TO FACILITATE:

To assign the interactive digital lesson, click "Assign" and schedule the lesson.*

To facilitate the lesson on paper, access the student copy of the lesson and distribute it to students. (25 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)
- [Student Reference Sheet](#)

*The data for interactive digital lessons will show up on your teacher assignment report.



Vocabulary Activity Set: List 2

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This vocabulary activity set will help students master the 7 high-impact academic vocab words they will see in the stories they read. These 5 activities are great for a quick warm-up activity or homework.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Use the Slide Deck to facilitate Vocabulary Activity 1 whole-class (20 min)
- Flexibly assign the remaining activities as warm-ups, homework, or practice to prepare students for the Vocabulary Quiz.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Vocabulary Activity Set](#)
- Teacher Answer Key*
- [Activity 1 Slide Deck](#)
- [Word Wall](#)

*Not available in PDF. Coming soon in digital form!



Discussion Lesson

RECOMMENDED

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

Having the ability to share, challenge, and build on ideas in an academic discussion is a critical skill for middle schoolers. This discussion lesson will help students refer to evidence to build on or challenge others' ideas. The assignment materials include a handout to teach the discussion skill whole-class, a handout to help students prepare for discussion and take notes, and teacher resources to help you facilitate whole-class or small group discussions.

Students will discuss their answers to the following question: In "Ruthless," Judson's plan to punish a thief leads to his own death. In "Button, Button," Norma's desire for a better life leads to her husband's death. In these stories, do you think people get what they deserve? Why or why not?



HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Lead students through the Discussion Skill Lesson (15 min)
- Have students prepare for discussion using the Discussion Prep handout (15 min)
- Launch discussion and have students take notes during discussion (30 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Discussion Skill Lesson Student Copy](#)
- [Discussion Skill Lesson Teacher Copy](#)
- [Discussion Preparation Student Copy](#)
- [Discussion Protocols](#)
- [Student Voice Tracker](#)

Reading Lesson: "Lamb to the Slaughter" (Short Story)

ESSENTIAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

"Lamb to the Slaughter" is a story about how one woman reacts to her husband's shocking betrayal and then decides to cover her tracks in an unexpected way. As students read, they will analyze how an author builds suspense through dramatic irony.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Introduce the lesson with the slide deck (5 min)
- Lead students through the reading and questions (55 min)
- Have students complete the independent practice (20 min)
- Facilitate the quick partner discussion (5 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Slide Deck](#)
- Teacher Copy*
- Student Copy*

*Student and teacher copies of this reading lesson are downloadable on commonlit.org for verified teacher accounts. Navigate to the [text page](#) and click "Download PDF" to access these materials.



Narrative Writing Prompt

OPTIONAL

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This engaging optional creative prompt can be used as an additional writing assignment in which students write a continuation of "Lamb to the Slaughter."

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Have students respond to the narrative prompt using the Narrative Writing Checklist as they write.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Copy](#)



Vocabulary Quiz 2

ESSENTIAL


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This vocabulary quiz assesses students' knowledge of the vocabulary words in Vocabulary List 2.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- To assign this quiz digitally, click "Assign" and schedule the quiz. Set aside 15 minutes for students to complete the vocabulary quiz.
- To have students complete the quiz on paper, access the student copy of the assignment materials and distribute it to students.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Vocabulary Quiz](#)
- Teacher Answer Key*

**Quizzes assigned digitally will be scored automatically. To ensure assessment security, a printable answer key is not available at this time.*

Reading Lesson: "Lather and Nothing Else" (Short Story)

ESSENTIAL


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

"Lather and Nothing Else" is a short story set during the Columbian Civil War. As a barber shaves the beard of a cruel officer, he struggles to decide between taking revenge and maintaining his integrity. As students read, they will determine how an author uses internal conflict to develop a theme.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Introduce the lesson with the slide deck (5 min)
- Lead students through the reading and questions (35 min)
- Have students complete the independent practice (15 min)
- Facilitate the quick partner discussion (5 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Slide Deck](#)
- Teacher Copy*
- Student Copy*

**Student and teacher copies of this reading lesson are downloadable on commonlit.org for verified teacher accounts. Navigate to the [text page](#) and click "Download PDF" to access these materials.*

Reading Skill Lesson: Theme

OPTIONAL


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This lesson can be applied to any text of choice. Students will review the steps for determining theme and apply them to the chosen text.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Choose a text students will work with, then follow the guidance on each section of the lesson. Each part has clear directions that indicate if the section should be teacher-led or assigned as partner work or independent practice. (20 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)
- [Classroom Anchor Chart](#)
- [Student Reference Sheet](#)

Grammar and Usage Activities

OPTIONAL


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

Grammar is an important skill in elevating student writing to the next level. This 360 Unit's grammar and usage materials contains 5 activities that focus on correctly using the three main verb forms: gerunds, participles, and infinitives. Great for a quick warm-up activity or homework!

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Assign the 5 activities as warm-ups, homework, or practice to prepare students for the grammar quiz.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Grammar Activities](#)
- [Teacher Answer Key](#)

Related Media Exploration: Where Do Moral Dilemmas Show Up In Everyday Life?

RECOMMENDED


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

In this thought-provoking Related Media Exploration, students will work with their peers to examine a moral dilemma known as the Trolley Problem. They will consider their instincts and reactions and think about how this dilemma is relevant to their world and future.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Lead students through the introductory slides. Release students to complete the remainder of the exploration with partners. (35 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Slide Deck](#)
- [Student Copy](#)
- [Teacher Copy](#)

Grammar and Usage Quiz

OPTIONAL


ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This grammar quiz assesses students' knowledge of the unit's grammar skill: correctly using the three main verb forms of gerunds, participles, and infinitives.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

- Assign the grammar quiz to students (10 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Grammar Quiz](#)
- Teacher Answer Key*

**Not available in PDF. Coming soon in digital form!*

Writing Lesson: Unit 1 Essay Planning

ESSENTIAL



ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

Planning and organizing ideas is often the most challenging part of writing an essay. In this multi-part writing lesson, students will prepare for their end of unit essay by practicing skills they can carry over into future essay planning.

Students will:

- Break down a prompt
- Find evidence that relates to the prompt
- Refine their ideas through discussion
- Draft and revise a thesis statement
- Examine an exemplar essay

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Follow the guidance on each section of the lesson. Each part has clear directions that indicate if the section should be teacher-led or assigned as partner work or independent practice. (50 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)

Writing Lesson: Unit 1 Essay

ESSENTIAL



ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

This end of unit activity requires that students respond to the following writing prompt:

What motivates people to do bad things? Use at least **two** of the following texts to support your answer:

- “Ruthless”
- “Button, Button”
- “Lamb to the Slaughter”

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Have students use their resources to draft their essay.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Student Essay Prompt](#)
- [Exemplar Essay](#)
- [Essay Rubric](#)

Writing Lesson: Writing Introductions

ESSENTIAL



ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:

In this multi-part writing lesson, students will learn how to use the “upside-down triangle method” for writing strong introductions.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Follow the guidance on each section of the lesson. Each part has clear directions that indicate if the section should be teacher-led or assigned as partner work or independent practice. (30 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)
- [Classroom Anchor Chart](#)
- [Student Reference Sheet](#)

Writing Lesson: Writing Conclusions**ESSENTIAL****ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:**

In this multi-part writing lesson, students will learn how to write a conclusion that supports their thesis.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Follow the guidance on each section of the lesson. Each part has clear directions that indicate if the section should be teacher-led or assigned as partner work or independent practice. (25 min)

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)
- [Classroom Anchor Chart](#)
- [Student Reference Sheet](#)

Alternative Writing Prompts**OPTIONAL****ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT:**

This unit includes three additional end of unit writing task options. Teachers may consider using these as extension activities or as a replacement for the recommended prompt.

HOW TO FACILITATE:

Consider which prompt best meets your students' needs and assign that prompt in place of or in addition to the recommended unit prompt.

ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS:

- [Teacher Copy](#)
- [Student Copy](#)





Training & Support Resources

CommonLit 360 is rich with resources for teachers and administrators. In addition to this PDF Unit Guide, here are just a few additional tools available to teams for free:

- ↳ Document: [Curriculum Framework, An Overview](#)
- ↳ Document: [Themes & Topics Overview](#)
- ↳ Live Webinar: [Getting Started with CommonLit 360](#)
- ↳ Instructional support videos available on each unit's [Support and Resources page](#)

Ready to roll out CommonLit 360 in your school or district? [Read about the affordable professional development](#) we offer for schools and districts through our CommonLit for Schools packages.

Pacing Guide

With appropriate pacing, Grade 8, Unit 1 should take roughly 5-7 weeks of instructional time. This assumes **45 minutes** of daily instruction. With this assumption, many of the reading lessons can last up to 2 days/class periods and should be spaced accordingly. Supplemental reading, vocabulary activities, and grammar activities can often be assigned as homework. Teachers should expect to revise pacing as needed.

WEEK 1

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Introduction • Vocabulary Activity Set List 1: Activity 1 & Slide Deck
Tues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Activity Set List 1: Activity 2 • “Ruthless” Slide Deck • “Ruthless” - Day 1
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Activity Set List 1: Activity 3 • “Ruthless” - Day 2 • “Ruthless” - Independent Practice
Thurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Activity Set List 1: Activity 4 • Writing Lesson: Exemplar Paragraph
Fri.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Activity Set List 1: Activity 5 <p>Flex time for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent/Book Club reading or meetings • Supplemental text set reading • Completion of previous activities • Teacher-created activities

WEEK 2

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary List 1 Quiz • “How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?” Slide Deck • “How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?” • “How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?” - Independent Practice
Tues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Button, Button” Slide Deck • “Button, Button” - Day 1
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Button, Button” - Day 2 • “Button, Button” - Independent Practice
Thurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Lesson: Writing a Strong Argument
Fri.	<p>Flex time for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent/Book Club reading or meetings • Supplemental text set reading • Completion of previous activities • Teacher-created activities

WEEK 3

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Activity Set List 2: Activity 1 & Slide Deck • Discussion Skill Lesson RECOMMENDED
Tues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Activity Set List 2: Activity 2 • Class Discussion RECOMMENDED
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lamb to the Slaughter” Slide Deck • “Lamb to the Slaughter” - Day 1
Thurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Activity Set List 2: Activity 3 • “Lamb to the Slaughter” - Day 2
Fri.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lamb to the Slaughter” - Day 3 • “Lamb to the Slaughter” - Independent Practice <p>Flex time for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent/Book Club reading or meetings • Supplemental text set reading • Completion of previous activities • Teacher-created activities

WEEK 4

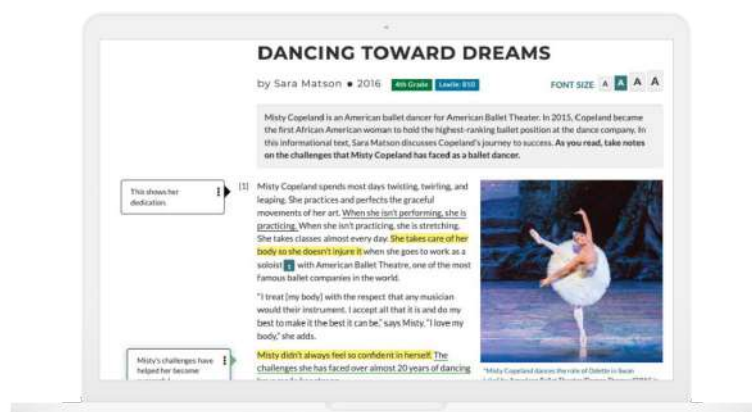
Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary Activity Set List 2: Activities 4 & 5 Narrative Prompt OPTIONAL
Tues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary List 2 Quiz "Lather and Nothing Else" Slide Deck "Lather and Nothing Else" - Day 1
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar and Usage Activities: Parts 1-3 OPTIONAL "Lather and Nothing Else" - Day 2 Reading Skill Lesson: Theme OPTIONAL "Lather and Nothing Else" - Independent Practice
Thurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar and Usage Activities: Parts 4-5 OPTIONAL Related Media Exploration: Moral Dilemmas RECOMMENDED
Fri.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar and Usage Quiz OPTIONAL <p>Flex time for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent/Book Club reading or meetings Supplemental text set reading Completion of previous activities Teacher-created activities

WEEK 5

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing Lesson: Unit 1 Essay Planning
Tues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing Lesson: Writing Introductions Unit 1 Essay: Drafting - Day 1
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit 1 Essay: Drafting - Day 2 Writing Lesson: Writing Conclusions
Thurs.	<p>Flex time for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent/Book Club reading or meetings Supplemental text set reading Completion of previous activities Teacher-created activities
Fri.	<p>Flex time for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent/Book Club reading or meetings Supplemental text set reading Completion of previous activities Teacher-created activities

CommonLit 360: Digital Experience

One of the reasons CommonLit 360 is so unique is that it is accessible through a free, state-of-the-art digital platform. Reading, writing, and vocabulary lessons and assessments within a CommonLit 360 unit can be assigned to students through CommonLit.org. During and after the lesson, teachers can view formative assessment data through a real-time lesson dashboard to easily track completion and progress. All of these digital features are free for teachers and students, just like the rest of CommonLit. To learn more about the digital experience, [sign up for an upcoming CommonLit 360 webinar](#) or email help@commonlit.org.



Appendix I: Text Selection & Text Complexity

When selecting texts for this unit, CommonLit considers both quantitative and qualitative measures of text complexity.

UNIT TEXTS

Title by Author	Lexile	Description
"Ruthless" by William DeMille (Short Story)	790L	"Ruthless" is a short story about a vindictive man's plan for revenge. In a shocking twist ending, the man gets a taste of his own medicine. As students read, they will analyze how authors use different points of view and situational irony to affect readers.
"How Do We Tell Right From Wrong?" by Anne-Marie Reidy (Informational Text)	1060L	"How Do We Tell Right From Wrong" is an informational text that outlines Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory about the three levels of moral development. As students read, they will trace how a central idea is developed over the course of a text.
"Button, Button" by Richard Matheson (Short Story)	420L	In "Button, Button," a couple is faced with a mysterious and tempting offer that forces them to choose between their own happiness and someone else's life. As students read, they will analyze how an author builds suspense through characters' different points of view.
"Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl (Short Story)	730L	"Lamb to the Slaughter" is a story about how one woman reacts to her husband's shocking betrayal and then decides to cover her tracks in an unexpected way. As students read, they will analyze how an author builds suspense through dramatic irony.
"Lather and Nothing Else" by Hernando Téllez (Short Story)	640L	"Lather and Nothing Else" is a short story set during the Columbian Civil War. As a barber shaves the beard of a cruel officer, he struggles to decide between taking revenge and maintaining his integrity. As students read, they will determine how an author uses internal conflict to develop a theme.

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS (ENGLISH)

Title by Author	Lexile	Description
<u>"Thank You, M'am"</u> by Langston Hughes (Short Story)	650L	This text tells the story of a boy who tries to steal a woman's purse to buy himself a pair of shoes and ends up learning a valuable lesson about kindness. Use it to discuss the unit's essential questions: How do we know what is right? Why do people choose to do wrong?
<u>"After Twenty Years"</u> by O. Henry (Short Story)	820L	This is a story about an old friendship with a twist ending. Use it to review situational irony and discuss unit themes about good and bad behavior.
<u>"Can we teach robots ethics?"</u> by BBC News (Informational)	930L	This text explores the morality behind self-driving cars. Use it to discuss unit themes about right versus wrong.

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS (SPANISH)

Title by Author	Lexile	Description
<u>"Gracias, señora"</u> by Langston Hughes (Short Story)	790L	This text tells the story of a boy who tries to steal a woman's purse to buy himself a pair of shoes and ends up learning a valuable lesson about kindness. Use it to discuss the unit's essential questions: How do we know what is right? Why do people choose to do wrong?
<u>"Veinte años después"</u> by O. Henry (Short Story)	740L	This is a story about an old friendship with a twist ending. Use it to review situational irony and discuss unit themes about good and bad behavior.
<u>"¿Podemos enseñarles ética a los robots?"</u> by BBC News (Informational)	900L	This text explores the morality behind self-driving cars. Use it to discuss unit themes about right versus wrong.

