

Rationale for Sixth Grade  
G/T English Curriculum  
The Quest

The first objective for this sixth grade year is for the students to receive a sound instruction on how to read a novel or other literary work. The teacher needs to model how to **read to learn** and how to read and **analyze ways the author manipulates** the reader's mind and emotions by using certain literary devices. The students need to read beyond plot. They need to read actively and constantly ask questions about what devices the author has used and how the author has made them feel. Thus, the teacher needs to read the literary works **with** the students and not just hand the book to the student and give a deadline for completion. The sixth grade students do not know how to read for the literary devices of characterization, theme, diction, figurative language, setting, and for the author's style. Students, when left alone, read for plot, if they read at all.

Secondly, the teacher will find that the curriculum is driven by the theme THE QUEST. Every activity, every questioning, every writing, every assessment, everything should reflect this theme and to the students' tie to the theme. The teacher will constantly need to remind the students of the theme and of how the literary work and activities tie to the theme. An on-going QUEST CHEST helps to remind the students of the theme. The culminating activity, a student-written biography, will also reflect the theme as it has been studied throughout the year. These activities cannot be accomplished if the affective activities are left out of the curriculum. Less is more; and just because only four major works are included in the curriculum does not mean requirements have been omitted. A great deal of time should be spent on teacher modeling, on the student-oriented activities, and on the prewriting activities with graphic organizers. Via these graphic organizers, the students are "thinking through" the writing process though they may not complete an essay. Furthermore, the literary works should be the basis for grammar studies, and the Dewey words can be studied as tied to *A Christmas Carol* and to *Ulysses*. The optional videos and poetry are given for the teacher to use as time permits. All videos and poetry have been chosen because of the tie to the theme THE QUEST.

Finally, the sixth grade students will receive a firm foundation in the study of the epic and the epic hero. They should learn about the universality of gods and goddesses, the monomyth, and archetypes. The students will begin to see man attempting to make order out of the disorder of his existence. Furthermore, the students should see that these epics are a basis of literature, and that the epic story has been repeated throughout time; even today we are writing new epics, and they all have the same elements. Man needs a true hero; all man is on a quest—to meet new challenges, to evolve, to grow, to learn about himself and to become a better person. The epic allows the students to see these epic elements and to study the epic hero—a person with human frailties but with the will to succeed in his journey. Whether leaving elementary for middle school, going on a first date, moving away to college, living in the "real world," we all encounter THE QUEST.

The literary works covered are *The View from Saturday*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Adventures of Ulysses*, and *The Adventures of King Arthur*. Along with these written works, the movie *The Lion King* is suggested as an introduction to the monomyth. Other movies which incorporate THE QUEST archetypes are *Star Wars* (any of them), *2001 Space Odyssey*, *Forest Gump*, *Little Buddha*, *The Hobbit*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, and many others. Even the Old Testament has its quest stories—Moses, Jonah, Noah, Joseph. The teacher should make use of clips or at least bring into class discussion any movie or story which has the quest as its theme. A list of poetry is also included for the teacher to read with the students, to analyze, etc.

TAAS writing, grammar, and vocabulary are not the emphasis in this portion of the curriculum. Writing examples are included in this curriculum—from TAAS possibilities to literary analysis possibilities. The teacher will need to decide when and how to bring in these other areas of Language Arts.