

Novel Study: The Season of Styx Malone

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 Season of Styx Malone* by Kekla Magoon, a winner of the Coretta Scott King Award. As they progress through this engaging novel, they will explore **narrative writing** with an emphasis on **plot elements**. This study will prepare students to interpret and write 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 **figurative language**, 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. They 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 grade-level grammar skills, as well as understand **new vocabulary**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning.

1. What characters did you read about in the novel and how would you describe them? (chapters 1–54)
Follow up: Which character did you enjoy reading about the most and why? (chapters 1–54)
2. Caleb really wants to travel outside of his hometown of Sutton. Is there anywhere that you want to go or places you want to see? (chapter 1)
Follow up: Why do you want to visit this place? (chapter 1)
3. What is the difference between first- and third-person point of view? (chapters 6–54)
Follow up: Can you give me an example of each? (chapters 6–54)
4. Tell me about the Great Escalator Trade. (chapter 8)
Follow up: What do the boys in the story want and why? (chapter 8)

5. What are some themes that emerge in the story? (chapters 17–54)
Follow up: What lesson or message can you interpret about the themes based on the novel? (chapter 54)
6. What are some of the conflicts that emerge in the story? (chapters 37–54)
Follow up: Are these conflicts internal or external? What is the difference between an internal and an external conflict? (chapters 37–54) Are these conflicts resolved at the end? (chapter 54)
7. Is there a happy ending for the characters? Why? (chapter 54)
Follow up: If you had to come up with an alternate ending, what would it be? (chapter 54)
8. What are some strategies you have learned for writing a fictional narrative? (chapter 54)
Follow up: What have you learned about narrative writing that has made it enjoyable to read and to write? (chapter 54)