



In the Mind's Eye: Truth Versus Perception: ELA Lessons for Gifted and Advanced Learners in Grades 6-8

Emily Mofield, Tamra Stambaugh Ph.D.

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In the Mind's Eye: Truth Versus Perception invites students on a philosophical exploration of the themes truth and perception. Lessons include a major emphasis on rigorous evidence-based discourse through the study of common themes and content-rich, challenging informational and fictional texts. This unit, developed by Vanderbilt University's Programs for Talented Youth and aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), applies concepts from Plato's Allegory of the Cave to guide students discover how reality is presented and interpreted in fiction, nonfiction, art, and media. Students engage in activities such as Socratic seminars, literary analyses, skits, and art projects, and creative writing to understand differing perceptions of reality. Lessons include close readings with text-dependent questions, choice-based differentiated products, rubrics, formative assessments, and ELA tasks that require students to analyze texts for rhetorical features, literary elements, and themes through argument, explanatory, and prose-constructed writing. The unit features art from M. C. Escher and Vincent Van Gogh, short stories from Guy de Maupassant and Shirley Jackson, longer texts by Daniel Keyes and Ray Bradbury, and informational texts related to sociology, Nazi propaganda, and Christopher Columbus. This unit encourages students to translate learning to real-life contexts and problems by exploring themes of disillusionment, social deception, and the power of perception.

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