

### Novel Study: The Science of Breakable Things

In this unit, students will be given tools and strategies for the critical reading of a novel.

#### What's the story?

Students will read the award-winning novel *The Science of Breakable Things* by Tae Keller. This middle-grade novel is about a seventh grader, Natalie, and her attempts to win an egg drop contest (and its prize money) to obtain a rare Cobalt Blue Orchid for her mother.

Natalie navigates the **challenges of family relationships, friendships, failure, and persevering through difficult times**. Natalie learns that **she can't always protect breakable things** in her life, such as eggs and hearts, but that it is **important not to give up and to continue asking questions**. As students progress through this engaging novel, they will explore **narrative writing** with an emphasis on **structural elements**. This novel study will prepare students to interpret and write their own fictional narratives.

#### What will my student learn?

Students will learn to **read texts closely** and **carefully**. Novels are often multidimensional, so students will have opportunities to let their imagination flourish, explore a unique **narrative structure**, analyze images, and expand their creativity.

Students will work toward **completing a narrative writing project**, which reinforces the unit's integration of reading about and writing a fictional narrative. Students will learn to **analyze and write dialogue and descriptions** that reveal characters' perspectives, feelings, and relationships and how they change. The activities in this unit are designed to increase students' comprehension of the novel and provide opportunities to practice writing with the **literary tools and techniques** they learned. Students will also study and practice **writing composition skills** as well as understand **new vocabulary**.

#### Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning (please note that chapters in this novel are titled "Assignments"):

1. Why does the author use scientific steps to organize the novel? (Assignment 42)  
**Follow up:** How can we relate these steps to our own lives?
2. Who are the main characters in the novel? (Assignments 1-42)  
**Follow up:** Which character or characters do you like the most? What about them do you find interesting?
3. Why does Natalie enter the egg drop competition? (Assignment 11)  
**Follow up:** Why does Natalie want to win the prize money?

4. What are the results of the egg drop competition? (Assignment 32)  
**Follow up:** What do the characters' reactions to this result teach you about them?
5. Describe Natalie's second plan to obtain the Cobalt Blue Orchid seed. (Assignments 33-42)  
**Follow up:** Does this plan work? Why or why not?
6. How do the characters change in this novel and why? (Assignment 42)  
**Follow up:** How does Natalie's relationship with her mom, her dad, and her friends change in the novel?
7. What does Natalie learn at the end of the novel? (Assignment 42)  
**Follow up:** What does Natalie learn about breakable things, and how does this apply to different aspects of her life?