

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS *WIT & WISDOM*?

Wit & Wisdom is a comprehensive Grades K–8 English language arts curriculum developed by and for teachers. Each *Wit & Wisdom* module centers on the study of rich and engaging texts, curated to build student knowledge of important ideas in the liberal arts and the sciences. The approach is integrated and text-based: daily reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary study is based on—and draws on evidence from—exceptional texts.

The *Wit & Wisdom* approach helps teachers celebrate the joy of reading and writing with students, while also supporting all learners to tackle the rigor that the standards demand. By reading books they love and engaging meaningfully in their learning, students develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful readers, critical thinkers, and effective communicators who love to learn and can succeed in college and careers.

Wit & Wisdom allows educators to teach more meaningful English because of three principles.

Books, Not Basals

Every *Wit & Wisdom* text students encounter is authentic and of the highest quality. Instead of basals, students read books they love to build knowledge of important topics and master literacy skills. The texts are wide-ranging and varied, including a careful balance of literary, informational, and fine-art texts.

Knowledge Building

Every module, or unit of study, in each grade focuses on a topic essential for building background knowledge, vocabulary, and writing skills. For example, students learn about the seasons, the American Revolution, civil rights, and space exploration. Essential topics strategically reoccur, empowering students to deepen understanding of core knowledge across Grades K–8.

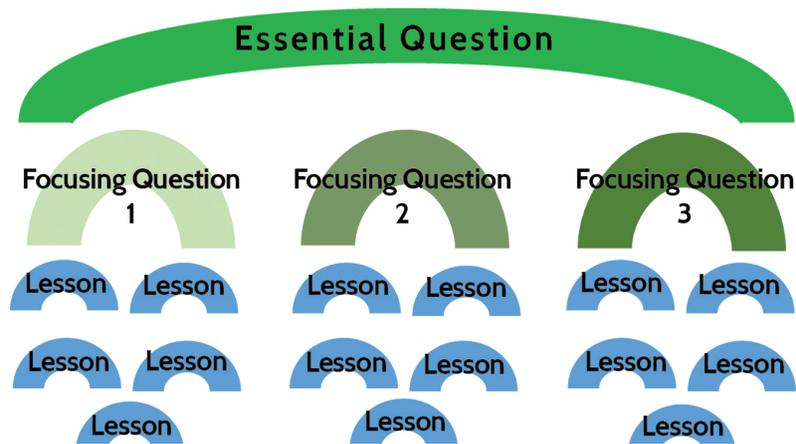
Integrated, Not Isolated

Students practice reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in an integrated way, with every strand of the standards woven throughout each module. This integrated approach enables students to be more successful as they activate and build on their developing background and vocabulary knowledge of the module topic while learning skills in other areas.

GETTING STARTED WITH *WIT & WISDOM*

OVERVIEW

Wit & Wisdom consists of modules of study designed to help students develop habits of mind common to strong readers and writers. Each module develops around complex texts and an Essential Question. Several Focusing Questions organize arcs of lessons that build sequential knowledge of texts and the Essential Question. Reading, writing, and discussion in each arc support student success on an End-of-Module (EOM) Task.



The following provides an overview of the *Wit & Wisdom* structure of study.

The **Academic Year** consists of an abbreviated introductory module, Module 0, and four comprehensive modules to be taught in order.

The Modules (units of study)

- center on one Essential Question;
- typically consist of thirty to thirty-eight core lessons, seventy-five minutes in length, each followed by a fifteen-minute Deep Dive focused on vocabulary or style and conventions germane to the core lesson;
- center on complex texts (both literary and informational) and visual art related to the Essential Question;
- focus on designated Common Core State Standards (CCSS) English Language Arts (ELA) standards; and
- conclude with a culminating EOM Task.

Each **Essential Question**

- provides a compelling question for students to investigate during study and beyond;
- establishes inquiry-based learning; and
- guides students' thinking as they read, think, discuss, and write throughout a module.

Examples:

- Kindergarten Module 2: What makes a good story?
- Grade 2 Module 2: How can people respond to injustice?
- Grade 4 Module 1: What does it mean to have a great heart, literally and figuratively?
- Grade 8 Module 3: What is love?

The **Focusing Questions**

- offer deeper investigations of different aspects of the Essential Question;
- direct students' reading, thinking, discussion, and written tasks throughout each arc of lessons in a module; and
- culminate in a Focusing Question Task, an opportunity for students to demonstrate learning and teachers to assess progress.

Example:

Grade 5 Module 4

Essential Question: How can sports influence individuals and societies?

Focusing Questions:

How can sports affect the way we view others?

How can sports create opportunities for change?

How can people challenge or overcome barriers through sports?

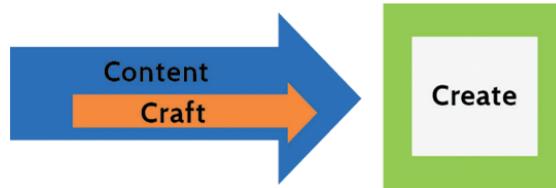
Each of the **Daily Lessons** consists of a core lesson and a Deep Dive.

- **Core lessons** (75 min.)
 - focus students' learning through lesson-level **Content Framing Questions** and **Craft Questions** that target specific content and craft learning;
 - offer a purposeful sequence of activities centered on reading, discussing, and writing about module texts; and
 - build students' content knowledge and skills acquisition.
- **Deep Dives** (15 min.) provide a deep study of pertinent vocabulary or CCSS-aligned style and conventions connected to the core lesson.

LEARNING DESIGN

Content-Craft-Create Framework

The Content-Craft-Create framework is the backbone of *Wit & Wisdom*'s learning design.



Specifically, *Wit & Wisdom* lessons are designed so that students develop the following:

- **Content knowledge.** Students learn how to comprehend complex literary, informational, and visual texts.
- **Craft proficiency.** Students learn to convey information and express ideas through explicit instruction in the crafts of writing, speaking, and presenting.

- **Opportunities to create.** Through the merging of content and craft, students demonstrate their knowledge and express their ideas in formal written and oral assessments. Representing the Great Minds logo, the *Wit & Wisdom* empty frame is ready and waiting for students to create their unique contributions to knowledge—of the world and of ideas.

Each aspect of this framework is carefully organized to help students gain lifelong skills and habits of mind.

Content Stages and Content Framing Questions

Wit & Wisdom equips students with a flexible yet predictable process for deep reading of complex texts. Lessons are structured with a purposeful progression that enables students to access, understand, and analyze these texts. This progression consists of five Content Stages: Wonder, Organize, Reveal, Distill, and Know. Shaping each lesson is a Content Framing Question that guides students' exploration of a text and represents where they land in the lesson's learning.

The following chart identifies each Content Stage, a typical version of its associated Content Framing Question, and the type of thinking and reading in which students engage during each stage.

Content Stage	Content Framing Question	Description of Student Thinking and Actions
<u>Wonder</u>	What do I notice and wonder about this text?	Students read the text with curiosity and attention and ask key questions about what they read.
<u>Organize</u>	What is happening in this text?	Students organize their thinking on what the text is about, demonstrating their literal comprehension of a text.
<u>Reveal</u>	What does a deeper exploration of [text-specific element] reveal in this text?	Students go deeper into the text, explore the author's craft and word choices, analyze the text's structure and its implicit meaning, and attend to other unique features of the text.
<u>Distill</u>	What is the essential meaning of this text?	Students synthesize their understanding of a text's elements to discern the full impact of the elements they studied. They seek to understand the text as a sum of its parts, with the goal of achieving a profound understanding of the whole work.
<u>Know</u>	How does this text build my knowledge of [specific topic]?	Students consider the text in the context of their own knowledge and learning. They examine the impact of the text on their world of knowledge and articulate the transferrable knowledge and skills they have acquired during the course of studying a text.

The content stages form the acronym **WORD + Know**, representing the knowledge students build by answering each question with a close examination of the words of text. By engaging in this process with multiple texts, students internalize the stages and develop habits of mind that will enable them to approach and be successful with many different types and levels of texts.

Craft Stages and Craft Questions

The crafts of writing, speaking, and presenting are also taught in a careful sequence that ultimately leads students to mastery and independence. Students begin by examining high-quality exemplars of the craft. Then they receive progressive direct instruction in the skills necessary to practice and master the craft. As is true with the Content Stages, *Wit & Wisdom* delineates each Craft Stage with a Craft Question.

The following chart identifies each Craft Stage, its associated Craft Question, and the type of thinking and reading in which students engage during each stage.

Craft Stage	Craft Question	Description of Student Thinking and Action
<u>Ex</u> amine	Why is [specific skill] important?	Students analyze an exemplar of a writing or speaking skill to recognize criteria for quality communication and, ultimately, to execute the skill on their own.
<u>Ex</u> periment	How does [specific skill] work?	Students practice and hone the target writing or speaking skill in a scaffolded task.
<u>Ex</u> ecute	How do I use [specific skill] in [specific task]?	Students employ the skill in their own text-based writing.
<u>Ex</u> cel	How do I improve my use of [specific skill]?	Students revise and revisit their speaking or writing, cultivating mastery of the target skill.

Each stage begins with ex-, representing the exPLICIT instruction in exPRESSION that students gain. With this carefully scaffolded instruction, students develop transferable skills in the crafts of speaking, writing, and presenting.

Create: The Demonstration of Content and Craft Learning

After building content knowledge through the Content Framing stages progression and developing their craft, students are ready to create a knowledge-based product. Students express their ideas and understanding of texts by completing these performance assessment tasks:

- Focusing Question Tasks
- End-of-Module (EOM) Tasks

Whether written, oral, or both, Focusing Question and EOM Tasks invite and inspire students to create and share great work.

These tasks are specific to each module's texts, standards, and topic. Modules are backward-designed from these questions, which drive student inquiry and focus assessment.

MODULE TOPICS AND EOM TASK WRITING TYPES

Grade	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4
K	<i>The Five Senses</i> Informative Writing	<i>Once Upon a Farm</i> Narrative Writing	<i>America, Then and Now</i> Informative Writing (Research)	<i>The Continents</i> Opinion Writing
1	<i>A World of Books</i> Narrative Writing	<i>Creature Features</i> Informative Writing (Research)	<i>Powerful Forces</i> Narrative Writing	<i>Cinderella Stories</i> Opinion Writing
2	<i>A Season of Change</i> Informative Writing	<i>The American West</i> Informative Writing	<i>Civil Rights Heroes</i> Narrative Writing	<i>Good Eating</i> Opinion Writing (Research)
3	<i>The Sea</i> Informative Writing	<i>Outer Space</i> Opinion Writing	<i>A New Home</i> Narrative Writing	<i>Artists Make Art</i> Informative Writing (Research)
4	<i>A Great Heart</i> Informative Writing	<i>Extreme Settings</i> Narrative Writing	<i>The Redcoats Are Coming!</i> Opinion Writing (Research)	<i>Myth Making</i> Informative Writing
5	<i>Cultures in Conflict</i> Informative Writing	<i>Word Play</i> Narrative Writing	<i>A War Between Us</i> Opinion Writing	<i>Breaking Barriers</i> Informative Writing (Research)
6	<i>Resilience in the Great Depression</i> Informative Writing	<i>A Hero's Journey</i> Narrative Writing	<i>Narrating the Unknown</i> Argument Writing	<i>Courage in Crisis</i> Informative Writing (Research)
7	<i>Identity in the Middle Ages</i> Narrative Writing	<i>Americans All</i> Informative Writing	<i>Language and Power</i> Argument Writing	<i>Fever</i> Informative Writing (Research)
8	<i>The Poetics and Power of Storytelling</i> Narrative Writing	<i>The Great War</i> Informative Writing	<i>What Is Love?</i> Argument Writing	<i>Teens as Change Agents</i> Informative Writing (Research)