TASK 1: PLANNING COMMENTARY

Respond to the prompts below (no more than 9 single-spaced pages, including prompts) by typing your responses within the brackets. Do not delete or alter the prompts. Pages exceeding the maximum will not be scored.

1. Central Focus
   a. Describe the central focus and purpose for the content you will teach in the learning segment.

   [The central focus for the content I will teach in the learning segment is providing evidence from multiple forms of text to construct a writing response pertaining to the topic of refugees. The purpose of the lesson segment is to teach students how to distinguish between relevant evidence and make connections and inferences between different types of sources.]

   b. Provide the title, author (or, if a film, the director), and a short description (about a paragraph) of salient features of the text(s) that a reviewer of your evidence, who is unfamiliar with the text(s), needs to know in order to understand your instruction. If there is more than one text, indicate the lesson(s) where each text will be the focus. Consider the following in your description: genre, text structure, theme, plot, imagery, or linguistic features, depending on the central focus of your learning segment.

   [Text 1: Shattered Lives, by Kristin Lewis
   This article focuses on Syrian Crisis and specifically the refugees who have been displaced from their homes as a result. The article describes the conditions that led up to the civil war in Syria and the sprawling consequences that ensued. The article focus on a young girl named Dania, who was force to flee her home town in Syria when the situation became too dangerous. The article goes on to talk about the vast number of refugees affected by the Syrian Crisis and the humanitarian efforts that have sprung up in response.

   Text 2: Refugee Camp Graphic
   This graphic provides a number of statistics related to the countries and people affected by the Syrian conflict. Statistics include people forced to flee their homes by country, concentration of refugees, concentration of refugee camps, and conflict areas.

   Text 3: Refugee and Refugee Camp Photos
   These photos relate to the Shatter Lives Article and focus and provide details on the hardships that refugees face in their current lives either at large or in camps.]

   c. Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address young adolescents’ abilities to

   - construct meaning from and interpret complex text
   - create a written product interpreting or responding to complex features of a text

   [The teacher will provide young adolescents with opportunity to demonstrate their ability to decipher between relevant and irrelevant evidence. Also, students will demonstrate the
ability to construct meaning and claims using relevant evidence from multiple sources. Students will do this by working cooperatively in groups analyzing print, photos, and graphics. Furthermore, student will demonstrate the ability to write an informative text through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. Students will do this by working together and independently to construct, evaluate, and revise written works in response to a statement of inquiry.

d. Explain how your plans build on each other to help young adolescents make connections between textual references, constructions of meaning, interpretations, and responses to text to deepen their learning of Middle Childhood English Language Arts.

[Students have been working throughout the semester on analyzing print text such as Shattered Lives for main idea and supporting evidence. They have participated in reciprocal teaching, using the RACE strategy to construct their responses and back up their claims pertaining to a particular inquiry and/or text. This unit plans to build upon these skills and knowledge to incorporate multiple forms of text in addressing an inquiry. Students should demonstrate the ability to construct meaning, make connections, and provide inferences and interpretations pertaining to the print, photo, and graphic texts provided in this learning segment. Students will do this by working cooperatively and independently to construct and revise written responses to an inquiry pertaining to a complex text set.]

e. Explain how you will help students make interdisciplinary or integrative connections between the central focus of the learning segment and other subject areas.

[The guiding questions for this learning segment will be used to help students make interdisciplinary or integrative connections between the central focus of the learning segment and other subject areas, specifically Social Studies. These questions include

- How are countries changed by war?
- How does war affect and/or change children?
- What hardships and/or changes come with being displaced from your home?
- Why are humanitarian efforts crucial to refugees? How do humanitarian groups help to change the circumstances of refugees and other displaced people?]

2. Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching

For each of the prompts 2a–c below, describe what you know about your students with respect to the central focus of the learning segment.

Consider the variety of young adolescent learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

a. Prior academic learning and prerequisite skills related to the central focus—Cite evidence of what young adolescents know, what they can do, and what they are still learning to do.
[The students involved in this learning segment have been taught how to identify main ideas and use evidence/details from a text to support their claims. They have demonstrated the ability to use the RACE strategy in constructing their responses to an inquiry. This strategy includes “Reciting the Question,” “Answering the Question,” “Citing Evidence,” and “Explaining Evidence.” In this learning segment students are learning how to analyze, interpret, and make connections across multiple forms of text. Furthermore, students are learning how to analyze and revise written works to expand upon and decipher between relevant and irrelevant evidence.]

b. Personal/cultural/community assets related to the central focus—What do you know about your students’ everyday experiences, cultural backgrounds and practices, and interests?

[The learning segment is being taught at a Title 1 school in a class with an ethnically diverse group of students. The students come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, yet share in common interests and activities such as pop culture and athletics. Many of the students of this particular classroom share common values of family friendship and socializing that is indicative among adolescents in the 8th grade. Many of the students have experience with poverty and are used to moving with their families to different environments and schools. A couple of the students in the class our English language learners and grew up speaking primarily a different language than that of their current academic environment and/or community.]

c. Young adolescent developmental assets related to the central focus—What do you know about your students’ cognitive, physical, and social and emotional development?

[The students in this particular learning segment consist of a class of “enhanced” 8th grade adolescent who vary significantly in their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. This is an age where teachers will encounter a wide range of maturities as they relate to the issues above. Compared to other classes throughout the day, the students in this particular class show marked improvements in cognitive development as it relates to understanding concepts and organizing/communicating their ideas. Physically, they are as varied as any other class of 8th grade students. Socially and emotionally the students of this particular class demonstrate better classroom behavior and cooperatively learning skills than some of their other peer classes.]

3. Supporting Students’ English Language Arts Learning

Respond to prompts 3a–c below. To support your justifications, refer to the instructional materials and lesson plans you have included as part of Task 1. In addition, use principles from research and/or theory, including young adolescent development, to support your explanations.

a. Justify how your understanding of your students’ prior academic learning and personal/cultural/community/developmental assets (from prompts 2a–c above) guided your choice or adaptation of learning tasks and materials. Be explicit about the connections between the learning tasks and students’ prior academic learning, assets, and research/theory.

[The decision to focus the learning task on refugees, specifically Dania from the Shattered Lives Article, was to relate back to the statement of inquiry for the semester. This
statement reads as follows: In order to better understand ourselves and our place in the world, we must learn to communicate and synthesize big ideas across cultures and throughout time. The students can relate to Dania, specifically because of her age, and other refugees across the world through the exploration of similar hardships included displacement, poverty, family concerns, and social/emotional issues. The lesson segment was designed to elicit the retention of previous knowledge while building on skills that will help prepare students for high school. As mentioned earlier many students are reading and writing below 8th grade levels and are in need of practice, repetition, and scaffolding in order to make significant academic strides in Language Arts.

b. Describe and justify why your instructional strategies and planned supports are appropriate for the whole class, individuals, and groups of young adolescents with specific learning needs.

Consider young adolescents with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students.

[The instructional strategies and planned supports provided in this learning segment consist of direct instruction, modeling, scaffolding, cooperative group learning, and individual work. The teacher will use a variety of instruction strategies and planned supports to that the whole class, which is made up of students with a variety of different learning styles and needs for support can benefit in general. Individual who are struggling reader/writers will be paired up with appropriate groups of students. The teacher will provide breakdown of instructions for students with IEP and/or learning disorders.]

c. Describe common student errors or misunderstandings within your central focus and how you will address them.

[Many times students struggle with backing up their claims using evidence directly from a text. Often, students will make assumptions that they cannot refer back to a particular text to back up with appropriate evidence. Furthermore, students struggle organizing their ideas to develop a comprehensive and complete constructed response to an inquiry. This lesson segment will address these errors or misunderstanding by providing students with interactive cooperative group learning experiences. These experiences focus on revising a written response to include more relevant details that add to a more comprehensive and complete response. In addition students will practice and receive feedback constructing outlines for their essays in an attempt to help them better organize claims and construct their written responses.]

4. Supporting English Language Arts Development Through Language

a. Language Function. Identify one language function essential for young adolescents within your central focus. Listed below are some sample language functions. You may choose one of these or another more appropriate for your learning segment.

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<tr>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Argue</th>
<th>Describe</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
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<td>Synthesize</td>
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[Student will synthesize information and ideas across multiple forms of text.]
b. Identify a key learning task from your plans that provides young adolescents with opportunities to practice using the language function identified above. Identify the lesson in which the learning task occurs. (Give lesson/day number.)

[The key learning task in this learning segment that provides young adolescents with opportunities to practice using the language functions consists of the development of their outlines and essays in response to the statement of inquiry. This lesson takes place over the last two days of the learning segment and summarizes the learning objectives as they relate to the students ability to synthesize information and ideas across multiple texts to construct a well organized and thoughtful response.]

c. **Additional Language Demands.** Given the language function and learning task identified above, describe the following associated language demands (written or oral) young adolescents need to understand and/or use:

- Vocabulary
- **PLUS** at least one of the following:
  - Syntax
  - Discourse

Consider the range of young adolescents’ understandings of the language function and other language demands—what do students already know, what are they struggling with, and/or what is new to them?

[Students will demonstrate their understanding of the vocabulary by making references to content specific vocabulary in their essays. These references should demonstrate an understanding of key vocabulary learned from the Scope Article “Shattered Lives.” The vocabulary should be used to connect ideas and make inferences based on the information from the different texts. The students will demonstrate their understanding of the syntax/discourse by writing their responses in a formal style that uses complete sentences to introduce, expand upon, and explain relevant evidence and ideas. Students will be instructed to use the RACE strategy in their writing in which they “Rephrase the Inquiry,” “Answer the Question,” “Cite Evidence,” and “Explain Reasoning.”]

d. **Language Supports.** Refer to your lesson plans and instructional materials as needed in your response to the prompt below.

- Describe the instructional supports (during and/or prior to the learning task) that help students understand and successfully use the language function and additional language demands identified in prompts 4a–c.

[Students will be provided with a variety of instructional supports that include teacher modeling and scaffolding, peer support through cooperative learning, and video/print materials. The teacher will model reciprocal teacher to remind students on how to effectively participate in this process. Furthermore, the teacher will provide scaffolding during cooperative and independent work as necessary. Video and print materials will be used to enhance teaching strategies and appeal to different styles of learning.]

5. **Monitoring Student Learning**
In response to the prompts below, refer to the assessments you will submit as part of the materials for Task 1.

a. Describe how your planned formal and informal assessments will provide direct evidence of young adolescents’ abilities to construct meaning from, interpret, AND/OR respond to a complex text throughout the learning segment.

[The teacher will provide informal assessment through class discussion and observation during cooperative and independent work. Specifically, the teacher will assess to identify if students are deciphering between relevant and irrelevant evidence and making connections between sources. Furthermore, the teacher will assess to understand if students are comprehended and implementing the necessary components involved in creating an effective outline and essay. Finally, the teacher will assess to see if students understand the relevance and purpose of the crucial aspects of an essay pertaining to main idea and details. The teacher will do this by taking notice of the evidence students select and how they organize that evidence into clear and cohesive paragraphs.]

The teacher will provide summative assessment to the students through the grading of their paragraphs and essays. The teacher will assess to see if student effectively organized and structured their essays. Also the teacher will assess to see if a variety of relevant evidence from multiple sources was used to strengthen their claims. Furthermore, the teacher will assess to see if students made connections and inferences from the information provided in the different texts. The teacher will develop and provide a rubric to the students for this assignment.]

b. Explain how the design or adaptation of your planned assessments allows young adolescents with specific needs to demonstrate their learning.

Consider all students, including young adolescents with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students.

[Students who are struggling English readers/writers will be able to demonstrate their learning through the variety of different types of formal and informal assessments designed through the learning segment. The teacher will observe these students in their cooperative learning groups to assess if they are participating and benefiting in their peer interactions. Furthermore, outline templates will be provided for students to help the teacher assess how individuals students are organizing and explaining their ideas. Classroom discussion will also help struggling writers demonstrate what they know. The paragraphs will assess how the learning segment has challenged adolescents with gaps in academic knowledge, and or gifted students.]