

# Coming-of-Age Unit

## Educator Workbook

---

This Educator Workbook supplements the [Facing History Coming-of-Age Unit Planning Toolkit](#) and supports the pre-planning and design process for a Facing History coming-of-age literature unit. Each section provides specific questions and activities that correspond to the online Unit Planning Toolkit.

### This workbook includes the following sections:

#### Section 1: Start with Yourself

- ❑ A guided self-reflection to help educators consider their identities, their students' identities, and their teaching practice.

#### Section 2: Choose a Coming-of-Age Text

- ❑ A question-driven assessment to support the text-selection process, as well as questions to support educators as they help students fully engage with the world of the text.

#### Section 3: Begin with the End in Mind

- ❑ Facing History learning objectives and learning outcomes that can be paired with federal and state standards or used on their own to identify enduring areas of understanding, important ideas, and key concepts in the unit.

#### Section 4: Craft the Essential Question

- ❑ A bank of essential questions for a coming-of-age unit that can help students explore the curriculum in greater depth, as well as help for educators to align their essential question with key Facing History learning outcomes and passages in their text.

#### Section 5: Design the Summative Assessment

- ❑ A summative assessment planning guide that supports educators in adapting the Unit Planning Toolkit [“This I Believe . . .” Personal Narrative assessment](#) or in outlining their own unit assessment.

### Before You Begin

Download the [Unit Planning Template](#) so you can make notes as you progress through the workbook and toolkit. You can also view a [Sample Facing History Coming-of-Age Unit Outline](#) that uses the template at the end of this workbook.

## Section 1: Start with Yourself

*This section supports **Start with Yourself** in the Unit Planning Toolkit.*

**Directions:** The following reflection questions can be invaluable for individual teachers, department chairs, instructional coaches, and pre-service teachers when developing a Facing History literature unit. Reflect on them in your journal, during planning meetings with your team, or as a department.

### Know Your Purpose

Educators always need to consider our core beliefs about teaching and learning. This process starts with understanding our “why,” the key principles that guide our planning and pedagogy for the students in our classroom each year.

1. What are your core beliefs about teaching and learning?
2. What factors helped to shape these core beliefs?
3. If you were one of your students, what would you say about your teaching?

### Consider Your Identity and Experiences

When we reflect on our identities, it is important that we consider our own reading and writing identities and the ways in which our past experiences as ELA students might shape our own pedagogy and curricular decisions.

1. How did the literature you read during adolescence expand your worldview and help you engage with life experiences different from your own? How did it fall short of providing these growth opportunities?
2. You now teach ELA or humanities classes. Did you enjoy these classes when you were in school? Why or why not?

### Consider Your Students’ Identities and Experiences

Knowing our students as unique individuals, as well as understanding their relationship to reading and writing, can help us support them intellectually and emotionally.

1. How would you describe the demographics of the students in your classroom/school (consider grade level, ethnicity, socioeconomic factors, gender identity, native language)?

2. In what ways does the student population in your classroom reflect the student population at your school?
3. When have you observed students to be most motivated in your classroom?
4. How might your students' own identities and life experiences shape their encounter with the curriculum in your new unit?
5. What important skills and knowledge do your students already have, and how can this unit relate to what they bring to the classroom?

### **Consider Your School Community**

Knowing your school community and understanding the value systems and available assets can help you understand how your curriculum fits into the larger school curriculum and community ethos.

1. Who is your principal or school head? What is their vision for the school, and how does your course fit into that vision?
2. Which teacher has been in your department the longest? What institutional memory might be useful as you build this unit?
3. Which teacher is newest to your department? What new perspectives and fresh ideas might they offer that could be useful as you build this unit?
4. Who in your professional community can you turn to for help when supporting students and choosing core texts?

### **Activity: Mapping Your Educational Journey**

What key moments have shaped your educational journey, and how would you represent these moments symbolically or visually? Start by reflecting on memorable experiences you had during your own schooling, including pivotal moments that shaped you as a reader and writer, influential mentors, and professional development you found meaningful. Then adapt the **Life Road Maps** teaching strategy to create your educational journey map. Consider its shape (a line, zigzag, spiral, something else) and where to include potholes, highways, hills and valleys, detours, and other journey metaphors as you use images, symbols, color, words, and phrases to map your journey. What does your educational journey map reveal, and how can it help to inform the decisions you make in your classroom this year?

## Section 2: Choose a Coming-of-Age Text

*This section supports [Choose a Coming-of-Age Text](#) in the Unit Planning Toolkit.*

**Directions:** Use the following questions to prompt individual and departmental reflection and discussion about the text-selection process.

### Reflect on Your Course as a Whole

1. What are the larger themes and big questions that you want your students to engage with in this course?
2. What identities, points of view, experiences, and voices—of both authors and characters—do you include in your course? What is missing?
3. How prepared do you feel to build intentional learning spaces where your students can discuss difficult texts and themes? In addition to consulting Facing History's [Fostering Civil Discourse: How Do We Talk about Issues that Matter?](#) guide and our [Contracting](#) teaching strategy, where else in your school community or educator network can you find the support you need to foster a reflective and brave classroom community?
4. How will you prepare to address racial slurs, derogatory words, anachronistic language, and dialect with intention and care in your classroom? (See also [Strategies for Addressing Racist and Dehumanizing Language in Literature](#).)
5. What might a tool like a literature equity audit reveal or affirm about the resources used in your course?

### Reflect on Specific Text Selection

1. What texts come before and after this one?
2. How might your students be entering this unit emotionally?
3. What is your own relationship to the text, and how might it influence your decision about whether or not to teach it?
4. What priority are you trying to address with this text selection—what is the opportunity, challenge, need, or new direction you would like to pursue?

5. Is the text—and any discussions and questions raised by it—appropriate for your students’ reading ability, developmental readiness, and emotional maturity? How do you know? Are there portions or aspects of the text that you worry are developmentally inappropriate? If so, what are they?

### Reflect on Coming-of-Age Literature

1. What coming-of-age experiences and milestones are explored in the texts you are considering?
2. How do the depictions of adolescence in the text reflect (or not reflect) your own experience of growing up?
3. How will this text connect students to perspectives, experiences, and values that both challenge and resonate with their own coming-of-age experience?

### Put Literature in Context

It’s important to consider the context in which a text was written or created. Understanding relevant historical and contemporary context will help your students navigate the “world of the text” and will also help them understand how to thoughtfully and critically make connections to the world outside of the text.

1. What historical or contemporary issues does the text raise that your students need to understand in order to fully engage with the text?
2. If the text selected is *not* contemporary, what new ideas, insights, and imperatives have emerged since its publication?
3. If the text selected *is* contemporary, what context do you feel connected to and what context do you need to research deeply?

#### Activity: Engage with a Text-Selection Tool

Our friends at Learning for Justice produced **two text-selection tools** that you may find helpful. One tool is a one-page questionnaire designed for “busy teachers and anyone looking to assess a text’s diversity.” The other tool is a comprehensive multi-page guide “ideal for curriculum coordinators, literacy coaches, book-selection committees, and pre-service teachers.”

## Section 3: Begin with the End in Mind

***This section supports [Begin with the End in Mind](#) in the Unit Planning Toolkit.***

**Directions:** Building on the previous two sections of the workbook, the following questions and planning activity support educators in identifying goals, learning objectives, and key learning outcomes for their Facing History coming-of-age unit. Use the planning activity to surface moments in the text that support these learning outcomes and to plan which chapters and passages to prioritize for whole-class learning experiences and formative assessments.

### Consider Your Goals for the Unit

Educators always need to consider the purpose behind our curriculum choices and articulate the goals for our students so they understand how what they are learning connects to previous units and fits within the course as a whole.

1. What do you want students to remember a year after they read this text? Why?
2. How does this text fit into your overall course goals?
3. What topics and/or themes do you want students to engage with in this unit? How does the coming-of-age text you selected help students engage with these topics and/or themes?

### Facing History Learning Objectives

When writing learning objectives for a Facing History coming-of-age literature unit, it is important to consider the whole student. With this in mind, we have identified three main learning objectives, which balance students' social, cognitive, and civic development:

1. Explore the Complexity of Identity
2. Process Texts through a Critical and Ethical Lens
3. Develop a Sense of Civic Agency

While you should feel free to add your own learning objectives, which may draw from your state and federal standards, the resources in the Unit Planning Toolkit focus on supporting students' growth and progress toward these three objectives.

## Facing History Learning Outcomes

Regardless of the text, a Facing History literature unit should provide opportunities for students to engage with our learning outcomes, which describe the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that students develop over the course of the unit. After reviewing [the learning outcomes](#) in the Unit Planning Toolkit, use the following activity to start planning which outcomes you want to support your students' progress toward and assess during your coming-of-age unit.

### Activity: Surface Key Moments that Align with Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Use the [Begin with the End in Mind Educator Handout](#) to help you identify specific moments where your text provides opportunities for students to engage with key Facing History concepts and skills.

## Section 4: Craft the Essential Question

*This section supports **Craft the Essential Question** in the **Unit Planning Toolkit**.*

**Directions:** With your work of literature and learning objectives in mind, use the following activities to identify possible essential questions for your unit. Consider how they invite your students to wrestle with complexity and to engage the mind, heart, and conscience through exploration of the text and reflection on their own lived experiences.

### Generate a List of Unit Essential Questions

Drawing from the coming-of-age essential questions provided in the **Unit Planning Toolkit** and/or your own ideas, generate a list of possible essential questions for your unit that will reflect the unit and course goals, as well as the learning objectives, that you identified in the previous section of the Educator Workbook.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity: Test-Drive Essential Questions

After you have settled on a few possible essential questions, take them for a test drive!

**1. Choose one or two possible essential questions from your list above.** Reflect on how each question offers possibilities to do the following:

- Investigate characterization and theme through the lens of identity and belonging.
- Make personal and real-world connections between the book and self.
- Explore moral dilemmas and choices.

**2. Identify 5–7 key scenes** in the text that **explore, complicate,** or **add nuance** to your unit's essential question, scenes that you would like your students to explore in small groups and as a class:

**3. On a piece of paper, write the essential question and complete the following sentence starter for each scene:**

*This scene explores, complicates, or adds nuance to my unit essential question because . . .*

If you completed the activity Surface Key Moments that Align with Learning Objectives and Outcomes in **Section 3: Begin with the End in Mind**, consider test-driving those scenes to see if they offer opportunities to explore the essential question. If you find it difficult to complete the exercise, it may be a sign that it isn't the best question for your unit.

## Section 5: Design the Summative Assessment

*This section supports **Design the Summative Assessment** in the **Unit Planning Toolkit**, which includes teacher resources and student handouts to support a **“This I Believe . . .” Personal Narrative** essay, podcast, or video project.*

**Directions:** Regardless of whether you are adapting the “This I Believe” personal narrative essay for your context or creating your own unit assessment, reflect on the following questions to identify your assessment goals and to outline your summative assessment.

### Identify Key Content Knowledge and Skills

1. What content knowledge and skills do you want students to retain a year after they complete this unit?
2. How does this content knowledge and how do these skills benefit your students, both in the lives they are leading now and in their future education and careers?

### Identify Your Assessment Goals

1. What are your main goals for this summative assessment?
2. How will the content knowledge and skills identified in the previous question be reflected in this assessment?
3. How does this summative assessment build on what students have already learned? How will it help to prepare them for what comes next in the course?

### Align the Assessment with Essential Questions and Learning Objectives

1. How will this assessment help students answer the essential question(s) you’ve selected for this unit?
2. What elements of the assessment will help you measure the learning objectives you’ve selected for this unit?

### Plan Formative Assessments

1. What formative assessments will students complete to help them practice the learning objectives and outcomes you’ve selected?

- a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
2. How will these formative assessments lead to student success in the summative assessment?

### Select Mentor Texts to Teach Form and Craft

1. What types of mentor texts (e.g., poems, short stories, essays, podcasts, videos) do you think will enrich the assessment experience for your students?
2. Have you already identified specific mentor texts for this assessment to help your students examine form and craft, and to inform their own writing process? If not, what help do you need with this process?

### Establish Assessment Criteria and Timeline

1. How long will students have to complete the summative assessment?
2. When during the unit will you introduce the summative assessment to your students?
3. How will you assess the summative assessment?
4. How will you know that a student did well on this assessment? How will they know?
5. How will you know that a student has not succeeded in meeting the assessment goals? How will you communicate this to the student? How will you use this information when planning and implementing your next unit?

#### About the Educator Workbook

This Educator Workbook is part of the **Coming-of-Age Unit Planning Toolkit**, designed to support middle and high school ELA and humanities teachers as they develop and implement a coming-of-age literature unit. Visit the Toolkit at [www.facinghistory.org/ela/coming-age/toolkit](http://www.facinghistory.org/ela/coming-age/toolkit) or explore our Coming of Age in a Complex World resource collection at [www.facinghistory.org/ela/coming-age](http://www.facinghistory.org/ela/coming-age).

## Sample Facing History Coming-of-Age Unit Outline

*The following is an example of a Facing History coming-of-age unit plan, using the Unit Planning Template and Facing History approach. This sample outline is for demonstration purposes only.*

### Facing History Coming-of-Age Unit Planning Template (Sample)

**Coming-of-Age Work of Literature (Title/Author):** *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

#### Facing History Learning Objectives

Explore the Complexity of Identity  
Examine Texts through a Critical and Ethical Lens  
Develop a Sense of Civic Agency

**Essential Question:** What individuals and experiences have shaped my beliefs about myself and the world around me?

**Summative Assessment Summary:** “This I Believe” podcast (using Facing History’s **“This I Believe” Personal Narrative** educator resource as a guide). This summative assessment invites students to identify and explore their core beliefs and values in writing and a podcast in order to consider how, when taken together, they reflect a greater personal philosophy of being in the world.

Week	Pacing	Facing History Learning Experiences	Facing History Learning Outcomes
1	<b>Pages/Ch:</b> pp. 1–114	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>What We Mean by “Coming of Age”</b> (Introduce)</li> <li>● <b>Exploring Identity in Literature and Life</b> (Explore and Extend)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Students will examine how their identity is a combination of who they say they are, who others say they are, and who they hope to be in the future.</li> <li>❑ Students will engage with real and imagined stories that help them understand their own coming-of-age experiences and how others experience the world.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Pages/Ch:</b> pp. 115–167	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Understanding Social Systems as an Element of Setting</b> (Introduce and Explore)</li> <li>● <b>Map the Internal World of a Character</b> (Explore)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Students will identify examples of injustice in the literature they read and in the world today. They will examine how an individual’s identity, group membership, and relationship to systems of inequity can impact their sense of who they are and agency when faced with a moral dilemma or choice.</li> <li>❑ Students will practice perspective-taking in order to develop empathy and recognize the limits of any one person’s point of view.</li> </ul>
3	<b>Pages/Ch:</b> pp. 168–196	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Asking Compelling Questions</b> (Extend)</li> <li>● <b>Reflecting on Our Obligation to Others</b> (Explore)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Students will analyze the internal and external conflicts that characters face and the impact these conflicts can have on an individual’s choices and actions, both in the text and in the real world.</li> <li>❑ Students will recognize that their decisions matter, impact others, and shape their communities and the world.</li> </ul>
4	<b>Pages/Ch:</b> pp. 197–236	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Agency and Action</b> (Introduce and Explore)</li> <li>● <b>Reflecting on Our Obligation to Others</b> (Extend)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Students will practice perspective-taking in order to develop empathy and recognize the limits of any one person’s point of view.</li> <li>❑ Students will analyze the author’s representation of individual and collective agency in the text and compare and contrast it to their own beliefs and experiences in the world.</li> </ul>

5	<b>Pages/Ch:</b> Finish the book!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>What We Mean by “Coming of Age”</b> (Extend)</li> <li>● <b>Summative Assessment:</b> “This I Believe” Podcast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Students will engage with real and imagined stories that help them understand their own coming-of-age experiences and how others experience the world.</li> <li>❑ Students will recognize that their decisions matter, impact others, and shape their communities and the world.</li> </ul>
<b>Formative Assessment Ideas</b>			
Entry and exit tickets * Chapter quizzes * Grammar quiz * Big Paper group work * Sketch to Stretch * Fishbowl discussion Analytical Writing Assignment: Passage Analysis * Narrative Writing Assignment: Extended Paragraph			
<b>ELA Skills for Mini-Lessons</b>			
Reading comprehension strategies * Close-reading strategies for passage analysis * Grammar * Speaking and listening skills Analytical writing * Narrative writing/storytelling			

## Begin with the End in Mind Educator Handout

**Directions:** This handout supports **Section 3: Begin with the End in Mind** of the Unit Planning Toolkit and Educator Workbook. Use this handout to identify key moments in the text that align with a subset of Facing History learning outcomes. If there are other learning outcomes that you know you want to focus on in your unit, you can replace and/or record them in the space provided.

Facing History Objective #1: Explore the Complexity of Identity	
Facing History Learning Outcome	Moments that Support This Learning Outcome (chapters, pages, or passages)
Examine how their identity is a combination of who they say they are, who others say they are, and who they hope to be in the future.	
Engage with real and imagined stories that help them understand their own coming-of-age experiences and how others experience the world.	
Facing History Objective #2: Process Texts through a Critical and Ethical Lens	
Facing History Learning Outcome	Moments that Support This Learning Outcome (chapters, pages, or passages)

Practice perspective-taking in order to develop empathy and recognize the limits of any one person’s point of view.	
Analyze the internal and external conflicts that characters face and the impact these conflicts can have on an individual’s choices and actions, both in the text and in the real world.	
<b>Facing History Objective #3: Develop a Sense of Civic Agency</b>	
<b>Facing History Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Moments that Support This Learning Outcome (chapters, pages, or passages)</b>
Analyze the author’s representation of individual and collective agency in the text and compare and contrast it to their own beliefs and experiences in the world.	
Recognize that their decisions matter, impact others, and shape their communities and the world.	