

## Literature

### Description and Learning Outcomes

Courses approved for the Literature category must meet at least three of the five following outcomes:

1. **Read for Comprehension:** Students will be able to read for comprehension, detail, and nuance.
2. **Literary Analysis:** Identify the specific literary qualities of language as employed in the texts they read.
3. **Literary Analysis:** Analyze the ways specific literary devices contribute to the meaning of a text.
4. **Context(s):** Identify and evaluate the contribution of the social, political, historical, and cultural contexts in which a literary text is produced.
5. **Critically Engage Texts:** Evaluate a critical argument in others' writing as well as one's own.

### Approved Courses and Enrollment

Students are required to pass one course approved for Literature or transfer in an appropriate course. During the assessment period, 29 courses were approved to meet the Literature requirement. See page 75 for the list of courses approved for the assessment period.

Literature courses enroll over 4,700 students each year with an average class size of 30 (see Table 17). Figure 31 shows enrollment trends over the past five years. The English department teaches the most students, with ENGH 201 and 202 as the highest enrolled courses. PHIL 253 has the next highest enrollment, followed by CLAS 250 and 260.

Students in the Honors College take HNRS 122: Reading the Arts to fulfill their learning outcomes in this category. Although not formally a part of the Mason Core, HNRS 122 is also included in this assessment.

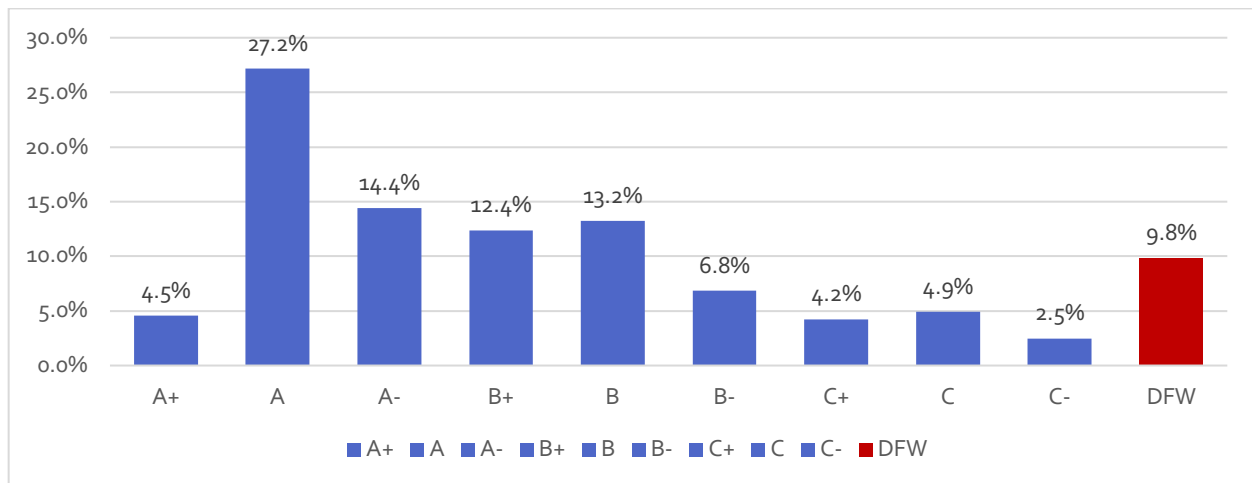
### Courses Included in Assessment

The assessment period included 49 sections of Mason Core Literature courses taught in fall 2018 and nine sections of Honors 122. All sections offered in the assessment period were expected to participate. Of the 58 course sections included in the assessment period, 79% submitted materials.

## Enrollment and Grades Distribution

A total of 2,018 students enrolled in Literature courses, and 216 enrolled in HNRS 122 in the assessment period. Of these students, 90% passed their courses with a C- or above (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. Grades Distribution for Mason Core Literature Courses, Fall 2018



## Assessment Methods

Student written work samples were requested from all course sections taught in the assessment period. Faculty were asked to submit samples completed in the final third part of the semester and that allowed students to demonstrate their learning on one or more of the expected course learning outcomes. Samples were selected using randomized course enrollment lists to insure the best possible representative sample.

The **Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Literature Courses** was used for this assessment. The rubric was modeled after the VALUE rubrics and was developed by Mason faculty as a tool to assess individual student work on five learning tasks or outcomes. The rubric uses four performance descriptors: Benchmark, Emerging Milestone, Advanced Milestone, and Capstone, as well as an option for "no evidence." The performance descriptors are developmental, identifying student performance levels in a context of learning and growth. The rubric is intended to be used across all of the years of a student's college experience, and is not limited to a single course, assignment, or student class level.

Using a process modeled after the VALUE Institute reviewer calibration, faculty reviewers were trained to use the rubric to assess student work. Reviews were normed to produce consistent ratings across reviewers. Reviewers met for an in-person, one-day training and review session and completed the reviews of student work by the end of the day. Reviewers were faculty

members who have taught Mason Core Literature courses and related courses. Reviewers earned a small stipend for their efforts.

Each student work sample was assessed twice. Results were analyzed for interrater reliability; discrepant reviews were resolved using a third review. Samples that were submitted in foreign languages (e.g. French, Arabic, and Mandarin Chinese) were reviewed by native or fluent speakers of the respective language.

### Learning Outcomes Assessment Results

Figures 28 and 29 display results from 290 ratings. Figure 28 includes “no evidence” ratings; a rating of “no evidence” was used when the learning outcome could not be seen in the sample; this could mean that either the assignment did not require application of the outcome, or that the student did not demonstrate it. A “no evidence” rating provides important information in aggregate but is given no value for an individual sample.

Figure 28. Assessment Results, Aggregated, including “No Evidence” Ratings

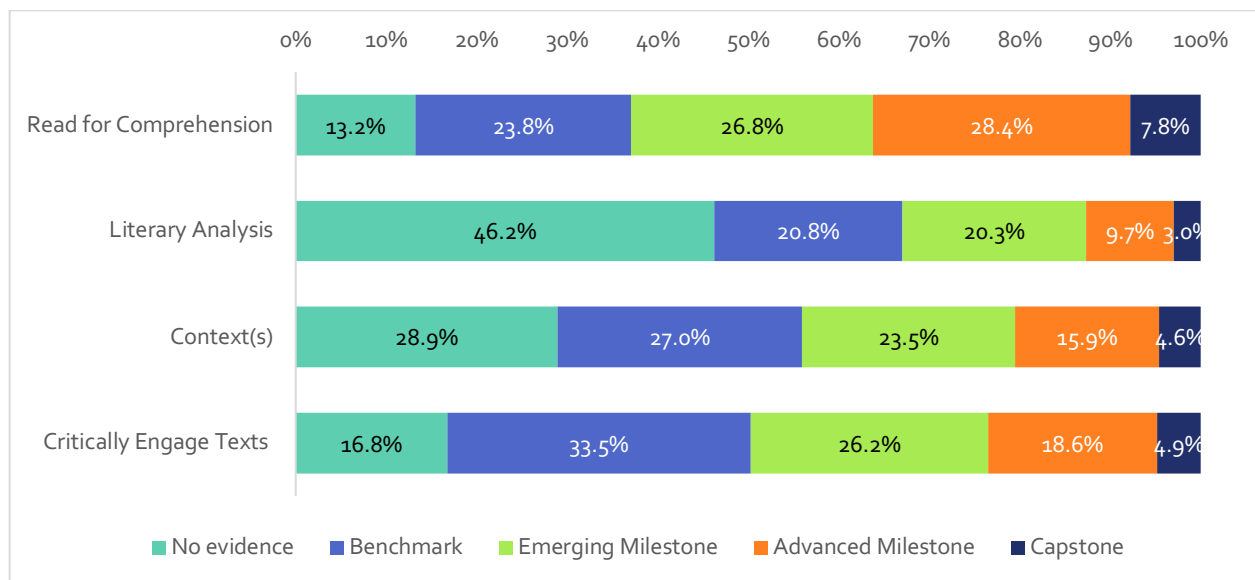
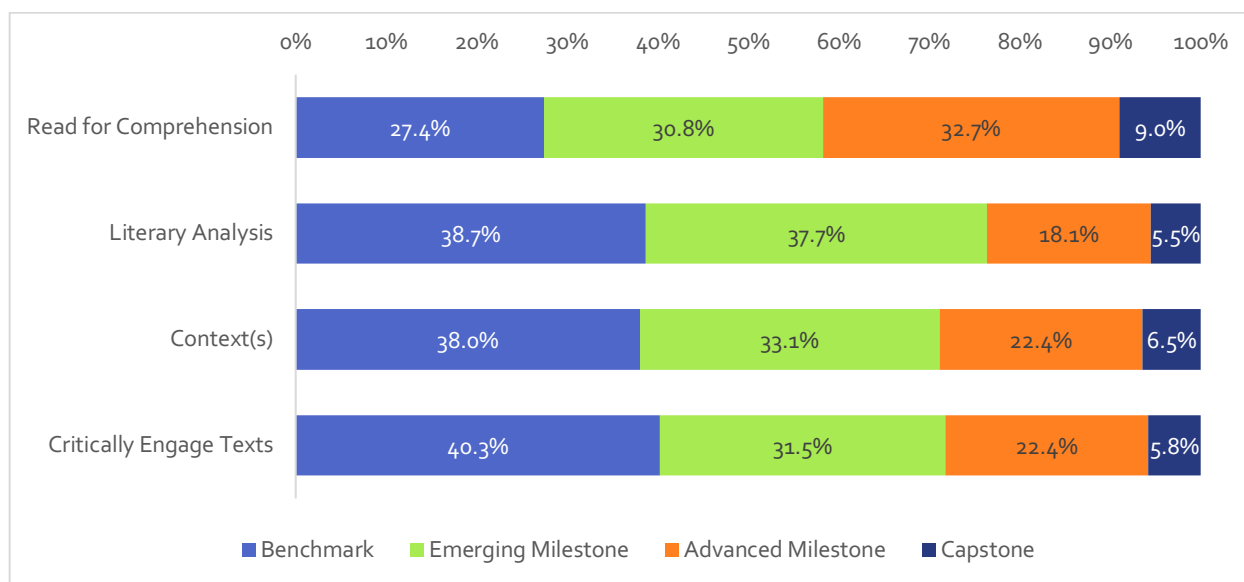


Figure 29. Assessment Results, Aggregated, excluding "No Evidence" Ratings



### Highlights from Analysis of Results

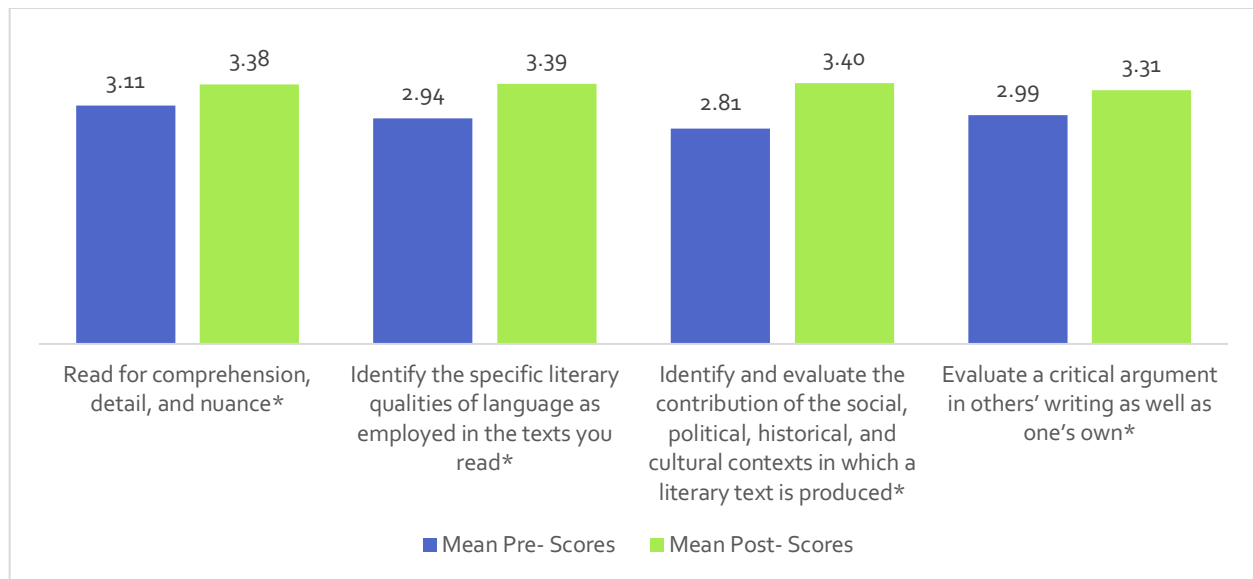
Data were analyzed to ascertain differences among courses in achieving the four learning outcomes. Comparison tests were conducted using nonparametric statistics because rubric data are ordinal; Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney  $U$ , ( $p < .05$ ) was used when analyzing differences between two groups, and Independent-Samples Kruskal–Wallis  $H$  test was used to analyze differences across three or more groups or courses. Demographic groups included gender, race/ethnicity, and transfer status. "No evidence" was treated as missing. Significant findings ( $p < .05$ ) are noted below.

- Work samples were least likely to show evidence of **Literary Analysis** (53.8% demonstrated this outcome), or **Context(s)** (71.7% demonstrated this outcome).
- Comparison tests revealed no differences in performance by student demographic group.
- The four highest enrolled courses (ENGH 201, ENGH 202, HNRS 122, PHIL 253) were compared for differences in student performance.
  - There were no differences by course or student demographic on **Read for Comprehension** or **Context(s)**.
  - Comparison tests showed significantly higher performance for Honors students only on **Literary Analysis** and **Critically Engage Texts Through Writing**.

## Student Self-Assessment

All students who were enrolled in a Mason Core Literature course during the assessment period received an online self-assessment survey at the end of the semester. The retrospective pre-post self-assessment asked students to rate their knowledge and skills on four learning outcomes at the beginning of the semester (pre), and then again at the end of the semester (post). In total, 138 students completed both the pre and post items, resulting in a 6% response rate. A t-test pairwise comparison showed significant perceived learning gains on all four outcomes (see Figure 30).

Figure 30. Mean Scores on Student Learning Self-Assessment



Mean scores, self-reported on a scale of 1-4, n=138, \*  $p < .05$

### How do the Results Meet Expectations?

Because this was the first time that Mason used this rubric to assess student work, these data provide baseline information. In post-assessment conversations, faculty were concerned that literary analysis was not more evidenced in the samples and surmised that perhaps courses need more development in this respect.

### How are Results Being Used to Improve Students' Educational Experience?

A series of open meetings (including an online option) were held in fall 2019 to share results. The English department has been encouraged to use the assessment findings to reconsider its curriculum to better align with the learning outcomes for this category.

## Limitations of this Assessment

Overall, this assessment was well-designed for the student work in the highest enrolled courses. The sample size for many of the courses was insufficient to perform a robust analysis of results for those courses, so it is unclear how well the rubric applied to some of the courses.

## Assessment Rubric(s)

The **Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Literature** was developed by a team of Mason Literature faculty to evaluate student work for the Mason Core learning outcomes in Literature. The rubric was modeled after the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. The rubric is designed to evaluate student performance on four learning outcomes, with four increasingly sophisticated performance descriptors for each outcome. The rubric can be used with many types of written work. Most student work will not show evidence of all four outcomes; in this case, an additional category for "no evidence" should be made available.

## Courses Approved for Mason Core Literature in Fall 2018

ARAB 325: Major Arab Writers/Stories

CHIN 310: Survey of Chinese Literature

CHIN 311: Modern Chinese Literature in Translation

CHIN 325: Major Chinese Writers

CHIN 328: Asian American Women Writers

CLAS 250: Classical Mythology

CLAS 260: The Legacy of Greece and Rome

CLAS 340: Greek and Roman Epic

CLAS 350: Greek and Roman Tragedy

CLAS 360: Greek and Roman Comedy

CLAS 380: Greek and Roman Novels

ENGH 201: Reading and Writing about Texts

ENGH 202: Texts and Contexts

ENGH 203: Western Literary Tradition

ENGH 204: Western Literary Traditions

FREN 325: Major French Writers (Topic Varies)

FREN 329: Problems of Western Civilization in French Literature

FRLN 330: Topics in World Literature

GERM 325: Major Writers

ITAL 320: Topics in Italian Film and Literature

ITAL 325: Major Italian Writers

JAPA 340: Topics in Japanese Literature

KORE 311: Modern Korean Literature in Translation

PHIL 253: Philosophy and Literature

RELI 235: Religion and Literature

RELI 333: Spiritual Autobiography

RUSS 325: Major Russian Writers

RUSS 326: A Survey of Russian Literature

RUSS 327: A Survey of Russian Literature

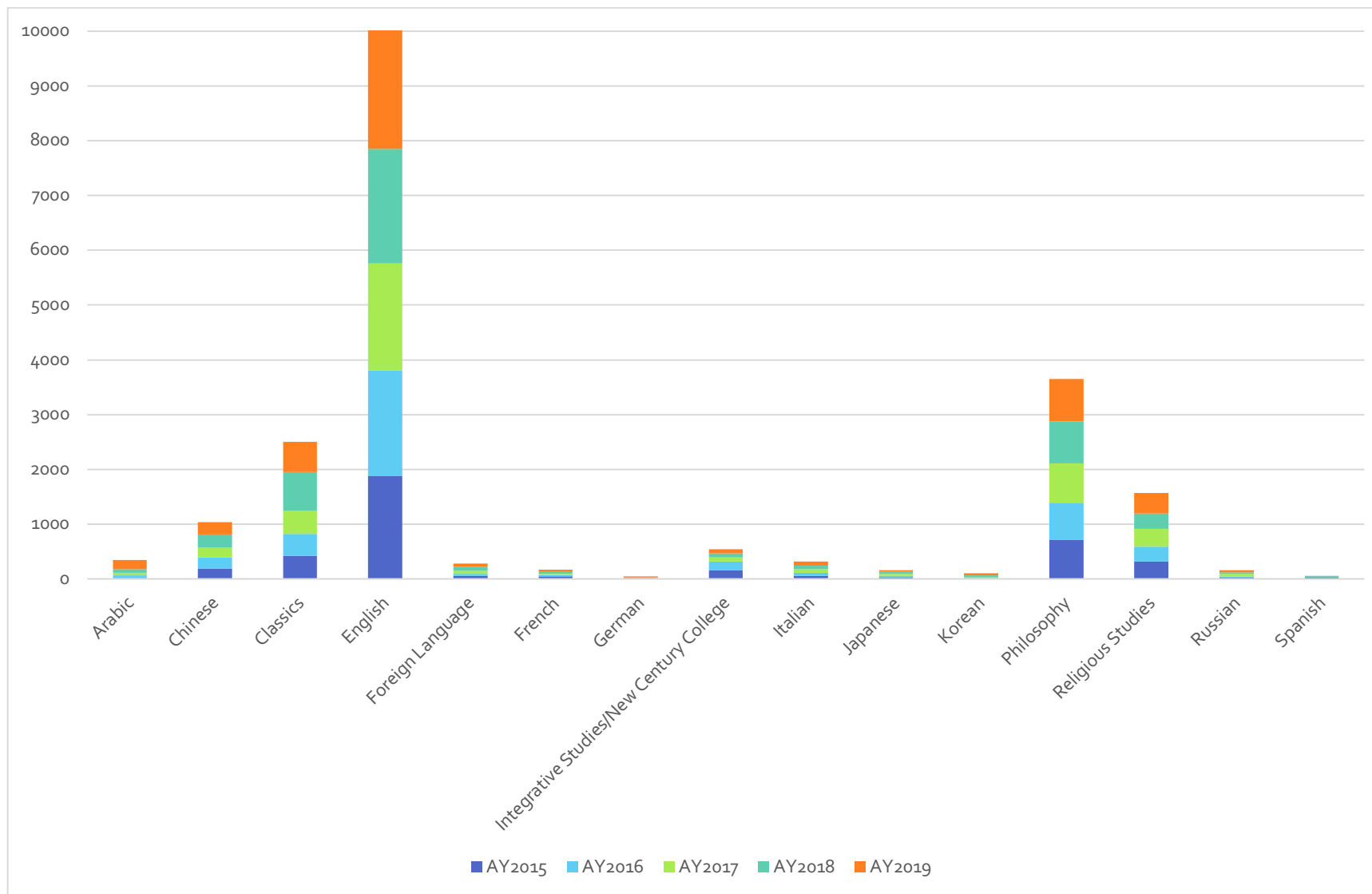
SPAN 325: Major Hispanic Writers

Table 17. Enrollment in Mason Core Literature Courses, AY15-19

Subject	AY2015		AY2016		AY2017		AY2018		AY2019	
	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll
Arabic			2	64	2	48	3	66	3	164
Chinese	9	190	9	206	8	169	10	247	11	222
Classics	9	424	9	399	8	415	18	712	14	550
English	69	1879	74	1928	74	1951	75	2089	82	2338
Foreign Language	3	53	1	36	4	64	3	74	3	56
French	2	46	1	25	1	22	2	47	1	24
German			1	25					1	24
Integrative Studies/New Century College	7	159	7	160	4	72	3	77	3	76
Italian	3	59	3	52	4	64	3	69	3	78
Japanese	1	27	1	32	1	35	1	36	1	27
Korean					1	25	1	39	1	39
Philosophy	15	709	16	681	16	718	17	772	18	768
Religious Studies	8	319	7	269	9	327	8	282	11	373
Russian	1	25	1	25	2	48	1	24	2	37
Spanish	1	24					1	31		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>3914</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>3902</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>3958</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>4565</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>4776</b>



Figure 31. Five-Year Enrollment Trends in Mason Core Literature Courses, AY2015-19



## Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Literature Courses

This rubric was developed by a team of faculty experts to evaluate student work for the Mason Core learning outcomes in Literature. For more information about the learning outcomes and approved courses, <https://masoncore.gmu.edu/literature-2/>

**How to use this rubric:** This rubric is designed to evaluate student performance on four learning outcomes, with four increasingly sophisticated performance descriptors for each outcome. This rubric can be used with many types of written work. Most student work will not show evidence of all outcomes; in this case, an additional category for “no evidence” should be made available.

Student Learning Outcomes	Level of Performance			
	Capstone	Advanced Milestone	Emerging Milestone	Benchmark
Read for Comprehension	Use the text, general background knowledge, and/or specific knowledge to draw more complex inferences about the message of the text	Examine text for perspectives or issues beyond the text’s explicit message (e.g. might recognize broader issues at play, or might pose challenges to the text’s message and presentation)	Understand how textual features (e.g. sentence and paragraph structure or tone) contribute to the text’s message; draw basic inferences about purpose of the text	Demonstrate understanding of vocabulary appropriate to paraphrase or summarize the information the text communicates
Literary Analysis	Articulate advanced knowledge and insight of literary aspects (structure, genre, style, language, and/or literary devices) to build connections and complex interpretations of text(s)	Connect literary aspects (structure, genre, style, language, and/or literary devices) to provide advanced interpretation of text(s)	Connect literary aspects (structure, genre, style, language, and/or literary devices) to provide basic interpretation of text(s)	Identify literary aspects (structure, genre, style, language, and/or literary devices) in an attempt to interpret text(s)
Context(s)	Present a convincing argument about the relationship between the literary text and the synthesis of social, political, historical, and cultural contexts	Present an argument about the relationship between the literary text and the social, historical, and cultural contexts	Attempt to build connections between the literary text and the social, historical, and cultural context	Demonstrate emerging awareness of the contribution of social, political, historical, and cultural contexts to literary text
Critical Writing	Presents compelling evidence, complex argument, cohesive writing, and independent voice about text(s) so as to participate in a disciplinary conversation	Presents meaningful evidence, strong argument, and cohesive writing about text(s)	Presents evidence and convincing argument about text(s)	Presents limited evidence and basic argument about text(s)