**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts

**Grade level/band**: 9-10

**Task source**: Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC); Primary Author: Catherine Hampton

**Is This Fiction for Real? Researching Social Issues in Literature**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

1. **Task overview**:

In this task, students will read a fiction novel of their choice containing a modern social issue. Students will then conduct research on the social issue and write a research paper that analyzes and compares/contrasts the depiction of a social issue in the novel in relation to the reality of that social issue. Students will provide textual evidence from the novel as well as from their researched sources.

1. **Aligned standards:**
2. **Primary Common Core State Standards**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/9-10/2/) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/1/) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.10](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10/10/) By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literacy nonfiction in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/10/) By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS ELA Literacy W.11-12.7Conduct short, as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (thesis-a self-generating question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

1. **Secondary Common Core State Standards**

(Optional) [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/4/) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

1. **Critical abilities**

Research: Conduct sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem, narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate, and demonstrate understanding of the subject under investigation. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, use advanced searches effectively, and assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience.

Communication in Many Forms:Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

1. **Time/schedule requirements:**

This task will take approximately 4–5 weeks of nonconsecutive class time. Students will need several days of computer lab time for research and several computer lab days for writing their articles.

1. **Materials/resources:**

* The teacher will need to create a reading list of high-interest fiction novels available in the school library as a starting place for students. Students may choose a novel outside of this list with teacher approval.
* Thesis Statement Worksheet (one copy per student)
* Computers with Internet access
* Word processing software

1. **Prior knowledge:**

* Students will need to be able to read a novel independently and take active notes.
* Students will need to know how to access school databases and/or be able to evaluate websites for reliability so their research is accurate.
* Students will need to be familiar with MLA style, including parenthetical citation and creating a works cited page.
* Students will have had previous experience with writing an analytical paragraph, developing a thesis statement, and outlining and organizing an essay.

1. **Connection to curriculum:**

None listed.

1. **Teacher instructions:**
2. Present students with an overview of the performance task by giving them the student prompt and explaining the scenario. Also give students a reading list containing high-interest novels available in the school library. Be sure to tell them that they are not limited to these choices and encourage them to think outside the list (with teacher approval).
3. Allow time for students to select and locate a book. Students will be expected to check out a novel to begin reading and will have the next 2-3 weeks to read the novel. During that time, students should be taking active notes that they will be able to use later to help them write their research paper and prepare and present their speech (if a teacher chooses).

There will be a lapse in time to enable students to read their novel in addition to the regularly scheduled in-class literature and writing being taught during this time.

1. 2-3 weeks later, give students 1-3 days to begin conducting research on the social issue they have identified in their novel in the computer lab. Additional research can be conducted outside of class time. Students may use any reliable media for their sources, including both Internet text and video.
2. In class, have students develop a thesis statement based on their findings in the literature and their research. Students will work on the outline for their research paper and get feedback from the teacher and/or peers.
3. Instruct students to begin writing the rough drafts of their articles, using MLA style and containing both parenthetical citation and a works cited page. Give students several days of writing time and assign the remaining writing for homework.
4. Give students a copy of the scoring guide. Have them look over the criteria and assess where their paper fits using the guide. Give students a couple days to make changes to their articles and turn the final copy back in. The teacher can also have students pair up and assess each other’s articles using the rubric.
5. **Student support:**

* Work with the school librarian and have him/her give a "book discovery" presentation to introduce an array of novels containing relevant social issues for young readers. He/she could also provide an introduction to library resources and databases to help students locate their novels.
* Provide a quick refresher on the elements and organization of a high quality paper.
* For students who struggle with MLA citations, provide examples, or point them to online resources that will help them formulate their citations.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* For students who would welcome or need more of a challenge, they could present a speech to their peers that summarizes the findings from their research.
* If a student would welcome additional reading, they would be strongly encouraged to take on reading a second independent novel with the same social issue present so that they could incorporate more than one scenario in which characters are dealing with the same social issue.
* Another extension option would be for students to interview a source that can provide first-hand information about the social issue (counselor, researcher, etc.). If this option is used, the teacher should give students information about how to conduct an interview with a primary source.
* One additional extension could be the production and presentation of a poster by students showing their main findings and sources.

1. **Scoring:**

Student work can be scored using the SCALE Textual Analysis Rubric (Gr 10).