

Thematic Connections

Thematic Connections help students make sense of life, both their own life—self-knowledge—and the world—how things work. They are particularly rich for students as they begin to see the interconnectedness of all the areas of inquiry in the curriculum, and are led to ask questions and initiate investigation in an interdisciplinary manner.

Relationship to Nature – seasons, plants and animals, land forms, ecology, balance of nature, light and shadow/time of day, estimating distances and height, myths, pre-technological societies compared to contemporary technology, cultural differences, world religions, fiction and non-fiction about people’s relationship to plants and animals and the systems that support them, use of plants and animals, natural resources, extinction of species, symbolism of animals and plants, poetry, the costs of technological progress, and many others.

Point of View – different ways of representing the same data, differing perspectives on historical events, different characters’ points of view in literature and drama, light as particle or as wave, measuring an electron’s position or its energy, relativity, relativism, debates and arguments in history and in the present, maps (topological, bird’s eye view, political, etc.), perspective drawing, optical illusions, and many others.

Portrait – definition of a “portrait” as a representation that shows the essential elements of a thing; portrait of an ecosystem or bioregion, portrait of a place, identifying essential elements (literature, content-area reading), map reading, self-portraits and portraits of others, political cartoons and satire, false portraits / misrepresentation, character description, portrait of an element or a compound, biography, and many others.

Balance/Unbalance – weights and measurements, equations, physical education, variables, linear equations and relationships, balanced accounts of historical events, balanced and unbalanced compositions, difference between symmetry and balance, mobiles, density tubes, and many others.

Story – narrative elements, identifying the main idea and supportive details, compare first and third person stories, the story of a person’s life (biography and autobiography), the “story” of pollination (characters, setting, plot, obstacles, etc.), the “story” of natural selection, the “story” of the O₂ and CO₂ cycle, the “stories” of immigration, monologues and dialogues, and many others.

Truth: Myth, Fact, and Fiction – history of science, the scientific method, source checking, proofing, camouflage, optical illusions, myth as history or as fiction, deception and misunderstanding, stereotypes, differing historical accounts, media literacy, and many others.

Journey – the water cycle, watersheds, migration, immigration, and emigration, the spread of cultures and religions, the digestive system, the protagonist’s journey in fiction, how works of art get into a museum, the journey of the river, mythic journeys, the hero’s journey, the journey of a comet, journeymen and apprenticing, and many others.

Transformation -- states of matter, American Revolution, chemical processes, the water cycle, changing fractions to decimals, decay and composting, digestion, production of energy, evolution, physical development and developmental stages, mythical transformations/Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, world religions, translation to another language or to another form or medium, and many others.