

Exemplary Planning Commentary: English Language Arts

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1a. Central focus of the segment

The central focus for my lesson segment is “Analyze in detail the theme of gender roles and expectations in *Doll House* and discuss its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined the plot, characters, and setting.” *Doll House*, by Henrik Ibsen, has been chosen for the 10th grade Humanities curriculum in order to analyze a 19th century through a feminist lens. The students have just studied an array of social reform movements, and one case study that we focus on is the Women’s Movement. Ibsen’s text allows us to examine traditional gender roles, expectations and stereotypes in the 19th century and how one character defies these restrictions. The central focus is aligned with English Common Core State Standards and our school’s grade level expectations that students can analyze a complex text in detail, discussing how an author develops his theme through his characters, setting, and plot devices.

1b. Features of the text

The main text of this learning segment is *A Doll House*, a play in three acts by Henrik Ibsen. The play was written in 1879 and describes the dialogue that takes place in the Helmer household over the period of a few days. The main characters include Nora (the main protagonist), mother of two children and wife of Torvald, their friend Rank, one of Torvald’s former colleagues Krogstad, and Nora’s friend Kristine. In the beginning, all the characters represent some variation of traditional gender roles, expectations and stereotypes of 19th century society. Nora represents the traditional female role of subordinate, acquiescing wife to Torvald, who treats her as a silly, inferior plaything. However, she displays different personalities according to which character she interacts with, at times also demonstrating intelligence, resolve and manipulative control. Over the course of the play, Nora comes to realize that she cannot live with a man like Torvald who treats her as an inferior. In the end she decides to leave her husband and children in order to discover her own identity and purpose, free from traditional societal constraints.

1c. Interpreting and writing about text

Given the central focus, to “analyze in detail the theme of gender roles and expectations in *Doll House* and discuss its development over the course of the text,” the learning targets (i.e. learning objective) for each lesson correspond directly to an English L.A. Common Core Standard. Each learning target (i.e. learning objective) breaks down the complex task of the central focus into smaller goals. In Lesson 1, students practice the skill of citing textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly. I model how to do a close reading of the stage directions at the very beginning of the play to glean information from the text about the setting and tone of the play. The students then work in groups to do close readings of Act I and make analyses about characters and their gender roles and expectations based on the textual evidence. For example, students are asked to pay attention to the terms that Torvald uses to address Nora and make conclusions about how these terms express his views on a women’s roles and expectations of behavior. (See more evidence of Lesson 1 language demands on Assessment 1.2.) Students use a handout I created to write down their citations and interpretations. I invite students to record their analysis in bullet points because at this time I want them to focus on textual evidence and content, rather than worrying about writing conventions and form.

In Lesson 2, the learning target (i.e. learning objective) asks students to “discuss how Nora develops into a complex character by expressing multiple and conflicting motivations as she interacts with different characters in *Doll House*.” To

accomplish this target, students again work in groups and focus on one of Nora's relationships and how she acts, what she says, and the motivations behind her behavior. This activity facilitates making meaning from the complex text because it scaffolds the complex character that Nora embodies by focusing on one of her relationships. Students display this analysis in note form on classroom whiteboards. They gain knowledge of all of Nora's varying personalities by reading all group displays during a classroom "gallery walk." Lessons 3 and 4 require students to create a more formal written response to the complex text. This task is a logical progression to convey analysis in formal writing after having done several days of note and discussion formats. Homework due for Lesson 3 asks students to write a journal entry to address the ending of the play. They respond to my prompts: Did it provide the reader with sufficient closure? Were readers surprised? Did Nora make the "correct" choice? In Lesson 4, the post-assessment asks students to summarize their learning about gender roles, expectations and stereotypes through the Doll House characters. They choose 3 characters and describe their motivations, behavior and whether they change over the course of the play.

1d. Explaining how lessons build and link to other skills

As the progression above outlines, my lesson plans evolve in a way that scaffolds learning to build on itself. Learning targets, tasks, and questions progress from simpler to more complex, singular to multiple, specific to comprehensive. We go from discussions of literal to symbolic meaning, and external relationships to internal motivations. English-Language Arts is a complex subject which includes making meaning from what the text actually says, to what it stands for, what is inferred and implied, and what the reader is able to take away from it. By offering a varied curriculum and multiple approaches (including close-reading, character analysis, plot development and performance, I allow students to find the access point that works for them to unlock the meaning and effect of literary analysis.

1e. Opportunities to express learning targets (Washington State only).

Each lesson introduces the learning target for that day near the beginning of class and asks students to rephrase it in their own words. The learning targets are either projected in a presentation, written on the board, or typed on a handout for that day. (See top of Instructional Material 1.1 for typed version, and slide 1 of Instructional Material 2.1 for presentation version.) Students initially engage with the learning targets by listening to me read them, silently reading them as individuals, or speaking them to a peer. Rewording the learning targets is a tool to assess whether they understand them. In Lessons 1 and 2, directly following restating of the learning targets, I also ask students to reflect on the importance of learning this skill. (Refer to all lesson plans for slight variations on this process.) At the end of the lessons, I check for accomplishment and understanding of the learning targets either by a student reflection piece on a handout (Instructional Material 1.1), a fist-to-five show of fingers (Informal Assessment 4.6), or in the summative, written post-assessment (Assessment 4).

2a. Summary of students' prior knowledge

At the beginning of the learning segment, I administer a preassessment to gauge what students know about the central focus, specifically the theme of gender roles, expectations and stereotypes. The previous day students listened to an opening lecture on the 19th century Women's Movement. Therefore, content is new, as well as the form: the students have only read one other play this year, *The Crucible*, nearly 6 months ago. My advanced students will adjust to this literary style easily, but my ELL student, struggling readers and concrete thinkers may have trouble constructing a coherent plot from mere dialogue. Nevertheless, students have done a lot of close textual reading, discussion and analysis of making meaning from complex text. With some targeted guidance I am confident they will be able to construct meaning from this play. Lessons 1, 2, and 3 indicate what students will be learning in this unit: citing text and inferring meaning, discussing complex characters and analyzing author's intention.

2b. Summary of student assets

Throughout my internship, I have taken advantage of opportunities to get to know the students on a more personal level. In preparation for this unit, during our small conference sessions of 3-4 students at a time, I asked students to share their ideas on current gender roles and expectations. I asked them questions such as: What are typical female personality traits, career fields, and home duties? What are typical male traits, careers and household responsibilities?

How do your parents split duties like employment, housework, and childrearing? Listening to students answers to these questions allowed me to get a sense of their current understandings and misconceptions about gender roles, as well as their exposure to gender norms outside of school. I plan to refer to these conversations to make personal links during the lesson segment.

Culturally, there is a mix of students from non-American heritage, mixed race parents, and Caucasian backgrounds. In addition, my students come from a mix of family structures including traditional parenting, single parenting, same-sex parenting, and cross-generational guardianship. These diverse family scenarios are especially relevant as we discuss gender roles and expectations, because students are able to bring a unique personal view to discussions. While not an element of our lesson segment per se, I felt it important to ask students to make personal connections to the central focus to build a base of prior knowledge and evoke authentic experiences. I believe that much of this prior knowledge came through in the preassessment, in the short answer question #2. (See Assessment 1.1).

3a. Selecting learning activities based on prior knowledge and other assets

The preassessment administered in Lesson 1 informed me that students understood most of the Women's Movement lecture and gleaned a solid base of knowledge about the roles, expectations and stereotypes of women in the 19th century. Since the lecture did not focus on the male side, students had a harder time generating a list of 5 typical male roles, expectations and stereotypes: of 16 students, 7 identified 4 or less ideas. This information guided me to highlight the behavior, words and motivations of the male characters in the play, rather than merely focusing on Nora, the main female protagonist. In the middle of the lesson segment, I returned the preassessments to students and asked them to add to their lists, and all of them were able to generate comprehensive picture of male roles, expectations and stereotypes, demonstrating their growth of knowledge.

My understanding of students' varied family structures encouraged me to include evaluation of the play's relationships in terms of current family dynamics. In my circulation during group work, I often asked students to compare the fictional characters interactions to those they experience at home and in their daily lives. I asked questions like Would this relationship look the same or different today? Would a couple use similar language towards each other? What are terms of endearment we commonly hear? Finally, I know that several of my students are in musical theater or drama classes, so I encouraged them to read passages aloud in dramatic fashion, and was excited to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their stage skills during the small skit performances. According to Marzano (2003), teachers that show they care about students by inquiring into their home life, extracurricular activities and interests generally have better behaved and more motivated students. In fact, I saw several students shine with expression and confidence in their skit performances while their normal mode is as quiet observer.

3b. Selecting learning activities for the whole-class and individuals

The instructional strategies for this lesson sequence included 1) assessment of prior learning using a preassessment, 2) review of previous lesson content or access of prior learning 3) preview of upcoming material, 4) frequent formative assessment layered throughout each lesson, 5) cooperative learning activities within each lesson, 6) guided inquiry and direct instruction segments as critical input experiences to begin each lesson, and 7) review of content near the end of each lesson, along with 8) closure assessment of student voice.

The progressive scaffolding of these instructional strategies is extremely effective for my LSP students, which all benefit from clear, structured tasks that build on each other. In addition, my lesson presentations that include guiding questions that remain projected during group work or discussions (See Instructional Materials 3.1), are extremely helpful for LSP students that struggle with abstract thinking, sustained focus and open-ended work. The visuals also benefit my ELL student and visual learners. Moreover, my frequent engagement with students during cooperative learning tasks helps keep students on task, monitor their participation and give me the chance to offer positive, encouraging feedback.

Lesson 1 demonstrates a sample of the instructional strategies outlined above. Lesson 1 begins with a formal preassessment to assess student's prior knowledge on gender roles, expectations stereotypes in the 19th century. Then,

students read and rephrase the learning targets as a preview of what they will be learning in the lesson. Preview is effective for both individuals and a whole-class environment, which I orchestrate by first having students interact with a partner, and then repeat their thoughts for the whole class. Marzano (2007) highlights the effectiveness of previews to engage students in new material. Next, I conduct a think-aloud to model close reading of the text. According to Schoenbach, Greenleaf and Murphy (2012), Think-Alouds are highly valuable for struggling readers and English language learners, as they model how an expert thinker makes sense of text. The bulk of Lesson 1 is dedicated to cooperative learning with guiding questions to practice close reading and locating textual evidence. Borich (2011) defends cooperative learning as one of the most successful instructional strategies teachers can employ. Most often I create groups and partnerships with differentiated intention, generating diverse groups so that stronger students can help facilitate learning of underperforming students. If groups are made randomly, for instance in Lesson 1 groups are created by counting off by 5's, then I will tailor my formative assessment attention – circulation and verbal feedback during group work – towards those groups with more struggling students. The closure piece of student voice for Lesson 1 asks students to answer two questions on the board in the box at the bottom of their group work handout. Students address the questions: How did the group work help you achieve the Learning Targets? What questions do you still have, and what resources will you make use of to clarify or answer your confusions? These student voice pieces inform me what to review and clarify during the next day's lesson.

3c. Resources for getting help on learning targets (Washington state only)

The last question of the preassessment lists many resources that students can access to support their learning. I ask them to identify 3 resources of which they plan to consult during the unit. Halfway through the lesson segment, I return the preassessments and ask students to reflect how one of these resources has helped them learn thus far. At the end of the sequence, I ask students to indicate which resources they actually consulted, and of those which they found most helpful. This periodic attention to resource availability and use are gentle reminders about where students should go to assist learning. In addition, throughout the lesson segment I verbally communicated other resources that students could access through my on-line Teacher Page, such as detailed homework assignments, video links to a traditional Doll House performance, and other relevant websites and articles. Pressley and McCormick (2007) conclude that students who are given more resources to support their learning can more efficiently and quickly develop self-efficacy, which in turn improves their academic performance.

3d. Managing misconceptions

My central focus asks students to analyze in detail the theme of gender roles and expectations in Doll House and discuss its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by the plot, characters, and setting. While students will likely be able to recognize evidence of gender roles and expectations within the text, they may have trouble understanding how the ending was such a radical commentary on women's behavior at the time it was first performed. 19th century audiences were appalled at Nora's decision to abandon her husband and children in order to seek her own self-identity and purpose in life. In today's world, single women with careers, confidence and identities separate from any male partner or beneficiary are the norm, but this was not the case in 19th century societies. In fact, German theaters were so disapproving that directors demanded Ibsen to write an alternative ending in order to comply with social norms. In the alternative ending, Nora takes one last look at her children and collapses in tears, regretting her urge to leave and promising her everlasting devotion as mother and wife. In Lesson 3 I address this misconception in relation to our learning target, to analyze the last Act of Doll House and how Ibsen's choices to structure the text and order events create tension and surprise. I also explain the alternative ending to foster discussion and understanding of the radical affect the play had on live audiences.

The other common misconception students have is that the characters are static and do not change over the course of the play, except for Nora's sudden departure at the end. Most students interpret Nora as a weak character, exhibiting traditionally subordinate behavior and ability. Throughout our lesson sequence, especially during formative assessment circulation during group work and whole-class debriefs, I will draw attention to hints that Nora is in fact smart, determined, and manipulative. Our learning target in Lesson 1, to cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis, will assist in addressing this misconception. As another example, Kristine first comes across as an independent nonconformist, but at the end of the play she begs a former lover to take her in and give her a purpose to live and work,

thus exhibiting her desire to be under the control and guidance of a man. Our learning target in Lesson 3, to discuss how particular characters change over the course of the play, is tailored to address the misconception of static characters. Schoenbach et al discuss the importance of guiding students towards knowledge accumulation by surfacing current schema and using inquiry and textual evidence to help students revise this schema.

4a. Identifying the language function

The primary language function in our central focus is analyze. According to Piaget (1932) this is one of human's higher cognitive functions. Students are asked to analyze the theme through many lenses, such as how it is communicated through characters, how it is reflected in the setting, and how it emerges through the plot. To help students accomplish this complex central focus, I break down each lesson to analyze a particular element or layer, such as citing textual evidence for gender roles and expectations in Lesson 1, and examining Nora's relationships between characters in Lesson 2.

4b. Learning activities enabling practice with the language function

The language function for this lesson sequence is analyze. Since analysis is toward the upper level of cognitive functions in Bloom's taxonomy, it requires some scaffolding of lower-level tasks, such as identifying, comparing and contrasting. Lesson 2 demonstrates an exemplary opportunity for students to analyze character relationships and how they reflect gender roles and stereotypes, through these sub-levels of identifying, comparing and contrasting. Specifically, students first work collaboratively to analyze one relationship that Nora has with another character. They look for evidence of her type of connection with that character (real, fake, manipulative), her motivation for interacting with that character, specific language use, and how gender roles/expectations influence her behavior. They discuss in groups target questions/categories prompted by the teacher and write their conclusions on the whiteboard. Then, students read peers' analysis of Nora's other relationships as they do a silent "gallery walk" past all group whiteboard displays. Students demonstrate their comprehensive analysis in the exit slip (Instructional Material 2.3), where they indicate what they learned about 3 of Nora's relationships.

4c. Additional language demands

In Lesson 2 as described above, students work collaboratively to analyze one relationship that Nora has with another character in the play. At the beginning of the lesson, we reviewed the big concepts of gender roles and expectations while students shared their homework assignment: selecting a passage from Act II and a corresponding media artifact that depicts a current gender norm. In addition, we talk about the key words in the learning target, like complex character and multiple and conflicting motivations, and what they mean for the play. As previously explained, I guide students to look at 4 specific aspects of Nora's relationships, including her type of connection with that character (real, fake, manipulative), her motivation for interacting with that character, specific language use, and how gender roles/expectations influence her behavior. I project these prompts on a presentation so that students can organize their board notes according to this syntax. As collaborative work begins, Students look at Act I and II of the play, discuss with their group, and write their findings on the board. Consequently, during this collaborative session students engage in speaking, listening and writing, additional language demands to the primary language function. As students do the gallery walk they also engage in the demand of reading. In their exit slip students perform analytical writing, another opportunity to practice and demonstrate their proficiency at the language demand.

4d. Supporting language use

Lesson 2 includes several types of instructional supports. As briefly described above, the lesson begins with a review of critical vocabulary like gender roles and expectations while students share their homework. I conduct a formative assessment on their understanding of these terms while students pair share and during whole-class sharing, making sure I emphasize correct interpretations of these terms and clarify any misconceptions. During the discussion of the learning targets, I again call close attention to the critical terms, such as complex character and multiple and conflicting motivations. By asking students to rephrase the learning target in their own words, I give peers the opportunity to support each other's understanding of the words and the goal at hand. When I call on a student to share her definition,

I offer another chance for students to check their own understanding. Refer to the “Instruction/Inquiry” section of Lesson 2 for a detailed description of these events. Finally, next to the learning targets I project an image from a play production promotion of Doll House, which portrays Nora sitting down with a series of ribbons attached to her hands and suspended from above. I deliberately chose this image to support visual learners in understanding what it means to have multiple and conflicting motivations, as represented in the many ribbons that could be pulling the woman in different directions. See Instructional Material 2.1 for this image.

During the collaborative activity itself, I again use visual cues to support productive group work. I project the 4 categories students should be analyzing in a presentation slide. These prompts are listed on the 3rd slide of Instructional Material 2.1. Several times I saw students look at this projection, including two of my LSP students, so I know this visual task reminder was a helpful learning support to students that have trouble completing multi-step tasks, organizing ideas, and sustaining focus. I also circulate among the groups during the collaborative work to conduct formative assessment on the understanding students are bringing to their group. I created differentiated groups so that each had one weaker student supported by 3 stronger students. Therefore while circulating, I can engage the weaker student in conversation to elicit his/her understanding of what the group has already written. I can also ask prompting questions to help that student (and the group) move forward to items not yet discussed/addressed. See the questions in the “Practice Activity Support” section in Lesson 2 for a list of these questions.

During the next activity, the “gallery walk” of group findings, students silently read the analysis of all of Nora’s relationships. After students return to their original seats, I conduct a formative assessment of student’s comprehension by asking the same questions that I did during group work to ensure that all students hear the most important aspects of each relationship. The final activity of this lesson, the exit slip of Clear and Foggy windows, is one final instructional support for students to showcase their learning of Nora’s complex character and multiple conflicting motivations. They can also communicate any outstanding questions or confusions. Both of these elements will help inform my next instructional decisions, as to what students know well and what still needs clarifying and addressing. See Instructional Material 2.3 for the exit slip.

5a. Assessing student learning

My lesson segment contains frequent informal assessments embedded throughout each lesson. I also have three planned formal assessments: a preassessment in Lesson 1, a journal writing assignment administered for homework after Lesson 2 (the half-way point of the unit), and a postassessment in Lesson 4.

The preassessment will provide evidence of the students’ base knowledge of gender roles, expectations and stereotypes in the 19th century, as well as their initial idea of which resources they plan to make use of during the unit. I employ both quantitative and qualitative questions to gauge knowledge. The resource questions cued me to which resources I should focus on making quality learning-supports, as well as resources to emphasize to students that didn’t indicate they were going to use them. For example, the majority of students (12/16) predicted Conferences would be valuable learning tools, so I made sure to address any confusion students had, review class material and pose deep analytical questions during these extra group sessions. The journal writing assignment, strategically placed at the midway point of the sequence, indicates how well students understand the development of the gender theme over the course of the play, in terms of its ending and specific symbolic devices employed by the author. (Refer to the “Formal Assessment” section at the end of Lesson 2 for the detailed journal prompts.) Through the discourse of writing, students can demonstrate how well they understand the play’s radical ending, Ibsen’s craft of dialogue and symbolism that reveals hidden desires and deceptions. The writing assignment is also a great chance for me to ask clarifying questions of their analysis and ask for a response, as another tool to support learning. The postassessment given in Lesson 4 demonstrates cumulative learning from the unit and allows students to summarize their analytical learning. It also gives me concrete evidence about which resources students actually used, and of those, which ones students found to be most valuable.

While these formal assessments produce critical evidence of learning, I find informal assessments to be just as valuable. Lesson 1 contains a sample of the types of informal assessments integrated throughout a lesson that I use on a daily basis. (See Lesson 1 for a clear description of this sequence.) In Lesson 1, the first informal assessment occurs after I model a think-aloud of close reading of the first paragraph of stage directions for the play. During the Think-Aloud, I

read the first few sentences aloud and then pause from reading, and verbalize my observations, paying attention to the vocabulary used by the author and how I interpret them. Then I read a few more sentences, and ask students to share what words they notice, and how they interpret them. This informal assessment allows me to gauge which students recognize the important vocabulary clues and the interpretive conclusions they are drawing. While not everyone volunteers answers, I glance around the room and look for blank stares, nods of affirmation, and studious thinking expressions. These cues of understanding will guide my circulation during group work. I will monitor groups for more informal assessment of student's close reading and interpretative skills. I ask clarifying questions, prompt students to locate passages that directly support their statements, and affirm keen insight. I will linger longer with groups that show confusion, less activity or have students with particular needs. The final informal assessment in Lesson 1 occurs after students have reconvened as a whole group. We review student's findings as a class. First I ask for volunteers, and then I call on the quieter voices to make sure reluctant speakers get a chance to demonstrate their learning.

5b. Adapting lessons

In Lesson 1 as described above, the group work with guiding questions is a type of activity that addresses diverse learners, because students are engaging in multiple types of discourse. They perform close reading of the text, verbal discussion with group members, and written production of knowledge on the handout. Students who might be weaker in one of those areas are able to contribute in others. For my ELL and students who struggle with abstract thinking and loose structures, the questions include page numbers from the text to guide students where to look for evidence. Please see Assessment 1.3 for reference. The group work affords me as the teacher the flexibility to pay more attention to struggling readers and underperforming students. Whether I make deliberate differentiated groups or the groups are randomly formed, I quickly assess group dynamics to guide my circulation and verbal feedback towards the groups that have a higher concentration of students with needs. For example, one of the random groups in Lesson 1 contains three students who do not have an LSP but who have demonstrated slow processing skills, reluctance to verbalize thoughts and mediocre writing ability. The first time I join the group, everyone is silent and writing down information on the handout. I say to them, "This is group discussion time, so I would encourage you to share your ideas with each other!" One student responds that they just spoke and now they are recording their thoughts. I nod, allow them to proceed and move on to another group. Later, when I notice they are discussing another question, I return to the group so I can listen to the ideas they are proposing. I am reassured that they are hitting critical content and ask clarifying questions to witness them produce more language. That night, when I watch the film recording from this lesson, I observe that the group engaged in adequate discussion – I was busy interacting with other groups to notice them during all of their verbally productive moments! In the subsequent series of questioning when the class has reconvened, this informal assessment allows me to call on one of those group members to verify their learning and give her the chance to share her understanding with the whole class. Indeed, when it comes time for the whole-class discussion, the benefit of this informal assessment is clear: doing guided group work before individual sharing ensures that all students come to these whole-class discussions with written material they can draw from, whether the ideas were originally their own or not. This kind of preparation improves the performance of weaker students and reinforces the contributions of stronger students.

5c. Student reflection (Washington state only)

My learning segment contains a series of both written and oral strategies in order to elicit student voice. Near the beginning of each lesson, I ask students to rephrase the learning targets and reflect why these goals are important. This series of brief oral exercises give students the opportunity build intention for their learning. It also informs me whether students understand our learning goals, key academic language and if I need to clarify things further or in different words. At some point in the middle of each lesson, I often point back to the learning targets to remind students of our goals. In Lesson 3 and Lesson 4, I also employ quick physical spectrums to gauge student learning. In Lesson 3, I ask students to give me a thumbs up/sideways/down to show how ready they are to perform their skits, especially in terms of portraying character motivation, gender roles, and conflict. With this information, I gather that students will need more time in the next lesson to practice. In Lesson 4, I ask students to show a number of fingers from fist-to-five to indicate how well they achieved the learning targets for the day and how well the film and live performances enhanced their understanding of the text. These quick numerical gimmicks tell me that students have benefited from exposure to the text in a different medium and that the extra skit practice was a valuable practice activity.

At the end of each lesson, I also provide opportunities for written reflection. At the end of the group work during Lesson 1, students write 2-3 sentences to reflect on the learning target, raise questions, and suggest resources they could consult to smooth any confusion. These reflection questions are written on the board, and students write their individual responses in the box at the bottom of their handout. See the “Assessment of Student Voice” section in Lesson 1 for a more detailed description of this process. At the end of Lesson 2, students fill out an exit slip called “Clear and Foggy Windows” that elicits both firm understanding in relation to the learning target and outstanding questions or confusions. In Lesson 3, students reflect on their contributions during their student-lead discussion and their strengths and weaknesses as a discussion participant. The postassessment in Lesson 4 is an opportunity for students to demonstrate cumulative learning on the unit central focus, according to Assessment 4.

5d. Strategies to promote student self-assessment (Washington state only)

The student voice exercises described above in answer 5.c. are all strategies for students to monitor their own learning. The fist-to-five and thumbs up/sideways/down spectrums in Lessons 3 and 4 are physical representations for students to reflect and show their learning as a quick snapshot in time. The written student voice pieces are tools for students to take more thoughtful time and attention to their learning progress. In these exercises, students not only reflect on strength and accomplishments, but also deficiencies and remaining questions. For example, in Lesson 1 students reflect on the utility of group work to facilitate learning and pose any questions it raised. In Lesson 2, students demonstrate firm understanding of Nora’s complex character relationships in the “Clear Window” box, while also voicing outstanding questions related to the past two learning targets: gender roles, plot development and character motivations. In Lesson 3, students are invited to reflect on their common discussion roles, and reach outside their comfort zone to try new types of contributions. While it took the students some time to generate interactive discussion without the facilitation of a teacher, it was a fascinating activity to observe the variety of behavior: some students embraced the challenge to take on new roles in a subtle way, others remained in their traditional roles and a few exaggerated their intentions to such a degree it was disruptive to the whole group. After this discussion, students had a chance to reflect upon their discussion behavior, and my three observations matched the three dominant types of student response: the first group shared it was helpful to think about new types of contributions because it forced them think about the text in a new way; the second said it wasn’t helpful because they either forgot or were not able to add to the conversation due to a lack of preparation (annotating the text during the previous night’s homework); and the third group felt that the meta-analysis of discussion roles detracted from engaging in meaningful conversation because it forced formulaic responses rather than free-flowing ideas.

The other tool I embed into most lessons is group work, which inherently offers students the opportunity to self-monitor their learning. During group work, students can share their ideas and check their understanding against their peers. They can further their classmate’s ideas, challenge them, ask questions, or offer a new opinion. I see these group dynamics as a highly beneficial learning tool because the students themselves are producing knowledge and using each other to verify, supplement, and revise their understanding. It deconstructs a teacher-centered learning environment into active student-centered engagement. In addition to the group discussion activities in Lesson 1 and 2, the gallery walk in Lesson 2 is an exemplary tool for students to monitor their learning. While during the discussion portion students only focused in depth on one of Nora’s relationships, they have the chance to check their understanding about the other characters from peers’ work. The silent, walking exercise gives students time to consider the information at their own pace. Ideally, students will breeze through information that they understand well, and linger longer in front of the notes that they understand poorly. Afterwards, they demonstrate their cumulative learning from this process by recording their learning in writing, another strategy to self-monitor what they learned during the lesson.