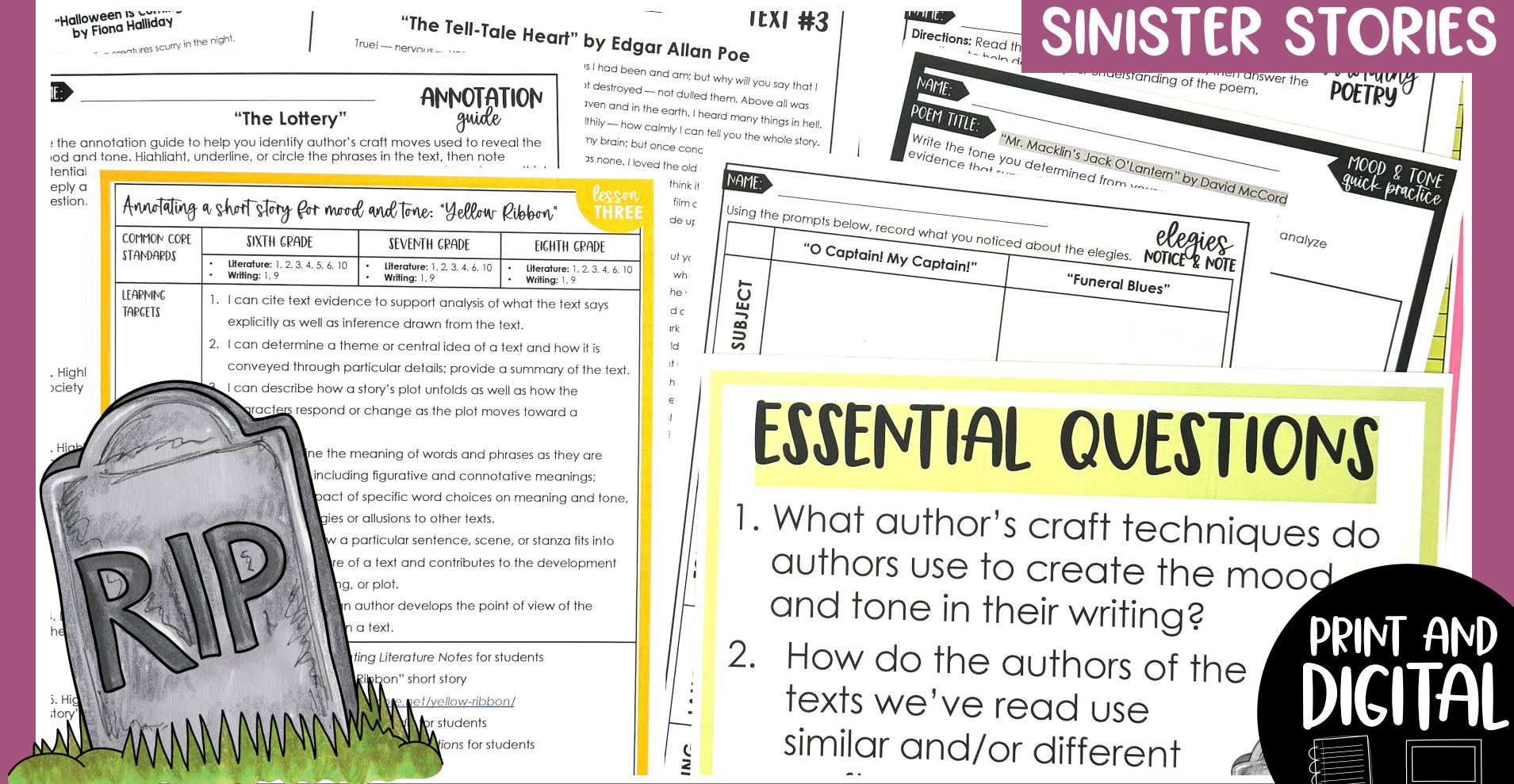
6th-8th GRADE

A THEMATIC UNIT

ANALYZING THEMES THROUGH LITERARY CRAFT ACROSS GENRES

SINISTER STORIES



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What author's craft techniques do authors use to create the mood and tone in their writing?
2. How do the authors of the texts we've read use similar and/or different

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A MIDDLE SCHOOL ELA

SINISTER STORIES: ANALYZING MOOD AND TONE

This multi-genre ELA unit gives students the tools they need to analyze how authors use craft to create mood and tone—while diving into the eerie, suspenseful world of spooky literature. Through haunting short stories, chilling poems, and rich author studies, students explore sensory language, figurative devices, and stylistic techniques that evoke emotion and atmosphere. With scaffolded lessons, guided annotations, and discussion-based analysis, they'll gain confidence reading complex texts and expressing their interpretations through both writing and speaking.

- ☑ **11 step-by-step teacher lesson plans**
- ☑ **11 step-by-step teacher PDF and Google Slides teaching presentations**
- ☑ **Student notebooks** for print + digital use
- ☑ **Guided annotations for short stories and poems**, including *The Yellow Ribbon*, *The Lottery*, *Annabel Lee*, and *The Tell-Tale Heart*
- ☑ **Explicit author's craft lessons** (imagery, tone, suspense, and symbolism)
- ☑ Sensory details and mood **analysis graphic organizers**
- ☑ **Socratic Seminar and comparative writing assessment** for the unit's essential questions
- ☑ **Editable rubrics, pacing guide, and teacher notes**

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Sinister Stories: Analyzing Mood and Tone

This *Sinister Stories* unit helps students analyze how authors use literary craft to create mood and tone across short stories and poems—all through eerie, high-interest Halloween texts that engage even your most reluctant readers. Through scaffolded lessons, guided annotations, and step-by-step writing and discussion activities, students learn to identify how imagery, diction, and structure shape a text's emotional impact. With ready-to-teach slides, student notebooks, and clear teaching guides, this unit makes teaching mood and tone both creative and rigorous.

✨ **Here's what they'll learn:**

- **Mood & Tone Foundations:** Understand how authors develop mood and tone through word choice, imagery, pacing, and structure.
- **Analyzing Author's Craft:** Examine how sensory details, figurative language, and symbolism create atmosphere and emotion.
- **Comparing Texts Across Genres:** Explore mood and tone in both short stories and poetry to recognize patterns and stylistic differences.
- **Discussion & Collaboration:** Engage in guided discussions and analysis questions to deepen interpretation of theme, tone, and emotional effect.
- **Analytical Writing Practice:** Write comparative or literary analysis paragraphs using text evidence to explain how authors craft mood and tone.

📚 **Why this works:**

This unit turns spooky literature into a powerful study of author's craft. The mix of haunting stories, chilling poems, and scaffolded analysis helps students connect literary techniques to meaning—without overwhelming them. They'll learn to move beyond identifying figurative language to explaining *why it matters* and how it contributes to mood, tone, and theme.

💡 **Perfect for:**

- Teachers who want a ready-to-use unit on author's craft, mood, and tone.
- Students who thrive on eerie, atmospheric stories that make analysis exciting.
- Any 6th–8th grade ELA classroom focused on literary analysis, close reading, or comparing texts across genres.

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Teachers like you have said...

"I absolutely love every resource I buy from Martina. The layout is easy to follow, it correlates with her other resources, and **has everything you need in it. The standards are aligned with every lesson, suggested responses are included, clear procedures, learning objectives, and so much more.**" – Julie N.

"This is an amazing resource and is well worth the price. It is so robust. I started with the text structures and objective summaries lessons, and students were very engaged." –Jill P.

"This is a great mix of interactive notebooks, independent reading, and teacher-modeled lessons. There were many different directions you could go depending on the makeup of the class." -Jessica R.

"I love using this resource. I struggle with nonfiction and this was very easy to use and engaging." –Courtney L.

"I love all of Martina's resources, so when I heard she was making a Halloween DIGITAL activity, I had to jump on it! This was perfect for my students to do remotely**. They got to choose which activities they wanted to do, so I love the variety. Plus, most of these topics were already covered in class (thanks to her other units), so I didn't have to reteach anything!"** -Christian B.

"I am a former public school teacher turned homeschool teacher and I run my own novel studies outside of any box curriculum. **This resource was very creative, my students loved the interactive notebook, and we really enjoyed the book choices.** I would purchase more resources from The Hungry Teacher in the future!" –Kristen G.

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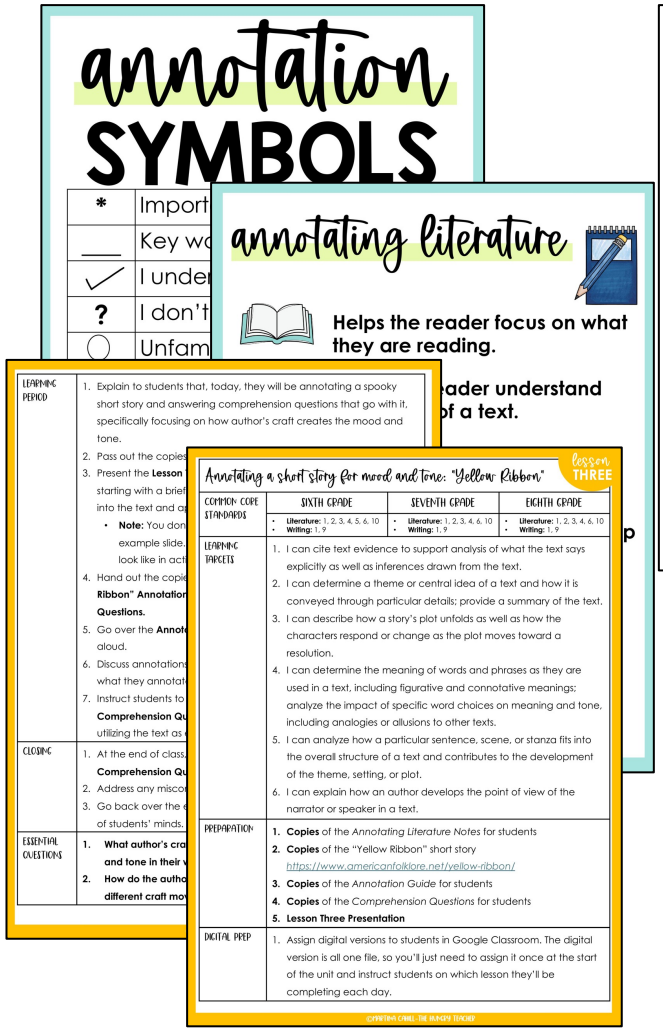
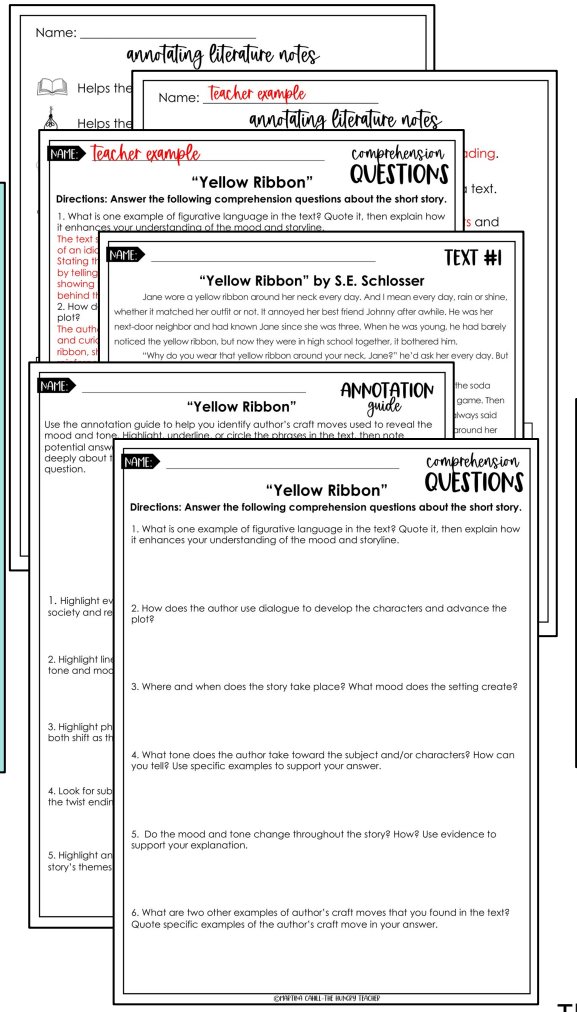
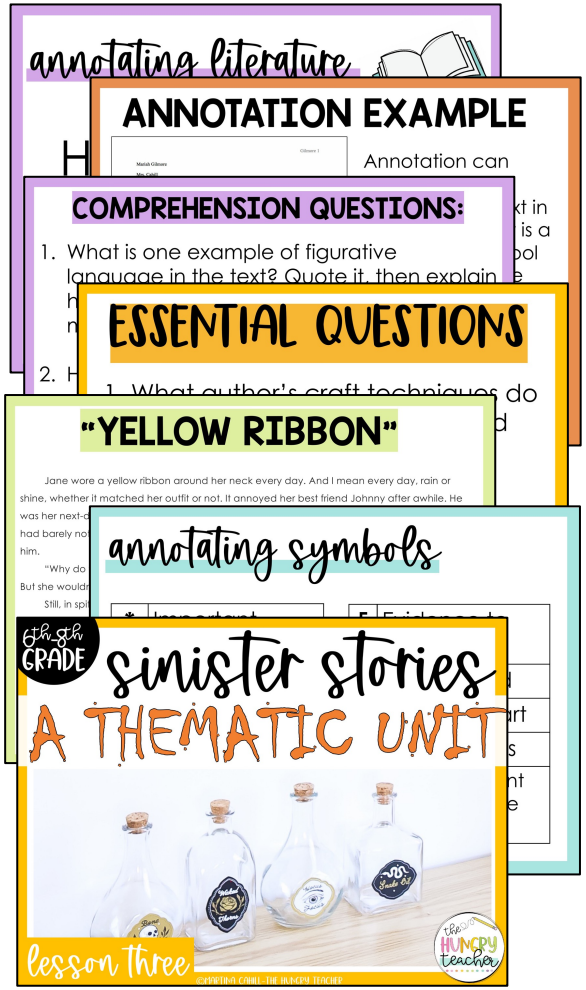
example of lesson plan + resources



Each lesson plan has a section for the standards, objective, prep, learning period, and closing. It also includes any student materials and examples.





The lesson's teaching slides have everything you need to teach the lesson: teaching slides, examples, and concept break downs.

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11 LESSON PLANS

SIXTH GRADE LITERATURE

RL.1	**Cite textual evidence to suppor** inferences drawn from the text.
L.2	**Determine a theme or central id**

SEVENTH GRADE LITERATURE STANDARDS

RL.1	**Cite several pieces of textual evidence** to support analysis of what the t well as inferences drawn from the text.

EIGHTH GRADE LITERATURE STANDARDS

		LESSONS
RL.1	**Cite the textual evidence** that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11
RL.2	**Determine a theme or central idea** of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
RL.3	**Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents** in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	2, 5, 9, 10, 11

lesson ONE — Introduction to author's craft

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 4, 10	• **Literature:** 1, 4, 10	• **Literature:** 1, 4, 10

lesson TWO — author's craft: mood and tone

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10 • **Writing:** 9
LEARNING TARGETS	1. I can cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.		

lesson THREE — Annotating a short story for mood and tone: "Yellow Ribbon"

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10 • **Writing:** 1, 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10 • **Writing:** 1, 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10 • **Writing:** 1, 9

LEARNING TARGETS

1. I can cite text evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. I can determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text.
3. I can describe how a story's plot unfolds as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
4. I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
5. I can analyze how a particular sentence, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.
6. I can explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

PREPARATION

1. **Copies** of the *Annotating Literature Notes* for students
2. **Copies** of the "Yellow Ribbon" short story https://www.americanfolklore.net/yellow-ribbon/
3. **Copies** of the *Annotation Guide* for students
4. **Copies** of the *Comprehension Questions* for students
5. **Lesson Three Presentation**

DIGITAL PREP

1. Assign digital versions to students in Google Classroom. The digital version is all one file, so you'll just need to assign it once at the start of the unit and instruct students on which lesson they'll be completing each day.

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lesson FOUR — author's craft: sensory details

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 4, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 4, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 4, 10 • **Writing:** 9
LEARNING TARGETS	1. I can cite textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the		

lesson FIVE — Annotating a short story for mood and tone: "The Lottery"

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE

lesson SIX — Annotating poetry

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9

LEARNING TARGETS

1. I can analyze a poem and make inferences about its meaning using textual evidence.
2. I can cite text evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
3. I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
4. I can analyze how a particular sentence, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

PREPARATION

1. **Make copies** of the *Poetry Terms* interactive notebook page OR reference page for students.
2. **Make copies** of *Annotating Poetry #1* and #2 for students.
3. **Lesson Six Slides** for projection.

DIGITAL PREP

1. Assign digital versions to students in Google Classroom. The digital version is all one file, so you'll just need to assign it once at the start of the unit and instruct students on which lesson they'll be completing each day.

LEARNING PERIOD

1. Explain that, today, students will be learning about annotating poetry then practicing with annotating two spooky poems.
2. Display the **Lesson Six slides** and pass out the **Poetry Terms** notes.
   - **Note:** If time permits, have students cut and paste the interactive notebook version into their notebooks, then complete them together. Otherwise, give students the completed reference page & go through it with them as you work through the slides.

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lesson SEVEN — Elegy poems

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9

lesson EIGHT — Author focus: Edgar Allan Poe

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 • **Writing:** 9

lesson NINE — Annotating a short story for author's craft: "The Tell-Tale Heart"

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE

lesson TEN — Essential question Socratic Seminar (2 DAYS)

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 6	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4 **Writing:** 1, 4, 5

lesson ELEVEN — Essential question comparative analysis essay (2-3 DAYS)

	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 • **Writing:** 1, 4, 5, 9	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 • **Writing:** 1, 4, 5	• **Literature:** 1, 2, 3, 4 **Writing:** 1, 4, 5

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PAGE	LESSON	PACING	LESSON TITLE AND CONCEPT
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4	N/A	N/A	Links to **Digital Files**
5	N/A	N/A	6th-8th Standard Alignment
8	1	1 DAY	**Introduction to Author's Craft**
18	2	1 DAY	**Author's Craft:** Mood and Tone
29	3	1 DAY	**Annotating a Short Story for Mood and Tone:** "Yellow Ribbon"
37	4	1 DAY	**Author's Craft:** Sensory Details
45	5	1 DAY	**Annotating a Short Story for Mood and Tone:** "The Lottery"
57	6	1 DAY	**Annotating Poems for Mood and Tone:** "Song of the Witches" Coming"
68	7	1 DAY	**Elegy Poem**
76	8	1 DAY	**Author F**
87	9	1 DAY	**Annota Tone:**
96	10	2 DAYS	**Comp** for Un
105	11	2-3 DAYS	**Comp** for Unit

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example of lesson six's slides

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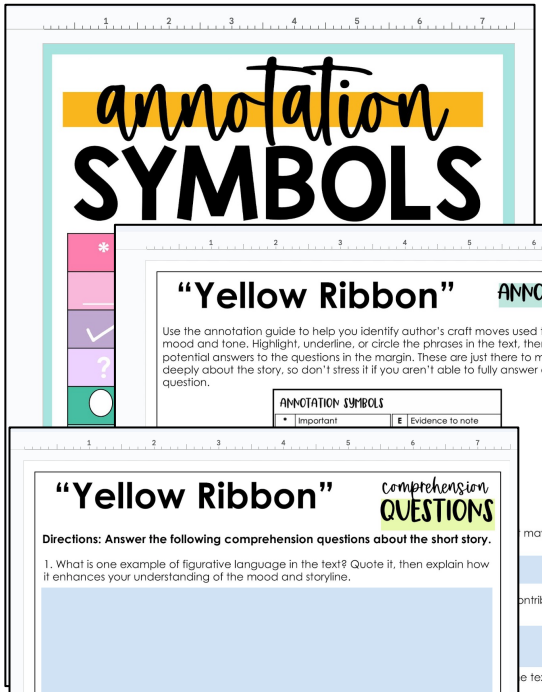
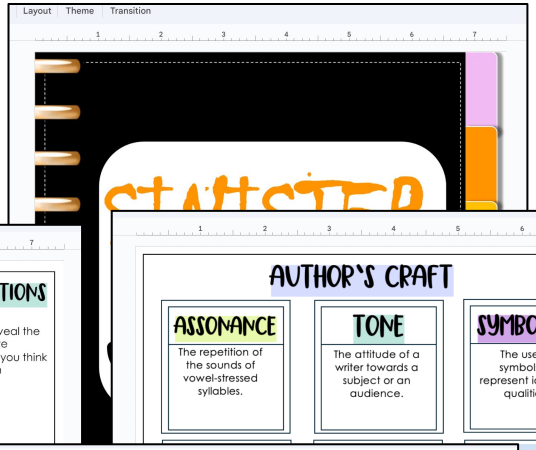
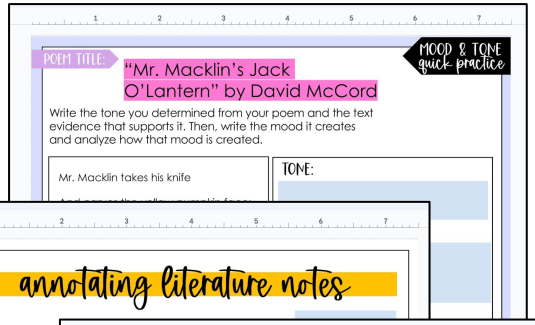
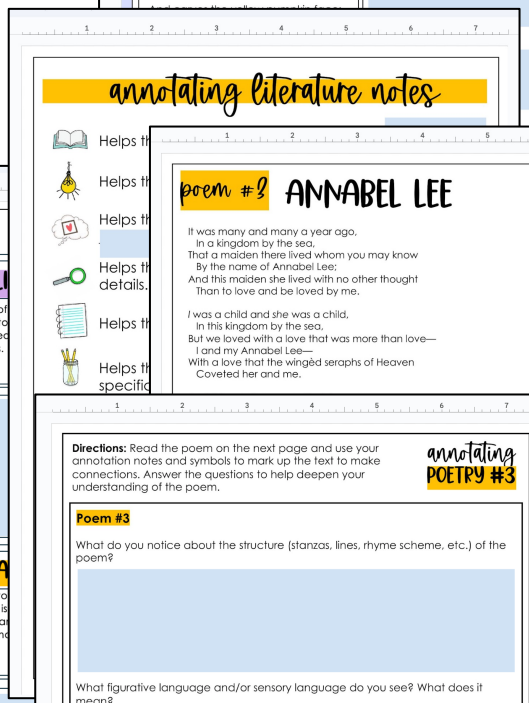
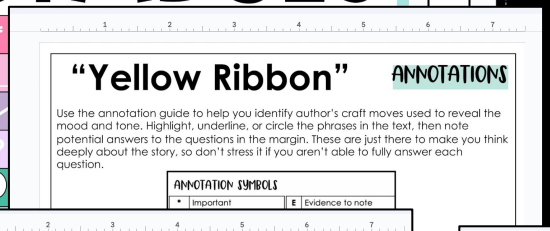
digital version included

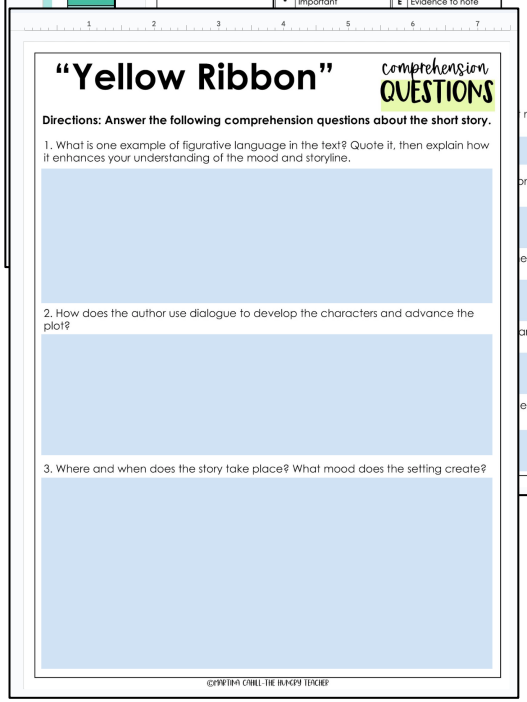


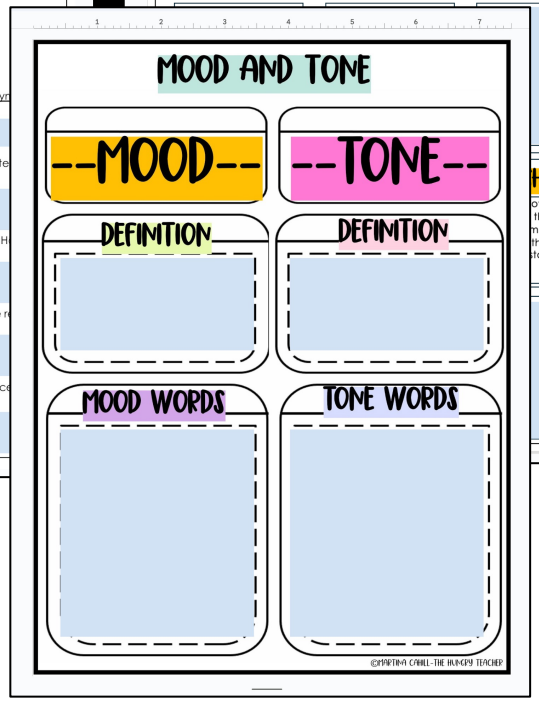


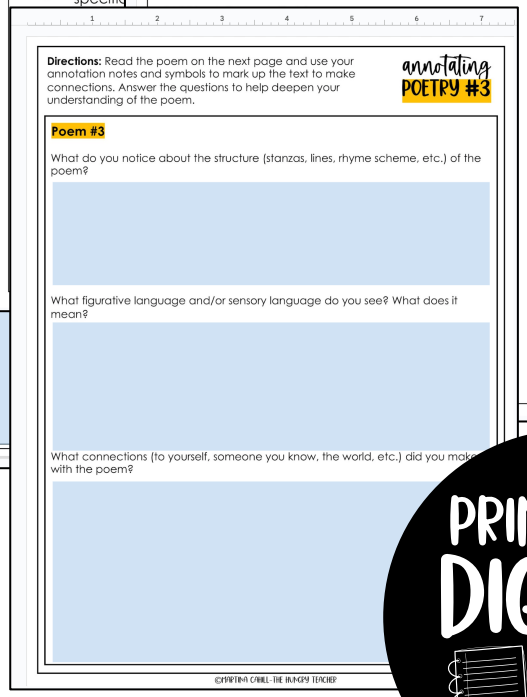












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