A passion for reading and discussing literature is often a prime motivator for wanting to teach English. As lovers of literature, we read to be transported into other worlds, make connections to our lives, and understand what it means to be human. These purposes (and many more) guide us as we engage with literature as proficient readers. Yet, as English teachers, we must also consider the specific literacy skills and strategies needed to make sense of a text. Reading in this way helps in planning how we might teach or reinforce those skills and strategies through the reading of that text. Our job as English teachers is not simply to ensure that students understand who Jay Gatsby is and who Daisy is in relation to him; we must also help students piece together how the author—through craft and convention—tells his story and how students, with these understandings, can approach the reading and writing of future texts.

As teacher educators, we want to make explicit for our teacher candidates the need to read for teaching. This type of reading means considering the techniques of craft and convention that writers use, the skills and strategies readers need to make sense of these moves, and ways to help young people attend to and use those skills and strategies. This is a hefty intellectual and pedagogical shift. Yet, this shift is needed to support young people in becoming proficient readers and writers. This shift toward reading for teaching, or reading with an eye toward the skills and strategies one might teach, takes time and practice, even for proficient readers and teachers.

Our teacher candidates—undergraduate and graduate students who hold or are in the process of obtaining a degree in English—come to us with particular ways of reading literature. When reading, they might attend to the symbols and motifs in The Great Gatsby and, knowing the history of that era, make inferences about what Gatsby and Daisy represent in relation to the American Dream during the 1920s. For example, they might attend to the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg, yet not consider the prior knowledge, skills, and strategies they use to note and interpret this symbol. Consequently, their initial drafts of curriculum designs rarely include instructional objectives or activities that investigate how and why writers include symbols, or make visible the cognitive process from noting symbols and historical context to making an interpretation. This kind of explicit instruction helps students gain declarative knowledge as well as literacy strategies that support them in becoming competent readers (Applebee and Langer). To facilitate this shift in reading so that our teacher candidates might be more explicit in their instruction, we created a graphic organizer we call Reading for Teaching (RfT) (see Figure 1). We designed the RfT to guide reading and initial planning by making visible the cognitive work of more veteran secondary ELA teachers. We wanted to help our teacher candidates overcome what Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe call the “expert blind spot,” where proficient readers, who have forgotten what it feels like to read a text for the first time, underestimate the cognitive work needed to make sense of that text (229).
FIGURE 1. Reading for Teaching

Overview of Core Text  Title: Their Eyes Were Watching God  Author: Zora Neale Hurston

Synopsis (2–3 sentences, including year, genre, and basic info): “First published in 1937, TEWWG is Hurston’s most highly acclaimed novel. A classic of black literature, it tells with haunting sympathy and piercing immediacy the story of Janie Crawford’s evolving selfhood through three marriages.”

1. Takeaways
   • How relationships define (or do not define) us. “She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie’s first dream was dead, so she became a woman” (24).
   • How social constructs like gender and race contribute to our identity (how we perceive ourselves, how others perceive us)
   • How authors use nature as a metaphor for our own aspirations (e.g., flower = love) and trials (e.g., hurricane = struggles)

2. Reading Strategies
   • How to track concrete nouns and images (e.g., moon, apple) in our notes (or by circling the words on a page when we can) in order to “see” these images together and make inferences about how the author might be using nouns/images as symbols of something intangible to create a mood/tone/effect
   • How to read with a predetermined lens (e.g., feminist, Marxist) in order to understand how our experiences and perceptions shape how we “read” the world (literally, figuratively)

3. Craft
   A. Key Ideas and Details
      • How authors introduce characters (through dialogue, action, narration) and what these introductions suggest about the character
      • How a single character develops over the course of a text in order to explore a particular theme
   B. Genre and Structure
      • How omniscient narration is different than other points of view, and why authors choose this POV over others
      • How and why an author might choose to tell a story via a flashback
   C. Figurative Language
      • Use of symbols (e.g., pear tree, hair, hurricane) to create associations in the reader’s mind that are imaginative rather than literal
      • Use of personification to “give life” to inanimate objects and to emphasize particular concepts—“No hour is ever eternity, but it has its right to weep” (175)

4. Conventions
   • How to use spelling, punctuation, and dialogue tags in dialogue to effectively capture the quality of the conversation (e.g., the dialect of the characters, pauses, overlapping speech)
   • When, how, and why authors start sentences with conjunctions—“But the whole town got vain over it after it came” (41).

5. Supplementary Texts
   A. Context and Perspective
      • (historical context) poem by James Weldon Johnson alongside illustration by Aaron Douglas—both from God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse (1927)
      • (author’s perspective) an anthropological informative text written by Hurston
   B. Big Ideas, Themes, Concepts
      • (women, relationships) “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin (short story, 1894)
      • (our connection to nature) poem by Mary Oliver
   C. Strategies, Craft, and Conventions
      • (alternative approaches to narration and POV) excerpts from Tim O’Brien’s The Things They Carried and Julie Otsuka’s Buddha in the Attic (“we,” a narrator who speaks on behalf of a group)
      • (narrator as a character) poem “Hazel Tells Laverne” by Katharyn Machan Aal; excerpts from Barbara Kingsolver’s Poisonwood Bible; excerpt from Christopher Paul Curtis’s The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

What Is the Tool?
We see the RfT as a tool for English teachers to capture their noticings about a text and connect them to specific literacy skills and strategies that they might explicitly teach students as they study that text. As we designed the RfT, we asked ourselves: What did we, former teachers of literature, attend to as we read literature we planned to teach? How do the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS) align with these aspects of literacy? Figure 2 shows the set of guiding questions from the RfT. Each question number corresponds to a specific section of the RfT, and these questions map onto particular CCSS, as noted in the right-hand column. Given that the CCSS are new, many teachers are unsure how to connect them to their instructional planning. Accordingly, we decided to use the RfT as a tool for orienting teachers to two domains of the CCSS: Reading Literature and Language.

Question 1 asks teachers to track the big ideas they note as proficient readers; we hoped their answers would scaffold their development of Essential Questions (EQs), or what Wiggins and McTighe define as “a question that lies at the heart of a subject or a curriculum . . . and promotes inquiry and uncovery of a subject” (342). EQs anchor unit plans around a central idea, thereby helping the unit to cohere. Big ideas in The Great Gatsby might

<table>
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<th>GUIDING QUESTIONS</th>
<th>CORRESPONDING COMMON CORE ELA STANDARDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What takeaways (i.e., big ideas, themes, arguments) do you think the author is promoting?</td>
<td>• RL.11-12.2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account.</td>
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| 2. What reading strategies (e.g., questioning, clarifying, predicting, summarizing, visualizing, detecting irony) are you using as you read to make sense of the text? | • 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.  
• RL.11-12.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful . . .  
• RL.11-12.6. Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).  
• L.11-12.3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.  
• L.11-12.3a. . . . apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.  
• L.11-12.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases . . . , choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.  
• L.11-12.4a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.  
• L.11-12.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.  
• L.11-12.5a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text. |
FIGURE 2. Continued

GUIDING QUESTIONS

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<th>CORRESPONDING COMMON CORE ELA STANDARDS</th>
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<td>3. What aspects of craft does the author heavily use? In other words, what key devices do you notice in terms of:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Ideas and details (e.g., theme, plot, setting, how characters are introduced and developed)?</td>
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<td>• RL.11-12.2. See above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• RL.11-12.3. Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).</td>
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<td>B. Genre and structure (e.g., narration, point of view, parallel plots, flashback, stream of consciousness, soliloquy, foreshadowing)?</td>
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<td>• RL.11-12.5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The use of figurative language (e.g., metaphor, simile, personification, allusion, puns, allegory, symbolism, hyperbole, paradox, oxymoron, irony) to create associations in the reader’s mind that are imaginative rather than literal?</td>
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<td>• RL.11-12.4. See above.</td>
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<td>• RL.11-12.6. See above.</td>
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<td>• L.11-12.5. See above.</td>
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<td>• L.11-12.5a. See above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What conventions of grammar and style (e.g., passive voice, sentence length and variety, the dash, the semicolon) does the author use?</td>
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<td>• L.11-12.1a. Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.</td>
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<td>• L.11-12.3. See above.</td>
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<td>• L.11-12.3a. See above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. What specific supplementary texts of varying genres (e.g., literary—poems, short stories, dramatic scenes; informational—biographies, diary entries, newspaper articles, speeches, scientific articles; visual/artistic—paintings, comics, film clips, music) would help students make better sense of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The historical and/or cultural context of the text and/or the author’s particular perspective?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• RL.11-12.7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem . . . , evaluating how each version interprets the source text . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>• RL.11-12.9. Demonstrate knowledge of . . . how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• RL.11-12.11. Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and philosophically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events, and situations . . .</td>
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</table>

a. Note: The labels for each standard include the domain (i.e., “RL” = Reading Literature; “L” = Language), grade level, and number of the standard. For example, “RL.11-12.1” means the listed standard comes from the Reading Literature domain for grades 11–12 and is the first in the series of standards within this domain. All listed CCSS are for grades 11–12, the grade band in which the CCSS classifies The Great Gatsby and Their Eyes Were Watching God. Source: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. Common Core State Standards English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Washington DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010. Web. 10 Sept. 2013.
b. RL.11-12.11 is a New York state addition to the Common Core.

be wealth, the past, and how people see us. A possible EQ drawn from these ideas might be, “How does money shape our identity?”

Questions 2–4 ask teachers to attend to craft and convention, as well as to be metacognitive about the particular strategies they applied while reading the text (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, and Murphy). These ideas help teachers draft the Learning Targets (LTs), or instructional goals for their units. In terms of craft, or an author’s use of literary and rhetorical devices, The Great Gatsby is rich in symbolism, as noted earlier. An LT focused on craft might ask students to track the repeated use of specific objects or images (e.g., clocks, the eyes of
T. J. Eckleberg) to make inferences about the influence of symbols on mood. In terms of convention, or an author’s use of grammatical or stylistic choices, a teacher might observe how Fitzgerald uses spelling, punctuation, and vivid verbs when writing dialogue. This observation could later become an LT investigating how these conventions influence the quality of conversation in narrative. Such an LT emphasizes teaching grammar in the context of reading and writing to support students’ abilities “to draw on those aspects of grammar that will enrich and enhance their writing” (Weaver and Bush 3).

We hoped that our teacher candidates would realize that these noticings regarding craft and convention could be the features of ELA they would teach students through the reading of the text. By having the teacher candidates attend to these things while reading, we wanted to help them overcome Wiggin’s “expert blind spot” (229).

Question 5 gives teachers space to consider how they might extend students’ exposure to and engagement with the context, ideas, and techniques relevant to the text by brainstorming supplemental literary, informational, and artistic texts that resonate with these areas of focus. This concept of layering on additional texts allows students to gain context, a broader perspective, and deeper understanding of the ideas being studied (Beach and Marshall; Wessling). For example, in a unit on The Great Gatsby, teachers might include historical documents written in the 1920s, short stories or poems that deal with unrequited love, or a contemporary political cartoon on consumerism so that students gain a fuller understanding of the time period as well as themes addressed in the text. In sum, we designed the RfT to model ways of teacherly reading of literature with the aim of supporting teachers in planning instruction across aspects of literature and literacy, making sense of and aligning with the CCSS, and creating more coherent, comprehensive units of study.

How Did We Use the Tool in Our Courses?

Both authors taught methods courses on teaching English at their respective institutions. The culminating assignment for these courses is a unit plan. Unit plans are multi-week curriculum materials tethered to a core text (i.e., a longer literary work such as a novel or play) and organized around discrete periods or genres (e.g., the Roaring Twenties, 20th-century American literature), topics (e.g., success, the nature of love), EQs (e.g., What does the American Dream look like in 2014? How do authors get us to care about their characters?), or other approaches (Beach and Marshall; Wessling).

Because this assignment is often our teacher candidates’ first attempt at crafting a unit plan, it is chunked into components and scaffolded over several weeks. Each week of the course, a component of the unit plan is due, and the draft of this component is peer reviewed in small workshop groups. One of the first components is the Unit Overview, which functions as a blueprint of the unit, including an EQ, a series of LTs in various domains of ELA (i.e., reading, writing, discussion, grammar, and digital literacy); rationales for why these LTs are important for students to attain and how they connect with the core literary text; and the CCSS to which the LTs correspond. In both methods courses, the RfT is situated at the beginning of the unit plan assignment and is a first step in designing the Unit Overview.

To be sure the tool would support the novices as imagined, we completed the graphic organizer ourselves based on Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston (see Figure 1). This sample RfT serves as a model for our teacher candidates to understand what we are asking them to do. The model was also intentionally designed to introduce the language and function of LTs. We conceptualize LTs as objectives that articulate what students will know, understand, and/or be able to do independently at the end of a unit of instruction. We believe that the language of LTs should be specific, concrete, and transferable, and should state the function, or larger importance, of the targeted goal. Hence, we offer sentence frames (e.g., “Students will learn [skill, strategy, or knowledge] in order to [function].”) alongside sample LTs (e.g., “Students will learn how to notice and track concrete nouns in order to make inferences about how the author might be using these nouns as symbols of something intangible to create a mood, tone, or effect.”). Our sample RfT uses some of this language; many of the bulleted ideas begin with “how,” and several suggest the larger function with words such as “to” or “in order to.” We completed the sample RfT in
this fashion and drew attention to these moves during class in the hopes that teacher candidates would mimic this language and begin to internalize some strategies for conceptualizing and drafting LTs.

Our teacher candidates fill out the RfT while reading their texts and bring to class these RfT drafts. During class, teacher candidates share their RfTs in pairs, and partners provide feedback on what appeals to them as literature students, what clarifications they need, and where they see places of coherence or connection across the RfT that could support their partner in crafting their EQs and LTs. The purpose of the collaborative work is to help teachers organize and refine the objectives of their unit plans. In this way, the RfT, in partnership with peer feedback, serves as an ideation tool to help teachers sort through pedagogical possibilities before committing to the specific LTs that serve as the foundation for their units.

How Might We Revise or Implement the Tool in the Future?

We found that the RfT supported novices in focusing on literacy skills and strategies as they began to design units. We also found that each time a tool sharpens their focus, new questions emerge. For example, now that teacher candidates understand the importance of layering texts within a unit, they ask for strategies they can use to identify supplementary texts. Accordingly, we plan to use class time or online discussion forums so that teacher candidates can share resources.

As we continue to refine this tool, we plan to incorporate a focus on speaking and listening, as developing these skills is an essential part of ELA. We also plan to add space to consider multimodal and digital literacies, such as theatrical performance and the creation and analysis of blogs. Revising the tool in these ways would help broaden our novices’ interpretation of what constitutes a text and support them in considering the literacies required in our discourse- and technology-rich society.

We are aware that one tool cannot do all that is needed in the shift toward reading for teaching, nor can it fully prepare teacher candidates for curriculum design. However, we hope that the RfT, as it evolves, will continue to support teachers in developing or strengthening the habit of mind to consider what specific literacy practices a text is useful for teaching, making stronger connections to the Common Core State Standards, and ultimately crafting more coherent and comprehensive units of study.

Works Cited

Chandra L. Alston, a former high school English teacher, is an assistant professor in the Joint Program in English and Education at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and lead faculty in Secondary Teacher Education for English Language Arts. Lisa M. Barker, a former high school English and drama teacher, is an assistant professor of secondary education at the State University of New York at New Paltz, where she teaches courses on English education, the teaching of writing, and the facilitation of discussion. The authors can be reached at clalston@umich.edu and lisamariebarker@gmail.com.

READWRITETHINK CONNECTION

Teacher read-alouds demonstrate the power of stories. By showing students the ways that involvement with text engages us, we give them energy for learning how reading works. By showing them how to search for meaning, we introduce strategies of understanding we can reinforce in shared, guided, and independent reading. This is described in the ReadWriteThink.org strategy guide, “Teacher Read-Aloud That Models Reading for Deep Understanding.” http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/teacher-read-aloud-that-30799.html