

The purpose of this tool is to help educators understand each of the grade level standards and how those standards connect to the students' overall preparation for college and career readiness.

Standards are defined as the most critical prerequisite skills and knowledge. This document is color-coded to reflect both anchor and priority standards. Though previous emphasis was placed on priority standards to address lost learning due to COVID-19, New Mexico teachers should note that moving forward, while priority standards allow for acceleration of learning, all standards should be addressed in instruction throughout the school year.

In this guide you will find:

- A [breakdown](#) of each of the grade level standards within the literature strand, including:
 - Vertical alignment guidance
 - Essential vocabulary related to the standard
 - Identification of anchor standards as identified by the CCSS and priority standards as identified by NMPED
- Sample aligned [assessment items](#)
- Companion resources guides that address:
 - [Planning Literacy Instruction with MLSS Guide](#)
 - [Choosing a Complex Text](#)
 - [Text Dependent Questions with Complex Texts](#)
 - [Vocabulary Instruction with Complex Texts](#)
 - [Speaking, Listening, and Writing](#)
 - [Differentiating Support for All Learners](#)
 - [Cross-Curricular Connections with Literacy](#)
 - [Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness in Literacy](#)

Key		
	<i>Anchor Standard</i>	Anchor standards, as identified by the Common Core, are denoted with an anchor icon. Anchor standards are the fundamental skills we want students to have when they graduate. The College and Career Ready (CCR) and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate. Anchor standards appear from Kindergarten to 12th grade and are aligned to what colleges and workplaces expect students to be able to do.
	<i>Priority Standard</i>	Priority standards, as identified by NMPED, are denoted with red highlighting. Priority standards are the most critical prerequisite skills and knowledge a student needs. This does not mean that these are only standards required to be taught, just these are the standards that will allow for the acceleration the students of New Mexico need during this time.

STANDARDS BREAKDOWN

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key Ideas and Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCSS.RL.9.1 ○ CCSS.RL.9.2 ○ CCSS.RL.9.3 ○ NMSS.9.1 ○ NMSS.9.2 ● Craft and Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCSS.RL.9.4 ○ CCSS.RL.9.5 ○ CCSS.RL.9.6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integration of Knowledge and Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCSS.RL.9.7 ○ CCSS.RL.9.8 (not applicable to Literature) ○ CCSS.RL.9.9 ● Range of Reading Level and Text Complexity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCSS.RL.9.10
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RL.9.1		
	Anchor Standard: Key Ideas and Details <i>R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</i>	
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Key Ideas and Details
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.1, RL.2.1, RL.3.1, RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.6.1, RL.7.1, RL.8.1	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.1
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
Students deliberately choose evidence that is detailed and complete to best support their analyses of what the text directly states as well as what the text indirectly states.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analysis – a detailed examination of the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole ● explicit, explicitly – stated clearly and directly, leaving no room for confusion or interpretation ● inference – a conclusion derived from logical reasoning following an investigation of available evidence ● strong and thorough textual evidence – evidence that is judged to be powerful (i.e., having greater rhetorical value) when compared to other information, facts, and data that could be used for support (strong) and encompasses each facet of a particular argument or claim/set of claims such that no area is left vulnerable to simple counterclaims (thorough) ● text – any media that students can read, write, view, listen to, or explore, including books, photographs, films, articles, music, art, and more 	
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● identify criteria for strong and thorough textual evidence. ● refer to these criteria to evaluate and check the quality of their evidence. ● select evidence that fits the established criteria and supports their analyses. ● explain the connection between their inferences and textual evidence. 		

RL.9.2				
	<p>Anchor Standard: Key Ideas and Details</p> <p><i>R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</i></p>			
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand		
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Key Ideas and Details		
Standard		Vertical Alignment		
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.		<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.2, RL.2.2, RL.3.2, RL.4.2, RL.5.2, RL.6.2, RL.7.2, RL.8.2</td> <td style="width: 50%;"><i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.2</td> </tr> </table>	<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.2, RL.2.2, RL.3.2, RL.4.2, RL.5.2, RL.6.2, RL.7.2, RL.8.2	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.2
<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.2, RL.2.2, RL.3.2, RL.4.2, RL.5.2, RL.6.2, RL.7.2, RL.8.2	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.2			
Clarification Statement		Vocabulary for Teacher Development		
Students establish a literary text’s theme, trace it throughout the work, and closely examine how it is first introduced, how it progresses, how it evolves, and how it is clarified through key details. Using the theme and key details, students summarize the text in an unbiased manner.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analysis – a detailed examination of the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole ● explicit, explicitly – stated clearly and directly, leaving no room for confusion or interpretation ● inference – a conclusion derived from logical reasoning following an investigation of available evidence. ● strong and thorough textual evidence – evidence that is judged to be powerful (i.e., having greater rhetorical value) when compared to other information, facts, and data that could be used for support (strong) and encompasses each facet of a particular argument or claim/set of claims such that no area is left vulnerable to simple counterclaims (thorough) ● text – any media that students can read, write, view, listen to, or explore, including books, photographs, films, articles, music, art, and more 		
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● choose a variety of topics from a literary work and establish what statement the author is making about these topics in order to determine the section of the text where the theme is most prominent. 				

- annotate the text to collect evidence on the setting, characters, dialogue, and/or other plot elements that reveal the development of the theme.
- give explanations of how and why a particular theme progresses throughout the text.
- differentiate between significant details about the text and personal reflections.
- write paragraphs summarizing a text with content that is accurate and language that is neutral.

RL.9.3		
	<p>Anchor Standard: Key Ideas and Details</p> <p><i>R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</i></p>	
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Key Ideas and Details
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.	<p><i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.3, RL.2.3, RL.3.3, RL.4.3, RL.5.3, RL.6.3, RL.7.3, RL.8.3</p>	<p><i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.3</p>
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
Students examine how characters' multiple traits, personalities, and conflicting motivations evolve throughout the plot. Students also examine how characters react to each other and how their actions propel the story forward or contribute to the theme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analyze – to critically examine the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole ● complex character – a character who undergoes important changes as the plot unfolds and has a variety of traits and sides to their personality ● interact – to act in such a manner as to influence another ● motivation – the reasoning behind a character's action ● plot – the sequence of events in a story, play, movie, etc. ● text – anything that students can read, write, view, listen to, or explore, including books, photographs, films, articles, music, art, and more ● theme – the underlying meaning that a literary text directly or indirectly explains, develops, and/or explores 	
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● identify the motivations of a particular character and explain the extent to which the character is complex. ● list ways a character changes and describe how the character interacts with and influences other characters. ● explain how the character influences the plot or develops the theme. 		

9.1		
Grade	NMSS Domain	
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
Students in Grade 9 will analyze and evaluate common characteristics of significant works of literature from various genres, including Hispanic and Native American oral and written texts	<i>Previous Grades:</i> 5.a, 6.a, 7.a, 8.a	<i>Future Grades:</i> 11-12.1
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
Students can analyze and evaluate the common characteristics of literary works across genres. This includes Hispanic and Native American oral and written texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● characteristic – a feature or quality belonging typically to a person, place, or thing and serving to identify it ● genre – a specific type of composition characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter 	
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analyze multiple texts and determine a common characteristic across these texts. ● describe how a common characteristic serves multiple texts, both oral and written. 		

9.2		
Grade	NMSS Domain	
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
Students in Grade 9 will cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of British, world, and regional literatures, including various Hispanic and Native American oral and written texts.	<i>Previous Grades:</i> N/A	<i>Future Grades:</i> 11-12.2
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
Students deliberately choose evidence that is detailed and complete to best support their analyses of what the text directly states (explicit) as well as what the text indirectly states (implicit). They will do this for a variety of texts written by authors around the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● strong and thorough textual evidence – evidence that is judged to be powerful (i.e., having greater rhetorical value) when compared to other information, facts, and data that could be used for support (strong) and encompasses each facet of a particular argument or set of claims such that no area is left vulnerable to simple counter-claims (thorough) 	
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● evaluate evidence on a strength scale from weakest to strongest. ● assess the quality of several pieces of evidence. ● write responses to a text-dependent question, using only pieces of evidence deemed strongest. 		

RL.9.4		
	Anchor Standard: Craft and Structure <i>R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</i>	
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Craft and Structure
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).	<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.4, RL.2.4, RL.3.4, RL.4.4, RL.5.4, RL.6.4, RL.7.4, RL.8.4	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.4
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
Students examine the text to understand the meaning of words or phrases, using the context to inform their thinking. Students consider how particular words and phrases are used to influence the overall meaning and tone of the text, such as how they create a formal or informal tone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analyze – to critically examine the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole ● phrase(s) – a small group of words representing a conceptual unit, containing either a subject or a verb, but not both. Both a subject and a verb would constitute a clause (e.g., “Running through the forest, she breathed in the fresh, crisp air.”) ● text – anything that students can read, write, view, listen to, or explore, including books, photographs, films, articles, music, art, and more ● tone – the attitude an author takes toward the subject or topic of a text, generally revealed through word choice, perspective, or point of view 	
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● determine the meaning of a word using context clues found before and after keywords in the text. ● explain how a word impacts the overall meaning and tone of a text. ● rewrite a passage by changing key words and phrases to convey a different tone. 		

RL.9.5				
	Anchor Standard: Craft and Structure <i>R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</i>			
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand		
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Craft and Structure		
Standard		Vertical Alignment		
Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.5, RL.2.5, RL.3.5, RL.4.5, RL.5.5, RL.6.5, RL.7.5, RL.8.5</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"><i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.5</td> </tr> </table>	<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.5, RL.2.5, RL.3.5, RL.4.5, RL.5.5, RL.6.5, RL.7.5, RL.8.5	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.5
<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.5, RL.2.5, RL.3.5, RL.4.5, RL.5.5, RL.6.5, RL.7.5, RL.8.5	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.5			
Clarification Statement		Vocabulary for Teacher Development		
Students examine how an author deliberately organizes a text, sequences events, and utilizes pacing, such as parallel plots and flashbacks, to create a sense of mystery, tension, surprise, etc. for the reader.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyze – to critically examine the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole event – a thing that happens; an occurrence text – anything that students can read, write, view, listen to, or explore, including books, photographs, films, articles, music, art, and more 		
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss how an author organizes a text and order events. create outlines of a text that reflect the overall structure, the order of events, and where time was manipulated. explain how structural choices create a specific experience for the reader. 				

RL.9.6		
	<p>Anchor Standard: Craft and Structure</p> <p><i>R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</i></p>	
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Craft and Structure
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.	<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.6, RL.2.6, RL.3.6, RL.4.6, RL.5.6, RL.6.6, RL.7.6, RL.8.6	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.6
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
Students examine how an author or character from world literature narrates the text from a particular perspective. Students determine how an author’s or narrator’s culture, and experiences influence their attitude toward an event, character, idea, or concept within the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analyze – to critically examine the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole ● perspective – an attitude toward or outlook on something 	
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● use graphic organizers (such as a cause/effect organizer) to determine how the author’s or character’s perspective affects their attitude toward events, characters, ideas, or concepts within the text. ● highlight areas in the text that reflect culture and areas where the author, narrator, or character thinks, says, and does, and make connections between the two. 		

RL.9.7		
	<p>Anchor Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas <i>R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</i></p>	
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).	<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.7, RL.2.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7, RL.6.7, RL.7.7, RL.8.7	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.7
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
Students examine two literary texts in different formats which address the same subject or key scene, such as Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus." Students compare the two texts' representations of the subject or key scenes, noting their similarities and differences as well as the parts that were accentuated or omitted to understand the artist's or author's purpose and bias.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyze – to critically examine the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole artistic medium – the form(s) or material(s) an artist or author uses to express their ideas (e.g., words, oil paint, etc.) 	
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compare and contrast the treatment of a subject or scene in two different artistic mediums. create side-by-side comparison charts to explain how Medium A and how Medium B address established points of comparison. discuss the mediums' major similarities and differences with their class. 		

RL.9.9				
	<p>Anchor Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p><i>R.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</i></p>			
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand		
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas		
Standard		Vertical Alignment		
<p>Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).</p>		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.9, RL.2.9, RL.3.9, RL.4.9, RL.5.9, RL.6.9, RL.7.9, RL.8.9 </td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.9 </td> </tr> </table>	<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.9, RL.2.9, RL.3.9, RL.4.9, RL.5.9, RL.6.9, RL.7.9, RL.8.9	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.9
<i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.1.9, RL.2.9, RL.3.9, RL.4.9, RL.5.9, RL.6.9, RL.7.9, RL.8.9	<i>Future Grades:</i> RL.11-12.9			
Clarification Statement		Vocabulary for Teacher Development		
<p>Students examine how an author borrows or alters content from an original text, such as how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analyze – to critically examine the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole 		
Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● compare and contrast a modern character with a mythological character. ● discuss how a theme/event/character from a myth has been modernized in a contemporary text. ● compare the theme/event/character in a traditional story to the same in a modern work of fiction. 				

RL.9.10		
	<p>Anchor Standard: Range of Reading Level and Text Complexity <i>R.10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</i></p>	
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Range of Reading Level and Text Complexity
Standard	Vertical Alignment	
<p>By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</p> <p>By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.</p>	<p><i>Previous Grades:</i> RL.K.10, RL.1.10, RL.2.10</p>	<p><i>Future Grades:</i> RL.4.10, RL.5.10</p>
Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development	
<p>By the end of grade 10, students competently read and understand literature within the 9-10 text complexity band (Lexile: 1050-1335). They are able to read independently for an extended time. Students make connections to their background knowledge and relevant experiences to engage with text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● independently – on one’s own, without aid from another (such as a teacher) ● proficient/proficiently – competent, skilled, and/or showing knowledge and aptitude in doing something; the level at which one is able to complete a particular skill, such as reading complex texts, with success ● text – anything that students can read, write, view, listen to, or explore, including books, photographs, films, articles, music, art, and more ● text complexity band – stratification of the levels of intricacy and/or difficulty of texts, corresponding to associated grade levels (2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-12) determined by three factors: 1) qualitative dimensions (levels of meaning, language complexity as determined by the attentive reader), 2) quantitative dimensions (word length and frequency, sentence length, and cohesion), and 3) reader and task considerations (factors related to a specific reader such as motivation, background 	

	knowledge, persistence; others associated with the task itself such as the purpose or demands of the task itself)
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Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...

- write a list of predictions they have about the text, chapter, excerpt, etc. based on the text's title, chapter title, act/scene title, etc. and after independently reading, students confirm or disprove their predictions.
- use a reading strategy or keep a purpose in mind to help monitor their comprehension during independent reading.

ASSESSMENT GUIDE

- **Constructed Response Assessment Task aligned to RL.9.1 & RL.9.3**
 - Evidence of Text Complexity and Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness
 - VABB Analysis with Example Questions and Exemplar Student Responses
 - Example MLSS Universal Supports
- **Constructed Response Assessment Task aligned to RL.9.4**
- **Multiple Choice Assessment Items**

Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Key Ideas and Details
Sample Task #1 (Constructed Response)		
<p>After reading an excerpt from <i>Night</i> by Elie Wiesel students must: Write an essay in which you explain/analyze the way in which the author reveals how humans often react to threats from those with greater powers. Use evidence from the text to help develop your response.</p>		
Exemplar Student Responses		
RL.9.1 RL.9.3	<p>Claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author recognized the threat from the Fascist German army as troublesome and knew the actions of the troops would lead to the citizens’ downfall. He also recognized the citizens’ self-deception as a fault that would prevent the citizens from protecting themselves. <p>Textual Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author spoke directly to Moishe the Beadle to understand why he was adamant about the citizens understanding the threat from the Germans. The author asked his father to move to Palestine to avoid the impending trouble (“I had asked my father to sell everything, to liquidate everything, and to leave.”), recognizing the danger his family was facing. The author recognized the symbolism of the “yellow star” and recognized that his father and the other citizens ignored this symbol as fatal (“Poor Father! Of what then did you die!”) The author stated his understanding that the citizens’ false sense of security in the ghetto was nothing more than delusion (“The ghetto was ruled by neither German nor Jew. It was ruled by delusion.”). <p>Note: Students may identify other points of view that may be deemed appropriate by the teacher. If students can support another claim with textual evidence and logic, please score appropriately.</p>	
	DOK	Blooms
	Level 3	Applying
	Possible Aligned Language Objectives	Possible Misconceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students cite evidence to support their claim of the narrator’s point of view. Students analyze the author’s point of view as it develops over the course of the text. Students develop vocabulary to understand and utilize the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may focus on the community’s reaction instead of the author’s point of view on the community’s reaction. Students may describe their own point of view toward the Fascist German army instead of making a claim about the author’s point of view. 	

Evidence of Text Complexity and Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

Text Summary and evidence of Complexity:

- *Night* is a memoir by Elie Wiesel about his haunting and horrific experiences in concentration camps during the Holocaust. Wiesel was 15 years old when he was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau with his family. At the beginning of the novel, Wiesel is deeply interested in religious studies and Jewish mysticism, but as the novel progresses and he experiences the camps, he becomes disillusioned with God and struggles to understand the cruelty within humanity.
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel is worthy of students' time to read and also meets the expectations for text complexity at Grades 9-10. The text contains challenging vocabulary and has significant knowledge demands.

Evidence of Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness:

- **Who is represented in the text used to assess this cluster of standards?**
Jewish people and others who faced oppression during the Holocaust are represented in this text.
- **How are those groups and individuals portrayed?**
The Jewish people represented in the novel are portrayed as complex and diverse human beings. The novel humanizes a group of people that Nazi Germany tried to dehumanize.
- **Does the text provoke critical questions about cultural and linguistic diversity, especially within marginalized communities?**
The text provokes many critical questions about cultural and linguistic diversity. The reader is invited into the perspective of a community that was discriminated on based on these things.
- **What supports are provided to teachers to identify blind spots?**
The text does a good job of providing information about the Jewish community and their experiences during the Holocaust. Some of the cultural references are mentioned and may need further research to understand, but students will be able to grasp concepts even if they don't stop to understand all unfamiliar terms. Also, the Holocaust Museum and a myriad of other online resources can help create a deeper understanding.
- **How is this text culturally/linguistically responsive?**
This text is culturally responsive because it humanizes a marginalized group of people who were victims of a genocide. The discrimination of Jewish people is still relevant today.

RL.9.1
RL.9.3

VABB Analysis

RL.9.1
RL.9.3

Validate	Affirm
<i>The intentional and purposeful legitimization of the home culture and language of the student.</i>	<i>The intentional and purposeful effort to reverse the negative stereotypes, images, and representations of marginalized cultures and languages promoted by corporate mainstream.</i>
<p>Question: At the beginning of the novel, Elie wants to study the Kabbalah, a mystical interpretation of the Bible, but his father thinks he's too young. What is more important - what your family wants for you or what you want for you? Have you ever had to choose between the two?</p> <p>ESR: I think what my family wants for me is important, but it's not as important as what I want for me. At the end of the day, I want to be happy with my choices. I fortunately have not had to choose between two big things like what I want to do after high school. My family supports me, but they don't always agree on the little choices like how much I can be on my phone.</p>	<p>Question: Everyone has unique experiences of what "home" means, and it helps shape you into who you are today. What is your experience of "home" and how has it impacted your life?</p> <p>ESR: My experience of home is different than many of my friends. My mom is an Asian immigrant, and my dad is white. I'm biracial, so that means my home is a blend of cultures. That has impacted me because I eat different foods and have different holiday traditions than some of my friends do. For example, on Thanksgiving my mom makes turkey fried rice.</p>
Build	Bridge
<i>Create the connections between the home culture/language and the school culture/language through instruction for success in school and the broader social context.</i>	<i>Create opportunities for situational appropriateness that provides the academic and social skills that students will need to have success beyond school culture.</i>
<p>Question: In the novel, Elie is a religious young man who is challenged in his belief in God after experiencing many traumas during the Holocaust. Throughout the novel, he grapples with understanding how God could let these atrocities happen. Discuss a time that you were challenged in your beliefs. What happened and how did you handle it?</p> <p>Note: give students some suggestions to help them answer beyond religious beliefs if that is not applicable to them. For example, politics, their views on bullying or mental health, social issues like gender equality, etc.</p> <p>ESR: One time that I changed my beliefs was about body positivity. As a kid, I was surrounded by images and ideas of what beauty was. I read magazines and saw models that all looked a certain way. Even my mom would comment on my weight. As I got older, I started seeing other role models for beauty and that changed my beliefs about what it meant to be beautiful. Now there are more positive role models in the modeling industry</p>	<p>Question: In the novel, Elie and other prisoners around him resist their oppressors. What is one way that people today resist oppression? Do they resist in direct or open ways that are easy to see or in subtle ways that are harder to see or a combination of both? How effective is their resistance and why do you think so?</p> <p>Responses can vary. Push students to find examples that are positive moments of resistance.</p> <p>ESR: One way people resist today is by protesting. The Black Lives Matter protest is a direct way that people have resisted racism. Some people resist in ways that are harder to see but protesting and promoting BLM is easy to see. They are on the news all the time, and I think it's effective because the message is viral. So many people know about things that they'd otherwise not know about, and that means they can do something about what's going on.</p>

	and among celebrities, and that helps me see where I fit in.	
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Layer 1: Universal Supports

High-quality core instruction for all students

In New Mexico we believe that all students deserve access to high-quality grade-level texts to show proficiency with reading and comprehension as outlined in the New Mexico standards. These universal supports provide core instruction that allow students to comprehend complex texts by providing access points and opportunities for deep thinking.

1. Pre-teach Tier 2 Vocabulary Words
 - Tier 2 Vocabulary are words that are more likely to appear in text than speech. Pre-teaching these words before diving into a text allows students to better understand the text because their cognitive load can be focused more on comprehension. To learn more, please visit Resource Guide on [Vocabulary Instruction with Complex Texts](#)
 - Choose words that are not implicitly or explicitly defined within the text.
2. Annotate/Create Text-Dependent questions to push student thinking to think about themes and central ideas, knowledge of vocabulary, or syntax and structure following the steps outlined in this resource guide. To learn more, please visit Resource Guide on [Text Dependent Questions with Complex Texts](#)
 - Crafting and using text dependent questions throughout a complex text allows the reader to chunk the text to better focus on meaning. They also teach the reader how to think deeply about a text and use evidence from the text to support that thinking

Universal Supports

The details listed below apply to the specific text in the bottom-most box and are meant to offer examples of how universal supports can be planned for lessons using an appropriately complex text.

Tier 2 Vocabulary to Preteach	Text Dependent Question
<p>Word: <u>Kabbalah</u></p> <p>Think Aloud: <u>Kabbalah</u> is sometimes translated as "mysticism" and it's part of a Jewish tradition that thinks about God differently than other parts of the Jewish tradition. If something is mystical, it means there is some kind of spiritual mystery surrounding it. Kabbalists think about God not as a divine entity -- a single Creator who oversees everything -- but as part of the entire fabric of the universe. As in, God lives inside each person and people can reveal the hidden parts of God within themselves by developing a closer relationship with God. The Zohar is a collection of texts that is supposed to help Kabbalists in this spiritual journey to be closer to God.</p>	<p>Question: What does it look like or feel like for someone to live in "<u>penury</u>"?</p> <p>ESR: It looks like poverty which comes with a lot of stigma. The text says that Moishe was poor and it implies that he was also needy and people did not particularly like needy people in town. That indicates he probably didn't have a lot, and people probably got tired of him or others who were poor begging in their town. The text also says Moishe kept out of people's way and it implies that he might have done this because he was aware of the attitudes of the town toward poor people who lived in penury, and that probably didn't feel good.</p>

Tier 2 Vocabulary:
"Physically, he was as awkward as a clown. His waiflike shyness made people smile. As for me, I liked his wide, dreamy eyes, gazing off into the distance. He spoke little. He sang, or rather he chanted, and the few snatches I caught here and there spoke of divine suffering, of the Shekhinah in Exile, where, according to Kabbalah, it awaits its redemption linked to that of man.

I met him in 1941. I was almost thirteen and deeply observant. By day I studied Talmud and by night I would run to the synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple."

Night by Elie Wiesel
[Link to Full Text](#)

Text Dependent Question:

"They called him Moishe the Beadle, as if his entire life he had never had a surname. He was the jack-of-all-trades in a Hasidic house of prayer, a shtibl. The Jews of Sighet—the little town in Transylvania where I spent my childhood—were fond of him. He was poor and lived in utter penury. As a rule, our townspeople, while they did help the needy, did not particularly like them. Moishe the Beadle was the exception. He stayed out of people's way. His presence bothered no one. He had mastered the art of rendering himself insignificant, invisible."

Night by Elie Wiesel

[Link to Full Text](#)

Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Craft and Structure
RL.9.4	Sample Task #2 (Constructed Response)	
	<p>After reading an excerpt from <i>In the Time of the Butterflies</i> by Julia Alvarez students must answer: How does Alvarez’s use of the word “especially” further develop an idea that she introduces in paragraphs 2–6?</p>	
	Exemplar Student Responses	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alvarez’s comment that her mother “especially” lived in terror of Trujillo even after his fall. She recalls her statement in paragraph 2 that “Especially, I imagine my mother’s life.” Alvarez explains in paragraphs 2 and 3 that her mother was sheltered from the truth about Trujillo for a long time because her grandparents were afraid to criticize the regime and because “families such as hers kept their daughters out of the public eye.” As a result, Alvarez suggests in paragraph 6 that the reality of the dictatorship had a greater impact on her mother than on her father: “Perhaps because she had innocently revered him, my mother was now doubly revolted by this cold-blooded monster.” The word “especially” in paragraph 20 develops this by suggesting that her mother was more deeply and more lastingly affected by living under Trujillo. 	
	DOK	Blooms
	Level 3	Analyzing
	Possible Aligned Language Objectives	Possible Misconceptions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Students will analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may focus on the meaning/connotations they already have for the word “especially” instead of focusing on its use in this text. Students may struggle to identify the cumulative impact and instead focus on one discreet use of the word “especially”.

Multiple Choice Assessment Items		
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Key Ideas and Details
RL.9.2	<p>As described by the narrator, the grandfather is most remarkable for his</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. constant generosity and cheerful manner. B. extreme frugality and unfeeling pragmatism. C. narrow-minded prejudices and foolish stubbornness. D. strong convictions and intense personality. <p>Text Reference: Gilead by Marilynne Robinson from the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 Question Bank</p> <p>What choice best describes the narrator's attitude toward Nan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Admiration and curiosity B. Indulgence and pity C. Deference and gratitude D. Jealousy and resentment <p>Text Reference: "Kindness" by Yiyun Li from the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 Question Bank</p>	
Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Craft and Structure
RL.9.5	<p>The third paragraph (line 11-15) illustrates which contrast?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The natural landscape and human-made objects B. The comforts of home and the thrill of travel C. Quiet and commotion D. Past and present <p>Text Reference: Let the Great World Spin by Colum McCann from the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 Question Bank</p> <p>Alternative question stems with the right text:</p> <p>The purpose of the flashback in this passage is...</p> <p>The author creates suspense by...</p>	
RL.9.6	<p>In the passage, Katie primarily presents herself as someone who is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. shy, because is at a loss for words when Kalia's brothers speak to her. 	

	<p>B. perceptive, because she is aware of the tension among Kalia C. critical, because she is quick to make judgements based on the appearance of Kalia's home. D. troublesome, because she disturbs Lalia's brothers when she plays the piano.</p> <p>Text Reference: "Broken Chords" by Yia Lee from the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 Question Bank</p> <p>Alternative question stems with a clear text from outside the US: Character X's experience is different from their peers because...</p> <p>What misunderstandings might someone outside this culture have about Character X?</p>	
<i>Grade</i>	<i>CCSS Domain</i>	<i>CCSS Strand</i>
9	Reading: Literature (RL)	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
RL.9.9	<p>Anne Sexton's poem, "the Starry Night," about Vincent Van Gogh's painting of the same name, makes the following contrast between the earth and the sky:</p> <p>A. The sky is full of life and the town is not. B. The sky has rounded shapes and the earth has angles. C. The earth is full of life and the sky is not. D. The sky is peaceful, whereas the town is turbulent.</p> <p>Which of the following is NOT a transformation that Anne Sexton makes of the painting?</p> <p>A. The tree is a drowned woman. B. The moon pushes children from its eye. C. There are 11 stars. D. The night is a dragon.</p> <p>Text References: Anne Sexton's "The Starry Night" Van Gogh's "Starry Night"</p>	

Text Reference for MC Assessment Item RL.9.2

Questions 1-9 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*. ©2004 by Marilynne Robinson.

Line I wish you could have known my grandfather. I heard a man say once it seemed the one eye he had was somehow ten times an eye. Normally speaking, it seems to me, a gaze, even a stare, is diffused a little when there are two eyes involved. He could make me feel as though he had poked me with a stick, just by looking at me. Not that he meant any harm to speak of. He was just afire with old certainties, and he couldn't bear all the patience that was required of him by the peace and by the aging of his body and by the
5 forgetfulness that had settled over everything. He thought we should all be living at a dead run, I don't say he was wrong. That would be like contradicting John the Baptist.

He really would give anything away. My father would go looking for a saw or a box of nails and it would be gone. My mother used to keep what money she had in the bodice of her dress, tied up in a handkerchief. For a while she was selling stewing hens and eggs because times were very hard. (In those days we had a little land around this house, a barn and pasture and henhouse and a wood lot and woodshed and a nice little orchard and a grape arbor. But over the years the church has had to sell it all off. I used to expect to hear they were planning to auction off the cellar next, or the roof.) In any case, times were hard and she had the old man to deal with, and he would actually give away the blankets off his bed. He did that several times, and my mother was at a good deal of trouble to replace them. For a while she made me wear my church clothes all the time so he couldn't get at them, and then she never gave me a moment's peace because she was sure I was going to go off and play baseball in them, as of course I did.
10

I remember once he came into the kitchen while she was doing her ironing. He said, "Daughter, some folks have come to us for help." "Well," she said, "I hope they can wait a minute, I hope they can wait till this iron is cool." After a few minutes she put the iron on the stove and went into the pantry and came out with a can of baking powder. She delved around in it with a fork until she drew up a quarter. She did this again until she had a quarter and two dimes lying there on the table. She picked them up and polished the powder off with a corner of her apron and held them out to him. Now, forty-five cents represented a good many eggs in those days—she was not
15 an ungenerous woman. He took them, but it was clear enough he knew she had more. (Once when he was in the pantry he found money hidden in an empty can because when he happened to pick it up it rattled, so he took to going into the pantry from time to time just to see what else might rattle. So she took to washing her money and then pushing it into the lard or burying it in the sugar. But from time to time a nickel would show up where she didn't want it to, in the sugar bowl, of course, or in the fried mush.) No doubt she thought she could make him go on believing all her money was hidden in the pantry if she hid part of it there.
20

But he was never fooled, I believe he may have been a little unbalanced at that time, but he could see through anyone and anything. Except, my mother said, ne'er-do-wells. But that wasn't really true either. He just said, "Judge not," and of course that's Scripture and hard to contradict.
25

But it must be said that my mother took a great deal of pride in looking after her family, which was heavy work in those days and especially hard for her, with her aches and pains. But he'd walk off with a jar of her pickled beets without so much as a by-your-leave. That day, though, he stood there with those three coins in his drastic old mummified hand and watched her with that terrible eye, and she crossed her arms right over the handkerchief with the hidden money in it, as he clearly knew, and watched him right back, until he said, "Well, the Lord bless and keep you," and went out the door.
30

My mother said, "I stared him down! I stared him down!" She seemed more amazed than anything. As I have said, she had a good deal of respect for him. He always told her she ought not to worry about his generousities, because the Lord would provide. And she used to say that if He weren't put to so much trouble keeping us in shirts and socks, He might have time to provide a cake now and then, or a pie. But she missed him when he was gone, as we all did.
35

Text Reference for MC Assessment Item RL.9.2

Questions 1-9 are based on the following passage.

This passage is from Yiyun Li, "Kindness." ©2010 by Yiyun Li. In the passage, the narrator and Nan are female recruits in the Chinese army.

Line "The Last Rose of Summer," she told me when I asked her about the song during the break. Nan was a small girl and looked no more than thirteen years old. She had joined a famous children's choir when she was six, and when the other children her age had entered middle school and left the choir, she had remained because she liked to sing, and she could still pass for a young child. When she reached sixteen, the choir changed its name from "children's choir" to "children and young women's choir." She'd laughed when she told us about it. Would she go back to the choir? one of the girls had asked her, and she'd thought for a moment and said that perhaps after the army she would have to find some other hobbies. One could not possibly remain in a children's choir all her life, she'd said, though she seemed to me the kind of person who could get away with anything she set her heart on. I could imagine her still singing at twenty or thirty among a group of children, looking as young and innocent as them—though this I did not tell Nan. We were friendly toward each other, but we were not friends, perhaps the only two in our platoon who hadn't claimed a close friend eight weeks into the military life. I did not see the need to have someone next to me when I took a walk around the drill grounds after dinner for the fifteen minutes of free time; nor did I need to share my night-watch duty with a special friend, so I was often paired with leftover girls from the other platoons—girls like me who had no one to cling to—and it suited me well to spend half the night with someone as quiet as I was in the front room of the barracks, dozing off in two chairs set as far apart as possible.

15 Nan was a different case. She was friendly with everyone, including the officers and the conscripts in the cooking squad, and was courted by quite a few girls hoping to become her best friend. You could see that she was used to such attention, amused even, but she would not grant anyone that privilege. Even our squad leader, who had become a favorite of the officers with her increasingly militant treatment of us, was unwilling to assign the most dreadful duties—cleaning the toilets, or the pigsties—to Nan. A less gracious person than Nan would have been the target of envy, yet she seemed untouched by any malignancy.

20 One girl, overhearing our conversation, asked Nan to sing "The Last Rose of Summer." Nan stood up from where we were sitting in a circle and flicked dried grass and leaves from her uniform. Her voice seemed to make breathing hard for those around her; her face, no longer appearing amused, had an ancient, ageless look. I wondered what kind of person Nan was to be able to sing like that—she seemed too aloof to be touched by life, but how could she sing so hauntingly if she had not felt the pain described in those songs?

Text Reference for MC Assessment Item RL.9.5

Questions 1-9 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Colum McCann, *Let the Great World Spin*. ©2009 by Colum McCann.

Line It is not fashionable anymore, I suppose, to have a regard for one's mother in the way my brother and I had then, in the mid-1950s, when the noise outside the window was mostly wind and sea chime. One looks for the chink in the armor, the leg of the piano stool shorter than the other, the sadness that would detach us from her, but the truth is we enjoyed each other, all three of us, and never so evidently as those Sundays when the rain fell gray over Dublin Bay and the squalls blew fresh against the windowpane.

5 Our house in Sandymount looked out to the bay. We had a short driveway full of weeds, a square of lawn, a black ironwork fence. If we crossed the road we could stand on the curved seawall and look a good distance across the bay. A bunch of palm trees grew at the end of the road. They stood, smaller and more stunted than palms elsewhere, but exotic nonetheless, as if invited to come watch the Dublin rain. Corrigan sat on the wall, banging his heels and looking over the flat strand to the water. I should have known even then that the sea was written in him, that there would be some sort of leaving. The tide crept in and the water swelled at his feet. In the

10 evenings he walked up the road past the Martello Tower to the abandoned public baths, where he balanced on top of the seawall, arms held wide.

On weekend mornings we strolled with our mother, ankle-deep in the low tide, and looked back to see the row of houses, the coastline, and the little scarves of smoke coming up from the chimneys. Two enormous red and white power station towers broke the horizon to the east, but the rest was a gentle curve, with gulls on the air, the mail boats out of Dun Laoghaire, the scud of clouds on the

15 horizon. When the tide was out, the stretch of sand was corrugated and sometimes it was possible to walk a quarter-mile among isolated waterpools and bits of old refuse, log shaver shells, bedstead pipes.

Dublin Bay was a slow heaving thing, like the city it horseshoed, but it could turn without warning. Every now and then the water smashed up against the wall in a storm. The sea, having arrived, stayed. Salt crusted the windows of our house. The knocker on the door was rusted red.

20 When the weather blew foul, we sat on the stairs, Corrigan and I. Our father, a physicist, had left us years before. A check, postmarked in London, arrived through the letter box once a week. Never a note, just a check, drawn on a bank in Oxford. It spun in the air as it fell. We ran to bring it to our mother. She slipped the envelope under a flower pot on the kitchen windowsill and the next day it was gone. Nothing more was ever said.

The only sign of our father was a wardrobe full of his old suits and trousers in our mother's bedroom. Corrigan drew the door open.

25 In the darkness we sat with our backs against the rough wooden planks and slipped our feet in our father's shoes, let his sleeves touch our ears, felt the cold of his cuff buttons. Our mother found us one afternoon, dressed in his gray suits, the sleeves rolled up and the trousers held in place with elastic bands. We were marching around in his oversize brogues when she came and froze in the doorway, the room so quiet we could hear the radiator tick.

"Well," she said as she knelt to the ground in front of us. Her face spread out in a grin that seemed to pain her. "Come here," she

30 kissed us both on the cheek, tapped our bottoms, "Now run along." We slipped out of our father's old clothes, left them puddled on the floor.

Later that night we heard the clang of the coat hangers as she hung and rehung the suits.

Over the years there were the usual tantrums and bloody noses and broken rocking-horse heads, and our mother had to deal with the whispers of the neighbors, sometimes even the attentions of local widowers, but for the most part things stretched out comfortably in front of us: calm, open, a sweep of sandy gray.

Text Reference for MC Assessment Item RL.9.6

Questions 1-9 are based on the following passage.

This passage is from Yia Lee, "Broken Chords." ©2011 by Yia Lee. The Hmong people are from Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and parts of China.

Line I wandered to it without trying to seem like I was heading directly there. But Kalia saw. She was a small girl, with skin the color of wet sand on the beach. Her shiny black hair was pulled back into its usual ponytail. She smiled as I stopped in front of the piano.

"Do you play, Katie?" she asked, getting up and sweeping away the clothes. She put them on the couch, and then she lifted the lid to the keyboard. The white and black keys winked at me.

5 I sat down and plinked out a few notes. "It's in tune," I said. Why had it been carelessly buried under all those clothes? She gestured for me to begin, so I started Mozart's Twelve Variations on Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. It was one of my favorites. Deceptively simple, yet full of energy and whim. My fingers were bouncing around a rush of sixteenth notes, when a voice startled me. "Aaron, shut up!" A booming male voice yelled in Hmong.

The music faltered and then I stopped. Kalia appeared calm, but her black eyes were annoyed.

10 "It's not Aaron, she's my friend!" she called back in English. "Oh, sorry, my bad." A body attached itself to the voice: a young man appeared in the doorway. He glanced at us carelessly and went away.

"That was my older brother. Ignore him, he's an idiot." Kalia tried to be lighthearted, and I smiled for her sake. "He doesn't like piano?" I asked.

15 She shrugged. "He'll be leaving soon—he hardly seems to live here anymore. Why don't you finish the song?" I finished the song, although the frolicking notes seemed false now. "Do you play?" Kalia shook her head. I thought, then asked, "Who's Aaron?"

"He's Aaron." Kalia motioned with her head and I realized that there was another person at the doorway. He must have been standing

20 there as I was playing, for his face had an intent, pleased expression. His skinny frame was drowning in baggy clothes and there was a gold stud in his left ear. Now that we were paying attention to him he flashed us a small smile. His black eyes seemed vaguely familiar. "How was detention?" Kalia asked him drily. "Good," he answered. "Maybe if you do your homework, you'd avoid it," Kalia suggested.

25 "Maybe," said Aaron. "Perhaps if you showed up in class once in a while, that would help, too." "Perhaps," Aaron said, his voice too pleasant. It sounded like an old argument. Kalia looked angry, and more tired than ever. I wasn't sure what to do; my fingers hit a couple of keys accidentally.

30 The sound of the piano shifted their attention to me. Aaron stepped into the room and approached me. "That's my piano," he said. I got off the bench. "I'm sorry . . ."

"Don't be, it's just that it hasn't been played on for a long time," he said, trailing a finger along the white keys. "It's weird, coming here and hearing it again . . ."

"Well, then, why don't you play something?" I said. The question just popped out of me and he hesitated. I sneaked a glance at Kalia; she

35 was watching Aaron closely. There were undercurrents that I wasn't sure how to read. I was wondering if I'd somehow made a mistake when he sat down abruptly on the bench and let his fingers hover over the keys. Then he pressed them down.

He played Chopin, the etude nicknamed Ocean. His fingers flew as the music swept over the room. He was good. Not perfect, but he had good technique and he knew the music. I could see it in his eyes, the way they blazed a vivid crystal black.

When Aaron stopped, there was a silence.

40 I struggled to say something. Kalia beat me to words. "Aaron, this is my friend Katie Yang," she introduced. "Katie, this is my little brother Aaron." I said hello to him, he nodded and said, "Whatssup?"

Then Kalia told him to go away and leave us alone; we were working on a project. But her tone was less angry and had more humor. When he left I looked at the piano. I could still hear the notes rolling in my mind.