

A Novel Study

Hunting By Stars

Grade 9 English – ENL1W

Métis Nation of Ontario

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Funded by:



The views expressed in the publication are those of the Métis Nation of Ontario and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

Version 2

ISBN: 978-1-998262-11-3

A Note to Educators



Welcome to the Métis Nation of Ontario's Grade 9 English Cherie Dimaline Study Guide! We recognize that this may be new learning for many educators. Our goal is to provide a series of resources that support educators and learners as they explore and learn about the Métis Nation and its people.

This study guide was created to provide teachers and students with three entry points to explore the works of Métis author and Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) citizen Cherie Dimaline. We invite you to use this resource to explore approaches to various topics and to help guide your reading of Dimaline's works. This resource has also outlined an analysis of key sections from the texts for educators to use in their literature units. This resource connects to the novels *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting By Stars*, as well as a Podcast Interview and Lesson Plan with author Cherie Dimaline.

These resources are simple-to-use tools for teachers and students. Educators can use the contents to bring authentic Métis voices into the classroom. The resources provide students and educators with an opportunity to use the Métis experience to connect with themes and learning goals in the Grade 9 De-streamed English course.

Author Letter to Students

Dear Students,

Everything is a story, and everyone is a storyteller. When you have a conversation, when you post online, when you dress in a way that puts your personality on display – these are all stories being told. These are your stories, and every one of them is important.

When we remember that the world is made up of stories, we are more observant, better listeners, and less likely to absorb information without critical thought. Keeping in mind that all information is being delivered through a point of view reminds us to consider the source of the information and to be thoughtful in our response. This is a great way to bring solutions, compassion, and understanding to an issue.

Stories are the building blocks that create our societies, and you are the storytellers that determine what is built next, what should be dismantled, and how we should move forward. It's a lot of responsibility, but it's also powerful. Better yet, it puts power back where it belongs – with you.

As an author, I think about story all the time – whether or not I am creating new ones. But as a human, it's something that we should all be aware of. A picture is a story, and so is a choreographed dance or a comment. Every moment that we are alive adds to the collective story is 'us'. I think it's a beautiful gift to be able to tell our own stories and to live in a world made more complex and remarkable because of them.

One of the best gifts I was given as a child was to be raised by Elder women who decided I needed the stories of my community, the land, our history, and what we collectively learned along the way. Being given such a

colourful recounting of my community meant that no matter where I lived, I was able to bring my home with me. It also meant that when I started to write books, I was able to return to that specific place, to those specific people, and bring them forward with me – to even send them beyond me. It's how I know, that no matter what changes in the way of geography or politics, my community will survive.

My advice is always to read voraciously, diversely, and often. Even if we don't agree with what we are reading, we at least are broadening the ability to respond and perhaps even create our own tales to counter. We need narratives from as many perspectives as we can get. Every great thinker and leader I have met in my life has been a consumer of story – whether or not they came from books and articles or people and art. Having a good understanding of different narratives allowed them to create their own from a place of being informed and empowered.

A story is not just a way into the world; it is also a way out – an escape. It is a hidden door, a secret garden, a portal to another time and place. And we all need to escape now and then. We need to exist in a story that ponders what things would be like without colonization or to drop us into an apocalyptic landscape so we can imagine the version of ourselves that would make heroic decisions and change everything.

When the day-to-day effort of living gets heavy, and anxiety starts to creep in around the edges, I remember that we are just a story that the universe is telling. In response, I want to tell stories back to the universe. And the closest thing I know to being able to whisper into the ear of the universe is to create stories for you – for readers who are on their way to a heroic place. So, bring yourselves into the books you read, bring your dreams and your troubles, bring your hearts and your voices. These stories are for you, always.

And in return, I hope you tell your own because everything is a story, and everyone is a storyteller. The world is counting on it.

Move and think, act and create with all the best parts of yourself, bringing all the dark corners you are shining a light into. Your ability to tell your own truth is an incredible thing. These are your stories, and every one of them is important.

Yours,

A large, handwritten signature in a dark grey or black ink, reading "Cherie Dimaline". The signature is fluid and cursive, with varying line thicknesses.

Cherie Dimaline

About this Resource

Welcome to the Métis Nation of Ontario's ***Hunting by Stars Novel Study by Cherie Dimaline*** for Grade 9 educators and students! Thank you for taking the necessary steps to include Métis voices, culture and stories in your classroom!

Educators can use this resource to teach multiple themes outlined in the Grade 9 De-streamed English course. Included are lesson plans and consolidation activities on the importance of setting, figurative language, and a formal essay. We recommend 6-7 class periods to work through this short story assignment. This resource focuses on the importance of setting, literary devices and writing a formal essay on a student-chosen topic from the novel. Supporting resources include a peer editing checklist, a rubric, student consolidation activities and recommended additional resources and references.

Background Information

Who are the Métis?

The Métis are a distinct Indigenous people with a unique history, culture, language, and way of life. The Métis Nation is comprised of descendants of people born of relations between First Nations women and European men. The offspring of these unions were of mixed ancestry. Over time, a new Indigenous people called the Métis resulted from the subsequent intermarriage of these individuals. This *ethnogenesis* of distinct Métis communities, along the waterways and around the Great Lakes region of present-day Ontario, occurred as these new people were no longer seen as extensions of their maternal (First Nations) or paternal (European) relations and they began to identify as a separate group. Distinct Métis settlements emerged as an outgrowth of the fur trade along freighting waterways and watersheds. In Ontario, these settlements were part of larger regional communities, interconnected by the highly mobile lifestyle of the Métis, the fur trade network, seasonal rounds, extensive kinship connections, and a shared collective history and identity.

There are many Métis communities throughout Canada. However, in Ontario, the Métis derive from seven historical communities throughout the province.¹

Métis Storytelling

Storytelling is woven into all cultures. It can convey teachings, history, family, and community memories and provide social entertainment and life lessons. Métis stories are intergenerational, passed down from the elders and knowledge holders to the young. Storytelling could occur around a campfire, at family and community gatherings during harvest or on cold winter nights. Like many Indigenous nations, Métis stories have been passed down orally for generations and, more recently, have become written stories in the form of novels, poetry, art and film.

¹ Métis Nation of Ontario | Culture and Heritage | Métis of Ontario (metisnation.org)

Métis stories do not have to be linear nor require a beginning, middle and end format. "Some Métis suggest that recounting the lineage of a story before telling it is vital to the cultural practice of Métis storytelling, whereas others prefer to maintain anonymity, thus allowing the story to take a life of its own, void of any temporal or labeled title."²

A skilled storyteller has an elaborate tone, engages the listeners, and sometimes even involves them in the story's development. Such is a skill of the past that is being reclaimed. In the spirit of cultural appreciation (and not appropriation), it is essential that the teller of a story has permission to share from the author, or that credit is given to the author, the community, or the nation to which it belongs.

Dystopian Genre

Dystopia is a literary device and genre used by writers to present a vision of the future that challenges readers to reflect on the current social and political environments in which they live. Dystopian literature often portrays society in cataclysmic decline resulting from environmental ruin, control through technology, and government oppression of individual freedom and expression. This resource assumes that students have already been introduced to the "dystopian genre."³

Setting

The setting of a story plays a crucial role. It helps establish the mood, tone, and atmosphere, drawing students into the narrative. Not only does it just indicate time and place, the setting lays the foundation for the characters' experiences and allows readers to picture themselves within the story. It shapes the characters, influences their behavior, and significantly impacts the plot. The setting provides the backdrop for the story, helping students gain a clearer understanding of the narrative's other key elements.⁴

² Voices of Métis: Métis – Library and Archives Canada Our Voices.

³ LiteraryDevices Editors. (2013).

⁴ Adapted from Two Little Birds Blog.

The Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- Identify words, images, and details that construct the setting
- Determine, describe, and compare settings
- Explain the significance of the setting in a literary text
- Use the writing process to demonstrate their understanding of how the author has used figurative language and literary devices (tone, atmosphere, etc) to convey important information about themes and characters
- Explain how the setting can affect the story
- Respond to, appreciate, and create a full range of texts in various forms, genres, modes, and media, including digital and media texts
- Make connections to their lived experiences and to those of others

Success Criteria

- Students will explore the Métis identity and story (Métis experience at Residential Schools and the importance of storytelling) through the inquiry process, drawing parallels between the characters and Métis lived experience.
- Students will use various transferable skills (critical thinking, global citizenship and sustainability, communication and collaboration) to clearly communicate their ideas, arguments and/or conclusions on the importance of setting and Métis issues of history and identity.
- Students will write a series of paragraphs comparing the setting of *Hunting by Stars* and *The Marrow Thieves* and how it relates to the genre, the story, the characters and the lived experiences of Residential School survivors.

Curriculum Connections:

Overall Expectation(s): A3., B1., B2., B3., C1., C2., C3., D1.

Specific Expectation(s): A3.3, B1.1, B1.2, B2.2, B3.1, B3.2, B3.3, C1.5, C1.7, C2.5, C2.6., C3.1, C3.7, D1.4

Assessment

Before students begin to explore the importance of setting in relation to the Métis experience in Residential Schools, we encourage educators to use resources approved by the Métis Nation of Ontario, such as [Residential Schools Podcast Episode 2: Métis Experiences](#) or Rupertsland Institute [Métis Memories Collection](#). After exploring these resources, educators provide a Minds On (Assessment for Learning) guiding questions on page 9 to assess previous student knowledge.

Sections 1–6 include a variety of student questions that assist in developing an understanding of the importance of setting in a dystopian novel, how it contributes to plot and character development, and how it helps students understand the author’s purpose. The teacher can use these for Assessment as Learning.

Section # 1

Hunting by Stars - Cherie Dimaline Novel Summary

Years ago, when plagues and natural disasters killed millions of people, much of the world stopped dreaming. Without dreams, people are haunted, sick, mad, and unable to rebuild. The government soon finds that the Indigenous people of North America have retained their dreams, an ability rumoured to be housed in the very marrow of their bones. Soon, residential schools pop up — or are re-opened — across the land to bring in the dreamers and harvest their dreams.

Seventeen-year-old French lost his family to these schools and has spent the years since heading north with his newfound family: a group of other dreamers who, like him, are trying to build and thrive as a community. But then French wakes up in a pitch-black room, locked in and alone for the first time in years, and he knows immediately where he is—and what it will take to escape.

Meanwhile, out in the world, his found family searches for him and dodges new dangers — School Recruiters, a blood cult, and even the land itself. When their paths finally collide, French must decide how far he is willing to go — and how many loved ones is he willing to betray — in order to survive? This engrossing, action-packed, deftly-drawn novel expands on the world of Cherie Dimaline's award-winning *The Marrow Thieves*, and it will haunt readers long after they've turned the final page. (From *Penguin Teen*)

**The author refers to the same character as French or Frenchie throughout the novel.*

Setting from *Hunting by Stars* Novel

The Importance of Setting: Lesson Plan

Survival is important in a dystopian novel. Characters fight to survive the oppressive conditions in which they find themselves. Many dystopian novels are set in the near future so that readers may easily immerse themselves in the story. Characters must resort to extreme measures to protect themselves and those around them, which usually means rebelling against the powers that be.

Minds On Lesson Opener: 15 minutes

Generate interest and discussion around the definition of setting. Ask students to consider the extent to which their “setting” (time and place) contribute to their behavior. Ask students about the setting they are currently in.

Guiding Questions:

1. Look around you. What do you notice? How do you know you are in a school/classroom? What evidence do you have?
2. What behaviors seem appropriate for you as a result of these indicators being present?
3. If these details were replaced by another setting (i.e., a gathering with friends at your cabin), how many of their current behaviors would still seem appropriate?

Ask students to now discuss areas of their community that are known “by name.” These could be official or unofficial names of neighborhoods or streets that imply a certain part of town or area.

Have students generate their own examples in partners or small groups onto sticky notes or online thought-sharing apps (Jamboard, etc).

Guiding Questions:

1. What do the place names suggest about the people living there and their lives?
2. Why is the connection between place names and stereotypes both powerful and dangerous?

Bridge the discussion to the literary concept of setting, the time(s) and place(s) during which a story takes place. Ask students to focus on how the author uses language to create a setting.

Materials Needed: sticky notes or devices, an online thought-sharing app to share with the whole class (Jamboard, etc.)

Section # 2

Lesson Activity: 60-75 minutes

Read the first chapter of *Hunting by Stars*, “Proof of Life,” to the class and have students follow along. Students are encouraged to use the Mind Map Analyzing Language (or a mind map of their choosing) to write down powerful words, interesting images and key details. Students will use these notes to write their Setting Comparison.

Chapter 1: “Proof of Life”

What is the setting of this chapter? What does the environment look like? Is it day or night? What year is it? What is happening? Visualize the story and how this affects the character and plot.

What descriptive language, phrases or literary devices has Cherie Dimaline used to describe the setting? Which words, language, interesting images and key details support your thinking? Include direct quotations and page numbers. For example:

1. Imagery
2. Flashback
3. Symbolism
4. Metaphor
5. Allusion

Extension/Modification

- Teachers may have students respond to the author's representation of the setting through creative expression (for example, art (diorama, Google Slides, Video), poetry, etc).
- Teachers may choose to compare other dystopian settings in movies with students. Examples: *The Matrix*, *Escape From New York*, *Rise of Planet of the Apes*

Materials Needed: *Hunting by Stars* novel, by Cherie Dimaline, Mind Map Analyzing Language: Setting Graphic Organizer, Appendix C.

Section #3

Lesson Consolidation: 3 x 75-minute blocks

1. Provide students with copies of the first chapters of Cherie Dimaline's novels *Hunting by Stars* and *The Marrow Thieves*. Students will use the Mind Map used in the previous class to make similar notes using the setting in *The Marrow Thieves*. Students may also use the Venn Diagram tool included.

Concept/Mind Map Prompts

Students can use the guiding question and prompts to organize and record their thinking on the graphic organizer on the following page.

Guiding Question:

How does the setting contribute to mood, atmosphere, character, conflict, and theme?

- Powerful Words
- Meaningful Comparisons
- Interesting Images
- Key Details

2. Using their Mind Map notes, students write a series of paragraphs comparing and contrasting the different settings in *Hunting by Stars* and *The Marrow Thieves*. Direct quotations (MLA format - Appendix A previously taught in class) will be used to provide textual evidence to support their writing. Students will conclude how setting can affect the plot, characters and overall tone/atmosphere of the story using the following guidelines:

- The environment
- The culture
- The social dynamics
- The physical surroundings

Guiding Questions:

- What is the most important thing about the setting in relation to the story?
- What is the mood or feeling that the setting evokes?
- How does the setting help to create the tone of the story?
- What lived experiences of Métis people can be compared to the setting of both novels?

Materials Needed: Mind Map: Analyzing Language: Setting and *Hunting by Stars*, Peer Editing Review Checklist, Rubric (Appendix C)

Extension:

- Teachers may want to show students examples of Residential Schools and the Métis experience. Students could discuss and/or respond to how the characters' experiences are similar to those of Residential School survivors.
- Have a Métis Residential School survivor come in and speak to the class, or watch a video of a Residential School survivor online. Have students prepare inquiry-based questions in advance. Pre-screen the questions.

Section # 4

Appendix A - Integrating Quotations

Below are four easy ways to incorporate direct quotations into your writing.

1. Write a lead-in sentence + colon:

- Derrick issues a warning to Rose: “We need to get out of here now.” (Dimaline 123)

2. Write a lead-in sentence:

- Author Cherie Dimaline uses imagery by describing the setting using phrases such as “Outside, the world was sped up, the sun and moon exchanging seats like a game of musical chairs set to fiddles.” (Dimaline 4)

3. Use a speech tag:

- Derrick says, “We need to get out of here now.” (Dimaline 123).

4. Incorporate it into your sentence as if you were paraphrasing:

- Derrick tells Rose that they “need to get out of there now.” (Dimaline 123).
- *The paraphrase might read: Derrick tells Rose that it's dangerous and they need to get out of there immediately.* (Dimaline 123).

Section # 5

Appendix B- Creative Student Partner Activity

In the space below, draw or use searched images to illustrate your partner's description of the setting. In 3-5 sentences, explain why you chose the images.



Section #6

Writing the 5 Paragraph Opinion Essay

(Supports OSSLT Preparation for Grade 10)

Opinion Essay Requirements:

In this section, students will write a 5 paragraph opinion essay (persuasive essay previously learned in class) on one of the topics provided that will support their preparation to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). *(Derived from the Education Quality and Accountability Office website)*

1. The question will ask you for your opinion about an issue relevant to the novel *Hunting by Stars*.
2. The essay must be written in the style of an OSSLT Opinion Essay:
 - a. Students will write FIVE paragraphs: an introduction paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.
 - b. The introduction paragraph explains your answer to the question. Pick **ONE** side. Identify three reasons why your answer to the question is correct with support from the novel (quotations).
 - c. Each body paragraph explains **ONE** of your reasons. Write three body paragraphs to fully explain your reasoning. You might use an anecdote, an example, a comparison, or a series of details to explain why your answer is correct.
 - d. Your opinion must be based on reasonable facts and be supported by the novel. Your writing skills are being evaluated, not your knowledge of the topic.
 - e. The fifth (final) paragraph concludes your essay by restating your opinion and summarizing why your answer is correct.
 - f. The response is written in the first person in a formal, decisive,

and strong voice. It should be close to 500 words in length.

Choose **ONE** of the following essay topics and write your 5-paragraph opinion essay in proper MLA format (previously taught).

Topics:

1. In your opinion, is it more difficult for a teen to “come of age” now or when your parents/guardians/caregivers were your age? How so?
2. Is *Hunting by Stars* a story of survival and hope, or is it a story of genocide? Explain.
3. Frenchie hides the reason he and his brother Mitch were let out of school from the group. Do you agree with Frenchie’s actions to survive and get back to his family (he sacrificed two people to do so)? Is he justified in his actions? Yes or no?

Writing a Good Introduction

Once you have chosen your topic and written your 3 body paragraphs (with quotations from the novel), you are ready to write your introduction!

1. Hook your reader with a quote, statement or definition.

“When you betray someone or something, you reveal something, like a secret or your true feelings. ... You betray your friend if you pretend that something is true just to trick him into doing what you want. In this case, betray means the same thing as deceive.” (Vocabulary.com)

2. In your next sentence, indicate the novel(s) and author(s) that you will be discussing.

Ex. In Cherie Dimaline’s novel *The Marrow Thieves*, the theme of betrayal is very evident.

3. Next is your thesis statement or what your essay is about. Be very clear. Look at your first sentences in your three body paragraphs and form your thesis statement. Your thesis statement should answer the topic question you chose.

4. Choose a good transitional sentence to move into your first body paragraph.

Writing a Good Conclusion

The concluding paragraph is like dessert: It rounds out the meal, summarizes the ideas, and leaves a finishing taste/final reflection for the reader to consider.

CONCLUSION Paragraph: Wrapping it Up

Your concluding paragraph must:

- Restate the thesis (*Try to use different words!*)
- Restate the main idea from each body paragraph in the order they appear in the essay
- Attempt to GO BEYOND the thesis by stating something worthwhile:
 - reach a judgment; endorse an issue; discuss findings

AVOID MISTAKES IN YOUR CONCLUSION

- Do not present new ideas or supporting details
- Do not stop at an awkward spot or trail off into meaningless or irrelevant information
- Do not pose questions that raise new issues

Strategies for an effective conclusion:

Play the “So What” Game

- When you read a statement from the conclusion, ask yourself, “So what?” or “Why should anybody care?”
- Ponder the question and answer it.
 - Basically, I’m just saying that family was important to Frenchie.
 - So what?
 - Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free, happy and valued person.
 - Why should anybody care?
 - That’s important because the government and recruiters tried to keep Indigenous Peoples from being together as a family so that they could maintain control and harvest their marrow in order to preserve society. When Frenchie was part of a family, he had hope for the future and personally undermined that control.

Return to the theme or themes in the introduction

- This brings the reader full circle.
- If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding.
- Refer to the introductory paragraph by using keywords or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.

Summarize

- Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in the paper.

Pull it all together

- Show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together.

Example:

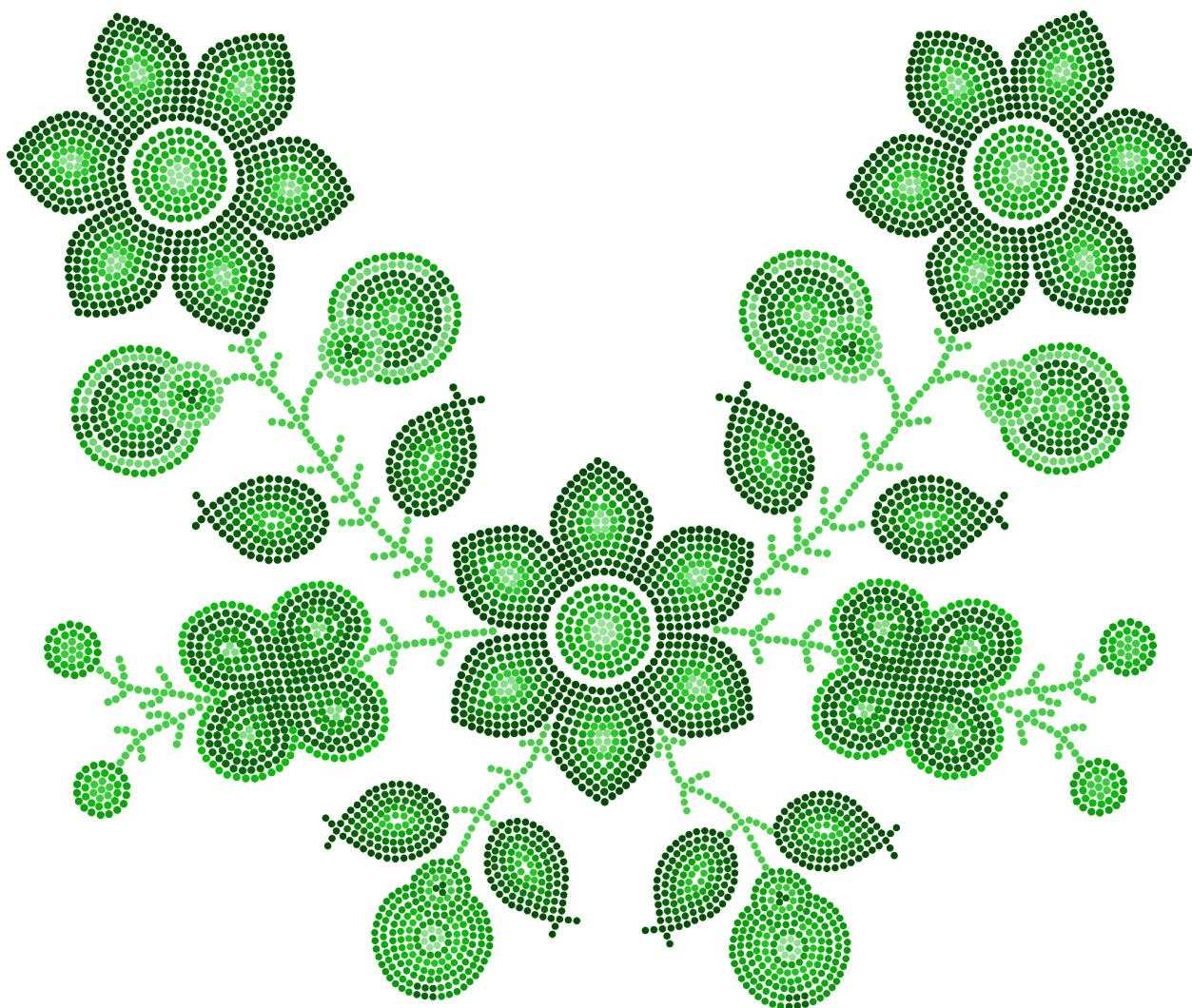
Author Cherie Dimaline has demonstrated many changes that have occurred in her young characters in her novel *Hunting by Stars*.

Works Cited

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Section #7

Tools to Support Student Thinking and Learning



Appendix C- Peer Editing: Series of Paragraphs Checklist

	Strength	Weakness	Next Steps
Introduction			
Clearly states topic			
Thesis clearly stated			
The argument contains sufficient supporting points			
Body/Supporting Paragraphs			
Paragraph properly structured			
Use of transition words			
The paragraph focuses on only one idea			
Specific examples include elaboration to support the thesis			
Incorporate quotes MLA style			
Anticipates alternative viewpoints & refutes with evidence			
Conclusion			
Reinforces argument and three supporting points			
Extends argument to facilitate thinking beyond the scope of the essay			
Communication			
Communication is clear (punctuation, sentence structure, etc.)			
Uses 3 rd person for expository writing			
Formal writing style (no contractions, slang, or lingo)			
Peer Edited by:			

Compare and Contrast

Name: _____

Class: _____

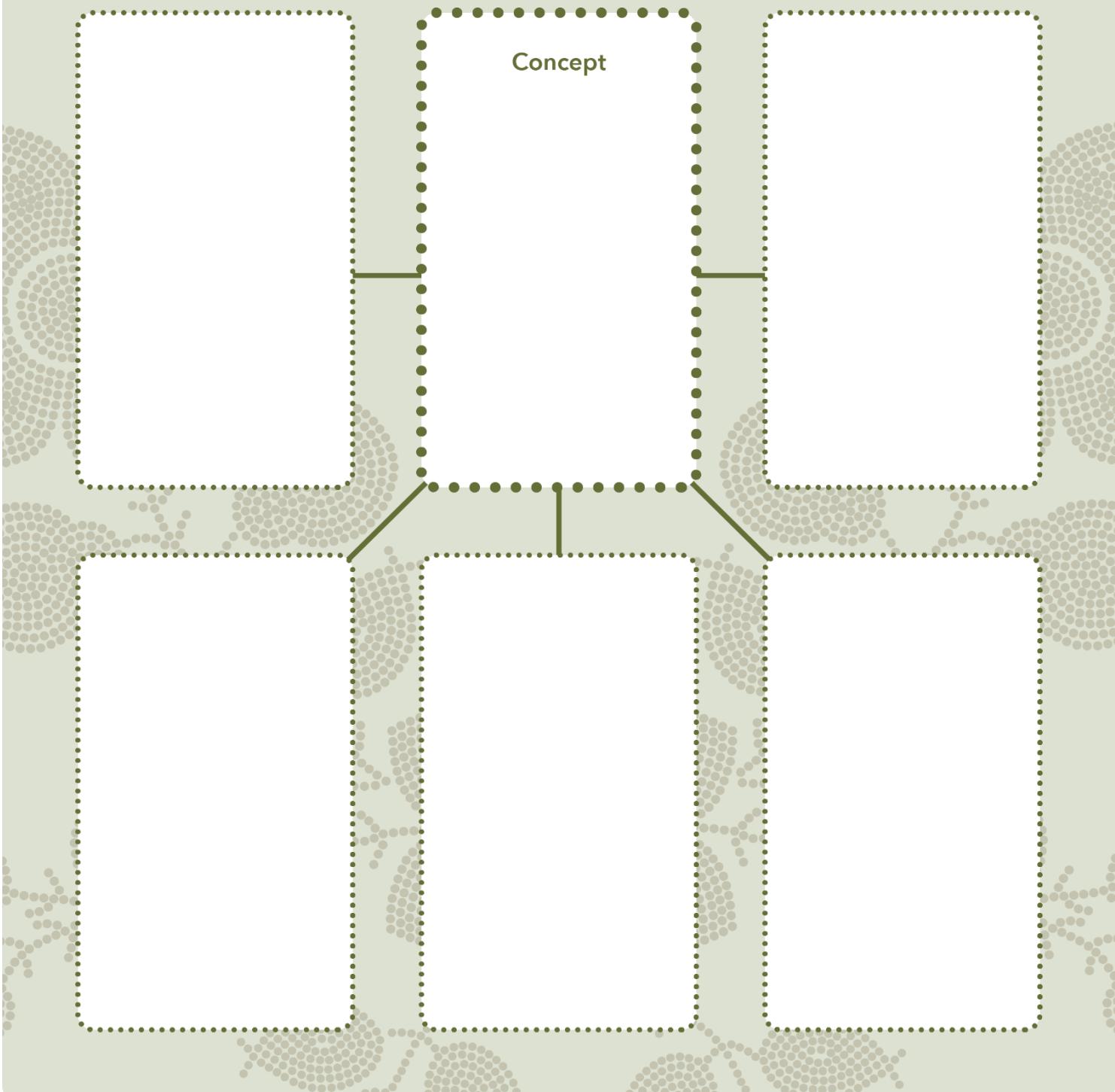
Write similarities and differences to compare and contrast each of the following concepts/ideas.

Similarities

Concept/Mind Map

Name: _____

Class: _____



Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Categories	Level 1- 50-59%	Level 2- 60-69%	Level 3- 70-79%	Level 4- 80-100%
Knowledge and Understanding				
Knowledge and understanding of ideas and concepts used to assess students on their persuasive/ opinion writing skills	the opinion may be confusing or ambiguous; the response may be too brief, or the focus may drift from the purpose, audience, or task	the opinion may be somewhat unclear, or the focus may be insufficiently sustained for the purpose, audience, and task	the opinion is clear, and the focus is mostly maintained for the purpose, audience, and task	opinion is introduced, clearly communicated, and the focus is strongly maintained for the purpose, audience, and task
Knowledge and understanding of the format of a series of paragraphs	demonstrates a limited understanding of the format of a series of paragraph	demonstrates some understanding of the format of a series of paragraph	demonstrates a considerable understanding of the format of a series of paragraph	demonstrates a thorough understanding of the format of a series of paragraph
Knowledge and understanding of stylistic devices	demonstrates limited knowledge of stylistic devices	demonstrates some knowledge of stylistic devices	demonstrates considerable knowledge of stylistic devices	demonstrates a thorough knowledge of stylistic devices

Categories	Level 1- 50-59%	Level 2- 60-69%	Level 3- 70-79%	Level 4- 80-100%
Thinking and Inquiry				
Support central ideas with information (e.g., facts, statistics, quotations, etc.)	evidence from the source material is minimal or irrelevant; references may be absent or incorrectly used	some evidence from sources might be weakly integrated, imprecise or repetitive; references may be vague	adequate evidence from sources are integrated; some references may be general	comprehensive evidence from sources is integrated; references are relevant and specific
Thinking and Inquiry				
Use of the central idea that is clear, insightful and focused	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Use of planning skills	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Recognizes alternate viewpoints	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness

Categories	Level 1- 50-59%	Level 2- 60-69%	Level 3- 70-79%	Level 4- 80-100%
Communication				
Organizes ideas and information in oral, visual, and/or written forms (use of graphic organizers)	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Communicates formal tone; appropriate diction, terminology, and style	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Uses conventions and vocabulary correctly	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Citations	with no sources cited	with some sources cited	with most sources cited	with all sources cited
Application				
Uses the writing process (Including drafting/rough work, and editing & revision)	with limited competence	with some competence	with considerable competence	with a high degree of competence
Makes connections within and between various contexts	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness

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