

# A Core Curriculum State Standards Annotated Educational Guide for



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## The Educational Activity Guide Format

The format of this guide follows a 4 week course of study. *Lara's Gift* has been divided into sections. Each section is comprised of discussion questions and follow-up activities for a designated group of sequentially listed chapters. The lessons in this guide are suitable for independent readers or group settings.

### Journaling

After engaging in group discussion, students are asked to respond to one of the questions posed in each course section by journaling. A Journal Response and Comprehension Rubric are available on page 24, which is helpful in assessing understanding and personal connection to the discussion questions and the story.

Journals can be purchased or can be personalized by making them out of everyday materials. Instructions for making hand-made journals are presented in the two Ehow.com links below.

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5760860\\_make-journal-out-paper.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5760860_make-journal-out-paper.html)

[http://www.ehow.com/video\\_4951964\\_make-paper-journal-school.html](http://www.ehow.com/video_4951964_make-paper-journal-school.html)

### Reading Assignment Bookmarks

Personal bookmarks are printed on the following page. Listed on these bookmarks are the designated chapter groupings and a space allotted for Target Completion Dates. A suggested format for a group or individual novel study is to assign weekly Target Completion Dates for students to finish reading prior to the weekly book discussion session.

#### Procedure:

- Print book marks on cardstock – one per student in novel study group.
- Trim the edges of bookmark.
- Give to student with the directions to:
  - Write their name on it.
  - Copy Target Completion Dates in designated space below assigned chapters to be read.
  - Keep the bookmark in the book for reference through the course of the novel study.




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## Bookmarks




Name

Prologue through Chap. 3

Chap. 4 through 7

Chap. 8 through 11

Chap. 12 through 14




Name

Prologue through Chap. 3

Chap. 4 through 7

Chap. 8 through 11

Chap. 12 through 14



Name

Prologue through Chap. 3

Chap. 4 through 7

Chap. 8 through 11

Chap. 12 through 14



## Discussion Questions for the Prologue through Chapter 3

**Note:** For each of the quotations below, respond to one of the questions by writing a paragraph or two in your journal.

*“But he’s the only white pup in the litter.” It was the color His Majesty Tsar Nicholas, ruler of all Russia, favored most of all. I was certain that Ryczar would be prized more than the other pups – even if he was small (4).*

- Earlier, Lara mentioned that “...every borzoi birth was a gift from God. (1)” If this is so, why would Papa consider culling Ryczar?
- If Ryczar is the only white pup in the litter, one that would ultimately please His Majesty Tsar Nicholas, why do you think Papa wants Lara to reject it?
- Can you think of ways that Papa would benefit from saving Ryczar’s life? How so?
- Why is Papa resistant to letting Lara care for Ryczar? What reasons does he have? What would you do if you were Papa? Lara?

*“Visions, whatever they might bring, are a gift from God – a gift we must embrace.” Mama folded her arms. “Don’t go filling our daughter’s head with your nonsense. (9)”*

- Why do you think Papa is bothered by Lara’s visions?
- What does Mama’s action of folding her arms say about her character?
- What about Golden Rule Number 5: Mothers know best? How does this rule relate in this case?
- Do you think Lara’s visions are a gift from God? Why?
- Where do you think visions come from?

*“There is now.” Papa raised one finger high in the air, as if he were the Tsar. “In the power vested in me by my forefathers, I hereby declare – Golden Rule Number Nine: Hunting’s a man’s sport. (20)”*

- Why is Papa not giving Lara opportunities to care for the dogs in the ways that she sees fit? In the ways that he has taught her to do so?
- The forefathers Papa is referring to are Lara’s family members, as well. Does this fact make any difference to Papa’s way of thinking? Explain ways that ancestral traditions might affect Papa’s expectations of Lara.
- Do you think being a female limits Lara’s capabilities? Explain your answer.
- Do you think being a female limits Lara’s possibilities? How so?



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- Predict the consequences Lara may have to endure should she go on a hunt. Do you think these consequences are fair? Justify your answer. If you were Lara, what would you do and why?

*Boris looked down at Zar, then threw back his head and bellowed, “Don’t try to make him into something he’s not. (37)”*

- Why do Boris and Papa have no faith in Zar?
- Why does Lara believe in Zar’s capacity for greatness?
- Do you agree with Lara when she says that all Zar needs is training? Why?
- What do you think about Alexander’s support of Lara’s point of view, that Zar should be trained in the same way as the other borzoi?
- What do you think about Zar? Has he proven himself to be worthy of one of the Tsar’s finest borzoi?

*“With the right training, I could teach you how to paint iconic images just like these,” Ruslan said. “Of course you’d have to cut off your braid,” he added. “And wear trousers.”*

*“Everything would be simpler if I were a boy,” I said (48).*

- What sorts of things would be simpler if Lara were a boy?
- Ruslan is a master of his craft, and he said that he would teach Lara how to paint like he does. Ruslan said that she simply needs the right training. Lara said that same thing about Zar.
  - Are there ways that Lara and Zar are similar? If so, what are they?
  - Do they both simply need a chance to prove themselves? How so?
- What are some of the sacrifices Ruslan has made for his art?
- Are there sacrifices that Lara will have to make on Zar’s behalf? If so, what are they?



To view images of the Holy Art of Imperial Russia, works much like Ruslan’s icons, as presented by New York’s Museum of Biblical Art click [HERE](#).



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## The History of the Russian Bells: A Video Showcase

*Along our way to the kennel we passed by the bell tower. Some of the church bells were centuries old, covered in motifs of icons and other saintly images (45).*



The Imperial era marked a period in Russian history when Russians were world famous for the bells that they manufactured. So what made bells so popular?

The sound of a bell carried for long distances and was uniquely recognizable. It called people to something special, to the service of prayer, and a calling from God. It also spread the walls of the church as far as it could be heard. By ringing different bells or different ringing patterns, it instructed those who could not make it to church

to the important parts of the service being celebrated, so absentees could mentally and spiritually participate.

Bells had other duties. Certain bells were rung when there was an announcement from the Tsar or from the ruling civil body. Other bell sounds alarmed people at the approach of an enemy, or, worst of all, of a house on fire. The desire to announce important events far and wide led to the rapid evolution in the size and weight of Russian bells.



The best example of this is the Kremlin bell tower, which was constructed at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Boris Goudonv. It contains 34 bells. The largest bell weighs 65 tons. It was rung at Christmas, Easter, and on the Tsar's birthday.



Goudonov also built a bigger bell. At 200 tons it was too heavy to hang in the bell tower and was later hung on a platform outside the tower. The bell was so big, it took 24 people to swing its tongue!

Weighing in at only 27 tons, the largest bell outside of Russia during the Imperial era was the Emperor Bell in Cologne, Germany.

**Source:** Gilbert H. Grosvenor's "Young Russia—The Land of Unlimited Possibilities": *The National Geographic* (1914).

To watch a brief video of the Russian bells being rung click [HERE](#) or [HERE](#).

For a news report and video describing the skill of bell ringing click [HERE](#).

To hear the bells and enjoy a video of the Russian landscape click [HERE](#).



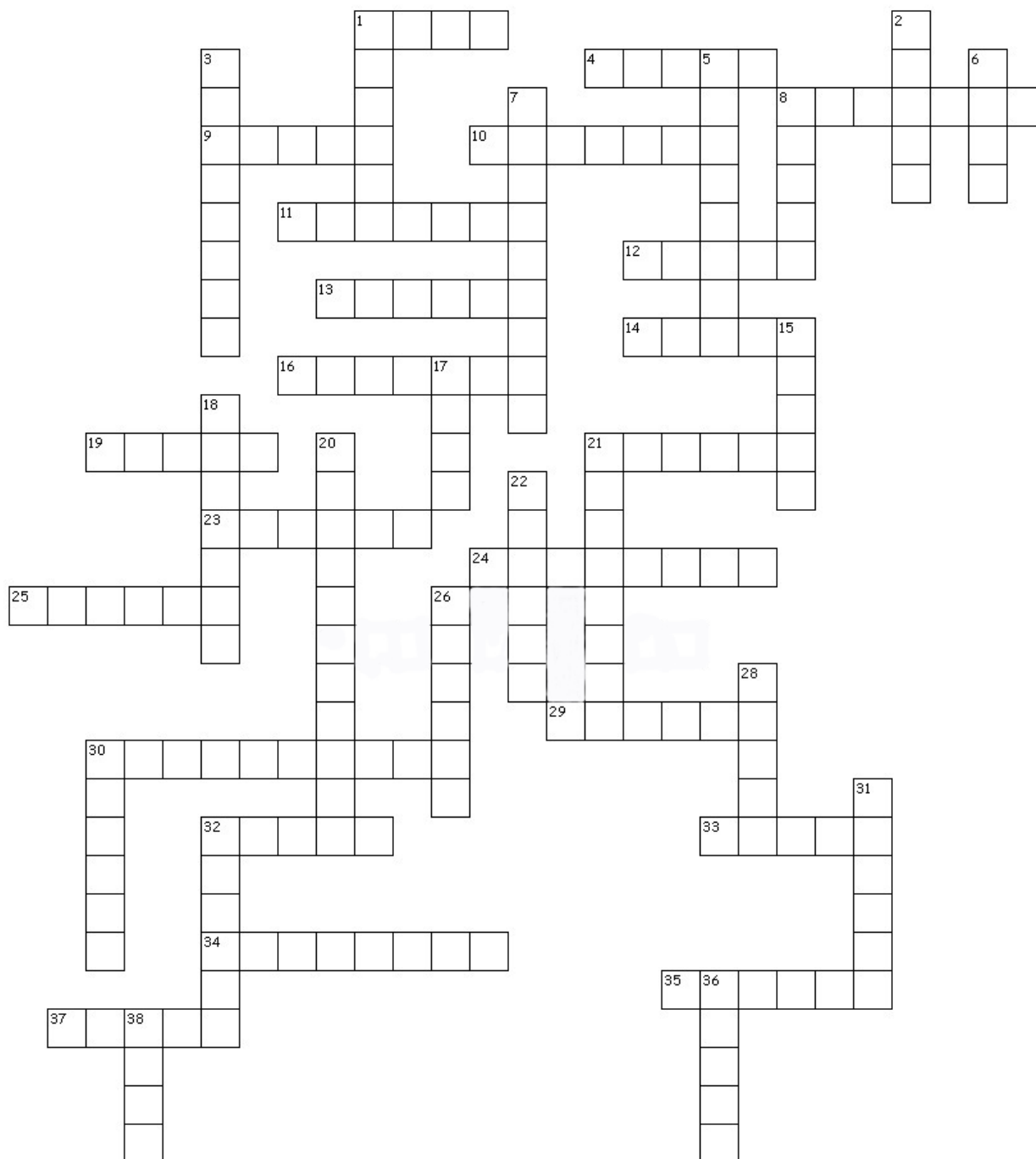
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## Glossary Crossword Puzzle



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## Glossary Crossword Puzzle – Across/Down

### Across:

1. Force
4. Power
8. Kind
9. Russian pancakes
10. Oh my God
11. Thank you
12. North wind
13. Quick
14. Charm, enchantment
16. Beet and cabbage soup
19. Baby pacifier
21. Armor
23. Knight
24. Mommy
25. Expert
29. Splinter
30. Runt
32. Rebel
33. Dawn
34. Good one
35. Star
37. Snowstorm

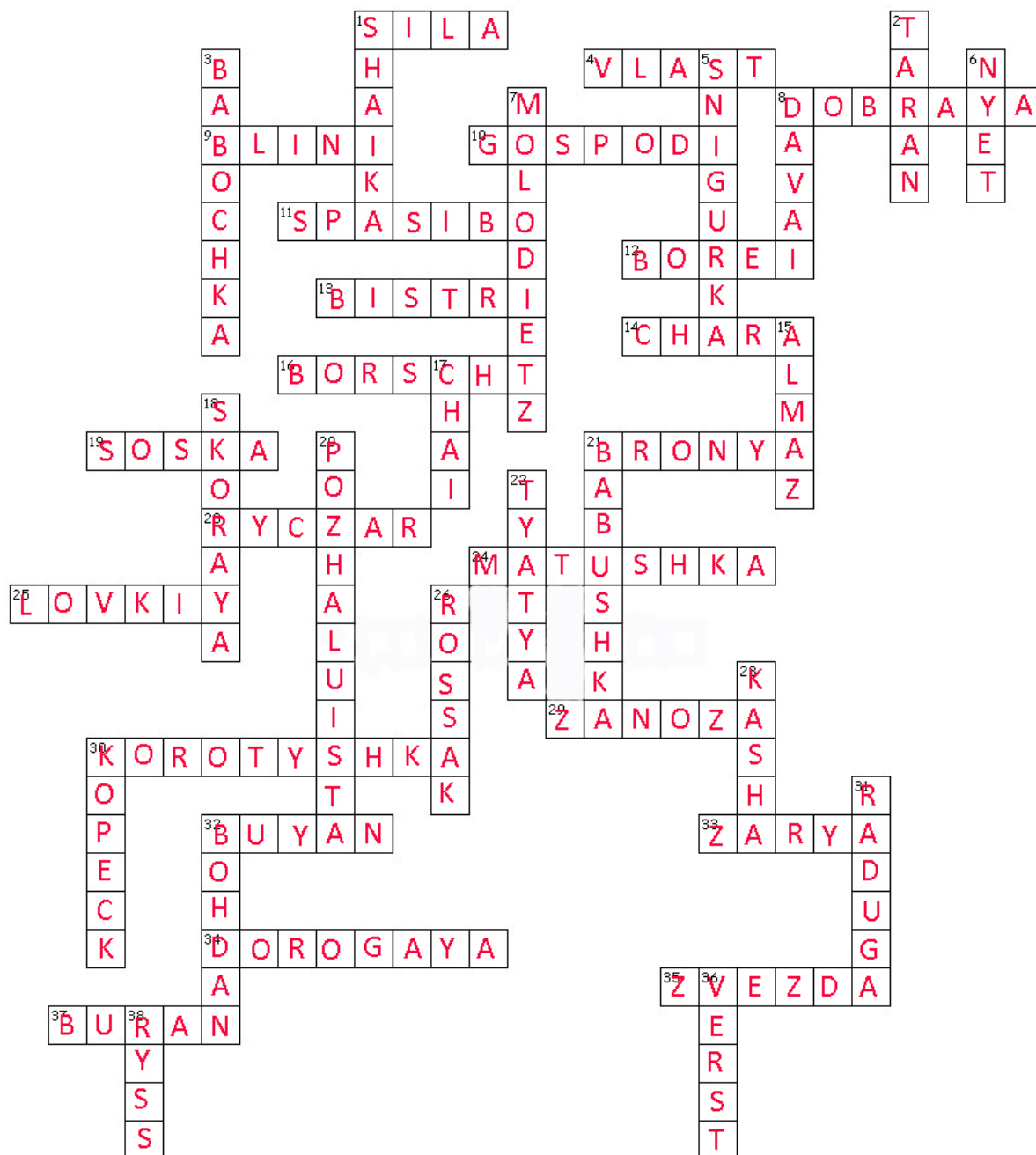
### Down:

1. Bandit tribe
2. Battering ram
3. Butterfly
5. Snow maiden
6. No
7. Good job!
8. Come on! Let's go!
15. Diamond
17. Tea
18. Rapid
20. Please
21. Grandmother
22. Daddy
26. Gray hare
28. Porridge
30. Russian currency
31. Rainbow
32. "Gift from God"
36. 0.66 miles
38. Lynx



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## Glossary Crossword Puzzle Answers



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## Discussion Question for Chapters 4 through 7

**Note:** For each of the quotations below, respond to one of the questions by writing a paragraph or two in your journal.

*“I can see in his eyes that he wants to obey,” Alexander said.*

*My cheeks burned red from embarrassment. “He doesn’t think I can do it. (52)”*

- It seems that even Zar has little faith in Lara’s capabilities to support him. How do you think Lara feels about this?
- Why do think Alexander wants Zar to dance with Lara?
- Is Alexander willing to support Lara? Explain your answer.
- How is it that Alexander appreciates Lara’s skill in caring for the dogs and her father does not?
- Do you think Alexander cares for Lara in a special way? Why or why not?

*A small part of me also felt shame not to share in the joy. For Mama’s sake I put on a cheery face. On the inside I pushed back tears (59).*

- In what ways has Bohdan’s birth changed Lara’s life?
- Do you think the following expectations placed on Lara are fair? Why or why not?
  - Family expectations? Caring for Bohdan, the gift from God?
  - Apprenticing with her mother for the regal Countess?
  - Being expected to marry rather than work in the kennel?
- Is Lara’s feeling of shame in this instance justified? How so?
- Do you blame her for not being joyful about Bodhan’s birth? Explain your answer.
- How does Lara’s denial of her true feelings regarding Bohdan’s birth relate to Golden Rule Number 2: Hope for the best, prepare for the worst?

*When my eyes fell upon Alexander, his face was full of smiles, but his voice sounded like a rooster who lost his crow. “Maybe you can teach the midwife’s nephew to love the dogs as much as you do? (70)”*

- Why is Alexander’s behavior conflicting, in that his face seems happy, yet he can barely speak?
- Do you think he really means what he is saying to Lara? Why or why not?
- What do you think about Alexander? What kind of guy is he? Describe his character traits.
- What do you think Alexander really thinks about Lara becoming a bride? Explain your answer.
- What do you think about her becoming a bride? Explain your answer.



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*“Surely you have a gift with your hands like your mother,” the Countess said. “You should take time to develop it and not waste another moment with the dogs. (76)”*

- There are a number of references to the word *gift* in this book. Can you recall and cite some of these references?
- Can you imagine how Lara felt being in the company of the Countess? Describe what you think Lara’s impression of the Countess and her royal surroundings might be.
- The Countess tells Lara that spending time with the dogs is a waste of time. What do you think and why?
- Being the seamstress for the Countess is an honorable, even enviable, position. Do you think that Lara should try to accept her lot in life? Why or why not?

*Mama’s face bunched up in thought. “Trust in God. Through your gift he’ll show you the way. (87)”*

- Interpret Mama’s reaction to Lara’s vision. What does Mama’s bunched up expression say about the way she is feeling? Is she concerned? Surprised? Angry? Ashamed? Explain your answer.
- What kind of sacrifice is Mama making by allowing Lara to return to the kennel?
- What kind of person is Mama?
- What does she mean by “...through your gift he’ll show you the way” (87)?
- How does Mama’s reactions and words relate to Golden Rule Number 5: Mothers know best? Do you believe this to be true for Lara? How so?
- How about you?
  - What are your gifts?
  - What is your passion?
  - Do you think your gifts will show you the way?



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## Characterization Concept Mapping

**Objective:** To connect personality traits with the various characters in *Lara's Gift*.

**Materials:**

- Characterization Concept Map found on page 14
- Characterization Description List found on page 13
- The book *Lara's Gift*
- A dictionary or a thesaurus
- Pencils

**Procedure:**

- Print out the Characterization Concept Map.
- Observe the Characterization Concept Map.
  - The names of various characters are found in the circles.
  - The arrows connecting the circles to empty boxes.
- Consider one of the characters featured in one of the circles.
  - What is he or she like?
  - Can you describe their character in some way?
- Review the words found on the Characterization Description List to discover words that might connect with the character's personality.
- Write words to describe a particular character inside the connecting boxes.
- If you are unsure about the definition of a word or would prefer to find an even better descriptor of the character, refer to the dictionary or thesaurus.
- Follow the same procedure for all of the characters featured in the circles.



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## Characterization Description List

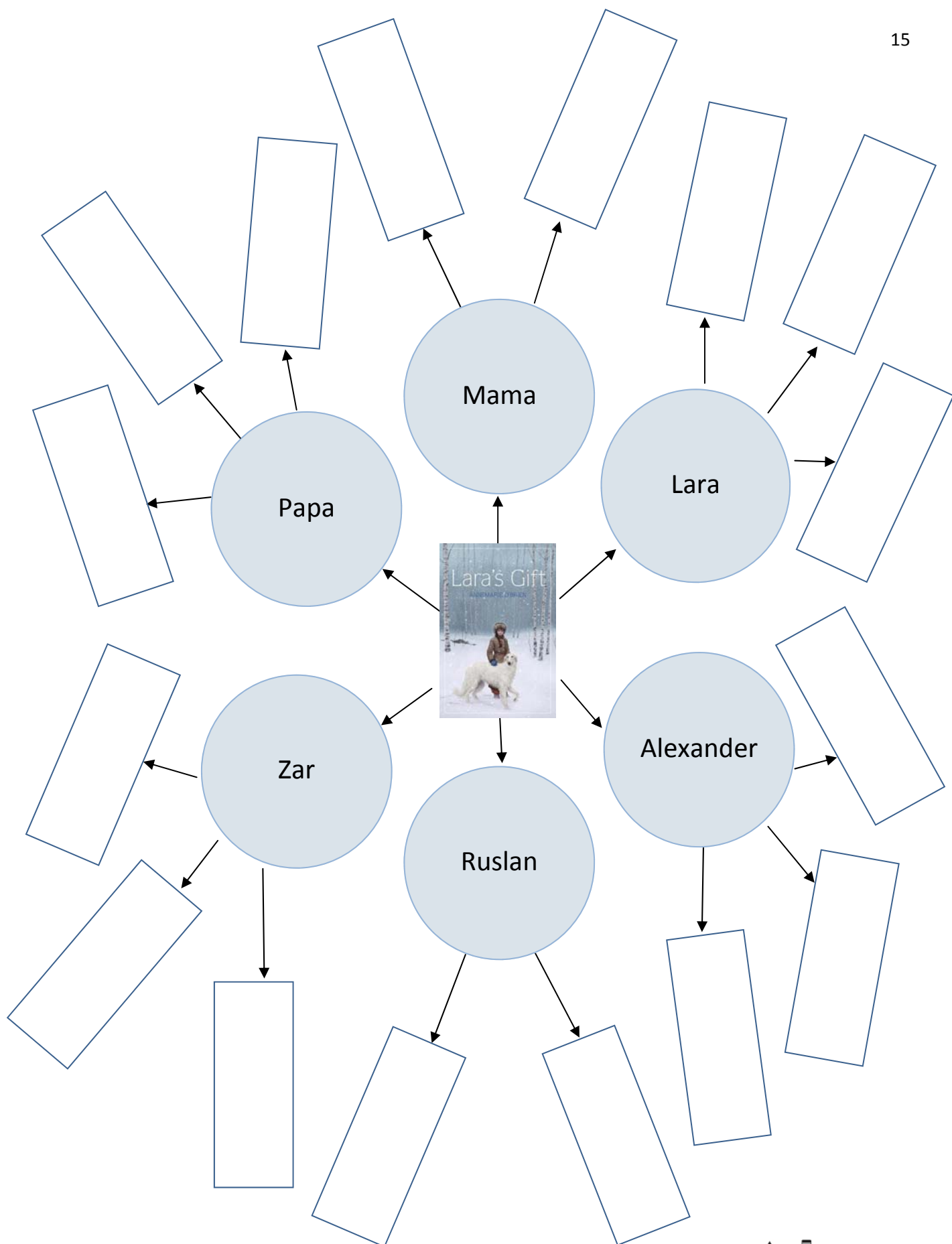
Able	Fair	Naïve	Silly
Accepting	Faithful	Neat	Simple
Adventurous	Fancy	Nervous	Simple-minded
Aggressive	Fighter	Noisy	Smart
Ambitious	Forgiving	Obnoxious	Stable
Annoying	Free	Opinionated	Strong
Arrogant	Friendly	Organized	Stubborn
Articulate	Frustrated	Outgoing	Studious
Athletic	Fun-loving	Passive	Successful
Awkward	Funny	Patient	Tall
Boastful	Generous	Patriotic	Tantalizing
Bold	Gentle	Perfectionist	Tender
Bossy	Giving	Personable	Tense
Brave	Gorgeous	Pitiful	Thoughtful
Bright	Gracious	Plain	Thrilling
Busy	Grouchy	Pleasant	Timid
Calm	Handsome	Pleasing	Tireless
Careful	Happy	Poor	Tolerant
Careless	Hard-working	Popular	Tough
Caring	Helpful	Pretty	Tricky
Cautious	Honest	Prim	Trusting
Cheerful	Hopeful	Proper	Ugly
Clever	Imaginative	Proud	Understanding
Clumsy	Impulsive	Questioning	Unhappy
Compassionate	Independent	Quiet	Unique
Complex	Intelligent	Radical	Unlucky
Conceited	Inventive	Realistic	Unselfish
Confident	Jealous	Rebellious	Vain
Considerate	Joyful	Reflective	Warm
Cooperative	Judgmental	Relaxed	Wild
Courageous	Keen	Reliable	Willing
Creative	Kind	Religious	Wise
Curious	Knowledgeable	Reserved	Witty
Dainty	Lazy	Respectful	Wonderful
Daring	Leader	Responsible	
Dark	Light	Reverent	
Defiant	Light-hearted	Rich	
Demanding	Likeable	Rigid	
Determined	Lively	Rude	
Devout	Loyal	Sad	
Disagreeable	Lovable	Sarcastic	
Disgruntled	Loving	Self-confident	
Dreamer	Manipulative	Self-conscious	
Eager	Materialistic	Selfish	
Efficient	Mature	Sensible	
Embarrassed	Melancholy	Sensitive	
Energetic	Merry	Serious	
Excited	Messy	Short	
Expert	Mischievous	Shy	



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## Discussion Questions for Chapters 8 through 11

**Note:** For each of the quotations below, respond to one of the questions by writing a paragraph or two in your journal.

*“This isn’t the life I want for you. (93)”*

- What sort of life do you think Papa wants for Lara?
- Is Papa a man of faith? Of tradition? How so?
- Do you think Papa is aware of Lara’s gift with the dogs? Explain your answer.
- Why do you think Papa does not want to hear about Lara’s visions?
- Does Papa love Lara? What evidence can you pull from the text to support your opinion?
- What is your impression of Papa? Why do you think he responds to Lara visions and gifts in the ways that he does?

*“And for nobles like the Vorontsovs for their choice to stay in the countryside – to continue breeding pure borzoi, despite the hardships and lack of labor,” Papa said. “Neither of us would be here today had they chosen to abandon country life for an easier, city lifestyle. (98)”*

- What kind of hardships is Papa referring to in this passage? Do you think these hardships might be what Papa wants to save Lara from enduring? How so?
- Is Papa grateful for the Vorontsovs? Why or why not?
- Are the Vorontsovs grateful for Papa? For Lara? Why or why not?
- What would happen to Lara’s family if the Vorontsovs rejected them, for some reason?

*“Change is what we all fear at some level. Once we learn to embrace it, only then can it become our friend. It’s the first step, but a difficult one. (112)”*

- Could change be what Papa fears? How so?
- How does Mama’s faith in God affect her perception of change?
- Does change have an effect on tradition? Religion? Rules? How so?
- Can you think of reasons why change may cause people to be fearful? Explain.
- Is embracing change much like allowing God’s gifts to guide one’s destiny? How so?



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*“Matushka, if Papa believes in God, why is he against my visions? (115)”*

- Why do you think Papa is against Lara’s visions?
- What would happen if Papa believed in Lara’s visions and gifts? Could Lara’s gift and visions be helpful? How so?
- Do you think Papa would lose some control of the kennel if he paid attention to Lara’s visions? How so?
- Would paying attention to Lara’s visions be a type of change? One that might lead to some fear? How so?
- How would honoring visions relate to Gold Rule Number 4: Trust, but verify?

*“I respect your rules. Still, we need to strive to improve our hunting methods, even if it means breaking the Rules,” Alexander said. “Of course, my father could settle this when he gets here. But it’s your cooperation I’d like to gain. (120)”*

- Papa has based all of his training success on the Eight Golden Rules. Alexander is challenging Papa’s rules and his judgment in this scene. Do you think it is wise to try a new way of thinking? To challenge rules and traditions that have been in existence for years and years? Why or why not?
- Alexander has faith in Zar’s hunting ability, despite the lack of training. Do you? Why or why not?
- Does Alexander have the same sort of faith in Lara’s abilities, as well? How do you know?
- Is Alexander’s thinking bringing about the type of change that Ruslan was referring to? How so?
- Does Alexander believe in following the Golden Rules? How do you know? Explain your answer.
- Do you see wisdom in the Golden Rules? How so?
- Do you see wisdom in challenging them, as well? Explain why or why not.



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## Golden Rules Foldable

*"The pups won't come tonight," he answered. "Of that I'm certain. Should a miracle occur, I'll gladly reveal the secret behind Golden Rule Number Eight. (93)"*

**Objective:** To create a foldable manipulative activity reinforcing the Eight Golden Rules of breeding borzoi.

### Materials:

- Foldable pattern found on page 18
- Scissors
- The book *Lara's Gift*
- Glue stick, tape, or glue

### Procedure:

- Print the foldable pattern on page 18.
- Trim around the bold edges of the pattern.
- Fold down lengthwise dotted line.
- Trim on the dotted lines forming Golden Rule strips.
- Secure the top tab to the fold behind it with glue or tape.
- Refer to pages 18 and 19 and write the coinciding Golden Rule beneath the matching number.
- Reveal your list of Eight Golden Rules by flipping the tab back and reading your rule!
- Go back through the story to find moments when each rule was either practiced or challenged.



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*The Eight*

*Golden*

*Rules*

*Rule 1*

*Rule 2*

*Rule 3*

*Rule 4*

*Rule 5*

*Rule 6*

*Rule 7*

*Rule 8*



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## Fabergé Eggs

*Borzoï were a national treasure, gifted among nobility like Fabergé eggs (6).*



During the Imperial era, the time in which *Lara's Gift* is set, decorated eggs played an important role in the Easter celebration. Russian Orthodox Christians viewed eggs as a symbol of Resurrection and the life beyond the grave.

On Easter day, wherever people gathered, they kissed and greeted each other, exclaiming "Christ is risen," and exchanged colored Easter eggs. Not only was it customary to put an egg in the hand of every acquaintance one met, but people played games with eggs, ate them, and used them in huge quantities for the traditional Easter bread (*Kulich*) and Easter dessert (*Pashka*).

While many eggs were boiled with red onions to produce the traditional red color, they often showcased geometric or traditional designs with regional significance, landscapes, churches, folk images, as well as short inscriptions like, "Christ is risen."



Russian Painted Eggs

Because old Russia managed to transform everything it touched, to infuse art and stamp it with its own genius and spirit, the Russian court took Easter-egg-gift-giving to a new level. Eggs were gilded, spun from sugar, or decorated with precious metals and gems. The most famous of all of these eggs were those designed and created by the master jeweler, Carl Fabergé for the last two Tsars.

To please his wife, Tsarina Maria Fedorovna, Tsar Alexander III commissioned Fabergé to craft an exceptional Easter gift. On Easter day, the Empress held what appeared to be a simple enameled egg, and discovered a golden yolk inside; within the yolk a golden hen; and concealed within the hen a diamond miniature of the royal crown and a tiny ruby egg—both now lost to history. Because the Empress was so delighted, the Tsar rewarded Fabergé with a yearly commission. The requirements: each egg must be unique and contain a suitable surprise for the Empress.

Eleven Easter eggs were created for Alexander and after his death his son, Nicholas II, continued the tradition, increasing the order to two eggs every year—one for his mother and one for his wife, Alexandra. Probably fifty-five eggs were made, of which forty-three are known to exist.

**Source:** Suzanne Massie's *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia* (1980).



Fabergé Egg by Crayola

Click [HERE](#) for a video and more information about Fabergé eggs.

Click [HERE](#) for instructions to make Russian Imperial Eggs with Crayola Products.

Click [HERE](#) for instructions to make Fabergé Egg Ornaments as featured in Martha Stewart's Living Magazine.



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## Discussion Questions for Chapters 12 through 14

**Note:** For each of the quotations below, respond to one of the questions by writing a paragraph or two in your journal.

*When I couldn't bear to watch another second, I untied Zar's lead and freed him. "Get him, Zar! The Red Thief is yours! (132)"*

- What is at stake as a result of this action?
- How is Lara honoring Golden Rule Number 6: Three borzoi make a hunting team?
- How is Lara breaking Golden Rule Number 7: An inexperienced borzoi is a dead one?
- How is Lara trusting her gift?
- What would you have done if you were Lara?

*It wasn't until Papa started to climb up onto the sledge that I moved into action. I swallowed a lump of fear the size of an iceberg and thrust the knife into the wolf's heart (136).*

- Both Lara and Zar have had their first successful hunting experience. They both killed a wolf. What does this mean for them in the future?
- Why is it important for Lara to have killed the wolf, rather than Papa?
- How did both Lara and Zar challenge Golden Rule Number 7: An inexperienced borzoi is a dead one?

*"Do your visions come to you from behind your eyelids?" he asked (141).*

- By saying this to Lara, how is Papa admitting that the visions are real?
- How would Papa know where the visions come from?
- Do you believe that Mama knew that Papa had once had visions, too? Explain your answer.
- Are Lara's visions part of the reason Papa wished that she would have a different life? How so?
- Earlier there was mention of a man who had visions named Rasputin, who claimed to be holy and could both heal ailments and predict the future. Aspects of his life were quite troublesome and very controversial. Could this be the reason Papa wanted to keep Lara's visions a secret? That he was worried that Lara's life might become troublesome and controversial? Explain your answer.



Rasputin



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Alexander turned to me. "Can you remember anything else from your vision?"

I closed my eyes and tried to recall what I had seen. "Birch trees! I saw birch trees. (161)"

- Lara's visions saved Zar and, in doing so, forced her to reveal the secret of her gift.
  - How is this beneficial?
  - How is this dangerous?
- Alexander belongs to Russian nobility. Some nobility feared Rasputin's power and influence over the Tsarina, who had the Tsar's ear. How does making Lara's visions public knowledge become dangerous for her and her family?
- What is Alexander's opinion of Lara's gift?
  - Do you think Alexander is threatened by Lara's gift? How so?
  - Do you think Alexander is afraid of Lara's gift? Why or why not?
  - Are there ways Alexander could be angered by Lara's gift? Explain your answer.
  - Is Alexander open to seeing her visions as the gift they are? How do you know?
- Lara blew the hunting horn to announce the good news that Zar was returning to the kennel safe and alive. What are some of the ways that this act brought about change?
  - With regard to accepting Lara's visions?
  - With regard to allowing Lara to assume a male's role in the kennel?
  - With regard to announcing that Lara, in fact, has visions and can predict the future?
- How did Lara's gift create fear?
- How did it bring about joy?
- How did this scenario challenge Golden Rule Number 8: Only a fool makes a decision based on a vision?
- In the end, how did Papa learn to embrace change through accepting Lara's gift?
  - How did Alexander?
  - How did Lara?



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## A Borzoi Cinquain

*“That says something about borzoi,” Ruslan said. “Pushkin lies at the soul of every Russian. (47)”*

In preparation for writing a poem about borzoi, also known as the Russian Wolfhound, students are encouraged to spend a little time becoming more familiar with the magnificent animal that inspired Annemarie O’Brien’s *Lara’s Gift*. And, for a nice peek into the poetic nature of the book, becoming familiar with the works of Alexander Pushkin, perhaps the greatest Russian writer of all time, could be creatively beneficial, as well.

Below is a list of linked websites, videos, and photographs to review. Students are encouraged to note things of interest in their journal, ideas that might help to spark the Pushkin within them!



[The Pushkin Page: Live, Texts, Humor, and Culture](#)

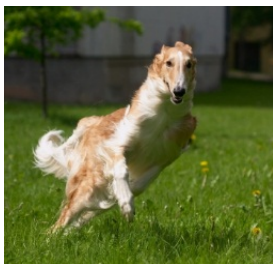
[Poetry Lovers Page: A Collection of Pushkin’s Works](#)

[Poet’s Graves: Serious About Poets and Poetry](#)



[Video: Borzoi Hunting In Russia](#)

[Borzoi Club of America](#)



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## The Cinquain Defined

This poetic form takes its name from the word *quinque*, “five.” The cinquain (SING-kane) is like the haiku in that it is composed of a set number of syllables (22) and a per line syllable count (2-4-6-8-2). A good cinquain will flow from beginning to end rather than sounding like five separate lines. (Janesczko 56).

*Oh, cat  
are you grinning  
curled in the window seat  
as sun warms you this December  
morning?*

*-Paul B. Janesczko*

Using the Poem Analysis grids, create a cinquain. Either structure the poem using the parts of speech approach printed on the form found on page 23 or simply follow the syllabic structure modeled in the cinquain above.



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## Cinquain Worksheet

Poem Title \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Line 1: (1 word noun-2 syllables)

\_\_\_\_\_

Line 2: (2 adjectives-4 syllables)

\_\_\_\_\_

Line 3: (3 action words-6 syllables)

\_\_\_\_\_

Line 4: (4 feeling words-8 syllables)

\_\_\_\_\_

Line 5: (1 word noun-2 syllables)



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## A Poem Celebrating Your Personal Gift

*I cleared my throat and raised my finger high in the air, as if I were the Tsar. "As long as the future Count agrees, I hereby abolish Golden Rule Number Eight – visions shall no longer be shunned as evil. They'll be embraced for the gift they are and put to good use. (166)"*

**Objective:** To write a Fibonacci poem in which the child's personal gift of himself is illuminated. Personal gifts are images of how a child sees his talents, interests, and passions influencing his future.

### Materials:

- Fibonacci worksheet found on page 28
- Pencil or pen
- Red marker or pen
- Several sheets of paper
- A timer

### Procedure - Part 1: Free-write:

*The intention for this facet of the lesson is to accumulate lists of words that describe the students' gifts. There are no set rules for this. Just write. Let the words flow. Here the student is gathering information to be used later in the Fibonacci. This facet of the poetry writing lesson can take place in one setting or over the period of several class sessions.*

- With paper and pencil in hand, explain that the student will begin this lesson by engaging in several timed free writing sessions focusing on their personal responses. Free-writing is known as 'stream-of-consciousness' writing, in that the writer simply lets the words flow. They must avoid stopping to ponder. Just write. Eventually, they will cull through their mass of descriptive words to create a poem exploring aspects of their personal gift.
- Each free-write session will last 10 minutes.
- After the prompt is given, the timer is set. Students are asked to begin writing immediately and do not stop until the buzzer has sounded.
- Personal Gift Prompts:
  - What is my life about? What is my purpose?
  - What do I stand for? What are my values?
  - What action/s do I take to develop my purpose?
  - What action/s do I take to develop my values?
  - What are my gifts? My talents? My personal goals?



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- Following free-write sessions, students may like to share their work by reading aloud to other classmates. Oftentimes, while engaging in this activity, students discover interesting things about themselves.

### Procedure - Part 2: The Fibonacci Poem

- Print the Fibonacci worksheet form on page 28.
- Review free-write.
- Circle the words or phrases that speak to the students' vision of themselves.
- The poem, itself is easy to write in that each line is formed by a specific syllable count.
- Review the key phrases circled in the free-write. Use these as the theme for the poem.
- Choose words consisting of the correct number of syllables as labeled on each particular line.
- After the form is filled, the student may like to type their poem, as the Fibonacci plays with white space in an intriguing way.



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## The Fibbonaci

Title \_\_\_\_\_

1 syllable \_\_\_\_\_

1 syllable \_\_\_\_\_

2 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

3 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

5 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

8 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

8 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

5 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

3 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

2 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

1 syllable \_\_\_\_\_

1 syllable \_\_\_\_\_



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## Sample Fibonacci Poems Written by Gifted Kids Like YOU!

### My Favorite Things

I'm  
 real  
 good at  
 soccer. Yes!  
 The best uniform.  
 I've got everything I need.  
 Soccer is my favorite thing.  
 Soccer is the best.  
 Shooting goals.  
 Winning  
 Sport  
 Fun

### What I Am Good At

I  
 like  
 writing  
 sentences.  
 Opinion, spelling  
 Punctuation, scary stories  
 I write silly and true stories.  
 I express myself.  
 Make-believe  
 I can  
 write  
 well.



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## Journal Response and Comprehension Rubric

Use this rubric to assess the students' abilities to complete journal activities. Share this assessment with students prior to completing the journal-writing lessons to illustrate the assessment process. You can also use the rubric as a basis for discussion and feedback with each student.

Student name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. The student writes journal responses in complete sentences. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The student writes three or more sentences to answer questions. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The student responds to questions by self-questioning, retelling, predicting, or assuming the role of a character. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The student's experiences and opinions are clear. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The student works with a peer to share journal responses and to develop a combined response when requested. \_\_\_\_\_

Excellent 4	Very Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1
The student completes the task with no major errors.	The student completes the task with only a few major errors and some minor errors.	The student completes the task with some major errors and many minor errors.	The student fails to complete the task.
The student demonstrates a full understanding of the concepts.	The student demonstrates a strong understanding of the concepts.	The student has difficulty understanding the concepts.	The student does not understand the concepts.



## Common Core State Standards Annotations

### English Language Arts - Reading: Literature

		Discussion & Journal	Crossword Puzzle	Concept Mapping	Golden Rules Foldable	Cinquain/Fibonacci
RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	✓				
RL.4.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.	✓				
RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).	✓		✓	✓	
RL.4.7	Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.	✓		✓	✓	
RL.4.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
RL.5.1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	✓			✓	
RL.5.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.	✓		✓		
RL.5.3	Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).	✓		✓		
RL.5.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
RL.6.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	✓			✓	
RL.6.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.	✓		✓		
RL.6.3	Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.	✓			✓	



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RL.6.5	Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.	✓			✓	
RL.6.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	✓	✓	✓	✓	



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## English Language Arts - Writing

		Discussion & Journal	Crossword Puzzle	Concept Mapping	Golden Rules Foldable	Cinquain/Fibonacci
W.4.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	✓				
W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	✓				✓
W.4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓				✓
W.4.8	Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.	✓				✓
W.4.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.	✓				✓
W.5.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	✓				
W.5.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	✓				✓
W.5.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓				✓
W.5.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.	✓				✓
W.6.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	✓				
W.6.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓				✓
W.6.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.	✓				✓



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