

Into Literature 8th Grade
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Summary

The design of the HMH Into literature is structured around scaffoldings for multilingual learners, choice, embedded close-reading routines, and “Fresh Lit” (www.hmhco.com/programs/into-literature). It is based on the science of reading, and the curriculum provides numerous flashcards, assignments, and ways to engage readers. The selections may not be used by every school using the curriculum. Some teachers may choose other texts. Other units are likely online as well. The HMH curriculum allows for numerous choices as well as teacher input for others.

In the curriculum, the first unit, “Gadgets and Glitches,” explores the use of technology in both its positive and negative modalities. The reading selection for this reviewed unit was called “A Bad Robot.” EARL is a bad robot who plays terrible music and must be remade. Bonnie Graham, the main character of the story, made EARL, but he doesn’t turn out the way she hoped. The theme is that even with hard work, you don’t always succeed.

Unit Two, “The Thrill of Horror,” examines why some of us like to be frightened. The first selection in the reviewed unit is Grace Byers’s “I Am enough” poem. The poem is about how no matter what you look like, what your talents are, or how educated you may be, every child is unique and should be treated with kindness. Another selection is Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart.” The short story is about a man who is obsessed with the “hideous” eye of an old man with whom he lives. He not only kills the old man but dismembers him and places the body parts in the floor of the house. He is later caught because he fantasizes he can hear the “beating of the old man’s heart.” Other parts of the lesson showcase various lyrics from rock music.

Unit Three, “Place We Call Home.” The first selection in this unit is from *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henríquez. The story is told in first person from the points of view of Alma Rivera, a young adult from Mexico, and Mayor Toro, a teenaged social outcast and first-generation Hispanic Latino American. In the end, the “American Dream” for them is uncertainty and struggle. It is an unhappy novel with an unhappy ending. The poetry selection from the reviewed unit is David Bouchard’s (a former Canadian high school principal who was born and raised in Saskatchewan) “If You’re Not from the Prairie.” The poem celebrates life there but also emphasizes that those who have lived there know cold, snow, flatness and so on in a way that others cannot know them. The last selection is a video of Michelle Obama and her speech, “Youth Matter.”

Unit Four, “The Fight for Freedom.” This unit focuses on what are we willing to do, or to give up, to keep our freedom. The first selection in the reviewed unit is the sit-in at Woolworth’s in the 1960s. The story of Harriet Tubman and the underground railroad follows. The

reading selection is Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream,” followed by a video clip of same. The rest of the unit focuses on the selling of slaves and the separation of families during slavery.

Unit Five, “Finding Your Path.” This unit focuses on what the teenage years do or should do in preparing students for adulthood. Poetry selections in the reviewed unit are two Langston Hughes poems, “Thank You, Ma’am” and “Mother to Son.” The other reading selection is W.D. Myers’s “The Treasure of Lemon Brown.” The Myers story focuses on how something does not have to be important or valuable to be valuable and important to us. Lemon Brown keeps old newspaper clippings about his blues shows and an old harmonica.

Unit Six, “The Legacy of Anne Frank.” This unit focuses on what we can learn from Anne Frank using mostly African American examples. The unit begins with selections from Margot Lee Shetterly’s book, *Hidden Figures*. A link to two dozen or so important Black figures in art, politics, and sports is also included.

Availability

Available to 8th Grade Students in South Carolina Districts.

Staff Recommendation

The complaint form includes allegations of inappropriate passages and poems but fails to identify any passages or excerpts with specificity. This material was adopted by the State Board following the textbook adoption process outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-31-510-610. Due to both the lack of specific allegations and the fact that this material has already been vetted by the State Board through the textbook adoption process, it is staff’s recommendation that this material be retained for the 8th grade.