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Purpose of Knowledge Packs

In-person learning, involving traditional ELA Guidebook implementation and virtual distance learning should be prioritized. However, the Department recognizes that if school buildings do not physically open, or if a hybrid model needs to be implemented, the time available for those types of interactions might be limited.

However, it is important to remember that learning and activities assigned to students should be meaningful and should be in service of helping students master the knowledge and skills demanded by the ELA Guidebook unit. Therefore, the Department is partnering with [CommonLit](#) to release knowledge packs that will support students in building knowledge and vocabulary¹.

NOTE: Packs should have **at least three** related texts. Some topics include more than three texts. Teachers can choose to have students read all texts or select the amount of texts their schedule allows time for.

These resources can be utilized in the following [learning scenarios](#):

- **Traditional In-person Learning:** These resources can be used to make small group instruction more meaningful for students. Teachers can support students in volume of reading and building knowledge while other students engage independently in one or more activities to support making meaning of complex, grade-level texts.
- **Virtual/Hybrid and Analog Distance Learning:** These resources can be used to give students meaningful, independent practice to support core instruction when they are learning asynchronously from home without the support of a teacher.

Directions for implementing are [available](#).

¹ More information about volume of reading can be found in the [Reading Guide](#).

Knowledge Pack One Text Set: *The Great Gatsby*

Text One

[“The Roaring Twenties”](#) by Mike Kubic

Mike Kubic is a former correspondent for *Newsweek* magazine. In this article, Kubic explores the ups and downs of the 1920s, an exciting time following the United States’ success in World War I. Unfortunately, the good times couldn’t last; in the early 1930s the United States experienced an economic crisis that starkly contrasted the fast lifestyles citizens experienced during the 1920s. As you read, identify the possible factors that contributed to the United States’ economic crisis of the 1930s.

Text Two

[“Keeping Up with the Joneses”](#) by CommonLit Staff

When everyone is getting the latest version of a smartphone, do you feel the pressure to buy one, too? The phrase “keeping up with the Joneses” describes the habit of trying to compete with your peers’ social status, wealth, and possessions. As you read, take notes on the historical origin and examples of keeping up with the Joneses.

Text Three

[“Frank Abagnale”](#) by CommonLit Staff

Frank Abagnale (born 1948) lived a life of deception, conning people for years in order to gain money and power. When he was eventually caught and arrested, he only had to serve five years before the FBI decided to let him out early to help them identify other cases of fraud. As you read the article below, consider what makes someone who they are—both figuratively and in the eyes of the law.

Text Four

[“You Can Buy Happiness, It It’s an Experience”](#) by Maanvi Singh

This NPR article discusses the findings of a study published in *Psychological Science* focused on how different purchases affect happiness. This article was published on Shots, NPR’s Health News blog. As you read, take notes on how people are affected by purchasing material goods and experiences.

Text Five

[“The Lost Generation”](#) by Mike Kubic

In this article, Mike Kubic, a former correspondent of *Newsweek*, discusses the circumstances under which America’s “Lost Generation” came to be. The phrase refers to the citizens who reached maturity after World War I, and whose adolescences were thus defined by a consciousness of mass carnage and destruction. Particularly prominent artists and writers who belonged to the generation included F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, T. S.

Eliot, James Joyce, and Sherwood Anderson. As you read, take notes on the way in which members of the “Lost Generation” are characterized.

Knowledge Pack Two Text Set: *Friday Night Lights*

Text One

[“Life After Sport”](#) by Emma Vickers

After retirement, high-performance athletes are at risk for depression and loss of self-identity. What can be done to overcome this challenge? This article delves into psychological research to discuss the struggles athletes face after they retire. As you read, take notes on the evidence the author uses to link the effects of retirement to the risk of depression in athletes.

Text Two

[“Teen Brain Takes Biggest Sports Hits”](#) by Katherine Harmon

Contact sports can pose serious threats to the athletes who play them, but are teenagers in greater danger than others? In this informational text, Katherine Harmon discusses the effects that head injuries can have on the teenage brain. As you read, take notes on what happens to an athlete as a result of a head injury and the additional effect it can have on teenagers.

Text Three

[“Many U.S. Football Players had Brain Disease, Data Show”](#) by Aimee Cunningham

Watching football, it’s clear that it’s a rough sport and can cause serious physical injuries. But how dangerous is it to players’ brains? In this informational text, Aimee Cunningham discusses a study that looks at football players’ brains and the effects of repeated hits to the head. As you read, take notes on the long-term effects that hits to the head can cause football players.

Text Four

[“Should Girls be Allowed to Play High School Football?”](#) by Josh Bean

In many American schools, girls are prevented from playing high school football, which has been traditionally thought of as a sport for boys. Some people believe this is unfair, while others disagree. In this 2013 article by journalist Josh Bean, locals in an Alabama community put forth their opinions on this debate. As you read, take notes on how the author addresses the debate.

Text Five

[“Serena Williams’ Catsuit Controversy Evokes the Battle Over Women Wearing Shorts”](#) by Deirdre Clemente

In this informational text, Deirdre Clemente discusses the controversy surrounding what Serena Williams, a famous tennis player, decided to wear to the 2018 French Open. Clemente uses this example to explore the attention that female athletes’ outfits have received historically.

Knowledge Pack Three Text Set: *The Warmth of Other Suns*

Text One

“[The One Coming North](#)” by Claude McKay

Claude McKay (1889-1948) was a Jamaican-American writer and poet. He was also an influential figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural, social, and artistic movement that took place in Harlem, New York. In this poem from his book *Harlem Shadows*, a speaker describes coming north. As you read, take notes on where the speaker describes coming from.

Text Two

“[I, Too](#)” by Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was an American poet, novelist, playwright, and social activist. Hughes was also a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a social and political movement of black artists in Harlem, New York. In this poem, a speaker comments on the discrimination he faces. As you read, take notes on the speaker’s thoughts about the future.

Text Three

“[Plessy Nears Its End](#)” by The New York Times

Plessy v. Ferguson was a constitutional law case that took place in 1896. When brought to the Supreme Court, the decision determined that racial segregation laws were constitutional by the “separate but equal” clause. In this *New York Times* article, sixty years following *Plessy v. Ferguson*, an author discusses the state of segregation in the United States and the changing social climate. As you read, take notes on what is contributing to the social change in the United States.

Text Four

“[The Scottsboro Boys](#)” by Jessica McBirney

The trial of the Scottsboro Boys was a historic event in which nine black youths were wrongfully accused and convicted for a crime they didn’t commit. Occurring in 1931, the Scottsboro Boys’ trials sparked outrage and a demand for social change. As you read, take note of the variety of ways in which the criminal justice system failed the Scottsboro Boys.

Knowledge Pack Four Text Set: Homeownership

Text One

“[Telephone Conversation](#)” by Wole Soyinka

Wole Soyinka is a Nigerian playwright, poet, and essayist. He was the first African to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986. In this poem, a speaker is asked to describe their skin color when they inquire about an apartment. As you read, take notes on how the speaker responds to the landlady’s questions.

Text Two

“[The U.S. has Become a Nation of Suburbs](#)” by Christopher Boone

Do you live in the city, a suburb, or a rural area? According to Christopher Boone, many Americans prefer to live in the suburbs and future generations will likely continue living there. As you read, take notes on how trends regarding where people live have changed over time.

Text Three

“[Home](#)” by Gwendolyn Brooks

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) was an American poet, author, and teacher. In 1950, she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, which made her the first African American woman to receive the honor. Her writing often explores the experiences of ordinary people and their communities. In this short story, a family contemplates losing their house. As you read, take notes on each character’s perspective on losing the house.

Text Four

“[Serving in Florida: Excerpt from Nickel and Dimed](#)” by Barbara Ehrenreich

Barbara Ehrenreich (b. 1941) is an American author and political activist. The following excerpt comes from *Nickel and Dimed*, a memoir of a social experiment in which Ehrenreich spent a year living off of minimum wage. The experiment investigated the effects of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, specifically how it affected the working poor. As you read, take notes on how Ehrenreich describes her experiences interviewing for various low-wage positions.

Text Five

“[Why There’s No Place Like Home for the Holidays](#)” by Frank T. McAndrew

There’s no better place to spend the holidays than home. In this informational text, Frank T. McAndrew discusses the significance of home. As you read, take notes on the significance of home to different people.

Knowledge Pack Five Text Set: Space

Text One

[“Her Code got Humans on the Moon - and Invented Software Itself”](#) by Robert McMillan

Margaret Hamilton is an American computer scientist and software engineer. In this informational text, Robert McMillan discusses Hamilton’s contributions to NASA’s Apollo space program in the 1960s and her work in software engineering. As you read, take notes on how Hamilton helped the Apollo space program succeed.

Text Two

[“JFK’s ‘Race to Space’ Speech”](#) by President John F. Kennedy

John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) served as 35th President of the United States. He was president during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Civil Rights Movement, and the beginning of the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. He delivered this speech about space to a large audience at Rice University in Houston, Texas on September 12, 1962. A year earlier, a Russian had become the first human to orbit the Earth. By 1969, Americans succeeded in being the first to walk on the moon. As you read the speech, consider what space exploration represented to Americans at the time.

Text Three

[“Should We Terraform Mars?”](#) by Paul Scott Anderson

Forming colonies on Mars has been the subject of books and movies for a long while now, but how possible is it? In this opinion piece, Paul Scott Anderson discusses the process by which Mars could be altered to be inhabitable by humans. Anderson ponders whether humans should inhabit a new planet just because they can. As you read, take notes on the risks that Anderson identifies with terraforming Mars.

Text Four

[“The Space Race is Over”](#) by Paul Kingsnorth

Paul Kingsnorth is a British author and editor. In the following article, Kingsnorth examines the growing support for space colonization and how this relates to humanity’s delusions about the future. As you read, take notes on the author’s argument about how people view the future of space colonization and what can be done about it.

Text Five

[“Are Humans Really Headed to Mars Anytime Soon?”](#) by Nell Grenfieldboyce

Nell Greenfieldboyce is a NPR science correspondent; the following article comes from NPR's *Morning Edition*. Established in 1958, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is an independent agency of the United States federal government that is responsible for aeronautics and aerospace research. While NASA first successfully sent an unmanned spacecraft to Mars in 1976, humans have yet to land on Mars. Minimal federal funding have prompted private companies to take up the reigns and attempt to independently fund manned missions to Mars. As you read, identify the various points of view presented in the article about humans traveling to Mars.

Knowledge Pack Six Text Set: Genocide

Text One

[“Introduction to the Holocaust”](#) by The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

During World War II, the German government run by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party systematically killed around 6 million people just because of their race or other aspects of their identity. As you read, take notes on the different groups that were targeted by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Text Two

[“Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”](#) by General Assembly of the United Nations

The “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1948, and came into force on January 12, 1951. The convention hoped to prevent future genocides like the Holocaust, in which approximately 11 million people were killed, 6 million of which were Jews. Initially, 28 parties signed the convention, now 147 parties have endorsed the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.” As you read, take notes on the phrasing the UN employs throughout the document and how it secures the legal prevention and punishment of genocide.

Text Three

[“President Clinton’s Remarks in Kigali on the Rwandan Genocide”](#) by President Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton served as the 42nd President of the United States from 1993 to 2001. He gave this speech on March 25, 1998, after visiting Rwanda for the first time since the 1994 genocide. Rwanda has two major ethnic groups: the Hutus and Tutsis. Hutu extremists led the killings, and they murdered almost one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus over a three-month period. This killing constituted a crime against humanity: genocide. Genocide is defined as the deliberate murder of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation. The United States, the United Nations, and other world powers have been harshly criticized for failing to act to stop the genocide. U.S. officials claimed to be unaware of the extent of the killing at the time, however, since the event, this claim has been proven false. As you read, take notes on how President Clinton characterizes the different groups and individuals involved in the genocide.

Text Four

[“The Man Who Coined ‘Genocide’ Spent His Life Trying to Stop It”](#) by NPR Staff

Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) was a Polish lawyer of Jewish descent who devised the term “genocide” to describe the deliberate killing of a large group of people based on their ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality. While genocide is a widely accepted term today, and a punishable crime, this wasn’t always the case. This informational text discusses the work of Lemkin, and references a documentary that provides further information regarding Lemkin and others that continue to fight to end genocide. As you read, take note of what experiences contributed to Raphael Lemkin’s interest in the issue of genocide.

Knowledge Pack Seven Text Set: The American Dream

Text One

[“America and I”](#) by Anzia Yeziarska

Anzia Yeziarska (1880-1970) was a Jewish American novelist known for her writing on immigration, assimilation, and Jewish American lives. As a child, she and her family immigrated from the Russian-Polish border to the United States. The following text is an essay about her struggles adapting to living in America. As you read, take notes on how Yeziarska uses figurative language to describe America.

Text Two

[“Hollywood Dreams of Wealth, Youth, and Beauty”](#) by Bob Mondello

The "American Dream" refers to the idea that anyone in the United States can become successful if they just work hard enough. But is this dream realistic? Where did this idea come from? In this article, reporter Bob Mondello looks at how Hollywood films since the 1900s have depicted life in America. As you read the text, take notes on the word choice used to describe Hollywood and American life.

Text Three

[“American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality”](#) by Ari Shapiro

In this article from 2012, three years after the economic recession, Ari Shapiro of NPR’s Morning Edition interviews Americans about their feelings about the American Dream. As you read, consider how America has changed over time, and how our ideas about the American Dream have evolved.

Text Four

[“From ‘The World Before Him’](#) by Horatio Alger, Jr.

In this excerpt from *The World Before Him*, author Horatio Alger, Jr. perfectly captures the hopeful vision of success in America’s Gilded Age through the eyes of a young country boy. As you read the excerpt, take note of the ways that Alger conveys the theme of the American Dream.

Text Five

[“From Lithuania to the Chicago Stockyards”](#) by Antanas Kaztauskis

Antanas Kaztauskis dictated this story of his immigration from Lithuania to the Americas to Ernest Poole, a reporter for the Independent. In order to pursue a better life and escape the possibility of conscription into the Russian army, Kaztauskis left his homeland to work in the Chicago Stockyards. In stark contrast to the humbler origins from whence he came, the Chicago Stockyards embodied ideals of hard work, competition and sacrifice against the backdrop of intense labor conflict. As you read, think about how America has changed over the past hundred years in regards to labor and immigration. Is it still the place of opportunity it once was?

Knowledge Building Journals

Experts collect knowledge and vocabulary as they go along. You will do this by keeping two different types of journals – a “Rolling Knowledge” journal and a “Sensational 6” vocabulary journal. Annotating the text is one way to collect knowledge and vocabulary in order to become an expert on a topic. Teachers will need to explicitly teach the skill of annotating the text to students who have not previously used this strategy.

Rolling Knowledge Journals

Complete the Rolling Knowledge journal after reading and annotating each text. The Rolling Knowledge journal is a place for you to collect new learning about the knowledge topic and capture connections that add to your existing knowledge on the topic.

1. Read and annotate each text, then answer the following questions in the correct columns:
 - What new knowledge did I collect about the topic while reading this text?
 - How did this text add to knowledge I already had about this topic?

Sensational 6 Journals

Complete the Sensational 6 journal after reading and annotating each text. The Sensational 6 journal is a place for you to collect and practice using vocabulary that is important to understanding the knowledge topic.

1. Read and annotate each text, then determine the six words from each text that are most important to understanding the central idea or theme of the text.
2. Next use your six words to write about the most important ideas of the text. You should have as many sentences as you do words.
3. Complete this chart for each text that you read.
4. After reading all the texts included in the knowledge pack, go back and review your words.
5. Select six words from ALL the word lists that stand out as the most important to the central idea or theme of the texts you read. These words will be known as the “Sensational 6.”
6. Use the “Sensational 6” words to summarize the knowledge you gained from the texts in this knowledge pack.

Annotation Strategy

- *Underline* the major points.
- *Circle* key words or phrases that are confusing or unknown to you.
- Use a *question mark (?)* for questions that you have during the reading. Be sure to write your own question.
- Use an *exclamation point (!)* for things that surprise you, and briefly note what it was that caught your attention.
- Draw an *arrow (→)* when you make a connection to something inside the text, or an idea or experience outside the text. Briefly note your connections.

Rolling Knowledge Journal Template

	New Learning	Adds to Learning
	What new knowledge did I collect about the topic while reading this text?	How did this text add to knowledge I already had about this topic?
Title of Text One	•	•
Title of Text Two	•	•
Title of Text Three	•	•

NOTE: Adjust the template to represent the number of text you assign to students.

Sensational 6 Journal Template

	Six Words	Six Sentences (new sentences)
Title of Text One	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
	6.	6.
Title of Text Two	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
	6.	6.
Title of Text Three	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
	6.	6.
Sensational 6		
<p>Summary Write a summary using the “Sensational 6.” Be sure to underline the vocabulary words.</p>		

NOTE: Adjust the template to represent the number of text you assign to students.

Teacher Directions for Implementation

Analog/Print-Only Option

1. Create a [CommonLit](#) account.
2. Use the Knowledge Pack Text Set links from page two to access each text.
3. Select “Download PDF” at the top of the text and make a copy of each text for each student.
4. Assemble student packets with student-facing directions.
5. Ensure students understand how to complete knowledge building journals using a notebook or offline compatible word processing program.

Virtual/Technology Enhanced Option

1. Create a [CommonLit](#) account.
2. Select “My Classes” and follow the directions to get your students into classes.
3. Use the Knowledge Pack Text Set links from page two to access each text.
4. Assign each text to each student via the CommonLit digital platform.

Ensure students understand how to complete knowledge building journals using an online compatible word processing program.

Final Project

Each knowledge pack should culminate with students creating a final project to showcase their knowledge of the topic and express their understanding of the texts. Final projects should include both a product and a presentation.

- **Product:** Students will create a product which expresses their understanding of the texts and topic. This product should be appropriate to the grade level and task. Teachers should choose the final product or offer a selection of options for a final product and allow student choice.
- **Presentation:** Students will showcase their products and knowledge of a topic. Presentations can be in person, virtual via video conference, and/or prerecorded and shared.

Possible Final Project Products

- Develop a multimedia presentation explaining your topic.
- Create and publish a story related to your topic.
- Create a podcast to discuss your topic.
- Create a poster to promote change related to your topic.
- Give a TEDTalk related to your topic.
- Create a graphic novel related to your topic.
- Create a mixed media art project that visually represents your topic.

Final Project Planning and Development

To support students in developing final projects, the [Final Project Tool](#) can be shared with students.

Sample Student Schedule

Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four	Day Five
Read text one and complete the questions that follow.	Reread text one and complete the rolling knowledge entries for that text.	Re-read text one and complete the Sensational 6 journal entries for that text.	Read text two and complete the questions that follow.	Reread text two and complete the rolling knowledge entries for that text.
Day Six	Day Seven	Day Eight	Day Nine	Day Ten
Re-read text two and complete the Sensational 6 journal entries for that text.	Read text three and complete the questions that follow.	Reread text three and complete the rolling knowledge entries for that text.	Re-read text three and complete the Sensational 6 journal entries for that text.	Reread the three texts and identify the Sensational 6 words and write a well-developed summary of the texts using the Sensational 6.
Day Eleven	Day Twelve	Day Thirteen	Day Fourteen	Day Fifteen
Make a plan for your final project.	Brainstorm the product of your final project.	Draft the product of your final project.	Develop your product for your final project.	Plan your presentation of your final project.
Day Sixteen	Day Seventeen	Day Eighteen	Day Nineteen	Day Twenty
Present your final project.	Reflect on your final project.	View a peer final project presentation on your topic and reflect on what you learned.	View a peer final project presentation on your topic and reflect on what you learned.	View a peer final project presentation on your topic and reflect on what you learned.