Planning Commentary Directions: Respond to the prompts below (no more than 9 single-spaced pages, including prompts) by typing your responses within the brackets following each prompt. Do not delete or alter the prompts; both the prompts and your responses are included in the total page count allowed. Refer to the evidence chart in the handbook to ensure that this document complies with all format specifications. 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 this learning segment.

   [The central focus for this unit is:

   “Develop keen awareness of Martin Luther King Jr.'s focal arguments in his Letter from the Birmingham Jail (LBJ) through analyzing both the clergymen’s letter sent to him as well as his use of rhetorical techniques in his own letter, and then critically leverage our keen awareness and rhetorical techniques in formal writing about a self-chosen injustice.”

   As the central focus states, the purpose of this unit is to empower students to critically investigate and formally write about a self-chosen topic that they believe is an injustice in today’s society, utilizing ethos, logos, and pathos rhetorical appeals learned from analyzing MLK’s famous letter.]

   b. Provide the title, author (or, if a film, the director), and a short description (about a paragraph in length) 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 including the following in your description: genre, text structure, theme, plot, imagery, or linguistic features, depending on the central focus of your learning segment.

   [As stated above, this unit finds its backbone in one text: MLK’s Letter from the Birmingham Jail. MLK wrote this letter while he was in Birmingham county jail during the Spring of 1963. While in jail, MLK received a copy of the local newspaper that hosted a letter from eight Christian clergymen renouncing MLK’s nonviolent efforts (the other salient text of the unit). MLK responded to the clergymen, writing a formal letter comprised of 39 paragraphs. The end product? The quintessential Letter from the Birmingham Jail (LBJ), a critical document of 20th century America. In his letter, MLK masterfully utilized ethos, logos, and pathos rhetorical appeals in order to justify why nonviolent political protests are an essential and just tactic in attaining human rights. LBJ incorporates ample amounts of rhetorical strategies, metaphors, and imagery in order to convince the clergymen of its salient argument MLK’s letter has been heralded as a shining example of brilliant rhetorical prose and a moving justification for the need for political nonviolent protests. LBJ will take center stage in this unit beginning in lesson two and beyond.

   The other complex text that students will analyze is the letter from the eight clergymen (of Birmingham) that was published in the newspaper while MLK was in jail. Students will read the exact letter that MLK responded to in LBJ. The clergymen propose that because MLK incites violence and “racial unrest” through advocating for peaceful protests, African American should only pursue human rights legally (through the court system). Because MLK routinely responds to specific aspects of the Clergymen Letter in his own letter, it is essential that students critically analyze and investigate the stance the Clergymen take in their initial letter to MLK, an endeavor our class undertakes in the first lesson of this unit.]
c. Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address students’ abilities to

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

[In order for students to make meaning from LBJ, they will need to critically analyze the context surrounding the letter. Thus, in lesson one of this unit, students will read the clergymen’s letter that MLK responded to in LBJ, synthesizing the letter’s focal arguments. This activity, together with the standards it addresses (1.1.b/c and 3.1.a.viii) will provide students with the critical awareness they require to authentically and critically interrogate MLK’s rhetorical techniques in LBJ in order that they might apply their analysis in their own writing.

Day two leverages the context building of day one. Though students have built needed context through critically analyzing one paragraph in the clergymen letter and then sharing with each other their findings, It is essential that I do not simply read the letter with students and tell them where/how MLK reveals his core argument. Rather, as the first learning objective suggests, students, after reading/listening to the first four paragraphs of LBJ, will individually circle specific words/lines that they believe are central to MLK’s argument. Then, students will have a chance to discuss with other students and share with the class key words/lines that they believe reveal MLK’s core argument. The aim is that students might interpret the basic argument of the text together. This first objective (standard 2.1.b.i) empowers students to immediately bear the heavy intellectual lifting of the unit’s central focus in a scaffolded environment in which I will explicitly, through questions and modeling, expand student interpretations of the core argument. In terms of objective two, again as the central focus aims for students to develop keen awareness of MLK’s letter through interrogating rhetorical appeals, it is essential that students have the opportunity to first learn and embody said rhetorical appeals. Rather than students passively taking notes from me, they will attend either a station that explores ethos, logos, or pathos rhetorical appeals and complete a “notecatcher” at that station in order to document essential features of the appeal and plan with other students how they will teach that appeal to the rest of the class. This process allows students to construct the basic meaning of their particular appeal and then embody and teach that appeal to the whole class.

Day three of the learning segment aims to deepen and expand students’ learning in day two. Students will (in groups) teach and act out their rhetorical appeal while the rest of the class will determine the basic elements of that appeal and document their learning using the supplied “notecatcher.” Again, though students will be actively constructing knowledge about each appeal from each other, I will serve as a scaffold to deepen and expand students’ meaning making. After each group teaches their appeal, we will immediately apply that appeal to MLK’s letter. I will do a “Think-Aloud” to model how students might interrogate where/how MLK utilizes each rhetorical appeal in his letter. Students will code the text with me, and will leverage my “Think-Aloud” in learning segment four. The two objectives for day three deepen students’ relationship with standard 2.1.b and introduce standard 1.1.a.v.ii. This learning segment assists students as they embody strategies for how to interrogate rhetorical techniques in texts.

Day four leverages day three, propelling students to interrogate various rhetorical appeals in a pre-determined section of LBJ, fulfilling standard 2.2.c.ii. Again, students will get to document their interrogation using a supplied “notecatcher.” As students now have the tools they need in order to independently interrogate rhetorical features in LBJ, I will have the freedom to assist my struggling readers, multilingual learners, and underperforming students as they interpret the letter. Considering that students will be utilizing rhetorical inspiration from MLK as they craft their own formal written product responding to their own self-chosen injustice, students will
highlight one aphorism from the section they read (in LBJ) that they will explicitly leverage in their own writing.

Day five weaves the previous four days together in a way that empower students to authentically and formally write about how their self-chosen topic is an injustice. Utilizing the aphorisms that students highlighted from LBJ, the rhetorical skills they learned and practiced, as well as their critical analysis of MLK’s argument in his letter, students will complete a written assessment that assesses their abilities in relation to standards 3.1.a.ix and .2.a.ii. The first standard measures their abilities to weave their mentor text, LBJ, into their writing, and the second standard measures students’ abilities to utilize rhetorical strategies in their writing about how their topic is an injustice. As I illustrated above, lessons one through four aim to build into students the tools they need to successfully address the standards measured in the authentic writing assessment on day five.

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

[Each learning segment in this unit would not be possible without the others. Day two, three, and four find their foundation in the context that students and I build on day one. Students, as they read LBJ, will continually make connection back to the letter from the clergymen that students analyze on day one. This text-to-text connection will be an essential ingredient for students as they authentically and effectively interpret how MLK utilizes specific rhetorical techniques in his letter. Further, the various meaning making students will do during each learning segment (as discussed in the previous question) connects back to day one’s analysis of the clergymen letter, deepening and authenticating students' learning in this unit.

In terms of specific day-to-day connections, day three explicitly allows students to connect to meaning making and textual references of LBJ. As students had the chance to initially interpret LBJ’s core argument on day two, throughout day three, student will refer back to LBJ’s opening section and more deeply and articulately interpret and respond to how MLK utilizes specific ethos, logos, and pathos rhetorical appeals in order to structure and deliver his argument. As students will now possess basic knowledge of rhetorical strategies, day three will be essential for students as they connect back to their heavy intellectual thinking on day two in order to deepen their awareness of LBJ’s focal argument.

Day four empowers students to leverage their explicit deepening of their interpretation of LBJ’s central argument as they read specific sections from the body of MLK’s letter. Day four allows students to utilize the skills that were modeled to them and that they practice on day three in order to interrogate how MLK continues to employ rhetorical strategies throughout his letter. Providing students with opportunities to venture into the bulk of the letter independently on day four, while remaining connected to their skill building in section one of the letter on days two and three, will be an invaluable opportunity for them to both learn how to interrogate MLK’s use of rhetorical strategies and to begin embodying how they will utilize rhetoric in their own writing.

Finally, day five provides students with multiple opportunities to weave the learning from the previous four days into their own writing. Students will refer back to the specific sections that they rhetorically analyzed as well as utilize key aphorisms from LBJ as they formally apply specific rhetorical strategies into their own writing on a self-chosen injustice. All together, this unit hosts learning segments that explicitly deepen and connect to each other in ways that allow students to deepen their learning of how to incorporate rhetorical strategies into writing for real world purposes.]

2. Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching
For each of the prompts below (2a–b), describe what you know about your students with respect to the central focus of the learning segment.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs, 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—What do students know, what can they do, and what are they learning to do?

[Every student can decode on a fundamental level. Though there are two struggling readers in the class, they do possess fundamental reading skills, and they can comprehend texts more accurately than they can decode them. In order to effectively and efficiently navigate complex texts such as LBJ, it is essential that students utilize specific intellectual tools as they read the text, namely “coding” strategies (highlighting and circling the text, and writing in the margins about main ideas/purpose, etc.) Students already know how to do this, and routinely “code” complex texts. The various coding strategies students know are especially useful for the two struggling readers and two ELL students. Further, students can interpret main ideas of text through identifying key details, and students can interpret meanings for difficult words through context clues and basic Latin roots.

In terms of the content for the unit, only two students reported (on their pre-assessment) that they have heard of the word rhetoric. One student has a basic understanding of an ethical and logical rhetorical appeal. As a whole though, students have no pre-requisite skills or prior instruction on how to identify rhetorical appeals, much less analyze how writers use rhetoric in order to persuade.]

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?

[Each student has a totally unique, never-before-lived story, and each of their stories will interact with the central focus in personal and purposeful ways. Because the central focus aims for students to leverage LBJ in their own writing on a topic of their own choosing, it is essential that I am aware that two students identify as African American, and two other students identify as Latino (and one speaks only Spanish at home). These students would have been considered “colored” in 1963 when MLK wrote his letter, and would have been oppressed. I know that these students are especially aware of “color” and of race relations in the United States today. Considering these particular students as well as the white students who I know who likewise have had experiences with certain injustices, it will be important for me to honor each student’s everyday experience, allowing them space to reflect and connect LBJ to their lived realities today. At the same time, it is important that I do not force any student to represent a specific cultural background, and that I set up the classroom environment in such a way that we respect each student’s writing on their self-chosen topic.]

3. Supporting Students’ English-Language Arts Learning

Respond to prompts 3a–c below. To support your explanations, 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 to support your explanations.

a. Explain how your understanding of your students’ prior academic learning and personal/cultural/community assets (from prompts 2a–b above) guided your choice or adaptation of learning tasks and materials.
I crafted this unit with a foundation in sheltered instruction. Thus, the unit will provide background knowledge, utilize various strategies, leverage student knowledge, and be comprehensible (Echevarria, Short, and Vogt *The SIOP Model*). That way, the unit will easily adapt to the specific learning needs of individual students. Because this unit revolves around one central text that we will be reading, analyzing, and leveraging for learning throughout the unit, it was imperative that I developed learning tasks that provide each student with access to LBJ. Thus, that is why students will collectively paraphrase the clergymen letter addressed to MLK on day one. That way, all students will gain the necessary background knowledge needed in order to grasp the purpose of the letter.

On day two and three, when we begin reading the letter, in order to ensure that all students are able to develop a foundational relationship with MLK’s purpose for writing the letter and how he utilized rhetorical appeals in order to achieve that purpose, we will complete a T-P-S activity that will connect students’ thoughts together and leverage student knowledge for learning. This strategy allows all students to have chances to engage in the learning process, and I will be able to clarify any gaps in students’ analysis of MLK’s central purpose for writing his letter. Further, because students will then be familiar with the intro but not familiar with specific rhetorical appeals that MLK utilizes, students will attend stations to learn about and plan how they will teach a particular appeal. In between student-led segments where groups of students will teach each appeal, I will model my analysis of how and for what purpose MLK incorporates rhetorical appeals into his intro. This will ensure that the content is comprehensible. And finally, on day four students will have opportunities to independently practice and apply skills they learned during day two and day three.

In terms of students’ unique stories, because rhetorical appeals and reading and writing matter insomuch as students can relate them to their own lived realities, I ensured that the summative assessment in the unit empowers students to incorporate rhetorical appeals into a formal piece of writing that explores how their topic is an injustice. This assessment will be personal and purposeful for them, and it will inform all students (especially the two underperforming students) that the skills we learn and the reading we do in school can and does find relevance to who we are outside of school.


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

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

On day one, because it is essential that students know the immediate context as to why MLK wrote LBJ, students will paraphrase the clergymen letter so that all students are able to readily grasp the clergymen’s argument addressed to MLK. We will read and listen to the letter being read which will allow struggling readers to both hear and see the text and navigate the text as it is being modeled for them. The paraphrasing itself will support ELL, struggling readers and underperforming students. However, expecting students to know how to paraphrase is unreasonable. Thus, all students will be able to refer to a model paraphrase of the first paragraph and will visually see how I paraphrased the clergymen’s writing. This support will ensure that all students have the tools they require in order to successfully attain needed background knowledge to LBJ at language levels that are comprehensible for all students.
Students will get to share with the class their paraphrase of their specific paragraph, and I will take notes on the “Doc-Cam.” This culminating activity will provide students with the structured accountability and scaffolding they need in order to deepen their analysis of the clergymen letter by working through depth of insight and misunderstandings for each paragraph.

On day two I will again apply the seeing/hearing/modeling reading strategy used on day one. The T-P-S activity will especially support both gifted students and the two students on the spectrum. As many students on the spectrum have a distaste for group work, the solo “think” portion will allow all students to “code” the intro individually at their own pace without fear of isolation. Further, the “pair” section will enable students on the spectrum to connect with other students in a formal, controlled format, enabling them to link ideas and learn new perspectives. And the “share” section will connect all students’ ideas together in a format that will honor thinking, pairing, and inspire new ideas.

Because students are wholly unfamiliar with rhetorical appeals, the stations activity on day two is an invaluable formal support that will attend to underperforming students as well as gifted students. As the stations will be self-guided, my three gifted students will have the space to deepen and extend their learning at their station as they plan for how they will teach their appeal, brainstorming engaging and authentic ways to present their information. Oppositely, I will have the freedom to assist the two underperforming students and two struggling readers as they navigate their station.

On day three, students will serve as a form of support for each other, as they teach their appeals. My removal from formally teaching will allow me to listen for acute gaps of learning so that I can weave specific illustrations into students’ teaching segments that will assist their classmates in their learning. In between each teach segment, I will model a “Think Aloud”, analyzing and marking the intro (on the “DocCam”) of MLK’s letter in regards to each rhetorical appeal. My “Think Aloud” will assist students in their learning on how rhetorical appeals are woven into writing as they will get to see me make specific analytical moves. This “Think Aloud” will be essential to transferring knowledge to students so that they can effectively practice their skills on day four.

And finally, on day four, as most students will be at a point where they are ready to delve into the text independently, armed with strategies on how to analyze how MLK utilizes rhetorical appeals, I will have the ability to formally assist and re-teach students as necessary, as well choral read or “echo” read with the two struggling readers in their independent navigation of the text.

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

[The most common misunderstanding will center on what exactly an ‘injustice’ is. I anticipate that students might declare, “school is an injustice!” On the first day, I will model for students an injustice that I am choosing (domestic violence), and how I plan to write about it. I’ll briefly point out that injustices are conditions/patterns of living that fundamentally prevent and destroy people’s opportunities to experience the community’s shared values and identities.]

4. Supporting English-Language Arts Development Through Language

a. Language Function. Identify one language function essential for students 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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<th>Analyze</th>
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<th>Evaluate</th>
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<td>Explain</td>
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b. Identify a key learning task from your plans that provides students with opportunities to practice using the language function identified above. Identify the lesson in which the learning task occurs. (Give lesson day/number.)

Throughout Lesson four (day four), students will get to independently analyze a particular section of LBJ, utilizing the skills learned from day three in order to discern where and how MLK leverages rhetorical techniques in his argument. Students will likewise propose an aphorism from their particular section that they will incorporate into their own writing. Students will document their analysis on an “Exit-Ticket” that they will turn in at the end of class.

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

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

Consider the range of students’ 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?

This unit will introduce new vocabulary to students while leveraging vocabulary students already are in tune with. Specifically, students are new to “rhetoric… ethos… logos… pathos” and will have opportunities throughout the unit to embody the specifics of each of these vocabulary words. In terms of the content of the letter, students are new to “injustice,” as well as an entire host of context specific vocabulary that would be too drawn out to list here. Examples, though, include “white moderate… Apostle Paul… Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights.” And finally, in terms of the central language demand (analyze), Students are struggling with how “analyze” is more involved and dissecting than either “identify” or “describe.”

Students also need to understand persuasive discourse, namely specifics of how LBJ is structured and how MLK constructs knowledge within his letter (through logical analogies, rhetorical questioning, etc.). Because LBJ is primarily a persuasive piece, it is important that students become keenly aware of how MLK issues his claims, the structure and format he uses to both support and argue his claims (rhetorical appeals), and ultimately how and for what purpose MLK addresses the clergymen’s counterarguments.

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

- 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.

This lesson quite literally propels students into practicing how MLK utilizes and for what purpose MLK incorporates ethos, logos, and pathos appeals into the foundation of his letter. Consequently, many of the instructional supports occur prior to this specific learning task. For instance, on day two, students, in a structured environment utilizing a T-P-S activity, develop fundamental awareness of MLK’s purpose for writing his letter. This fundamental awareness will be essential as students specifically connect how ethos, logos, and pathos rhetorical
appeals relate to MLK’s purpose for writing. If students do not know the fundamental purpose, how can they analyze how an author reveals that purpose?

Further, in order for students to analyze the role that rhetorical appeals play in the purpose of LBJ, it is imperative that students create an authentic and accurate definition of each appeal. Thus, on day three, students will, themselves, construct engaging methods to teach one of the three appeals to the rest of the class. This activity (supported by the information they will gain at each station) will empower students to truly embody the essential elements of each appeal so that they can analyze how MLK and for what purpose MLK weaves rhetorical appeals into his writing.

Day four is the logical culmination of day two and three. And on day four, students will have learned and embodied the two tools they need (awareness of MLK’s core purpose in writing the letter and knowledge of the specific rhetorical appeals) to independently practice analyzing where, how, and for what purpose MLK incorporates rhetoric into his letter. Because day four is structured the way it is, I will have the freedom to assist students individually and in groups as they request and require it.

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 students’ abilities to construct meaning from, interpret, and/or respond to a complex text throughout the learning segment.

[This unit embraces two formal assessments spread throughout two learning segments, as well as one informal assessment for each remaining lesson segment. The first formal assessment, students planning and then teaching and presenting their specific rhetorical appeal to the rest of the class, provides me (and students) with immediate evidence as to whether and how fully students have effectively absorbed the basics of their specific rhetorical appeal. The assessment will also provide opportunities for students to demonstrate how their rhetorical technique is applied in authentic situations, as well as identify one example from LBJ’s opening section that incorporates their appeal, providing me with direct evidence of student’s understanding of, and ability to interrogate, rhetorical techniques in a complex text.

The other formal assessment, students crafting a written product utilizing ethos, pathos, and logos rhetorical appeals that they interrogated in LBJ, will likewise provide me with direct evidence as to whether students are able to authentically apply the rhetorical strategies they studied, as well as use MLK’s argument in his letter in order to craft authentic and purposeful writing that responds to a self-selected injustice. This assessment allows students to authentically apply and embody the rhetorical strategies they studied in the unit to purposeful writing, rather than simply feed information back to me abstractly.

In terms of informal assessments, on day one, students will paraphrase sections of the clergymen letter, allowing me to assess how fully students grasp the implications and central argument of the letter. This in-class, immediate informal assessment enables me to teach specific sections of the letter that students do not adequately paraphrase on their own. That way, each student in the class will possess important background information they need in order to effectively analyze LBJ.

On day two, students will complete a “Think-Pair-Share” activity that will provide me with tangible feedback on how completely students are interpreting the core argument of LBJ. And again, just like the paraphrase informal assessment, I will immediately be able to address learning gaps that prevent students from authentically engaging with and analyzing the letter independently.
On day four students will independently interrogate how certain sections of LBJ incorporate rhetorical strategies, and I will observe and converse with students as they identify rhetorical issues and how those techniques reveal LBJ’s argument. In these moment-by-moment observations I will gain direct evidence on how acutely students are interpreting the role various rhetorical strategies play in the text.

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

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

[I intentionally and thoughtfully designed each assessment so that all students could effectively and authentically demonstrate their learning. The planned formal assessments host needed supports that allow each student equitable access. The paraphrase utilizes a detailed model that provides all students with the scaffolding needed to adequately paraphrase. The T-P-S activity is layered enough that each student can connect to the learning process at one of the stages of the activity.

In regards to the two formal assessments, I have no doubt that the diverse range of students will have equitable opportunity to convey their knowledge on each assessment. Because the formal assessment on day three utilizes a half-lesson of student planning time, I will be able to assist struggling readers/ELL students as well as the underperforming students at their specific stations. I will be able to teach in small groups specific content that will enable them to authentically demonstrate their knowledge during the assessment. Further, the assessment is choice-based. Students will choose how they will teach the class about their specific rhetorical appeal, and thus, students will be able to use unique experiences from their own lives that will assist in their depiction of the rhetorical appeal. In this sense, the two gifted students, as well as my underperforming students and struggling readers, will be able to authentically connect their lived realities and unique experiences to how they demonstrate knowledge in their assessment.

The second formal assessment, the unit’s summative and cumulative assessment, finds itself rooted in empowering all students to equitably demonstrate their learning. Though the assessment is fundamentally based in writing, the assessment does not test writing skills. Therefore, the two ELL students and the two emerging readers who do not yet write at a technical level that is conducive to effective communication in writing will still have access to authentically demonstrating their knowledge on the assessment. Why? Because students will have choice as to how they will structure their written product. They will be able to leverage writing that they enjoy, and that they are used to. Students can choose to write poems, create narratives (fiction or non-fiction), write a Facebook status (informal writing), write a formal introduction to a letter (modeling after LBJ), write a song, etc. Because the purpose of the assessment is for students to demonstrate their knowledge of rhetorical appeals through utilizing them to write about an injustice of their choice, the specific structure of the writing needs to match student interest.

This assessment needs to test new information learned authentically during the unit. And it does just that. Each day of the unit students will both deepen their understanding of rhetoric witnessed in LBJ, while they simultaneously connect and apply their learning to specific injustices in their own lives. Quite truly, every single day of the unit prepares all students to equitably access and demonstrate learning in the unit’s culminating formal assessment.