



Quick Start Guide

K-8 by Great Minds® | Everything you need to launch your first year with confidence

Welcome to *Arts & Letters!*

Your first year will feel challenging—and that's okay. Trust the sequence. The lessons are carefully designed to build on each other, and the more closely you follow the structure this year, the more your students will grow. You'll see knowledge accumulate in real time: through the Knowledge Deck Cards, the World Knowledge Chart, and the Essential and Content Framing Questions that give every lesson a sense of purpose. By the time students reach the end-of-module writing task, they have something real to say—because they've spent weeks building the knowledge they need to say it. When you're not sure why a lesson is asking you to do something, go back to the Module Overview, which gives the purpose and framing for the lesson in the sequence. After year one, the prep gets faster and the payoff gets even clearer.

1. What makes *Arts & Letters* so special?

Arts & Letters is built on a simple but powerful idea: **when students know more, they read better**. Instead of practicing skills on disconnected passages, students read rich, complex texts that are carefully sequenced—each building the vocabulary and knowledge they need for the next. Reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, inquiry, fluency, and visual art are all woven into every module, so nothing feels like an add-on. It is a curriculum in which every student gets to feel like a reader and a thinker.

2. What's Included: Your Core Materials

Each grade level has four modules of approximately 37–40 lessons each (150–160 lessons/year). Each lesson is designed for 60 minutes, one per school day.

Material	Who Uses it?	What It Contains
Teach book (4 per grade)	Teacher	Primary instructional guide. One book per module. Contains Module Overview, all 37–40 lessons with step-by-step guidance, and appendices including Achievement Descriptors. Print and digital.
Learn book (4 per grade)	Students	Students' companion workbook. Lesson handouts, graphic organizers, short texts, vocabulary activities, fluency passages, writing planners, and assessments. Used in almost every lesson.
Prologue (4 per grade)	Teacher	Companion pre-teaching lessons (~30 min each) for multilingual learners and students with language-based needs. Available for about one-third of all core lessons. Print and digital.
Knowledge Deck Cards	Both	Vocabulary card deck for every module. Each card shows the term, an image, definition, part of speech, and a sample sentence. Posted on the classroom wall as terms are introduced.
Module Texts (class sets)	Both	Carefully curated books, poems, and articles. Class sets in 1:1, 1:2 (partner), or 1:6 (small group) formats depending on use.
Digital Platform	Both	Lesson slides, Assessment Guides, implementation resources, context videos, digital <i>Learn</i> books, annotation tools, and all digital-only materials.
Posters (1 set per grade)	Both	Content Stages poster and Fluency Reference Chart. Displayed all year as anchor references for students and teachers.

3. How a Module Works

Each module is a self-contained unit of study built around one topic and an Essential Question—the big question students explore through all texts and tasks. Five structural elements shape every module.

Element	What It Does
Essential Question	The overarching inquiry question posted in the classroom from day 1 and printed on every lesson page. Guides students' thinking, reading, writing, and discussion throughout the module
Knowledge Threads	Three to six core ideas students develop through the module texts—the essential takeaways students should be able to articulate by module end. Every lesson, task, and assessment aligns to these.
Text Set	A curated sequence of books, poems, articles, works of art, and videos selected to build knowledge cumulatively. Each text deepens understanding from the one before. Texts span multiple genres and represent diverse voices.
Module Arc (Content Stages)	Lessons are organized by arcs, each corresponding to a Content Stage: Opening Bookend, Wonder, Organize, Reveal, Distill, Know, Closing Bookend. This progression moves students from curiosity through comprehension and synthesis.
Bookend Lessons	Flexible lessons at the beginning and end of each module. The opening Bookend engages students in the module topic; the closing Bookend brings meaningful closure.
Assessments	Two Module Tasks (in-progress writing), two Comprehension Assessments (Listening K-2; Reading grades 2-8), and one End-of-Module Task. Assessment Guides with rubrics on the digital platform.

4. The Content Stages: The Learning Progression

Post the Content Stages poster in your classroom all year. Every lesson's Content Framing Question corresponds to one of these stages.

Stage	What Students Do—and Why It Matters
Wonder	First encounter with new texts. Students read or listen with wide-open curiosity, noticing details, asking questions, generating wonders. Builds initial vocabulary and literal comprehension that supports all deeper work ahead.
Organize	Students develop literal understanding by re-reading, sorting, and structuring. They identify key elements (characters, setting, main ideas, text structure) using graphic organizers. Sets up analysis.
Reveal	Students zoom in on how the text works by examining author's craft: word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, point of view, or artistic decisions. Develops ability to analyze and interpret.
Distill	Students zoom out to synthesize, discerning the text's overall meaning, drawing conclusions, identifying central ideas/themes, connecting evidence from multiple texts to answer the Essential Question. Discussion is central.
Know	Students consolidate what they've learned and connect explicitly to the Essential Question and Knowledge Threads. The World Knowledge Chart and ELA Knowledge Chart are updated here.

5. Anatomy of a Lesson

Every *Arts & Letters* lesson follows the same three-part structure: Launch → Learn → Land. Don't skip the first two pages of every lesson, which contain the Essential Question, Content Framing Question, lesson preview, learning goals, vocabulary to introduce, full agenda, materials list, preparation steps, and a follow-up assignment.

Section	Time	Purpose & What Happens
Launch	2–5 mins	Opens the lesson with clear purpose. Teacher displays and echo-reads the Content Framing Question, then briefly orients students to the text or task. Short and focused. Primes working memory, does not deliver new content.
Learn	50–53 mins	The heart of the lesson. Always structured in three sub-sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read—students encounter the anchor text. • Respond—students deepen understanding through discussion, graphic organizers, or analysis. • Write/Observe/Engage—rotates based on the lesson's instructional focus (one per lesson, not all three).
Land	5 mins	Closes every lesson. Students add to the class knowledge chart, respond to a closing prompt, or complete a brief formative task. Never skip Land. This is the moment that moves new learning from working memory into long-term memory.

Icons in Your Teach Book

Icon/Feature	What It Means
Analyze Student Progress	Guidance on monitoring student work on the Learning Task and how to support students who are struggling.
Blue Font/Speech Bubble	Language teachers are encouraged to say exactly as written. Trust this scripted language—the phrasing models precise academic language.
Bullseye (Target) Icon	Indicates the Learning Task, the lesson-level formative assessment. Appears at the same point in the student <i>Learn</i> book. Your primary in-lesson check for understanding.
Differentiation: Challenge	An extension for students who need an additional challenge or are working above grade level.
Differentiation: Support	A scaffold for students who need additional support reaching grade-level expectations. Use responsively during the lesson.
P Icon	A <i>Prologue</i> lesson is available. Decide which students will receive it and when before the school day begins.
Teacher Note	A point-of-use explanation of a material, strategy, or instructional decision. Read during preparation, not during instruction.

6. Instructional Routines

Routine	Grades	Type	Purpose
Chalk Talk	3–8	Writing	Silent, written discussion about a topic or text. Gives shy or reluctant speakers a chance to share, reflect, and respond to peers without interruption.
Choral Reading	K–8	Reading	Teacher and students read designated text in unison to build fluency through whole-group oral reading.
Echo Reading	K–8	Reading	Teacher models fluent reading and students then read the same text aloud. Builds fluency through supported oral reading practice.
Fishbowl	3–8	Discussion	Inner circle practices a skill while outer circle observes and provides feedback. Fosters metacognition and skill development.
Gallery Walk	K–8	Movement	Students move around the room to view posted text, images, or student work. Students shape and are shaped by peers' thinking.
Give One–Get One–Move On	3–8	Discussion	Students jot responses, circulate, and trade ideas with a series of partners. Promotes equity by ensuring all students share equally.
Jigsaw	2–8	Discussion	Students become experts on one text section, then regroup to share with others. Covers more content efficiently while maintaining accountability.
Jot–Pair–Share	K–8	Speaking	Students write individually, share with a partner, then discuss as a class. Preparation time before sharing increases participation.
Mix and Mingle	K–8	Speaking	Students think silently, then share responses with a series of partners as they circulate. Reinforces that all students have a voice.
Question Corners	K–2	Movement	Question words posted in corners; students choose a question, move to that corner, and discuss with classmates. Promotes decision-making and verbal communication.
Readers' Theater	2–8	Reading	Student groups perform a section of text. Authentic purpose for reading aloud; fosters engagement, creativity, fluency, and comprehension.
Repeated Reading	2–8	Reading	Students read a short passage aloud multiple times to improve fluency and comprehension. Supports close reading and textual analysis.
Tableau	K–8	Movement	Student groups create a living picture by silently freezing in position to represent a scene or idea. Kinesthetic and creative; deepens understanding.
Take a Stand	3–8	Discussion	Students take a position on a question or issue, then discuss and reconsider views. Structured way to synthesize evidence and develop informed opinions.
Think–Pair–Share	K–8	Speaking	Students think independently, share with a partner, then discuss as a whole group. Fosters reflection, collaborative learning, and verbal communication.
Vocabulary Exploration	K–8	Speaking	Used with Knowledge Deck Cards: students hear the word, see it in context, discuss meaning, and practice using it. Repeated across modules and grade levels.

7. Pacing Your Year

Each grade level has four modules of 37–40 lessons each (approx. 150–160 lessons/year). Each lesson is designed for exactly one 60-minute period. A 180-day school year leaves 20–30 flex days for routines, reteaching, testing, and special events.

Principle	What It Means
4 modules per grade	Each module runs approximately 37–40 lessons and is a complete, self-contained unit of study. All four modules together form a complete year of ELA instruction.
One lesson per day	Do not compress lessons. Rushing undermines the knowledge-building progression. Maintain the one-lesson-per-day pace.
20–30 flex days	Built-in flexibility for assessment, responsive teaching, and unexpected events. Use flex days to respond to student needs, not just to catch up.
Opening & Closing Bookends	These lessons are flexible in structure and may extend beyond 60 minutes. Plan for this in your schedule because they are worth the time.

Literacy Block Planning by Grade Band

Grade Band	Arts & Letters Block	Additional Literacy Time to Plan
K–2	60 min (core)	30 min foundational skills instruction + 30 min for Volume of Reading, <i>Prologue</i> , small group, or Geodes practice
3–5	60 min (core)	30 min targeted practice, fluency, or Volume of Reading + 30 min optional <i>Prologue</i> (1–3 lessons/week)
6–8	60 min (core)	30 min homework (Volume of Reading, fluency, or core text reading) + 30 min optional <i>Prologue</i>

Setting Up Your Classroom

Display When	What to Post
All year	Reference the Content Stages poster every time you introduce a new stage or Content Framing Question. Students use the Fluency Reference Chart during fluency practice.
All module long	Essential Question. Knowledge Deck Cards (add each card as the term is introduced). World Knowledge Chart and ELA Knowledge Chart (updated daily during Land). Question Board (grades 6–8).
Every lesson	Content Framing Question (today’s focus) and daily agenda. Remove and replace these each day.
When lesson-appropriate	Syllable Types Chart (grades 3–5). Painted Essay structure chart (grades 3–5). Talking Tool (grades 3–8). Writing Checklist (grades 3–8). Module works of art and Art Terms cards.

8. Assessment at a Glance

Each module includes three types of formal assessment. All Assessment Guides, rubrics, and scoring resources are on the digital platform. Assessments draw on knowledge students have built together so every student enters from the same foundation.

Assessment	When	What Students Do
Module Tasks	Mid-module, in two installments	Formal in-progress writing task (narrative, opinion, or informational) completed in stages. Builds complexity incrementally and prepares students for the EOM Task. Scored with an Assessment Guide rubric.
Listening Comprehension Assessment (K–2)/Reading Comprehension Assessment (grades 2–8)	Twice per module	Students read or listen to a “warm read” text—a new text closely related to the module topic. Shared knowledge base ensures every student has an equal opportunity to comprehend.
End-of-Module (EOM) Task	Final lessons (usually L36–38)	Culminating writing task. Students draw on all module learning to produce a full written piece. Scored against Achievement Descriptor-aligned rubrics. Assessment Guide provides scoring guidance and follow-up suggestions.

Responding to Assessment Data

- **Review Assessment Guide rubrics** before module 1 so you know what proficiency looks like before students start writing.
- **Use the Learning Task (bullseye icon)** in each lesson as your primary in-lesson formative check. Don't wait for formal assessments.
- **The Analyze Student Progress notes** give you specific guidance for supporting students struggling with the Learning Task.
- **Use EOM Task data alongside Module Task data** to see growth across the module. One task alone does not show the full picture.
- **Assessment Guides** include suggested follow-up for students at different performance levels. Use these to plan responsive small groups.

9. Getting Started Checklist

Work through this before your first module and revisit the module-level and lesson-level sections before every module and lesson.

Before the School Year/Before Module 1

	Confirm arrival of all materials: <i>Teach</i> books, <i>Learn</i> books, <i>Prologue</i> books, Knowledge Deck Cards, module texts, and posters.
	Complete digital platform setup: teacher and student access credentials, student rostering, digital <i>Learn</i> assignments.
	Download the grade-level Materials Checklist from the digital platform.
	Read the Module 1 <i>Teach</i> book from cover to cover: Summary, Essential Question, Knowledge Threads, Learning Goals, Assessments, and Module Plan.
	Read all Module 1 texts before Lesson 1. Your content knowledge is your most important classroom asset.
	Hang the Content Stages poster and Fluency Reference Chart. These stay up all year.
	Decide where students will keep <i>Learn</i> books and journals; teach students this routine on day 1.
	Identify which students may benefit from <i>Prologue</i> support; plan when and how to deliver it.

Before Each Module

	Complete the Module Study Protocol: review Essential Question, texts, Knowledge Threads, Learning Goals, Materials & Preparation, and Assessments.
	Post the new Essential Question and prepare fresh World Knowledge and ELA Knowledge Charts.
	Review the EOM Task expectations so you can set students up from day 1 of the module.
	Read the Assessment Guide for this module's assessments on the digital platform.
	Confirm all module text class sets are accounted for and ready to distribute.

Before Each Lesson

	Complete the Lesson Study Protocol: read the full <i>Teach</i> book lesson including all preparation steps.
	Complete all preparation steps from the Lesson Overview (display charts, duplicate materials, arrange texts).
	Open lesson slides on the digital platform and confirm technology is working.
	Check the P icon—note which students need <i>Prologue</i> support for this lesson.
	Identify Differentiation Support and Challenge notes for your specific students.
	Know the Content Framing Question and be ready to post it and echo-read it with students at the start of Launch.

Keys to Success: Five Teaching Tips for New Teachers

Tip	What It Means
Trust the blue font.	The scripted language models precise academic language. Read it as written until you find your footing.
Don't skip Land.	It is the easiest part to cut and the most important not to. Even five minutes of synthesis cements the day's learning.
Post the Content Framing Question every day.	Students need to see the purpose of their work in writing, not just hear it spoken.
Use the lesson slides on the digital platform.	They reduce prep time, support pacing, and ensure nothing important is skipped.
Annotate your Teach book.	Flag what worked, what to adjust, and decisions made. Your first year becomes the foundation for year two.

FAQs

Question	Answer
What are Prologue lessons and who are they for?	<i>Prologue</i> lessons are 30-minute pre-teaching sessions paired with about one-third of all core lessons. Designed for multilingual learners and students with language-based needs, they build key vocabulary, practice sentence structure, and preview the core lesson's text, so students arrive prepared, not behind.
How does Arts & Letters support students at different levels?	Every lesson includes two types of margin notes: Support scaffolds for students who need extra help (used responsively, not pre-emptively) and Challenge extensions for students ready for deeper thinking. An Analyze Student Progress guide helps teachers monitor and respond to student work on the Learning Task.
What specific supports exist for multilingual learners?	<i>Arts & Letters</i> includes <i>Prologue</i> pre-teaching, Knowledge Deck Cards with images and definitions, scripted academic language in blue font, and the Talking Tool (grades 3–8), which provides sentence frames for academic conversation. Every lesson also includes structured oral language opportunities.