



Center for Gifted Education

The College of William and Mary

A Teacher's Guide to

NAVIGATORS

Questions and Activities for Novel Studies

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Overview

The *Navigators* are a series of novel study guides developed as a resource for teachers and students. These guides encourage advanced readers to develop their skills at analyzing and interpreting literature through structured questions and activities that highlight themes and concepts, literary elements, and real world connections contained within the books. Students are also able to develop their own vocabulary and writing skills by exploring and emulating the language and style used by different authors. In addition, several research activities are included in each *Navigator*.

1. What are the goals of the Navigator?

The Navigator addresses the following learning goals:

- To develop analytical and interpretive skills in literature.
- To develop understanding of selected literary themes.
- To develop linguistic competency through vocabulary and language study.
- To develop skills in written and oral communication.
- To develop higher level thinking and reasoning skills in language arts.
- To develop research skills.

2. Who is the audience for the Navigator?

The Navigator is intended for readers of selected novels and picture books that are appropriate for strong readers in various grades. Each selected book meets many of the criteria identified by Baskin and Harris (1980) for books for gifted readers:

- Rich, varied, precise, complex, exciting language
- Open-ended, with capacity to inspire contemplative behavior
- Complex, leading to interpretive and evaluative behaviors
- Help build problem-solving skills
- Role models

3. How should the Navigator be used?

The Navigator may be used as an instructional tool by a teacher or as an independent study guide by a student or group of students. The central intent is for teachers to use the Navigator to support a novel study with a group of students, selecting questions and activities to assign as desired, given the context. However, teachers may also choose to make the Navigator available to students at a learning center, with expectations specified for students as to which items they should complete.

The Navigator incorporates several types of questions related to the book. Some of these, identified as “while you read” questions, are specifically intended to be used for reflection and prediction as students progress through the book. Other questions are intended for response after the reader has completed the book, while still others may be answered either during or after reading. All of the higher-level questions included in the Navigator may be used for writing and/or discussion.

Additional activities appear beyond the discussion and reflection questions of the Navigator. Some of these activities support further development of the language arts skills identified in the goals, while others provide interdisciplinary connections and research applications.

4. What are the prerequisites for students using the Navigator?

Students using the Navigator should be able to read the book independently and should be familiar with the literary and reasoning terms utilized in questions. In addition, students will be asked to complete activities that use several specific teaching/learning models: the Literature Web, the Hamburger Model for Persuasive Writing, the Vocabulary Web, and the Elements of Reasoning. If these terms and models are new to students, teachers may wish to conduct mini-lessons on them either prior to or during use of the Navigator. For more information on these models, please go to our Teaching Models page.

5. How does the Navigator address standards for language arts?

The Navigator was designed with an eye to addressing key standards for language arts identified by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (1996) as well as standards from several state-level education departments. Specifically, the Navigator reflects standards in the following areas:

Standards Emphases	Navigator
Use of strategies to understand, interpret and evaluate text	Provides the student with an organizer for interpreting text (the Literature Web) and guiding questions to support understanding and critical analysis
Use of writing strategies and writing process elements	Provides writing prompts, a writing model, and emphasis on steps of the writing process
Use of spoken and written language for particular audiences and to accomplish particular purposes	Incorporates activities for writing and speaking that emphasize persuasive, reflective, information, and narrative communication
Knowledge of vocabulary, language structure, and language conventions and analysis of how they are demonstrated in text	Encourages in-depth word study of advanced vocabulary, including emphasis on etymology and usage of words
Research on issues and areas of interest, with emphasis on utilizing a variety of technological and informational resources to gather data, interpret results, and communicate findings	Provides several issue-based research assignments for students, emphasizing data collection from print, non-print, and human resources; analysis and synthesis of data; and written and oral communication of findings
Participation as members of literacy communities	Encourages discussion within and beyond the classroom about the specified text and invites similar exploration of other texts

Emphasis on reading a wide range of literature selections to build understanding of the human experience	Encourages in-depth study of the specified text as well as comparisons to other selected works; suggests specific titles for further reading
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6. How should the Navigator activities be assigned?

Teachers should specify expectations for students around number and type of activities and questions to be completed, as well as expectations for quality of work. Teachers may choose to assign Navigator questions and activities using a combination of required and optional items. Several sample organizations of assignments appear below.

Sample 1 (Teacher-led emphasis):

- Teacher-led discussion of higher-level questions; 1-3 questions assigned for journal response.
- Required assignments: Literature Web, persuasive essay OR book review, one Vocabulary Web, one research assignment
- Choice assignments: student choice of THREE remaining activities
- Oral presentation of one completed piece

Sample 2 (Small-group emphasis):

- Small-group discussion of higher-level questions, with 4-5 questions completed in writing for teacher review
- Group assignments: Character assignment OR concept assignment, two Vocabulary Webs, one research assignment with group presentation
- Individual assignments: Literature Web, persuasive essay OR book review, student choice of TWO remaining activities

Sample 3 (Individual emphasis):

- Written responses to student choice of 2-3 discussion questions per category
- Required assignments: one research assignment; student choice of THREE additional activities, of which one must be a completed writing piece; oral presentation of one assignment

7. How should the Navigator activities be assessed?

Teachers should assess student progress based on the quality of individual products and achievement toward the goals of the Navigator. Decisions around which activities to require students to complete should be based on how the selected activities support multiple learning goals.

Question responses should be assessed based on demonstration of insight and ability to use text to support inferences. Writing activities should be assessed based on clarity and insight, and may also be assessed for writing style and mechanics as desired. Oral presentations of completed work should be assessed based on coherence, content, and clarity of the presentation. Teachers may provide rubrics for students related to the required assignments or work with students to develop rubrics for assessment.

Completed Navigator activities should be collected into a folder for assessment, and final assessment may include self-evaluation by the student.

8. What additional resources are required to use the Navigator?

Most of the activities in the Navigator require only the book itself and regular classroom supplies. Vocabulary activities will require the use of a good dictionary, including etymological information on words. Recommended dictionaries are *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* and the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. Interdisciplinary and research activities may require additional supplies and access to library and Internet resources. The *Guide to Teaching a Language Arts Curriculum for High-Ability Learners* (Center for Gifted Education, 1998) provides guidance in the use of the literature, persuasive writing, and vocabulary study models used in the Navigator as well as other guidelines for language arts with high-ability populations.

A listing of additional resources and suggestions for further reading appears with each Navigator.

9. Technological Connections

Several opportunities for technological connections and development of technical skills are incorporated in the Navigator. Based on the resources available in your classroom or media center, consider the following uses of technology

- Access to the Internet for research projects. Key web sites are listed in the resources section.
- Use of word processing and/or publishing software for writing assignments.
- Use of presentation software for presenting research findings and completed activities.
- Use of Inspiration or similar for creation of concept maps.

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10. Teacher Resources

Baskin, B.H., & Harris, K. H. (1980). *Books for the gifted child*. New York: Bowker.

Boyce, L. N. (1997). *A guide to teaching research skills and strategies in grades 4-12*. Williamsburg, VA: Center for Gifted Education.

Center for Gifted Education. (1998). *Guide to teaching a language arts curriculum for high-ability learners*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association. (1996). *Standards of learning for the English language arts*. Urbana, IL: Author.

Paul, R. (1992). *Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world*. Rohnert Park, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.

VanTassel-Baska, J., & Little, C.A. (2003). *Content-based curriculum for high-ability learners*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.