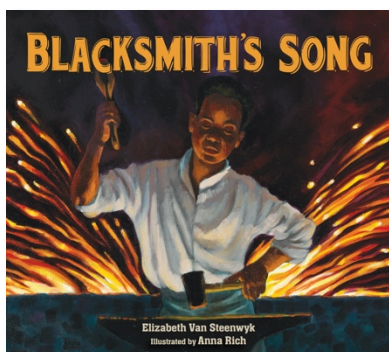


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Blacksmith's Song

Written by Elizabeth Van Steenwyk | Illustrated by Anna Rich

HC: 978-1-56145-580-5

Ages 6–10 | Historical Fiction

Lexile • F&P • GRL R; Gr 4

ABOUT THE BOOK

The son of an enslaved blacksmith learns that his father has been using the rhythm of his hammering to communicate with travelers on the Underground Railroad. When Pa falls ill, it is up to him to help others along the journey—and lead his family's escape.

THEMES

Freedom | Slavery | Underground Railroad
Family | Community | Hope

BEFORE YOU READ

Consider the cover of the book:

- Describe the action in the illustration. What is the boy doing?
- Examine the red and orange flames surrounding him. What do these bursts of colors represent?
- Study the boy's expression. What might he be thinking or feeling?
- Illustrations are pictures that tell a story. What story does this illustration tell?
- Consider the title of the book—*Blacksmith's Song*. What might it mean?

- Discuss what you know about blacksmiths.
- Discuss what you know about songs.
- A blacksmith uses heavy tools and burning coals to form hot metal into shapes. How could these actions be transformed into a song?
- Now that you have examined the cover and considered the title, what you think this story is about?

AFTER YOU READ

Read each passage from the book aloud then discuss the following questions:

“His muscles glisten. He’s working hard, but the sound from his anvil has no rhythm this afternoon. It’s an ordinary song for an ordinary day.”

- Describe the action depicted in this illustration in the first spread. Use sensory language to describe the setting.
- Pa is a blacksmith. He forges steel with a heavy hammer and an anvil. What do you know about a

MEETING THE STANDARDS

The activities in this guide directly address a variety of standards across the curriculum. For a complete list of the English Language Arts Standards addressed, please see pages 11–13.

blacksmith's work? What kind of strength and skills are required to do this job?

- The word rhythm is used to describe a pattern—in music, the tempo or beat. If Pa's anvil has no rhythm, what is meant by the phrase "an ordinary song"?
- Why do you think Pa does not answer his son?
- What does the boy's expression reveal about his feelings?

"Some evenings, Pa pounds out the blacksmith's song, a deep-down rhythm of hammer striking anvil. The sound grows louder, faster, as his tap, tap, tapping tells listening ears and hearts that the waiting is nearly over."

- Why do you think Pa pounds the hammer in a different rhythm from the one he used on the previous spread?
- Why might Pa be forging steel in the deep of night?
- Why do you think people are traveling in the dark, frightening night?
- Why do you think the boy seems troubled? Why would his mother need to comfort him?
- Describe what you think is happening in this scene.

"Later, Ma tells us what she heard while she was serving dinner. Those white people were looking for their slaves who ran away in the night."

- What does it mean to run away?
- Why would someone want to—or need to—run away?
- Why do you think the dinner guests are looking for escaped slaves?
- Discuss the action taking place in this illustration. What do you think the man standing beside the wall is doing? Why isn't he sitting at the dinner table with the other guests?
- Is there a connection between the "slaves who ran away in the night" and Pa's blacksmith's song?

"The master comes in. Has he heard us?"

- Why is the boy concerned that the master may have heard him and his father talking?
- Study the boy's expression in the illustration. How does he feel about the master? Give reasons why he feels the way he does.
- Does the master know about the blacksmith's song? Explain your answer.
- Birds sing to communicate with each other. Can you make a connection between a bird's song and the

blacksmith's song? How are they similar? How are they different?

"I can pound this rhythm out just like Pa does. Hammer strikes anvil. I sway to the rhythms and listen."

- What does the phrase "word seeps down to us" mean to you?
- Observe the action in this illustration. Why are the children dancing?
- Identify the people in this scene. Describe their relationships with one another.
- Why is it important for the boy to know his father's blacksmith's song?

"Midmorning, the master pays another call. 'Why were you at your forge so late last night?' he asks Pa."

- Describe the action in this illustration. Why is the master scowling?
- Notice the boy's expression. Why does he seem worried?
- How do you think Pa and his son feel when the master visits again?
- The Underground Railroad was a secret network that helped slaves escape to freedom. A bird can be a symbol of freedom. Discuss the meaning of the iron bird.

"But another rhythm beats in my heart and soul, just like it does in Pa's and did in his pa's before that. I strike the anvil and send the message to those waiting in the woods, who are hoping to hear the blacksmith's song."

- What experiences have prepared the boy for this moment?
- Consider the phrase "another rhythm beats in my heart and soul." Where does that rhythm come from?
- Why does the boy feel he must take his father's place at the anvil?
- Is the boy in danger? Is it worth the risk for him to tap out the blacksmith's song? Explain your answer.
- Why does the boy's family have to escape quickly, leaving the forge fire glowing?

REVIEWS

“A shadowy color palette situates the narrative in the twilight and moonlit hours, perfectly complementing the suspense of the plot. . . . Ending on a hopeful note, the book brings this piece of hidden history to life.”

—**Booklist**

“A plausible, powerful vision of ingenuity and daring in action.”

—**Publishers Weekly**

“An intriguing new angle on an important story.”

—**Kirkus Reviews**

“The design of every spread lends itself well to an oral reading or presentation, which would serve as a stimulus for more in-depth information or discussion on the topics of slavery and the Civil War. . . .a welcome addition to an introduction of the Underground Railroad.”

—**School Library Connection**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Van Steenwyk is the author of more than seventy books for children, including *First Dog Fala* and *How Kate Warne Saved President Lincoln: The Story Behind the Nation's First Woman Detective*. She began to write books after a career in radio and television. She looked for inspiration in history, an interest that has spanned a lifetime of reading and writing. She lives in California.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Anna Rich says her art career began in kindergarten. She much preferred coloring and drawing to her other class work. She received her BFA from Rhode Island School of Design, and has illustrated a number of books, including *Under the Night Sky* and *Joshua's Masai Mask*. She lives in New York.

Peachtree Teacher's Guide for
BLACKSMITH'S SONG
 prepared by Debbie Gonzales

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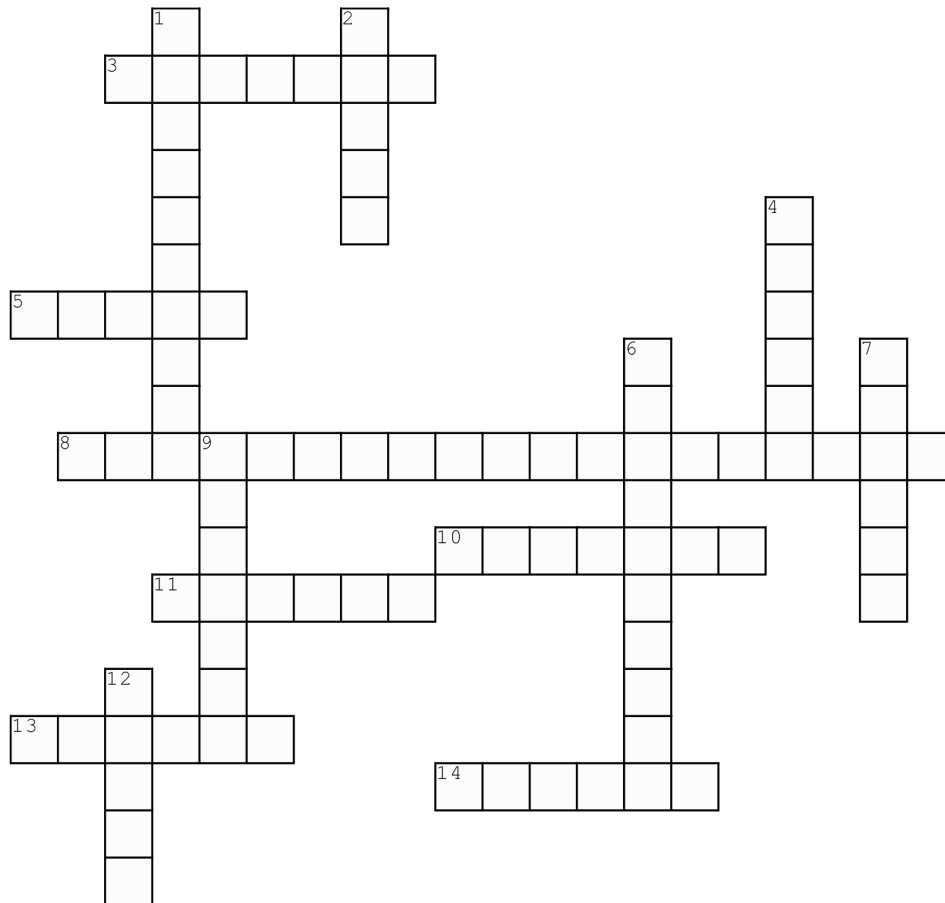
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Blacksmith's Song Crossword Puzzle



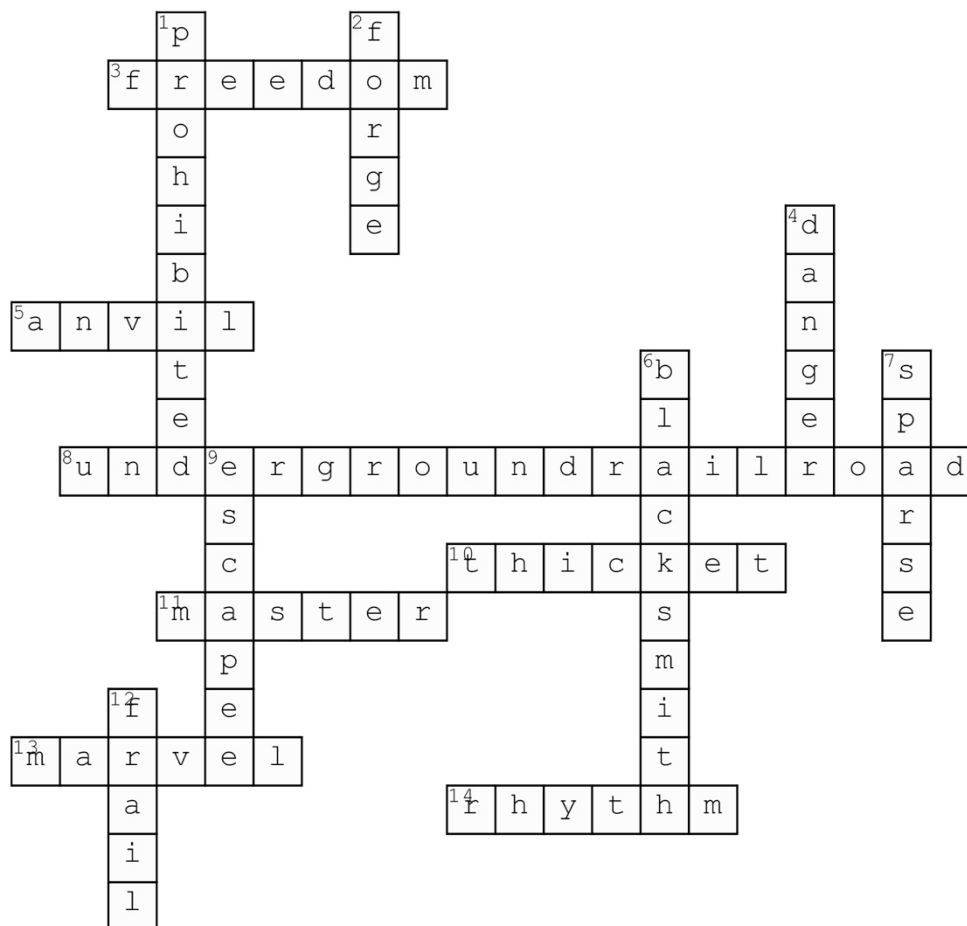
Across

3. the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved
5. a heavy steel or iron block with a flat top on which metal can be hammered and shaped
8. a system for helping fugitive slaves to escape into Canada or other places of safety
10. a thick or dense growth of shrubs, bushes, or small trees
11. a man who has servers or slaves working for him
13. to wonder or be curious about
14. a strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound

Down

1. forbidden by authority or law
2. to form by heating and hammering
4. exposure to harm or injury
6. a person who forges objects out of iron
7. thinly dispersed or scattered
9. a person who escapes
12. weak and delicate

Blacksmith's Song Crossword Puzzle ANSWERS



Across

3. the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved
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Writing Historical Fiction

OBJECTIVE: Write a narrative by developing imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

MATERIALS:

- *Blacksmith's Song*
- Writing Historical Fiction – The Underground Railroad Graphic Organizer (guide p. 7)
- Paper and pencil
- Markers

PROCEDURE:

- Discuss the term “historical fiction.” Explain that the book *Blacksmith's Song* is an example of historical fiction, meaning that it is a story set in the past, during a particular time period. The setting and historical events are key to the development of stories such as these. Point out that, though the story is fiction, *Blacksmith's Song* is based on events and situations that really happened.
- Explain that, in this lesson, students are instructed to write a historical fiction piece featuring an enslaved person and set during the time period of the Underground Railroad. Students will use the **Writing Historical Fiction – The Underground Railroad Graphic Organizer** as a guide.
- Students are encouraged to explore the following plot points for their stories:
 - Who will be the primary character? Describe his/her features, age, and role in the community.
 - What does this character want? What is standing in his/her way of getting it?
 - When will he/she know it is time to leave the master's plantation?
 - Where will he/she be going?
 - Why is traveling along the Underground Railroad dangerous for this character?
 - How will he/she know where to go? Who will help them?
- Students are instructed illustrate their stories.
- Students are encouraged to share their historical fiction pieces with the class.

Writing Historical Fiction
Underground Railroad Graphic Organizer

who

how

what

**The
Underground
Railroad**

why

when

where

Underground Railroad Escape Code

Author's Note:

There are many theories about how they might have communicated with each other about the Underground Railroad, but little evidence to support these beliefs. Some methods described in folklore are visual—such as quilts and dance—and others are oral—like code words, songs, and, perhaps the rhythm of the blacksmith's hammer.

* * * * *

OBJECTIVE: Make a connection between actual Underground Railroad coding and the storyline.

MATERIALS:

- *Blacksmith's Song*
- Escape Code cards (guide p. 9–10)
- Scissors
- Cardstock

PROCEDURE:

- Print the **Escape Code** cards on cardstock. Use scissors to trim around the border of the cards.
- Stack the cards and place them facedown on table. Each student should choose a card from the deck.
- Instruct students to make a connection between the **Escape Code** card and selected illustrations in *Blacksmith's Song*.
 - Consider the definition printed on the card. Discuss how it relates to the escape of enslaved people on the Underground Railroad.
 - Choose an illustration in *Blacksmith's Song*. Explore the connection between the definition printed on the **Escape Code** card and the action taking place in the illustration. For example, consider the first spread in the book, the one in which the boy is describing an “ordinary day.” Make a connection between this illustration and the “agent” card. Predict how a message from the “agent” would alter an “ordinary day.”
- Following a round of discussions, instruct students to write an informative essay or fictional narrative inspired by the connection between the **Escape Code** card and the illustration in *Blacksmith's Song*.
- Share work with the class.

AGENT

Coordinator, one who plotted course of escape and made contacts

BAGGAGE

Fugitive slaves carried by Underground Railroad workers

BUNDLES OF WOOD

Fugitives that were expected

CONDUCTOR

Person who directly transported slaves

FREEDOM TRAIN

The Underground Railroad

FRENCH LEAVE

Sudden departure

HEAVEN

Canada, Freedom

PARCEL

Fugitives that were expected

STOCK HOLDER

Person who donated money to the cause

LOAD OF POTATOES

Escaping hidden under farm produce in a wagon

SHEPHERDS

People who encouraged slaves to escape and/or escorted them

PATTER ROLLER

Bounty hunter hired to capture slaves

Common Core Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards » Reading Literature		Discussion Questions	Crossword Puzzle	Escape Code	Historical Fiction
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.1	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.2	Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.3	Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.7	Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.10	With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.	●	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1	Ask and answer such questions as <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , <i>where</i> , <i>when</i> , <i>why</i> , and <i>how</i> to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.2	Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.3	Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.7	Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	●	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1	Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.2	Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3	Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.7	Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2-3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	●	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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).	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.	●		●	●

Common Core Standards Alignment

		Discussion Questions	Crossword Puzzle	Escape Code	Historical Fiction
English Language Arts Standards » Writing					
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.2	Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.			●	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.3	Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.5	With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.2	Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.			●	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.3	Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.5	With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.			●	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.4	With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.			●	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.			●	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			●	●
English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening					
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 1 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.2	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.4	Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.5	Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.				●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.6	Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 2 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups.	●	●	●	●

Common Core Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening (cont.)		Discussion Questions	Crossword Puzzle	Escape Codes	Historical Fiction
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.2	Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.4	Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.6	Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.	●	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 3 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.2	Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.4	Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.6	Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.	●	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 4 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2	Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4	Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 5 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	●		●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.2	Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.4	Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.			●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, using formal English when appropriate to task and situation.	●	●	●	●