Independent Concept-Based Collections and Commonplace Books

**Project Description:** A year long, student-driven inquiry project to analyze and synthesize thematic understanding across genres and media.

Individually, students will craft questions to investigate a universal human condition and collect evidence in pursuit of answers to these questions within Commonplace Books throughout the year. For each item selected for inclusion in their project archives, students will analyze its thematic implications and how they are created through language and stylistic features. Finally, students will synthesize and present findings and collections to their classmates and audiences beyond the classroom.

**Project Overview and Objectives**

**Essential Questions:**

- How does a reader summarize a text in a meaningful way?
- What is the purpose and value in documenting research in a collection or archive?
- How does a writer select the best sources and/or excerpts within a collection for use in an effective academic essay? (i.e., Which texts and pieces in my concept-based collection would be best be explored in an essay to reveal an essential understanding of my thematic topic?)
- What is my independent, final conclusion or answer to my self-selected thematic question?
  - What led me to this answer? (texts, items, personal experience, etc.)
  - How did my answer change over time?
  - What, if anything, surprised me about this process or my final conclusion?
- Who is the best audience with whom to share my archive and conclusion?
- What is the most effective, engaging way to share my collection with and express my thematic understanding to this audience? (genre, technology, creation of art, etc.)

**Part 1: Introduction to Archives and Collections**

Students will explore and analyze online archival collections and related resources to define and understand the purpose, process, and value in creating and sustaining archives as means to understand humanity. Students will explore commonplace books as a means of recording and organizing a concept-based collection or archive.

**Part 2: Texts, Items and Analysis—Building the Collection**

Students will create an academic collection around a thematic question. Accordingly, they will analyze a wide range of texts and genres for thematic meaning, synthesize research into an archival collection, and share findings in a creative presentation.

Working individually, students will craft a concept-based, thematic inquiry question on a topic of personal interest to them and will revise this question throughout the year as needed. This year long inquiry will guide all self-selected reading, research, and analysis.

Working in teams, students will share their learning with classmates in small groups throughout the year in order to refine and better express understanding of their chosen theme.
For each piece of text or media students choose to include in their inquiry-based archive, they will analyze the piece for thematic understanding and connect significant language or style devices to said meaning in the form of Reader Response Logs and timed writings.

**Part 3: Synthesis and Sharing**

Once the pieces have all been selected for the collection, students will create an Annotated Bibliography that summarizes each piece in the collection and explains the connections to the student’s theme.

In a 2- to 3-page research essay, students will synthesize the thematic treatment in their collection by comparing and contrasting views presented within it in order to express a conclusion to their independent inquiry. Students must include direct evidence, corresponding MLA internal citation, and a Works Cited page to cite sources.

Students will present their thematic collection and learning to classmates—in small or large groups, depending on time available—and a chosen audience using a modality their choice. Presentations must be 3-4 minutes in length.

**English III TEKS Addressed**

(12) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to:

(A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts;
(B) evaluate the interactions of different techniques (e.g., layout, pictures, typeface in print media, images, text, sound in electronic journalism) used in multi-layered media;
(C) evaluate the objectivity of coverage of the same event in various types of media; and
(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone across various media for different audiences and purposes.

(13) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to:

(A) plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea;
(B) structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and rhetorical devices to convey meaning;
(C) revise drafts to clarify meaning and achieve specific rhetorical purposes, consistency of tone, and logical organization by rearranging the words, sentences, and paragraphs to employ tropes (e.g., metaphors, similes, analogies, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions, irony), schemes (e.g., parallelism, antithesis, inverted word order, repetition, reversed structures), and by adding transitional words and phrases;
(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and
(E) revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences.

(14) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are responsible for at least two forms of literary writing. Students are expected to:
(A) write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, complex and non-stereotypical characters, a range of literary strategies (e.g., dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot, and sensory details that define the mood or tone;
(B) write a poem that reflects an awareness of poetic conventions and traditions within different forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads, free verse); and
(C) write a script with an explicit or implicit theme, using a variety of literary techniques.

(15) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to:
(A) write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:
   (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;
   (ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;
   (iii) a clear thesis statement or controlling idea;
   (iv) a clear organizational schema for conveying ideas;
   (v) relevant and substantial evidence and well-chosen details; and
   (vi) information on multiple relevant perspectives and a consideration of the validity, reliability, and relevance of primary and secondary sources;
(C) write an interpretation of an expository or a literary text that:
   (i) advances a clear thesis statement;
   (ii) addresses the writing skills for an analytical essay, including references to and commentary on quotations from the text;
   (iii) analyzes the aesthetic effects of an author's use of stylistic or rhetorical devices;
   (iv) identifies and analyzes the ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text; and
   (v) anticipates and responds to readers' questions or contradictory information; and
(D) produce a multimedia presentation (e.g., documentary, class newspaper, docudrama, infomercial, visual or textual parodies, theatrical production) with graphics, images, and sound that appeals to a specific audience and synthesizes information from multiple points of view.

(20) Research/Research Plan. Students ask open-ended research questions and develop a plan for answering them. Students are expected to:
(A) brainstorm, consult with others, decide upon a topic, and formulate a major research question to address the major research topic; and
(B) formulate a plan for engaging in in-depth research on a complex, multi-faceted topic.

(21) Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather. Students are expected to:
(A) follow the research plan to gather evidence from experts on the topic and texts written for informed audiences in the field, distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources and avoiding over-reliance on one source;
(B) systematically organize relevant and accurate information to support central ideas, concepts, and themes, outline ideas into conceptual maps/timelines, and separate factual data from complex inferences; and
(C) paraphrase, summarize, quote, and accurately cite all researched information according to a standard format (e.g., author, title, page number), differentiating among primary, secondary, and other sources.

(22) Research/Synthesizing Information. Students clarify research questions and evaluate and synthesize collected information. Students are expected to:
(A) modify the major research question as necessary to refocus the research plan;
(B) differentiate between theories and the evidence that supports them and determine whether the evidence found is weak or strong and how that evidence helps create a cogent argument; and
(C) critique the research process at each step to implement changes as the need occurs and is identified.
(23) Research/Organizing and Presenting Ideas. Students organize and present their ideas and information according to the purpose of the research and their audience. Students are expected to synthesize the research into an extended written or oral presentation that:

(A) provides an analysis that supports and develops personal opinions, as opposed to simply restating existing information;
(B) uses a variety of formats and rhetorical strategies to argue for the thesis;
(C) develops an argument that incorporates the complexities of and discrepancies in information from multiple sources and perspectives while anticipating and refuting counter-arguments;
(D) uses a style manual (e.g., *Modern Language Association, Chicago Manual of Style*) to document sources and format written materials; and
(E) is of sufficient length and complexity to address the topic.

(25) Listening and Speaking/Speaking. Students speak clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to give a formal presentation that exhibits a logical structure, smooth transitions, accurate evidence, well-chosen details, and rhetorical devices, and that employs eye contact, speaking rate (e.g., pauses for effect), volume, enunciation, purposeful gestures, and conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively.