



Ninja Scholar 2.0 — Mentor Manual

A year-long facilitation guide • Grades 6–8 • 30 Weeks



4 UNITS

U1 • HERO'S JOURNEY

U2 • SPEAK YOUR MIND

U3 • CROSS THE LINE

U4 • THE LONG ROAD

GRADES 6–8 • 30 WEEKS

DORYOKU • EFFORT, REWARDED OVER TIME



How to Use This Manual

The Mentor's Job

This manual tells you what to do, what to say, and what to watch for each week. Use it as a script when you need words, as a checklist when you are setting up, and as a contingency guide when the class veers sideways (which it will).

The student binder is the kid-facing artifact. This manual is the adult-facing one. Same week, same skill, same story – different register. Where the student binder says "you," this manual says "the room." Where the student binder cheers, this manual briefs.

The Week Shape

Every week of Ninja Scholar follows a 45-minute shape built to protect the active work block. If you talk more than 15 minutes total, you are teaching past the point of middle-school attention.

BLOCK	TIME	PURPOSE
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + accountability check
Warm-up	5 min	Low-stakes game that hides the writing lesson
Main instruction	10–12 min	The week's tool or habit, taught fast
Active work	22–24 min	Kids write, talk, move. This is where learning lives.
Close	3–5 min	Reflection card + logistics

Total: 45 minutes. Protect the active block at all costs. Every minute you talk past 15 is a minute stolen from kids writing, talking, and moving.

The Manual's Sections

Each week page contains, in the order you will need them:

- ✦ **Week at a Glance** – the one-sentence summary of the whole session.
- ✦ **Pre-Class Checklist** – everything that must be ready before the first student walks in.
- ✦ **45-Minute Flow** – the timed blocks and the rationale for each.
- ✦ **The Beats** (Week 1) / **Teaching Script** (Weeks 2+) – slide-by-slide or beat-by-beat language you can read or throw away.
- ✦ **The Ninja Game** – the interactive thing that hides the lesson inside play.
- ✦ **Materials** – quantities, notes, and why each item matters.
- ✦ **Contingency Plans** – pivots for group size, shyness, time pressure, and refusal.
- ✦ **After Class** – the three things that must happen before you close the car door.
- ✦ **Parent Email (verbatim)** – exactly what to send home.
- ✦ **Framework Connections** – where this week lives in the larger curriculum.
- ✦ **Post-Class Log** – copy into the class log after teaching.

The Voice

Direct, trusting, brief. Voice to the adult, not the child. Facilitation cues, not lectures. Calmer accent than the student binder. Mochi appears, but sparingly – the mascot carries the joy so the rest of the manual can stay disciplined.

Inspire, don't require. Praise progress in public, correct in private. Short sentences. Trust the reader to rise to it.

If a Student Asks "Why Are We Doing This?"

The answer is always some version of: *"We're building the kind of room where the real stuff works. Trust me."* Week 1 is culture before content. Every week after is the same principle in a smaller form: build the room, then do the work inside it.

+



Your Ninja

The mechanics. Keep this at the front of your binder all year.



SENSEI NOTE

Two pages, three kinds of kid: the one who keeps their ninja all year, the one who re-masks at a unit boundary (keep this CORE, redraw the SKIN on page two), and the one who starts fresh (they enter at the party's current level, never behind). You never decide which stat to roll; the encounter's form tells you.

CORE · NEVER RESETS

Name of record _____

Current mask (see page 2) _____

Your three stats – assign +2, +1, and 0 at home. One each. They never change all year.

WITS

notice · deduce · solve



VOICE

persuade · perform · recite



NERVE

act · endure · go first



Your level is the unit you are on. Everyone at the table is the same level, so no one is ever behind.

LV	BELT	CLASS OVERLAY	WHAT IT LETS YOU DO	EARNED
1	White belt	Pathfinder	Name a place the party has not been. It exists.	
2	Yellow belt	Orator	Ask one question a session that must be answered truthfully.	
3	Orange belt	Vanguard	Go first, and describe what is on the other side.	
4	Green belt	Champion	Take a complication meant for another ninja.	
5	Blue belt	Armorer	Lend a companion your special weapon once a session.	
6	Brown belt	Truthsayer	State the enemy's real reason once. The party must weigh it.	
7	Black belt	Keeper	Name what a reward cost, and it becomes true.	
8	Hanko Seal	Sensei	Certify another ninja.	





Draw Your Ninja

This is the fun part. Make them yours.



DRAW YOUR NINJA HERE – GO BIG

Ninja name

Class flavor (the vibe)

What they wear

Their signature look or move

What they always carry

Where they come from – their story

Re-masking at a new unit? Your CORE stays. Redraw the new you on the back of this page – same ninja, new face.



Hero's Journey

WEEKS 1-4

Gear A · Phase 0-1 · The sentence begins, and the quest opens.



Meet Mochi. Also, One of Us Is Lying.

The One Thing

Week 1 is not about writing. It's about making the room feel like somewhere worth being weird out loud. If they leave laughing and slightly braver than they came in, you won. The kernel sentence is real work, but it's smuggled inside a lying game and a name game on purpose. Culture first. Content rides in on its back.

If a kid asks "why are we doing this?" the answer this week is always: *"We're building the kind of room where the real stuff works. Trust me."*

Week at a Glance

WEEK	1
HABIT	None (foundation week; no explicit habit)
WRITING PHASE	0: Kernel Expansion (oral, then one written)
TEXT	None. Student introductions are the text
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	One written expanded sentence + a Hero's Journey film/book picked for the year

Three jobs this week: set the tone (ninjas, not students), plant the year's first sentence tool (kernel → expansion), and launch the Hero's Journey Quest. Do not rush the culture. If the room isn't safe, the sentence work won't stick.

Pre-Class Checklist

Built for 8–14 kids (11+) in a 45-minute block. Scale quantities to your group.

- ☐ Name tents (kids write their own at the door: first tiny act of ownership)
- ☐ Index cards (3 per student: warm-up, speed-dating sentence, reflection card)
- ☐ A pen for every kid who will forget a pen (all of them)
- ☐ Whiteboard: Hero's Journey circle drawn in advance, 10 empty slots
- ☐ One pop-culture image they'll definitely know (Star Wars / Harry Potter / Moana)
- ☐ Mochi on display: printed big, or on the binder cover, somewhere they can see him
- ☐ Timer (visible: kills "how much longer")
- ☐ Stickers for Mochi's Seal of Approval
- ☐ Your three "One of Us Is Lying" statements, ready (two true, one gloriously false)
- ☐ Parent email queued (Hero's Journey pick due Week 2)

Why: prep the room like a stage. It tells them this class is different before you open your mouth.

45-Minute Flow

Protect the active block. Every minute you talk past 15 is a minute stolen from kids writing, talking, and moving.

BLOCK	TIME	WHAT	PHASE / TOOL
Cold open	5 min	One of Us Is Lying (you go first)	Phase 0 hook

BLOCK	TIME	WHAT	PHASE / TOOL
The Ninja Way	3 min	"Begin before you're ready": as a dare	Culture
Kernel with Mochi	7 min	Kernel → expansion, one detail only	Phase 0 (oral)
Active work	24 min	Speed-dating → weird-true sentence → share	Phase 0 (written)
Close	3 min	Reflection card + HJ Quest pick + cleanup	Logistics

Total: 45 min. Start with mischief, hide the writing lesson inside the game, teach the framework fast, then let them practice while they're still awake.

The Beats (say-it-like-this, then follow the room)

This is a script you can throw away. Read it for the language, then let the room take the wheel where it wants to. Every beat has a **chaos hatch**: a spot where the kids can grab control. Let them. That's the fun.

COLD OPEN: YOU LIE TO THEM BEFORE YOU SAY HELLO (5 MIN)

Don't welcome them. Don't explain. Kids are still finding seats and you're already talking:

"Three things about me. Two are true, one is a filthy lie. Vote with your hands. If you vote wrong, a ninja out-lied you on day one and you'll have to make peace with that. One: I have three kids. Two: I've been to 47 states. Three: I have a pet named Mochi who is, technically, a ninja."

Let them vote. Milk it. Reveal. Then, deadpan, *after* the game:

"Congratulations. You just did the one thing this whole class is secretly about: you felt a detail that was off. That instinct? That's the superpower. Welcome to Ninja Scholar. You're not students in here. You're ninjas, and ninjas notice."

Chaos hatch: if a kid insists they can out-lie you, let them try one on the room. Now they're teaching the lesson and don't know it.

THE NINJA WAY: AS A DARE, NOT A POSTER (3 MIN)

Point at Mochi.

"Meet Mochi. Worst-built ninja alive: round, soft, sticky, squeaks when he walks, gets stuck to walls. Should not work. Became the smartest scholar in the building anyway, because he refused to wait until he was good at it. That's this week's Ninja Way: *we begin before we're ready*. Everybody cool started scared. JK Rowling, broke. LeBron, missing shots. Your mom stalling a stick shift in a parking lot. Nobody waits for confidence. They move, and the confidence limps in late. Ten seconds: who's started something before they were ready? I'll go first, because I'm not a coward. Probably."

You go first. Model the vulnerability. Keep it fast and oral. **Do not collect a worksheet on this.** Writing it down kills it.

KERNEL EXPANSION: TAUGHT THROUGH MOCHI (7 MIN)

Skip "a kernel is like a seed." Show it.

"*Mochi swims*. True. Boring. That's a **kernel**: smallest sentence that still works. Watch me grow it: *Mochi swims laps in my bathtub every night while judging my life choices*. Same sentence, one detail bigger. That's an **expansion**. You add ONE thing: when, where, why, or how. Not all four. One. Ninjas are precise."

Then hand it over and *invite* the weird:

"Give me an expansion for *Mochi trains*. One detail. Weirder is better, as long as you commit to it."

Chaos hatch: take 3–4 kid expansions out loud. The room will one-up each other. Ride it. That IS the lesson landing.

ACTIVE WORK: SPEED-DATING WITH STAKES (24 MIN)

Two lines, 30-second rounds, one question per round. Rotate. After 3–4 rounds:

"Pick one person you met. Write a boring kernel about them. Then grow it with ONE weird, specific, TRUE detail. Weirdest true sentence wins Mochi's Seal of Approval. 'Bella reads.' Nope. 'Bella read a 400-page book in a day because she forgot to eat lunch.' *That's* a ninja sentence."

Walk the room. Read the surprising ones aloud. Give the sticker to **weird-and-specific, never to neat**. You're teaching them what "good" means by what you reward.

CLOSE: REFLECTION CARD + THE QUEST (3 MIN)

Index card: their best expanded sentence + one book/movie they want to map onto the Hero's Journey this year. Give the HJ a **90-second tease only**: "you already know this pattern, it's in everything you love, we'll prove it all year." Full 10 steps live in their binder for the curious. Don't lecture ten steps on day one.

Ninjas leave no trace. Room gets cleaned before anyone's dismissed.

Materials

ITEM	QTY	NOTE
Index cards	30 (3/kid)	Unlined. These become the year's first writing samples. Keep them.
Pens	15	They'll forget. Extras keep the room from stalling.
Name tents	15	Kids write their own at the door.
HJ circle	1 (board)	Draw 10 empty slots in advance so you point, not draw.
Pop-culture image	1	Pick the one your group definitely knows.
Mochi printout	1	Big. Visible. He's the mascot; let them see him.
Timer	1	Visible beats invisible.
Stickers	1 sheet	Mochi's Seal of Approval. Tiny, silly, works at every age.

Contingency Plans

Fewer than 8: speed-dating becomes a speed-circle. Stand in a ring, rotate every 30 seconds. Works with 5+.

More than 12: two circles running at once; you circulate, merge for sharing.

Too shy to move: seated "Two Truths and a Lie." Each kid writes 3 kernels about themselves (2 true, 1 false); class votes on the lie. Same target, less movement.

Running short: cut the HJ tease to one mentor example. Keep the lying game and the sentence. That's the foundation.

A kid refuses to share: "You don't have to read it out loud. Write it, I'll read it anonymously." Ninjas have choices.

After Class

- ✦ Collect reflection cards (note the HJ film/book picks).
- ✦ Send the parent email (below).
- ✦ Keep the index cards. You'll compare them to Week 6 to show growth.

PARENT EMAIL (VERBATIM)

Ninja Scholar | Week 1: Meet Mochi

Today your student joined Ninja Scholar Skills and met our mascot, Mochi, a very soft, very determined mochi ninja who is proof that you don't have to be built for something to become great at it. This year we study sentence-level writing, the Hero's Journey, the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens, and one novel together.

This week's task: help your student pick one book or movie that follows the Hero's Journey pattern (*Star Wars*, *Moana*, *Harry Potter*, etc.). They'll map it in class later this year.

No other homework. We're building culture first.

Thanks for sending your ninja to class.

Ninja Scholar Mentor

Framework Connections

ELEMENT	WHERE IT LIVES
Phase 0: Kernel Expansion	Core-Framework §4 (Writing Progression)
Hero's Journey (10 steps)	Semester-1-Synthesis, Unit 1
"Learn the Ninja Way" ritual	Core-Framework §2
Ninjas Leave No Trace	Core-Framework §2
Class format (45 min)	Core-Framework §1

Post-Class Log

Copy into the class log after teaching:

[Date]. Week 1: Meet Mochi / One of Us Is Lying

Skill Focus: Phase 0: Kernel expansion (oral + first written)

Fun Landed?

Skill Protected? (Did the sentence work survive the fun?)

Chaos Hatch Used? (Where did the room grab the wheel?)

Time Budget Honest?

One Fix for Next Time:

SMART Goals + Kernel Set-Up

Week at a Glance

This table is your dashboard. If someone asks what Week 2 is for, point here.

WEEK	2
HABIT	– (foundation week; no explicit habit)
WRITING PHASE	0 – Kernel expansion (written)
TEXT	Self-selected HJ film/book (chosen in class; ordinary world practice)
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	Students choose their year-long HJ story, write 3 kernel-expanded sentences about the hero's ordinary world, and set one SMART goal for class

Week 2 exists to do three things: transition students from "begin before you're ready" to "aim at one small target," solidify the kernel-expansion skill in writing, and lock in a year-long Hero's Journey story. The story selection is the ownership ritual; the SMART goal gives the year a target. Do not rush them. A student who leaves without a clear story choice and one specific, doable goal will float for the next several weeks.

Pre-Class Checklist

This list is built for a class of 8–14 11+ year olds in a 45-minute block. Adjust quantities if your group is larger or smaller.

- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from W1)
- ☐ Index cards (3 per student – warm-up, SMART goal, reflection card)
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Whiteboard or display: Hero's Journey circle drawn in advance (10 steps, empty)
- ☐ Timer (for speed rounds and 3-minute blocks)
- ☐ Sticker or token system (optional: for "ninja-est detail" moments)
- ☐ Parent communication – handout/email explaining HJ quest and confirming film/book accessibility
- ☐ Optional: 10 pre-approved HJ film/book list for indecisive students

Why this matters: Week 2 is where students realize this class expects them to choose and track their own work. If they do not have a story locked in, the Hero's Journey quest stalls. If they do not have a small, specific goal, the year feels vague. Your prep makes the abstract concrete.

45-Minute Flow

The flow below protects the active work block. Every minute of instruction steals minutes from student choosing, writing, and goal-setting. If you talk more than 15 minutes total, you are teaching past the point of middle-school attention.

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way – "set a target, then move" + accountability check on Week 1 HJ film/book selection	Culture
Warm-up / Game hook	5 min	Lie Detector – Kernel Expansion Game, Hero Edition (mentor models; students volunteer their own)	Phase 0

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Main instruction	12 min	SMART goals framework (8 min) + kernel expansion demo about a hero's "ordinary world" (4 min)	HJ quest launch + Phase 0
Active work	22 min	Students choose HJ film/book; write 3 kernel expansions about hero's ordinary world on index card	Phase 0 (written)
Close / exit task	3 min	Reflection card: hero name, one HJ question, one SMART goal	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

Why this works: Start with identity (aim before moving), move quickly to a low-stakes game that reviews kernel expansion, introduce the year's usable goal-setting tool, model the sentence skill on a shared hero, then let students apply it to their own story choice. The active block bundles choice + writing because the skills reinforce each other: a hero who knows where they start is a student who knows what to aim at.

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Plain white; no lines
Pens/markers	15	Students may forget; extras keep the room from stalling
Name tents	15	Reuse from W1
Hero's Journey circle	1 (whiteboard or slide)	Draw 10 empty boxes in advance so you can point, not draw
Timer	1 (phone works)	Visible timer removes "how much longer?" from the room
Sticker sheet	1 sheet	For "ninja-est detail" moments in kernel expansions
Pre-approved HJ list	1 (slide or print)	10 options for students who hesitate

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: Run SMART goal drafting as a whole-group "round robin" – each student offers one element of a class SMART goal, then writes their own. Share ordinary-world sentences in a circle rather than pairs. Vote on the "ninja-est detail" as a group.

If more than 12 students: Split story selection into two stations: one side browses the story menu, the other drafts SMART goals and ordinary-world sentences. Rotate after 10 minutes. Mentor circulates; assistant or older student helps with story selection.

If a student cannot decide on a story: Give them a 2-minute limit and a default trio: *Moana*, *Harry Potter*, or *Star Wars*. Say: "You can change your mind before Week 4. Ninjas decide and move." Stop the spiral.

If a student has not seen any suggested films: Pair them with a classmate who knows one of the stories well. The partner briefly describes the ordinary world; the student writes a kernel sentence based on the description. Or allow a picture book/fairy tale with parent approval.

If time runs short: Cut the SMART goal discussion to 5 minutes (skip examples; just framework). Keep the 3-sentence writing and reflection card – those are the week's non-negotiables.

If a student has already watched/read their HJ choice: "Perfect. Map it on the HJ circle at home and bring it next week."

If writing activity stalls: "Write one sentence about your hero's ordinary world. Just one. Then we'll make it better." Reduce demand, then rebuild.

If a student refuses to write: "You can dictate one sentence to me, and I'll write it on your card. The idea still belongs to you." Ninjas have choices.

Teaching Script

Copy everything below and feed to NotebookLM with prompt: "Convert this teaching script into an 8-slide presentation for middle schoolers. One idea per slide. Use simple visuals and include one interactive element on each slide. Add a speaker notes section with timing reminders."

[SLIDE 1: TITLE + ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK-IN]

Welcome back, ninjas. Last week we learned that ninjas begin before they're ready. This week we learn what to aim at once we've begun.

Before we start – who brought a Hero's Journey film or book idea from home? Thumbs up if you did. No stress if you didn't. You're about to lock one in today.

[SLIDE 2: LEARN THE NINJA WAY – WEEK 2]

This week's trait: **"Ninjas know where they're going before they start walking."**

Random effort is just noise. Ninjas set targets. They aim. Then they move.

[Call on 2–3 students. Fast. "What's one thing you want to get better at this year? Not 'be good at writing.' Something SPECIFIC."]

That's the Ninja Way. We don't wander. We aim.

[SLIDE 3: THE LIE DETECTOR RETURNS – HERO EDITION]

Same game, new material. I'll model with Harry Potter.

[Read or display:]

- 1 Harry Potter, a wizard who lives under the stairs, has a lightning-shaped scar.
- 2 Harry Potter, a wizard who lives under the stairs, has a pet owl named Hedwig.
- 3 Harry Potter, a wizard who lives under the stairs, has a pet dragon named Fluffy.

[Pause. Let them vote.]

The lie is #3. Fluffy is a three-headed dog, not his pet dragon. But did you notice the kernel? "Harry Potter, a wizard who lives under the stairs..." That's his ORDINARY WORLD. Before the adventure. Every hero has one.

[SLIDE 4: SMART GOALS – THE MAP]

You know what a dumb goal is? "I'm going to be a better reader." Cool. How will you know when you're there?

SMART goals have a shape. Write this down:

- + **Specific** – not "read more"; "read 3 chapters of my HJ book this week"
- + **Measurable** – a number you can check
- + **Achievable** – something YOU can actually do
- + **Relevant** – matters to your life or your quest
- + **Time-bound** – a deadline

A goal is a promise to your future self. A SMART goal is a promise you can actually keep.

[SLIDE 5: YOUR HERO'S JOURNEY QUEST – THE ORDINARY WORLD]

Today you choose the story you'll map all year. Every hero starts somewhere normal. That's called the Ordinary World.

[Show or describe one ordinary-world scene – Harry under the stairs, Moana on her island, or Luke on Tatooine.]

What's normal here? What's the hero's everyday life before everything changes?

[Take 2–3 quick responses.]

[SLIDE 6: KERNEL EXPANSION DEMO]

Let's write a kernel sentence about this hero's ordinary world.

[Write on the board:]

Harry lives with the Dursleys.

That's a kernel – short and true.

Now let's expand it with ONE detail. When? Where? Why? How?

[Add detail:]

Harry lives with the Dursleys in a tiny cupboard under the stairs because he has nowhere else to go.

That's the expansion. One detail. Not ten.

[SLIDE 7: YOUR TURN – ACTIVE WORK]

Here's your mission for the next 20 minutes.

On your index card:

- + Top: Write your name.
- + Line 1: Your hero's name and their ordinary world (kernel).
- + Line 2: Add WHEN or WHERE.
- + Line 3: Add WHY or HOW.

You need THREE expanded sentences about your hero before they ever become a hero.

Then, at the bottom, write one SMART goal for this class: "I will _____ by _____ because _____."

[Timer ready. Go.]

[Walk around. Celebrate specific details. Nudge students who haven't chosen a story after 5 minutes.]

[SLIDE 8: SHARE + REFLECTION CARD]

Who's brave? Read one ordinary-world sentence aloud.

[Read 3–4. Award sticker for: most specific detail, funniest detail, detail that surprised even the mentor.]

Here's what I notice. The sentences that popped had one weird or specific detail. "Luke works on a farm" is fine. "Luke works on a moisture farm on Tatooine while he stares at the twin suns" – that's a ninja sentence.

[Hold up the reflection card instructions.]

Fill out your reflection card. Take home the confirmation slip. Your Hero's Journey quest is officially open.

After Class

- + Collect reflection cards (confirm story choice + SMART goal).
- + Email parents explaining the HJ quest and asking them to confirm film/book accessibility.
- + Log any students still without a story choice – follow up by email before Week 3.
- + For students who didn't choose: assign from pre-approved list and email parent.

PARENT EMAIL (VERBATIM)

Ninja Scholar – Week 2: SMART Goals + Kernel Set-Up

This week your student learned how to turn a vague wish into a SMART goal – one that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based.

This week's at-home task: Confirm the Hero's Journey film or book your student chose. They will map this story all year. Please make sure the story is one your student can watch or read at home over the next month.

Examples of approved stories: *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Moana*, *The Lion King*, *The Hobbit*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, *Percy Jackson & the Olympians*, or another family-friendly story you approve.

No other homework. We are building direction first.

Thank you for raising a ninja who aims before shooting.

– Ninja Scholar Mentor

Framework Connections

ELEMENT	WHERE IT LIVES
Phase 0: Kernel Expansion (written)	Ninja-Scholar-Writing-Sequence
SMART goals framework	Ninja-Scholar-30-Week-Skeleton Week 2
Hero's Journey quest (at-home)	Core-Framework Section 3 (certification)
"Learn the Ninja Way" ritual	Core-Framework Section 2
Class format (45 min, honest time budget)	Ninja-Scholar-Phase-3-Architecture Section 1
30-Week Skeleton placement	Ninja-Scholar-30-Week-Skeleton Week 2

SMART Goals Quick Reference

Use this as your mini-lecture cheat sheet. In class, students should hear one kid-friendly definition per letter and see one before/after transformation. Save the full framework for the active work block.

LETTER	STUDENT-FRIENDLY DEFINITION	MENTOR EXAMPLE
S – Specific	What exactly will you do?	"Read 3 chapters of my HJ book" instead of "read more."
M – Measurable	How will you know you did it?	"Check the box" or "count the chapters."
A – Achievable	Can you really do this for the time given?	"Read 10 minutes" beats "read the whole book tonight."
R – Relevant	Does this matter to you?	Connect the goal to something the student already wants.
T – Time-bound	When does it end?	"By Friday" or "this week" gives a finish line.

For the in-class slide version, keep the letters on the screen and one upgraded example. Let students supply the "vague goal" half so the transformation feels like their work.

Fun Factor Notes

ELEMENT	WHY IT'S FUN
Lie Detector – Hero Edition	Familiar game, new material = low-friction engagement
Harry Potter/Star Wars examples	Every middle schooler has an opinion on one of these
Hero selection = agency	Students pick their own quest; ownership from day 2

ELEMENT	WHY IT'S FUN
"Ninja-est detail" sticker	Gamification rewards specificity, not length
SMART goal structure	Makes the vague actionable; kids feel powerful when they can name a target

Post-Class Log Template

After class, copy this into Ninja-Class-Log:

[Date] – Week 2: SMART Goals + Kernel Set-Up

Skill Focus (Phase/Week): Phase 0 – Kernel expansion (written; HJ context)

Fun Landed?

Skill Protected?

Thick Evidence? N/A (no text evidence yet)

Time Budget Honest?

One Fix for Next Time:

Paradigms & Principles + BBS Intro

Week at a Glance

This table is your dashboard. If someone asks what Week 3 is for, point here.

WEEK	3
HABIT	Paradigms & Principles (Roots – explicit foundation)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 1 – Because / But / So (oral + first written)
TEXT	Short clip selected by mentor (TED talk or mentor story)
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	One written BBS sentence + paradigms worksheet begun

Week 3 exists to do three things: introduce paradigms as invisible glasses, launch the because/but/so connector as the main sentence tool for Phase A, and give every student a first written success. The paradigms lesson is abstract by nature (it's invisible glasses, for heaven's sake), so keep it concrete: real examples, a clip, a student paradigm. The active work must produce writing. If students leave with only a discussion, the week failed.

Pre-Class Checklist

This list is built for a class of 8–14 11+ year olds in a 45-minute block. Adjust quantities if your group is larger or smaller.

- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from W1)
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student – warm-up, BBS practice, reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ TED talk clip cued and tested (60–90 seconds showing a clear before/after belief shift)
- ☐ Whiteboard: three columns labeled BECAUSE / BUT / SO
- ☐ Timer (for 2-minute oral rounds and 5-minute writing blocks)
- ☐ Sticker or token system (optional: for best connector choices)
- ☐ Paradigms & Principles handout (optional, one page with 3 examples)
- ☐ *If running the Ninja Game enrichment:* oversized clown glasses (1–2 pairs), 6–8 Setback Cards written ahead, "Ninja Eye" tokens – see Ninja Game section

45-Minute Flow

The flow below protects the active work block. Every minute you talk is a minute they don't write. If you talk more than 15 minutes total, you are teaching past the point of middle-school attention.

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + HJ quest check-in (who started their film/book?)	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	Paradigm shift flash: two opposite reactions to the same event; students vote which is ninja	Phase 1 setup

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Main instruction	12 min	Paradigms & Principles (7 min) + intro to Because/But/So with a pop-culture sentence (5 min)	Habit + Phase 1
Active work	22 min	Oral BBS on one sentence from clip (5 min); write one BBS sentence about a classmate's paradigm (10 min); share 3–4 aloud (7 min)	Phase 1 (oral + first written)
Close / exit task	3 min	Reflection card: one written BBS sentence + paradigms worksheet begun	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

If over budget: Cut the optional paradigms handout. Teach from the whiteboard only and move into active work 2 minutes early. Keep the BBS written practice protected at all costs.

The Ninja Game: Flip the Glasses

(enrichment — not in the canonical class plan; see page map)

BINDER ENRICHMENT FLAG

This game is a binder-layer addition; it does not appear in the canonical class plan (Week-03-Paradigms-BBS-Intro.md). The enrichment-vs-drift decision is deferred to the per-week Ninja Game inventory in the Week-03 Page Map.

Slot: Warm-up (5 min). Replaces the paradigm-shift flash vote. It produces the same BBS sentence the reflection card asks for, so it adds no net time.

Why this game: Paradigm is abstract. This forces students to *perform* the shift instead of discussing it, and the scoring rule teaches the actual definition: a shift changes action, not mood.

How to run it:

- 1 Read a **Setback Card** aloud (got a zero / didn't make the team / friend ignored me / burned dinner).
- 2 Student A puts on the **clown glasses** and reacts in the **fixed** voice (encourage ham). Student B snatches the glasses, puts them on, and replays the *same event* in the **growth** voice.
- 3 The pair locks it into one BBS sentence on the board.

Prop: oversized novelty/clown glasses. One pair works; the snatch is half the fun. If you want the metaphor crystal-clear, bring two pairs and label them FIXED and GROWTH.

The scoring is the lesson: award a Ninja Eye token only if the growth version changes what the character would *do next*. When a student wins with "but I felt better," name it: *"That's a pep talk, not a shift. What would you DO differently?"*

Watch for: students flipping only the emotion. Push every flip to a next action. Mixed ages: pair an older student (the snatcher) with a younger one (the fixed voice) so the harder move is scaffolded.

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Plain white; no lines
Pens/markers	15	Extras prevent stalls
Name tents	15	Reuse from W1
Whiteboard: three columns	1	BECAUSE / BUT / SO – drawn before class

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
TED talk clip	1 (device)	60–90 sec; must show a clear before/after belief shift
Paradigms handout (optional)	15	One page; 3 real-world paradigm examples
Timer	1	2-minute oral rounds
Sticker sheet	1 sheet	Best connector choice
Clown glasses ("Ninja Goggles")	1–2 pairs	Only if running Ninja Game enrichment
Setback Cards	6–8	Only if running Ninja Game; written ahead
"Ninja Eye" tokens	1 set	Only if running Ninja Game

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: Run oral BBS as whole-class popcorn style; each student adds one connector aloud in sequence.

If more than 12 students: Split into two circles for oral BBS, then merge for sharing. Alternatively, use seated pairs, then have 4 pairs share to the whole class.

If students are too shy for oral BBS: Anonymous written submissions on index cards; mentor reads 3–4 aloud and the class guesses the connector. Same target, no exposure.

If time runs short: Cut the paradigms lecture to 5 minutes (skip extra examples; whiteboard only). Keep the BBS written practice as protected active work.

If a student refuses to write: "Write just the connector word. Because. But. So. Pick one. We'll build the rest together."

If writing activity stalls: "One sentence. One connector. One honest thought. That's it."

If the TED talk clip is unavailable: Replace with a 60-second mentor story about a paradigm shift of your own.

If a student can't think of a paradigm: "What's something your parents believe that you disagree with? Start there."

Teaching Script

Copy everything below and feed to NotebookLM with prompt: "Convert this teaching script into an 8-slide presentation for middle schoolers. One idea per slide. Use simple visuals and include one interactive element on each slide. Add a speaker notes section with timing reminders."

[SLIDE 1: TITLE]

Two people. Same event. Totally different reactions. Why? Today you learn the word that explains everything.

[SLIDE 2: LEARN THE NINJA WAY – WEEK 3]

This week's trait: "Ninjas question what they believe before they believe what they think."

We all have invisible glasses on. They color everything we see. Most people never take the glasses off. Ninjas do.

[SLIDE 3: PARADIGM SHIFT FLASH]

Two kids get a zero on a test.

Kid 1 thinks: "I'm bad at this. I'll never get it."

Kid 2 thinks: "I don't get this YET. I need a different strategy."

Same event. Different glasses. Different action.

[Turn to class.] Which kid is the ninja?

[SLIDE 4: PARADIGMS & PRINCIPLES]

Your paradigm = the glasses you wear. Your principles = the truth underneath.

Principles don't change. Paradigms do. And when you change your paradigm, you change your life.

[One real example. Yours. Something embarrassing you believed that turned out to be wrong. Keep it under 60 seconds.]

[SLIDE 5: BECAUSE / BUT / SO – THE CONNECTOR UPGRADE]

Last week you EXPANDED sentences. This week you CONNECT them.

Three words. Three relationships:

BECAUSE – explains WHY. Cause. Reason. **BUT** – introduces conflict. Something unexpected. **SO** – shows result. What happens next.

These aren't just grammar. They're NINJA TOOLS. They make your thinking visible.

[SLIDE 6: TED TALK BBS – ORAL ROUND]

Watch this clip. (60–90 seconds.) Notice the moment the speaker's paradigm shifts.

[Play clip.]

Now, say a BBS sentence OUT LOUD about the clip. Don't write yet. Just speak.

Examples: "The speaker believed school was about obedience **BECAUSE** that's what he experienced." "The speaker wanted creativity in schools **BUT** the system punished it."

[2 minutes. Popcorn style. Call on volunteers fast. No wrong answers. Only "because," "but," or "so."]

[SLIDE 7: WRITE YOUR PARADIGM – ACTIVE WORK]

On your card, pick ONE of these and finish it:

"I used to think ninjas were _____, **BUT** now I think ninjas are _____ because _____"

OR

"Ninjas don't quit **SO** they _____"

OR

"Ninjas practice every day **BECAUSE** _____"

[5 minutes to write. Walk around. Read over shoulders. "Show me your connector."]

[Now, find a partner. Read your sentence aloud. Partner tells you: Which connector did you use? Did it match your meaning? 3 minutes.]

[SLIDE 8: REFLECTION CARD]

Bottom of your card:

- 1** One BBS sentence about YOUR paradigm (anything you believed that changed).
- 2** Circle your connector: **BECAUSE** / **BUT** / **SO**.
- 3** One thing from this week that made you see something differently.

[Collect. "Paradigms worksheet" is listed as begun; it's optional follow-up if time ran short, otherwise complete in class.]

After Class

- ☐ Collect reflection cards (BBS sentences + paradigm reflections)

- ☐ Email parents: Week 3 summary + HJ quest reminder (midpoint check Week 13)
- ☐ Record names + first BBS writing samples (keep index cards; compare at Week 6)
- ☐ Flag students who struggle with connector choice for check-in next week
- ☐ **Season 3 Testing Log entry** (see Post-Class Log below)

PARENT EMAIL (VERBATIM)**Ninja Scholar – Week 3: Paradigms & Principles + BBS Intro**

Today your ninja learned that everyone wears "invisible glasses" called paradigms, and that changing the glasses changes the outcome. We also introduced our first writing tool: because / but / so connectors.

At-home ask: Ask your ninja about a time they changed their mind about something. Can they say it in one sentence using "because," "but," or "so"?

Also this week, and it matters for next week: your ninja has a two-page ninja character sheet at the front of their binder. Have them fill it in at home, including the drawing and the three stats (they assign +2, +1, and 0 across WITS, NERVE, and VOICE). **Next week is their first campaign session and they cannot play without it.**

Hero's Journey quest reminder: Week 13 midpoint check. Students should have chosen their story and started it by now.

– Ninja Scholar Mentor

Framework Connections

ELEMENT	WHERE IT LIVES
Phase 1: BBS connector	Ninja-Scholar-Writing-Sequence
Paradigms & Principles (Habit lesson)	7-Habits-Lesson-Mining – Paradigms & Principles section
"Learn the Ninja Way" ritual	Core-Framework Section 2
Class format (45 min, honest time budget)	Ninja-Scholar-Phase-3-Architecture Section 1
30-Week Skeleton placement	Ninja-Scholar-30-Week-Skeleton Week 3

Fun Factor Notes

ELEMENT	WHY IT'S FUN
Paradigm shift flash	Instant engagement – every kid has had a "zero on a test" moment
TED talk clip	Multimedia break; real person's story beats abstract lecture
Popcorn oral BBS	Low stakes, whole-class energy; no wrong answers
Partner check-in	Social + accountable; students hear their own voice
Your embarrassing paradigm story	Vulnerability = trust; opens the room

Post-Class Log Template

After class, copy this into Ninja-Class-Log:

[Date] – Week 3: Paradigms & Principles + BBS Intro

Skill Focus (Phase/Week): Phase 1 – BBS connector (oral + first written)

Fun Landed?

Skill Protected?**Thick Evidence?** N/A (no text evidence yet)**Time Budget Honest?****One Fix for Next Time:****Season 3 Testing Log hypothesis for this week:**

THIS WEEK'S HYPOTHESIS	RESULT (PASS / FAIL / PARTIAL)	EVIDENCE
Oral BBS before written BBS will produce more confident connector choices than jumping straight to writing		

Annotation Bookmark + Discussion Protocol

Week at a Glance

WEEK	4
HABIT	– (implicit only)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 1 – BBS warm-up on a text sentence
TEXT	"The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	3+ annotations on bookmark; one annotation shared aloud

Week 4 exists to do three things: teach annotation as a physical habit, launch the discussion protocol that will run all year, and give students their first experience of using BBS on actual text. The Dinner Party is the right story because it is short, surprising, and full of clear because/but/so moments. Do not let the read-aloud expand past 10 minutes. The active work: annotation + one practice discussion: is where the learning lives.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from W1)
- ☐ **Completed character sheets** (assigned at home in Week 3). Spares + 5 minutes of the slack for anyone who arrives without one; a ninja with no stats cannot roll.
- ☐ **One six-sided die per table + the shape deck** – this is the first campaign session.
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student: warm-up, annotation practice, reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Student Binders printed: full text of **"The Dinner Party"** is embedded in the binder, so no separate story copies are needed
- ☐ Annotation bookmark handout, 1 per student (see [Curriculum/Ninja Scholar/Core-Framework.md](#) or [07-Student-Materials](#))
- ☐ Whiteboard or display: discussion protocol steps drawn (Write → Sort → Draw → Facilitate)
- ☐ Timer (for 10-minute read-aloud and 5-minute annotation block)
- ☐ Index cards or half-sheets for discussion questions, 1 per table
- ☐ Optional: highlighters or colored pencils, 1 per student
- ☐ **Ninja Game (Three Stars):** 3 star tokens or star stickers per student

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + HJ quest check-in	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	BBS warm-up: mentor reads one sentence from the story; students call out the connector	Phase 1 (oral)
Main instruction	10 min	Annotation bookmark walkthrough (5 min); discussion protocol: Write → Sort → Draw → Facilitate (5 min)	Annotation + protocol

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Active work	22 min	Read "The Dinner Party" aloud (approx. 10 min); students annotate using bookmark; first discussion using protocol (12 min)	Phase 1 (text evidence via annotation)
Close / exit task	5 min	Reflection card: one BBS sentence + one annotation reflection	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

If over budget: Cut the read-aloud to mentor-only reading while students follow silently (7 min). Keep annotation and one practice discussion as protected active work.

The Ninja Game: *(enrichment: not in the canonical class plan; see class plan Week-04-Three Stars Annotation-Bookmark-Discussion-Protocol.md)*

BINDER ENRICHMENT FLAG

This game is a binder-layer addition; it does not appear in the canonical class plan (`04-Class-Log-and-Plans/Class-Plans/Week-04-Annotation-Bookmark-Discussion-Protocol.md`). Keep until the per-week Ninja Game inventory decides enrichment vs drift.

Slot: Runs *during* the read-aloud (inside Active Work): it replaces silent annotation, so it costs no extra time and produces the annotated page the deliverable requires.

Why this game: "Mark the move" games practice the *symbol*. This practices the *judgment*: annotation is deciding what matters under uncertainty. Scarcity (three stars) forces real discrimination, and the story's own suspense supplies the stakes.

How to run it:

- 1 Give each student exactly **three star tokens** (or three star stickers, or three allowed pencil-stars) before you start reading.
- 2 Read aloud, pausing at paragraph breaks. Students spend stars when they judge a moment is one of the three biggest: but the cobra reveal is coming, so holding a star is a gamble.
- 3 Any student may call "**Freeze**" to mark and justify a line. If the room agrees, all make the real mark.
- 4 At the end, tally where stars landed. **The most-starred moments become the discussion-protocol questions:** the game feeds straight into Write → Sort → Draw → Facilitate.

Watch for: early dumping (a kid spends all three in the first paragraph). Let the natural regret teach the lesson: he'll have no star left for the reveal. Underline, circle, and ? stay unlimited; only the star is scarce.

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + reflection card
"The Dinner Party" text	—	Embedded in the Student Binder (no separate copies); anchor text is in <code>Research/Extractions/The-Dinner-Party-20260610.md</code>
Annotation bookmark handout	15	Laminate if possible for reuse all year
Pens + highlighters or colored pencils	15 each	Annotation benefits from color-coding

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Whiteboard: protocol steps	1	Drawn before class: Write → Sort → Draw → Facilitate
Timer	1	10-minute read-aloud; 5-minute annotation
Sticker sheet	1 sheet	Best annotation shared aloud
Star tokens (Three Stars game)	3/student (45)	Tokens, star stickers, or capped pencil-stars; only the star is scarce

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: Round-robin read-aloud; discussion becomes a full-circle go-around rather than protocol.

If more than 12 students: Mentor reads while students follow, or split into two groups for read-aloud. For discussion, use fishbowl: inner circle of 6 practices protocol while outer circle observes; then swap.

If students are too shy to share an annotation: "Write your annotation on an index card. I'll read 3 aloud anonymously. Same learning, zero exposure."

If time runs short: Cut the full read-aloud to mentor reading only (students follow); keep 5-minute annotation + 5-minute discussion as protected active work.

If a student can't annotate (no highlighter, doesn't know what to mark): "Underline ONE sentence that made you react. That's it. No wrong annotation."

If writing activity stalls: "Pick one sentence in the story. Underline it. Write one word: Why? Where? When? That's an annotation."

+

UNIT 1 • WEEK 4 • ORDINARY WORLD → CALL TO ADVENTURE

The Feast

INVESTIGATION

WITS

WHITE BELT

THE SCENE

You're at a dinner party. Everyone is being aggressively pleasant. Somebody at this table knows something is very wrong and has decided not to mention it, because that would be rude. Mochi knows too, and he squeaks when he moves, so he is no help at all. Nobody leaves until you work out what it is.

SAY THIS, THEN FOLLOW THE ROOM

"You're at a dinner party and everyone is being extremely polite about it. Mochi's here and he already knows what's wrong, but he squeaks when he moves, so he's not going to be much help. In the next ten minutes one of you is going to notice the thing nobody else does, and if it isn't you, you'll have to make peace with that. Open your story."

THE OBSTACLES • SHAPE-DRAW FIRES HERE

- What you noticed.** Each ninja marks one detail and describes it. Draw a shape: it decides what that detail turns out to be.
- The thing that moves.** Something shifts under the table. Draw a shape for what brushes past. Duplicates cancel; the party is running out of harmless explanations.
- Naming it.** The party pools their marks and names the danger aloud. One roll, d6 + Wits. On 4+ they name it in time. On 1-3 they name it late, and the call to adventure arrives as an order rather than an invitation.

ON THE CLOCK

BEAT	MIN	WHAT HAPPENS
Frame	3	Mentor sets the feast, names the wrongness
Read	10	"The Dinner Party" read aloud, as planned
Mark	8	Each ninja annotates using the bookmark ANNOTATION
Obstacles 1-2	6	Shape draws on two noticed details
Discussion turn	4	Each ninja takes one turn: what I found, why it matters DISCUSSION TURN
Name it	3	The party names the danger. One roll.
The Call	2	The call arrives. White belt awarded.

IF IT STALLS Drop the fiction, keep the annotation. Say: "Ninjas adapt. Finish marking your story."

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar: Week 4: Annotation Bookmark + Discussion Protocol

Today your ninja learned to read like a ninja: with a pen in hand, leaving marks on the page. We read "The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner and practiced sorting questions into thin, thick, and ninja categories.

At-home ask: Ask your ninja to show you their annotation bookmark and explain one mark they made on the story.

Hero's Journey quest: Week 13 midpoint check is approaching. Please make sure your ninja has chosen their year-long story and begun it.

Speak Your Mind

WEEKS 5–8

Gear A tail • Phase 1 • From sentences on a page to questions that start fights.

4 UNITS

U1 • HERO'S JOURNEY

U2 • SPEAK YOUR MIND

U3 • CROSS THE LINE

U4 • THE LONG ROAD

UNIT 02 • OPENER

Dinner Party Discussion + Connector Upgrade

Week at a Glance

WEEK	5
HABIT	– (implicit only)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 1 – Connector Upgrade (first evidence)
TEXT	"The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner (revisited)
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	One expanded BBS question with text evidence per table

Week 5 exists to do three things: reinforce the discussion protocol from Week 4, introduce the first real evidence demand, and show students that a question is a sentence tool. The Connector Upgrade is the pivot from oral play to written argument. Keep the model tight: one apprentice question, one connector, one piece of evidence, one twist. Students should leave the room having produced writing, not just discussion.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from W1)
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student – warm-up, connector upgrade, reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ **"The Dinner Party" copies, 1 per student** (reuse or fresh copies if heavily annotated last week)
- ☐ Whiteboard: BBS connector columns + a model "Connector Upgrade" before/after drawing
- ☐ Timer (for 3-minute question-writing and 5-minute expansion rounds)
- ☐ Index cards or half-sheets for table questions, 1 per table
- ☐ Optional: "Apprentice vs. Ninja Question" poster or handout, 1 per table
- ☐ Sticker or token system (optional: for best ninja question per table)
- ☐ **Ninja Game (Divide the Room):** floor space cleared; YES / NO / UNDECIDED signs or tape zones

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + annotation check (show me one mark from last week)	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	Connector-review speed round: mentor calls fragments; students shout BECAUSE / BUT / SO	Phase 1 (oral)
Main instruction	10 min	Review discussion protocol (3 min); Connector Upgrade: write a question, transform it with BBS + evidence (7 min)	Connector Upgrade + protocol
Active work	22 min	Write questions from text (5 min); one question selected per table; tables expand using BBS + thin evidence; mentor models paraphrasing (17 min)	Phase 1: Connector Upgrade
Close / exit task	5 min	Reflection card: one expanded BBS question with text evidence + HJ quest check	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

If over budget: Cut discussion protocol review to 1 minute ("Same as last week – you know it"). Keep the Connector Upgrade active work as protected block.

The Ninja Game: Divide the Room

Slot: Front of Active Work (the share-out of table questions) – it replaces the ordinary "read your question aloud," so it costs no extra time and produces the exit-ticket question.

Why this game: The week's trait is "questions that start fights." A relay rewards *speed*; this rewards *division*. The mechanic literally is the definition – a ninja question is one that splits a room.

How to run it:

- 1 Each table builds a question with the 4-step Upgrade Machine and reads it aloud.
- 2 The room votes with feet or hands: YES / NO / undecided.
- 3 **Score = the split.** A lopsided vote means the question was thin (one answer). A balanced, loud split means it's a true ninja question. Run it as a quick bracket and crown one **Ninja Question of the Day**.

Watch for: a deadlock where the room splits but no one will argue. That signals a question that divides on *fact*, not *judgment*. Push: "*You're split – now WHY? Use evidence from the story.*" That turns the vote into the discussion. Keep evidence-from-text as the tiebreaker so it never becomes opinion-only.

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + connector upgrade + reflection card
"The Dinner Party" copies	15	Fresh copies if heavily annotated last week; otherwise reuse
Pens	15	
Whiteboard: connector columns	1	BECAUSE / BUT / SO + one model before/after upgrade
Timer	1	90-second speed round; 3-minute writing blocks
"Apprentice vs. Ninja Question" handout (optional)	15	One-page reference with 2–3 examples
Sticker sheet	1 sheet	Best ninja question per table
YES / NO / UNDECIDED signs	3	Tape or printed signs marking the three vote zones; clear floor space for the vote

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: Tables of 2 instead of 3–4. Discussion protocol still works; sorting is faster.

If more than 12 students: Tables of 4–5. Use fishbowl for share-out: one table presents their ninja question; other tables vote on evidence quality.

If students are too shy to share their question: Anonymous submission to mentor; mentor reads 2–3 and the class upgrades them together. Then students upgrade their own.

If time runs short: Cut table selection to "mentor picks one question from each table." Keep the 10-minute expansion block as protected active work.

If a student can't write a question from the text: "Write any question about the story. Even if it seems thin. We'll upgrade it together."

If writing activity stalls: "Write one question. Any question. Add 'because' to it. That's the upgrade."

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 5: Dinner Party Discussion + Connector Upgrade

Today your ninja learned how to "upgrade" a basic question into a discussion-ready question using because / but / so connectors. They also practiced paraphrasing – saying a story's idea in their own words instead of copying.

At-home ask: Ask your ninja to explain the difference between an "apprentice question" and a "ninja question." Can they give you an example from "The Dinner Party"?

Hero's Journey quest: 14-Day Mission launch is coming in Week 5 / Week 6. Watch for the mission tracker.

PBA + Freewrite #1

Week at a Glance

WEEK	6
HABIT	Personal Bank Account (Roots – explicit)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 1 – BBS warm-up with PBA vocabulary
TEXT	None (autobiographical; student is the text)
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	PBA ledger started; Freewrite #1 in binder

Week 6 exists to do three things: make the 7 Habits concrete through the Personal Bank Account metaphor, launch the freewrite binder ritual that persists all year, and give students a safe place to write without mechanics correction. The PBA must feel like money in the bank, not therapy. Keep examples neutral and practical. The freewrite must have clear boundaries (5 minutes, one prompt, no sharing required) so students feel safe enough to be honest.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from W1)
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student – warm-up, PBA ledger, reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Freewrite notebooks or binders, 1 per student (if not yet distributed, use lined paper today)
- ☐ **PBA handout, 1 per student** (deposit/withdrawal categories; see [Curriculum/Ninja Scholar/01-Philosophy-and-Design/7-Habits-Lesson-Mining.md](#))
- ☐ Whiteboard or display: PBA ledger model drawn (two columns: Deposits / Withdrawals)
- ☐ Timer (for 5-minute freewrite block and 3-minute sharing)
- ☐ Optional: jar, rocks, or visual prop for Big Rocks demonstration
- ☐ **Ninja Game (The Trust Account):** 6–8 "Sam" action cards written ahead; balance meter drawn on the board
- ☐ Sticker or token system (optional: for most honest freewrite share)
- ☐ **Point students at the Magi text in their own binder** (it is embedded at the Week 7 pages) and assign the at-home read at the close. Week 7 checks a reading proof at the ritual and only re-reads two excerpts in class, so a ninja who arrives cold is lost.

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + HJ quest check-in (who's 7-day mission is due this week?)	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	BBS speed round with PBA vocabulary: "I made a deposit/withdrawal BECAUSE..."	Phase 1 (oral)
Main instruction	10 min	Personal Bank Account (10 min): deposits vs. withdrawals + optional Big Rocks demo	Habit: PBA

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Active work	22 min	PBA ledger: 3 deposits and 3 withdrawals from the past week (5 min); Freewrite #1 on "My biggest rock this week" (12 min); 2–3 volunteers share one sentence (5 min)	Phase 1 (BBS warm-up with PBA vocab) + Freewrite #1
Close / exit task	5 min	Reflection card: one PBA sentence + assignment: bring freewrite binder every week	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

If over budget: Cut the Big Rocks demo to verbal only (no physical props). Keep the PBA ledger and freewrite as protected active work.

The Ninja Game: The Trust Account

Slot: Main instruction (the PBA teach, ~10 min) – it replaces the deposit/withdrawal lecture. Students fill their own ledger afterward as usual.

Why this game: Charades for trust actions can feel performative, and exposing real deposits/withdrawals risks the "PBA as therapy" trap this week is built to avoid. Using a fictional banker, **Sam**, keeps it safe – and the running balance plus a withdrawal coming due makes "deposit before you withdraw" something students *watch* pay off rather than just hear.

How to run it:

- 1 Draw a **balance meter** on the board starting at zero. Read 6–8 short Sam actions one at a time (prep these – keep them neutral and sibling/friend scale, not heavy).
- 2 After each, the room votes **deposit or withdrawal AND by how much** (small / big). The "how much" is the judgment a yes/no charade skips. Move the meter.
- 3 **The twist that lands the lesson:** midway, a withdrawal comes *due* – "Sam needs to borrow his sister's bike." Ask whether the balance covers it. If they tanked Sam early, it doesn't.
- 4 *Then* students fill in their own private ledger – never required to share.

Watch for: keep every Sam action low-stakes and fictional. Do not invite students to volunteer real family withdrawals in front of the room. Protect that privacy boundary the same way you protect the freewrite.

Prep – sample Sam action cards:

- + Promised to help his sister study, then left to game. (*withdrawal, big*)
- + Apologized first after a fight. (*deposit, big*)
- + Did a chore without being asked. (*deposit, small*)
- + Repeated a secret a friend told him. (*withdrawal, big*)
- + Listened to his mom's hard day without trying to fix it. (*deposit, small*)
- + Showed up late again after promising not to. (*withdrawal, small but repeated*)

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + PBA ledger + reflection card
Pens	15	
Freewrite notebooks/binders	15	If first distribution, label with name + "Ninja Freewrites"

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
PBA handout	15	Deposit/withdrawal category list
Whiteboard: PBA ledger	1	Two columns drawn before class
Optional: jar + rocks	1 set	Big Rocks demonstration prop
Timer	1	5-minute freewrite
Sticker sheet	1 sheet	Most honest freewrite share
"Sam" action cards	6–8	Written ahead; neutral sibling/friend scale (sample set in the Ninja Game section)
Board balance meter	1	Vertical scale drawn before class; starts at zero

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: PBA ledger sharing becomes whole-circle go-around. Each student reads one deposit or withdrawal.

If more than 12 students: Split into two circles for freewrite sharing. Or use pair-share instead of whole-class share-out.

If students are too shy to share freewrite: "Read one SENTENCE. Just one. You choose which one." Or collect anonymous written submissions; mentor reads 2 aloud without naming names.

If time runs short: Cut PBA ledger listing to 2 deposits + 2 withdrawals. Keep the 10-minute freewrite as protected active work.

If a student has no freewrite notebook: Provide lined paper today; a notebook is required next week. "Ninjas come prepared. Next week, bring a notebook or I'll give you one."

If writing activity stalls: "Write one sentence about your biggest rock. Just one. Then keep going if you want."

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 6: PBA + Freewrite #1

Today your ninja learned about the Personal Bank Account – the idea that every relationship has deposits (actions that build trust) and withdrawals (actions that drain trust). We also launched the freewrite binder, where students write without grammar or spelling correction.

At-home ask: Ask your ninja what their biggest "rock" was this week – the person or responsibility that mattered most. They can share as much or as little as they want; freewrites are theirs unless they choose to share.

Assignment: Please make sure your ninja brings a freewrite notebook to class every week. If they lose it, they will replace it during class time.

Reading job (15 minutes, due next class): O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" is printed inside your ninja's binder, at the Week 7 pages. Please make sure they read the whole story before next class, then either initial it or have them mark it up – Week 7 opens by checking that the reading happened. Class only re-reads two short passages, so a ninja who skipped it will be lost.

Hero Training Mission: 7-day mission completions are being checked next week. Please send a photo of the tracker if it is complete.

Subordinating Conjunctions + Gift of the Magi Intro

Week at a Glance

WEEK	7
HABIT	– (buffer week; no explicit habit)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 2 – Subordinating Conjunction + BBS (first use)
TEXT	"The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry – read at home before class, assigned Week 6
SESSION LENGTH	40 minutes planned + 5 minutes designated slack
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	One sentence opening with a subordinating conjunction that keeps its promise + one BBS set on Della's decision

Week 7 exists to do three things: launch Phase 2 by teaching the subordinating conjunction as a sentence opener, re-enter "The Gift of the Magi" at the two moments that carry the whole story, and protect a real piece of writing from the very first day of this new tool. The subordinating conjunction is harder than BBS because students must commit to a structure before they know how the sentence ends. Keep the model concrete and do not let the buffer-week looseness erode the protected writing block.

The story is read at home, not in class. Only "The Dinner Party" is short enough to read start to finish in a session. Magi is too long, so the class read is an **8-minute re-read of two marked excerpts**, not a performance of the whole story. The full text is in the student binder at this week's pages, which is what they read from at home. If you restore a full in-class read, the writing block is what pays for it.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from prior weeks)
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student – warm-up, sentence practice, reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ **Key-passage script:** Excerpt A and Excerpt B marked in your copy, read-aloud cues highlighted (boundaries below)
- ☐ **1-page Magi abridgment × 4** – the cold-reader recovery path, for students who arrive not having read
- ☐ **The four openers posted on the board before students arrive:** Although / Before / When / After
- ☐ Sentence strips, 1 per student
- ☐ Timer (re-read pacing and the protected writing block)
- ☐ **Ninja Game (Draw the Opener):** opener-phrase cards in a hat or bowl – the four board openers plus *While / Since / Even though* for the draw; masking tape marking a "Built It" zone on the floor
- ☐ Laminated ritual card

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Ninja Way + Magi reading-proof check	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	Kernel expansion on "Della cried." using who / where / why	Phase 2 maintenance (written)

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Main instruction	7 min	The four subordinating conjunctions and the promise each one makes	Phase 2
Active work	22 min	Two-excerpt re-read (8) → Draw the Opener writing block (14)	Phase 2 (first written use)
Close	3 min	Preview, text-return #2 assigned, sentence strips collected	Logistics
Designated slack	5 min	Absorbs re-read or writing overrun. Never pre-filled.	—

Total: 40 planned + 5 slack = 45 minutes.

If over budget: spend the slack. After that, cut Excerpt A to its second half. **Never cut the writing block** – it is this week's only deliverable and Week 8's annotation is built on it.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way from the card.

Spotlight: the reading proof. Every student holds up their marked-up Magi pages or a parent sign-off. Sixty seconds, no discussion, and note who arrived cold. The whole shape of today assumes the story was read.

If a student arrives not having read it: hand them the 1-page abridgment and seat them. They still do the writing block. Do not make the cold read a public event.

Warm-Up (5 min)

Board kernel:

"Della cried."

Students expand it in writing using **who / where / why**. Three minutes to write, two minutes for two volunteer reads. Phase 2 maintenance; no new instruction here.

Main Instruction (7 min): The Four Openers

Direct teach of **Although / Before / When / After**, already on the board. The big idea:

"The moment you write *Although*, you've made a promise. A contrast is coming, and you have to deliver it before the period. One sentence, not two wearing a costume."

Each opener makes a different promise: *Although* promises a contrast, *Before* a sequence, *When* a moment, *After* a consequence.

Model from the story's opening only. The class has read it, but the two excerpts you are about to re-read are where the weight is, so do not spend the model on them. "Although Della had almost no money, she found a way to give Jim a gift" is enough. (Source: ¶1, the \$1.87.)

Active Work (22 min)

0:15–0:23 (8 min) – Key-passage re-read aloud. You read; students follow on their own binder pages and underline one sentence per excerpt where a character makes a choice.

✦ **Excerpt A, the sale of the hair:** from "She put on her old brown coat" through "Give it to me quick."

- ★ **Excerpt B, the reveal:** from *"From inside the coat, Jim took something tied in paper" through "I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs."*

That underline is their ticket into the writing block, and it is also what Week 8's annotation work builds on.

0:23–0:37 (14 min) – The writing block. Two pieces:

(a) One sentence about the story that **starts** with one of the four openers and keeps its promise across the whole sentence. This is where **Draw the Opener** runs (below).

(b) One BBS set about Della's decision:

Della sold her hair because... / Della sold her hair, but... / Della sold her hair, so...

Circulate. Feedback comments **only** on the Phase 2 skill: does the opener's promise get kept, in one complete sentence rather than two stuck together? No mechanics, no revision talk.

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 (during the re-read, if attention drifts) "Eyes on the page. Your underline is your ticket into next week's debate."
- 2 (to a stuck writer) "Read your opener out loud. What did you just promise? Now keep it."
- 3 (to an early finisher) "Draw a second card. Same sentence, harder opener."

The Ninja Game: Draw the Opener

Slot: part (a) of the writing block. It replaces a plain "write a sentence" instruction and produces the protected deliverable directly.

Why this game: letting students pick their own opener lets them dodge the hard ones, and everyone "chooses" *Because*. The whole difficulty of a subordinating conjunction is committing to a structure before you know your ending, so the draw has to be blind.

How to run it:

- 1 Each student draws one **opener card** blind (the four board openers plus *While, Since, Even though*).
- 2 They build one complete sentence about Della or Jim starting with exactly that opener. No swapping.
- 3 Once the sentence is complete and logical – a subordinate clause plus a main clause, not words slapped together – they read it aloud and step into the **"Built It" zone** taped on the floor.
- 4 The room watches the zone fill. The last few get coached one-on-one while everyone already standing helps as peer ears.

The scoring is the lesson: a sentence only counts if the opener actually subordinates real cause, contrast, or time logic. "Although Della sold her hair. She got money." does not count. Redirect: "Squish those into one sentence. What's the *full* relationship?"

Watch for: students who drew a hard opener (*Even though, Since*) freezing. Build one shared class example for that specific opener before sending them back to their own.

Close (3 min)

One-sentence preview: "Next week we annotate character choices and pick our debate question."

Assign text-return #2 (the parent email below). Collect the sentence strips into binders.

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Key-passage script	1	Excerpts A and B marked, read-aloud cues highlighted
"The Gift of the Magi" text	—	Embedded in the student binder at this week's pages; that is what they read at home. Anchor text: <code>Research/Extractions/The-Gift-of-the-Magi-20260610.md</code> (numbered 1–45)
1-page abridgment	4	Cold-reader recovery path only
Board: the four openers	1	Although / Before / When / After, posted before arrival
Opener-phrase cards	12–15	The four plus While / Since / Even though
Sentence strips	1 per student	Collected into binders at the close
Masking tape	1 roll	Marks the "Built It" zone
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + sentence practice + reflection card
Timer	1	Re-read pacing; protected writing block

Contingency Plans

If a student arrives not having read the story: the 1-page abridgment, handed over quietly. They do the full writing block like everyone else.

If fewer than 8 students: every student draws two opener cards and builds two sentences. Same game, more reps.

If more than 12 students: run two "Built It" zones so the line to read aloud does not bottleneck.

If energy is low by minute 15: split the re-read. Students read Della's and Jim's dialogue lines chorally while you read the narration. Costs nothing and wakes the room.

If students are too shy to read aloud: they may step into the zone silently and hand their card to a "scout" who reads it for them.

If a student is frozen on a hard opener: build one shared class example for that opener on the board first, then send them back to draft their own.

If a sentence is grammatically broken: "Read it out loud to me. Does it sound finished, or does it stop in the middle? Fix the middle, keep the opener."

If time runs short: spend the slack, then cut Excerpt A to its second half. Never cut the writing block.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 7: Subordinating Conjunctions + Gift of the Magi Intro

Today your ninja started "The Gift of the Magi" and learned a new sentence tool: opening a sentence with a subordinating conjunction (Although, Because, Even though...) before the main idea.

At-home ask: Ask your ninja which opener they drew and what sentence about Della or Jim they built with it.

Looking ahead: "The Gift of the Magi" carries through Week 12, including a class debate. Encourage your ninja to keep their copy handy.



Last updated: 2026-06-22 | **Cloned from:** Week-06 print-binder format | **Next review:** After Batch B taught

Annotation + Should-Questions

Week at a Glance

WEEK	8
HABIT	– (implicit only)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 2 – evidence spotting + arguable questions
TEXT	"The Gift of the Magi" – twice-read , text-return #2 verified at the ritual
SESSION LENGTH	44 minutes planned + 1 minute slack
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	2 annotated character choices + 2 should-questions per student + the class debate question, selected by whole-class vote

Week 8 exists to do three things: deepen annotation from "mark a moment" to "judge a choice," teach the should-question format that fuels the next two weeks, and **vote one question into existence for the whole class**. That last one is the week's real output. Weeks 9 and 10 are built on there being exactly one question, argued by two teams.

The vote is class-wide, not per table. Week 9 splits the whole roster into two teams arguing a single question and Week 10 debates it. Four tables with four questions is four debates you do not have time for. Whichever path you run, the session ends with one question on the board, copied into every binder, final.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ **Should-question frame poster:** "Should _____ have _____?"
- ☐ **Ballot space prepared on the board** – a numbered list for the nominees
- ☐ **Annotation model passage** (Excerpt A from Week 7) on a large card or slide
- ☐ **Week 7 → Week 8 text-return results** – know who arrived without their two sacrifice marks
- ☐ Sticky notes, 4 per student
- ☐ Name tags or name tents; pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student – warm-up, should-question drafts, reflection card
- ☐ **One six-sided die per table + the shape deck** – Unit 2's encounter rolls d6 + VOICE and draws shapes.
- ☐ **Ninja Game (Gallery of Choices), fallback only:** 3–4 oversized excerpt posters (Della sells her hair / Jim sells his watch / Della's reflection / the final exchange); colored dot stickers; sticky-note pads
- ☐ Laminated ritual card

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Ninja Way + hold up your two sacrifice marks (text-return #2)	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	"Jim looked at Della strangely..." finished three ways	Phase 1 BBS (written, never cut)
Main instruction	11 min	Model one annotation (3) → the should-question frame (8)	Annotation + should question

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE/TOOL
Active work	22 min	Annotate 2 choices (10) → write 2 should-questions (8) → class vote (4)	Phase 2 text evidence
Close	3 min	Preview, annotated copies and question cards filed	Logistics
Slack	1 min	—	—

Total: 44 planned + 1 slack = 45 minutes.

If over budget: cut the annotation block to one choice per student. **Never cut the vote.** Week 10's debate does not exist without it.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way from the card.

Spotlight: text-return #2. Every student holds up their copy showing **the two sacrifice marks** they made at home. Sixty-second visual check, no discussion. You are confirming the second read happened, because today's annotation assumes a twice-read text.

Warm-Up (5 min)

Board stem:

"Jim looked at Della strangely..."

Students finish it **three ways**, once each with *because*, *but*, and *so*. Three minutes to write, two minutes for volunteer reads.

Source anchor: Jim's expression when he comes in is deliberately unreadable — "It was not anger, nor surprise, nor anything she had been ready for." That ambiguity is exactly why three different connectors all work.

Main Instruction (11 min)

0:08–0:11 (3 min) – Model one annotation, live, with your own pencil.

"Watch my pencil. Della says four words: 'Will you buy my hair?' I circle it — that's a CHOICE. In the margin I write what she gives and what she gets: hair, twenty dollars. That's a complete annotation. Choice circled, trade named."

0:11–0:19 (8 min) – The should-question frame. Teach **"Should _____ have _____?"**

Two worked examples:

- + *Should Della have sold her hair?*
- + *Should Jim have sold his watch?*

Then one non-example, and **strike it through on the board:**

- + ~~*Did Della sell her hair?*~~

"A should-question is a question two smart people can disagree about. *Should Della have sold her hair?* Half of you just thought yes and half thought no. Perfect. *Did Della sell her hair?* That's not a debate, that's page three."

The two criteria: arguable both ways, and answerable with evidence from the story.

Launch line (0:08): "You've read this story twice and marked both sacrifices. Today you learn the two moves every debater needs: spotting a choice, and turning it into a fight worth having."

Active Work (22 min)

- + **0:19–0:29 (10 min) – Annotate two character choices** anywhere in the story, using the modeled format: circle the choice, margin note naming what the character *gives* and what they *get*. Last week's underlines and the text-return sacrifice marks are legal starting points.
- + **0:29–0:37 (8 min) – Write two should-questions**, each rooted in one of the annotated choices. Tables read theirs aloud and **nominate one per table** to the board.
- + **0:37–0:41 (4 min) – The class vote.** List the table nominees, numbered. Hands-up vote selects **the** debate question for Week 10. Write the winner at the top of the board; every student copies it into their binder.
The vote is final.

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 "If your margin note doesn't say what the character GIVES and what they GET, the annotation isn't done."
- 2 "Test your question on your neighbour. If they can't disagree with you, sharpen it."
- 3 (at the vote) "You're not voting for your friend's question. You're voting for the question you'd most want to argue about for twenty minutes."

The Unit 2 RPG Session — Meeting with Mochi

Week 8 is Unit 2's culminating RPG session. It re-skins the annotate + should-question + vote block above: same work, same output, wrapped in the campaign. Run this from the page.

UNIT 2 • WEEK 8 • MEETING WITH THE MENTOR

Meeting with Mochi

COUNCIL

VOICE

YELLOW BELT

THE SCENE

Mochi has been sitting in this room since Week One and not one of you has said hello, which is on you. He is the only one here who has already done all of this. He answers exactly one question today. Not one each. One. And he only hears questions built out of something a character actually did.

SAY THIS, THEN FOLLOW THE ROOM

"See Mochi? He's been sitting right there since Week One and not one of you has said hello. Rude. He did all of this before any of you and he'll answer one question today. Not one each. One. So each of you write me two, and we'll pick the best one to ask. Build them properly, because he doesn't repeat himself and he isn't impressed by you yet."

THE OBSTACLES • SHAPE-DRAW FIRES HERE

- The Toll of Attention.** Each ninja presents two choices they noticed in the story. *Shape draw:* the shape becomes the thing a character gave up, or the thing they got for it.
- Forming the Ask.** Two should-questions each, every one rooted in an annotated choice. No roll. Badly formed questions are simply not heard.
- The Ask.** The party votes on one question. Roll d6 + VOICE. On 4+ Mochi answers plainly. On a low roll he answers, but makes the party argue it themselves first.

ON THE CLOCK

BEAT	MIN	WHAT HAPPENS
Frame	3	Mochi introduced as the one who already walked this road
Annotate	10	Two character choices, circle + give/get margin note ANNOTATION
Should-questions	8	Two per ninja, each rooted in a choice SHOULD-QUESTIONS
Shape draws	4	On two of the noticed choices
Vote + ask	5	Party votes one question; roll; Mochi answers DEBATE QUESTION
Belt	2	Yellow belt awarded; the voted question is the W10 debate topic

IF IT STALLS Drop the fiction, keep the should-questions. Say: "Ninjas adapt. Finish your two questions."

Why the low roll is good: it hands the W9–10 debate to the table as a quest Mochi set, instead of an assignment you gave. Either way the voted question is locked and copied into every binder.

Fallback Game: Gallery of Choices

(Run this only on a year where you skip the RPG session. It does the same should-question + vote work as the encounter above, without the campaign frame.)

Slot: Main instruction transition into Active Work – replaces a seated annotation worksheet, and it produces both the annotation deliverable and the should-question draft in one motion.

Why this game: A worksheet asks students to mark a moment. This asks them to take a side on it – annotation here is judgment, not just attention. Walking the room and physically placing a dot in front of peers raises the stakes just enough to make the judgment real.

How to run it:

- 1 Students rotate in pairs through 3–4 stations (90 seconds each), each showing one Della/Jim choice moment enlarged on a poster.
- 2 At each station, the pair places **one colored dot**: Heart (this moved me), Star (this is the turning point), or Question mark (I'm not sure this was right) – then writes a one-line should-question stub on a sticky note and posts it next to the dot.
- 3 At the final station, the table reads all their stub questions aloud and does a **gut-check vote**: stand if you agree the character should have done it. A close, loud split means it's a real should question. A vote where everyone stands the same way means it's too easy – send it back for revision.
- 4 The table locks in **one should question** as its nominee.
- 5 **Then the whole class votes, and this is not optional.** Write every table's nominee on the board, numbered. Hands-up vote. The winner is written at the top of the board and **copied into every binder**. The vote is final.

WHY THE CLASS VOTE CANNOT BE SKIPPED

Week 9 splits the whole class into two teams arguing one question, and Week 10 debates that one question. Table-level questions leave you with four topics and no debate. The RPG session above already ends in a single party-wide vote; this fallback has to reach the same place.

Watch for: stub questions that are really "did" questions in disguise ("Did Della cut her hair?") – that has one factual answer. Redirect: "That's not a should. Try: *Should* Della have cut her hair, given what else she could have done?"

Close (3 min)

Preview: "Next week: Habit 1, and you get your debate teams."

Students file their annotated copies and question cards into binders.

Closing language (0:41): "We have our question. It does not change. Next week you find out which side you're arguing, and it might not be the side you believe."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Should-question frame poster	1	"Should _____ have _____?"
Annotation model card or slide	1	Excerpt A from Week 7
Board ballot space	1	Numbered nominee list for the class vote
Student story copies	1 per student	Annotated through two passes already
Sticky notes	4 per student	
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + should-question drafts + reflection card
Die + shape deck	1 per table / 1 deck	RPG session (d6 + VOICE, shape draws)
Excerpt posters + dot stickers	3–4 posters	Fallback game only
Timer	1	90 seconds per station in the fallback

Contingency Plans

If energy is low by minute 20: convert annotation to pair work. One student finds the choice, the other writes the give/get note, then swap for the second one. Same output, more social energy.

If students are stuck on should-questions: hand them the character list (Della, Jim, Mrs. Sofronie) and the frame card. Ask aloud: "Pick a name. Pick a thing they did. Put 'Should' in front of it." If still stuck, they adopt one worked example and write the second themselves.

If fewer than 8 students: run the gallery as a whole-class rotation instead of pairs.

If more than 12 students: add a station, or start two groups at different posters to avoid bottlenecks.

If students are too shy to vote visibly: head-down thumbs up or down instead of standing or hands.

If a table can't agree on its nominee: you break the tie with "Which one made the room split loudest?" Use the gut-check, not a re-vote.

If a should-question turns out thin once debate prep starts next week: it can be revised at Week 9. Flag it now, fix it then.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): they serve as their table's **question tester**. Every question gets read to them and they must argue the opposite side aloud for fifteen seconds. Scored role, zero written output; log participation.

Sub path (stall at minute 10 of the active block): run **Gear B Substitute Activity #3, Evidence Hunt** from the printed page – claim card "Della loves Jim more than her hair," find two supporting sentences, copy with location, pair-swap check. **The debate-question vote then shifts to Week 9's close**, where it fits inside the existing 3-minute close as a hands-up vote, because the table nominees already exist on cards.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 8: Gift of the Magi Annotation + Should Questions

Today your ninja judged Della and Jim's choices – not just noticed them, but decided whether they were the right call. They wrote "should questions," which set up a class debate in two weeks.

At-home ask: Ask your ninja their table's should question and which side they'd argue.

Looking ahead: Week 9 launches debate prep and a 21-Day Hero Training Mission. Week 10 is the live class debate.

Last updated: 2026-06-23 | **Cloned from:** Week-06 print-binder format | **Next review:** After Batch B taught

Cross the Line

WEEKS 9–12

Gear B • Phase 2 • From noticing a choice to standing on one.

4 UNITS

U1 • HERO'S JOURNEY

U2 • SPEAK YOUR MIND

U3 • CROSS THE LINE

U4 • THE LONG ROAD

UNIT 03 • OPENER

Habit 1: Be Proactive + Debate Prep

Week at a Glance

WEEK	9
HABIT	Be Proactive (Roots – explicit)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 2 – supporting ideas in proactive language, each with located evidence
TEXT	"The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry + the class debate question
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes (HABIT template: 3 + 3 + 14 + 22 + 3)
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	Team prep sheet: 3 supporting ideas in proactive language, each with one located piece of story evidence

Week 9 exists to do three things: teach reactive-versus-proactive language as a habit rather than a debate trick, build the actual prep sheets that Week 10's debate runs on, and send the debate rules sheet home so next week's instruction block can collapse to five minutes. The rules sheet is load-bearing. Week 10 was rebuilt on the assumption that the rules are already learned at home, so if the sheet does not go home tonight, next week loses a quarter of its debate time re-teaching them. Keep the prep block fully protected.

WHY THIS WEEK RUNS THE HABIT TEMPLATE

Habit weeks get 14 minutes of instruction, not the usual 8. Habit 1 is the first explicit habit teach of the year and it carries the Circles diagram, so the warm-up shrinks to 3 minutes to pay for it. The written warm-up still happens; it is never cut.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from prior weeks)
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student – warm-up, spare drafting, reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ **Team rosters printed** – two teams for the whole class, pre-assigned by mentor, balanced, and **not** sorted by stated opinion
- ☐ **Team prep sheets printed** – 3 numbered idea slots, one evidence line under each
- ☐ **Debate rules sheet, 1 per family** – print from `00-Front-Matter/Debate-Rules-Sheet.md`. This goes home tonight and is what empties Week 10's instruction block.
- ☐ Proactive/reactive language card pairs (8 pairs) per table
- ☐ Board: Circle of Concern / Circle of Influence diagram drawn before class
- ☐ The table's locked should question from Week 8, written on the board or on a handout
- ☐ 21-Day Mission tracker handout, 1 per student
- ☐ Timer (crossing rounds and the idea-drafting block)
- ☐ **Ninja Game (The Proactive Crossing):** masking tape line down the center of the room, labeled REACTIVE and PROACTIVE. The 8 card pairs double as the crossing prompts, so nothing extra needs writing.

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + 21-Day Mission launched in one sentence	Culture
Warm-up	3 min	Written flip of the Della sentence on the board	Phase 2 (written, never cut)
Main instruction	14 min	The Proactive Crossing (card pairs, kinetic) → Circles of Concern and Influence sorted on three story facts → teams, moderator, and jury named	Habit 1: Be Proactive
Active work	22 min	Team prep: 3 supporting ideas in proactive language, each with located evidence	Phase 2 evidence sentences
Close	3 min	Rules sheet handed out, prep sheets collected, reflection card	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

If over budget: cut the W. Mitchell story to one sentence and run 3 crossing rounds instead of 4. Never cut idea drafting, the rules-sheet handout, or the prep-sheet collection. Week 10 is built on all three.

Warm-Up: Flip Della (3 min)

On the board before class:

"Della had to sell her hair; there was nothing else she could do."

Model frame, also on the board:

"Della chose to _____ because _____."

Students rewrite the sentence in proactive language. 2.5 minutes to write, one volunteer reads. That is the whole warm-up. Do not discuss it yet; the crossing game is about to make the same point with their feet.

The Ninja Game: The Proactive Crossing

Slot: the first 6 minutes of main instruction. This is not an add-on. It is how the printed card pairs get delivered: same content the class plan calls for, read off the floor instead of off a table.

Why this game: telling students "use proactive language" produces compliance, not habit. Making them physically cross a line, but only by performing the flip out loud, forces the language change to happen in their own body before it ever reaches paper.

How to run it:

- 1 Tape a line down the center of the room: REACTIVE side, PROACTIVE side. Every student starts on REACTIVE.
- 2 Mentor reads the reactive half of a card pair aloud ("I have to." "He made me so mad.").
- 3 To cross to PROACTIVE, a student must say the flipped version out loud first: "I choose how I respond when my sister bugs me." No flip, no crossing.
- 4 Run 4 rounds off the card pairs. Then run one final round on a sentence about their own assigned debate side: "We have to argue this side" flips to "We choose to argue this side, and here's why." That last round seeds the prep block.

The scoring is the lesson: a peer gatekeeper at the line can challenge a sloppy flip that changes tone but not action. "I guess it's fine" does not count. Send weak flips back to try again, same rule as Flip the Glasses in Week 3.

Watch for: students flipping the emotion instead of the choice. Push every flip toward a verb: "I choose to..." "I will..." Let a confident student model the first round before opening the floor.

The Two Circles (board, ~6 min)

Draw both circles before class. Sort three facts from the story live, out loud, with the class calling them:

STORY FACT	CIRCLE	WHY
Jim's pay dropped from \$30 to \$20 a week	Concern	Della cannot control it
Expenses had been greater than Della calculated	Concern	Already spent; she cannot undo it
What to give Jim for Christmas	Influence	This is where she acts

The habit claim: proactive people work inside their Circle of Influence. Della's \$1.87 problem sat in her Circle of Concern until she found the one thing she actually controlled.

Launch line (0:06): "Della had a dollar eighty-seven and a problem she didn't cause. Today's habit is about what you do when the problem isn't your fault."

Roles Named (final 2 min of instruction)

Read the two team rosters aloud. Name the moderator. Everyone not on a team is the **jury**, which is a scored role, not a spectator seat. One sentence on each role and stop. The full rules go home on paper tonight, so do not teach them now.

Teams are mentor-assigned and balanced, never sorted by who believes what. Half the class will discover they have been assigned the side they do not agree with. Smile and refuse to switch anyone. That is this week's fun factor and it is also the point: you can argue a position you do not hold, and doing it well is a skill.

Active Work: Team Prep (22 min)

- + **0:20–0:24 (4 min):** teams huddle, re-read their side of the question, and assign one idea slot per pair.
- + **0:24–0:38 (14 min):** write **3 supporting ideas in proactive language**, each with one piece of story evidence and its page or paragraph location noted. Frame enforced: an idea states what a character *chose*, not what happened *to* them. Meanwhile the jury drafts its scoring criteria with the mentor: *Was the idea proactive-framed? Was the evidence from the book?*
- + **0:38–0:42 (4 min):** each team reads its three ideas aloud once. No rebuttals permitted. This is so Week 10 starts warm.

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 "Read me your idea. Did your character *choose*, or did things just *happen*? If it just happened, reframe it."
- 2 "Evidence means the book said it. Point to the spot before you write the line."
- 3 (to the jury) "Your criteria have to be checkable. 'It was good' is not checkable. 'The evidence came from the story' is."

Close (3 min)

Hand every student the debate rules sheet for home. Exact close line:

"Read this with a parent. Week 10, the timer is the law and I am only the timekeeper."

Collect the prep sheets. They come back to the team tables before students arrive at Week 10.

Closing language (0:42): "Your ideas are written, your evidence is located, and the rules are in your backpack. Next week we find out which team did its homework inside its Circle of Influence."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Team rosters	2	Mentor-assigned, balanced, not by stated opinion
Team prep sheets	1 per student	3 numbered idea slots, evidence line under each; collected at close
Debate rules sheet	1 per family	00-Front-Matter/Debate-Rules-Sheet.md ; goes home tonight and empties Week 10's instruction block
Proactive/reactive card pairs	8 pairs per table	Also serve as the crossing prompts
Circle diagram	1	Drawn on the board before class
Masking tape	1 roll	Marks the REACTIVE/PROACTIVE line
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + spare drafting + reflection card
Should question from Week 8	1	The locked debate question, posted
21-Day Mission tracker	15	One per student
Timer	1	Crossing rounds; 14-minute drafting block

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: run teams of two or three with the mentor as moderator. The jury shrinks to a single foreperson, who still drafts the criteria and still reads them aloud at Week 10.

If more than 12 students: grow the jury, not the teams. More jurors is better, and every juror gets a ballot next week. Teams above four speakers start losing slots at Week 10's timed format.

If energy is low by minute 25: convert idea-drafting to "stand and defend." Each pair must stand and say their idea aloud before writing it. Movement plus accountability, zero minute cost.

If students are stuck on proactive phrasing: the card pairs are the scaffold. Find the reactive phrase that matches your sentence and flip it using its pair. Mentor does the first flip aloud for the table.

If students are too shy to cross the line aloud: allow a written flip handed to the gatekeeper, who reads it and waves them across.

If a flip is reactive in disguise ("It's just not fair"): "Flip it. What CHOICE does your side want people to make instead?"

If time runs short: cut to 2 supporting ideas instead of 3. Never cut the rules-sheet handout or the prep-sheet collection.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): they take the jury-criteria role, which is this week's structural oral seat. They draft and read the scoring criteria aloud, then serve as jury foreperson at Week 10. Fully scored, zero written output required.

Sub path (stall at minute 10 of active work): run **Gear B Substitute Activity #1, Transitional Phrase Sort** (printed card set, answer key on back). Team prep compresses into the final 8 minutes using only the two worked should-question examples as idea seeds. If a true substitute is running the room, Habit 1 does **not** get taught at all, per the Substitute Protocol: subs never teach new habits. The habit week shifts forward, and Week 10's +5 slack plus Week 13's light load absorb it.

PARENT EMAIL**Ninja Scholar – Week 9: Habit 1, Be Proactive + Debate Prep**

Today your ninja learned Habit 1, Be Proactive, by physically crossing a line in the classroom, but only after saying a "choice" version of a complaint out loud. They were assigned a debate team and drafted three supporting ideas with evidence from the story for next week's live class debate. They also launched their longest Hero Training Mission yet: 21 days.

At-home ask (10 minutes): Your student came home with a printed debate rules sheet, one per family. Please read it together once. Quiz them on two things: (1) how long is each speaking slot, and (2) what happens when the timer sounds. The answer is that the speaker stops mid-word, because the timer is the law. Then ask your ninja to flip one of your own complaints into a proactive sentence ("I have to do dishes" becomes "I choose to...").

Looking ahead: Week 10 is the live class debate. Please send a photo of the Mission tracker when it's complete.

Last updated: 2026-07-24 | **Consolidated from:** `W09-Habit-1-Be-Proactive.md` class plan + Week-09 print-binder draft | **Next review:** After Batch B taught

Debate Day: The Timed Micro-Debate

Week at a Glance

WEEK	10
HABIT	– (Habit 1 carries forward from Week 9, now under pressure)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 2 – evidence deployed orally
TEXT	The class debate question, from the Week 8 vote, on "The Gift of the Magi"
SESSION LENGTH	40 minutes planned + 5 minutes designated slack
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	Participation in the timed debate + a jury verdict against written criteria. Satisfies Certification requirement #5.

Week 10 exists to do one thing well: let students argue, in public, with structure, and survive it. Two weeks of prep culminate here. This is the highest-energy week in Gear B by design, and the debate itself is this week's Ninja Game. There is no separate insert. Resist the urge to referee content: the format and the jury do that work. Your only job during the debate is the timer.

WHY THIS WEEK HAS FIVE MINUTES OF SLACK

An earlier version of this plan called for prep, debate, and debrief all in one session. That does not fit in 45 minutes, and the arithmetic is what forced the current architecture. Prep moved to Week 9's active block, the rules went home on paper, and the debate was rebuilt as a 24-minute timed format with the debrief inside it. The five minutes at the end are designated slack. They absorb a deliberation that needs a fourth minute or a re-vote. Never pre-fill them.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ **Visible countdown timer.** The single most important object in the room today.
- ☐ **Team prep sheets returned to the team tables before students arrive** (you collected them at Week 9)
- ☐ **Jury ballots printed, 1 per juror**, carrying the two criteria the jury itself drafted at Week 9: was the idea proactive-framed? was the evidence from the book?
- ☐ **The timed format on a poster, big, at the front** (segment names + minutes)
- ☐ **Moderator script card** (4 lines, below) on the moderator's chair
- ☐ Bell, chime, or other clear "time's up" signal
- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from prior weeks)
- ☐ Index cards, 1 per student, for the reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Courtroom props, optional: gavel, speaker placard. Pure fun, zero cost to skip.

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + Courtroom Walk-In chant + rules-sheet spotlight	Culture

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Warm-up	5 min	Written: "Our team will win because..." (jurors write a different stem)	Phase 2 (written, never cut)
Main instruction	5 min	Jury criteria read aloud, timer law, moderator's four lines rehearsed. No new content.	Logistics
Active work	24 min	The Verdict: the timed micro-debate, with deliberation and debrief inside it	Habit 1 live + Phase 2 oral evidence
Close	3 min	Verdict recorded in binders	Logistics
Designated slack	5 min	Absorbs segment overruns. Never pre-filled.	—

Total: 40 planned + 5 slack = 45 minutes.

If over budget: the slack is the answer, so spend it. If you are still over after that, cut rebuttals to 1:00 per side. Never cut the debate, the closings, or the jury deliberation. Certification requirement #5 and next week's thesis lesson both depend on them.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way as always. Then the **Courtroom Walk-In:** the room says it together, *"I choose. I don't have to."* It is Week 9's habit in four words, said standing, on the day it has to hold up under pressure.

Rules-sheet spotlight: hands up if a parent quizzed you on the rules sheet. Ten seconds, no discussion, then move on. You are checking that the Week 9 handout did its job, not starting a conversation.

Warm-Up (5 min)

Board stem for team members:

"Our team will win because..."

Board stem for jurors:

"The strongest argument will be..."

Each student writes one BBS-style sentence, their choice of connector. 4 minutes to write, 1 minute for two reads aloud. This is what keeps the never-cut writing warm-up alive on debate day, and it takes 30 seconds to set up.

Main Instruction (5 min): The Brief

No new content. Three things only:

- 1 The jury reads its two criteria aloud** (the ones it wrote at Week 9).
- 2 The timer law restated:** the speaker stops mid-word at the sound.
- 3 The moderator rehearses the four lines once.**

The rules were learned at home. Do not re-teach them. That pre-teaching is exactly what buys the 24-minute debate.

Launch line (0:08): "You prepped last week. You learned the rules at home. My only job today is this timer, and the timer is the law. Jury, read us your criteria."

The Ninja Game: The Verdict

Slot: the entire active-work block. For Week 10 the debate *is* the Ninja Game. The procedure and the props make the structure visible and the stakes real.

Why this game: two weeks of prep deserve a real performance with real consequences, not a worksheet. Courtroom framing turns "argue in front of the class," usually a kid's nightmare, into a ritual with rules, roles, and a clear finish line.

The format (24 minutes, run it off the poster):

SEGMENT	TIME	NOTES
Opening, Team A	1:00	one speaker
Opening, Team B	1:00	one speaker
Three ideas per team, alternating	9:00	6 slots × 1:30. Every prep-sheet idea gets a voice; different speaker per slot where numbers allow.
Rebuttal, Team A	2:00	responds to the other side's strongest point
Rebuttal, Team B	2:00	
Closing, Team A	1:00	
Closing, Team B	1:00	
Jury deliberation, aloud, in front of the class	3:00	foreperson leads, criterion by criterion, against the ballot
Debrief	4:00	mentor-led, script below

The scoring is the lesson: the jury is not grading who shouted loudest. It is grading the two things it wrote down, which are whether the argument used the text and whether it used proactive language. That is what makes this a debate and not a fight. Deliberating out loud in front of the room is the point: the class hears reasons being weighed.

Moderator script card (verbatim, 4 lines):

- 1 "The question before the class is: [question]. Team A, your opening."
- 2 "Time. Team [X], your next idea."
- 3 "Time. We move to rebuttals."
- 4 "The jury will now deliberate. Foreperson, you have the floor."

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 (when a speaker freezes) "Read your prep sheet line word-for-word. That's what it's for."
- 2 (when the room reacts to a point) "Jurors, faces neutral. Your ballot talks, you don't. Yet."
- 3 (at deliberation) "Foreperson, take them criterion by criterion. Criterion one first."

Debrief script (4 min): three questions, about 75 seconds each. Write one-word answers on the board. No speeches.

- 1 "What was the single strongest piece of *book* evidence you heard?"
- 2 "Where did proactive language show up?"
- 3 "What would you do differently with one more prep week?"

Watch for: a side running out of supporting ideas mid-debate ("Reuse one idea with new evidence, real debaters do this too"); a speaker freezing (the prep-sheet rule above is automatic and shame-free, because every idea slot has a written line behind it by design, which is what Week 9 built); the room getting too heated ("We're

questioning the choice, not the person," which is Week 8's rule).

Close (3 min)

Verdict recorded in binders: one sentence carrying the question, the verdict, and the winning argument.

Closing language (0:37): "Verdict in binders. Notice what won today: not the loudest voice, the located evidence. Hold that thought for next week."

Preview: "Next week the courtroom gets bigger. You each build a thesis of your own."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Countdown timer, visible	1	The debate runs on strict timing
Format poster	1	Segment names + minutes, big, at the front
Jury ballots	1 per juror	The two criteria the jury drafted at Week 9
Moderator script card	1	4 lines, on the moderator's chair
Returned prep sheets	1 per student	Collected Week 9, on the tables before arrival
Bell or chime	1	Clear, neutral "time's up" signal
Index cards	15 (1/student)	Reflection card
Courtroom props (optional)	1 set	Gavel, speaker placard

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: run teams of two or three. The mentor moderates, and the jury shrinks to a foreperson plus one juror. Every student holds a speaking or jury role; there are no audience-only seats.

If more than 12 students: grow the jury, not the teams. Above four speakers per team the 1:30 idea slots stop going around. Extra students become jurors, and every juror gets a ballot.

If energy is low by minute 13 (pre-debate jitters reading as flatness): run the openings standing, with the full team standing behind each speaker. Costs nothing, and bodies wake up.

If a speaker freezes mid-slot: "Take a breath. Read your card. That's allowed, ninjas use notes." Never let silence become punishment.

If the room gets too heated: pause. "We're questioning the choice, not the person." Resume when calm.

If a side runs out of supporting ideas mid-debate: "Reuse one idea with new evidence. Real debaters do this too."

If time runs short: spend the slack first. Then cut the debrief to one question. Keep the full debate structure intact; it is the lesson.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): debate day is already the oral-track showcase. Speaking slots require zero writing, and the jury and foreperson roles are fully scored with no written output beyond a checkmark ballot. A scribe is permitted even there.

Sub path: the debate does not run with a substitute. A substitute runs **Gear B Activity #2, Should-Question Factory** instead, and the debate shifts one week, absorbed by this week's slack and Week 13's light load. If the *mentor* is present but the debate stalls mid-format because a team collapses, convert the remaining idea slots to "open floor, 1:00 each, prep sheets only" and the format still completes on time.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 10: Debate Day

Today your ninja debated in front of the class: opening statement, three supporting ideas with evidence from the story, rebuttal, and closing, judged by a jury of their classmates against written criteria. This satisfies Ninja Certification requirement #5.

At-home ask (2 minutes): Ask your student, "Who won the debate, and what was the single best piece of evidence?" If they can answer the second half, the week did its job. Nothing to turn in.

Looking ahead: Week 11 turns this debate position into a written thesis statement, which is the foundation of persuasive writing for the rest of the year.

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Last updated: 2026-07-24 | **Consolidated from:** `W10-Debate-Day.md` class plan + Week-10 print-binder draft | **Next review:** After Batch B taught

Thesis Workshop: Opinions Are Not Evidence

Week at a Glance

WEEK	11
HABIT	– (none explicit; last week's courtroom logic carries)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 2.5 – claim + reasons architecture
TEXT	Self-selected persuasive topic: a Magi claim, the student's Hero's Journey quest film or book, or an approved favorite
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes (3 + 5 + 12 + 22 + 3)
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	2 to 3 drafted thesis statements, peer-checked; the strongest one circled and filed

Week 11 exists to do three things: turn last week's verdict logic into a single written sentence, teach the claim-plus-three-showable-reasons frame that every persuasive paragraph this year is built on, and prove physically that three real reasons stand up where two duplicates fall down. This sentence is the parent of the topic sentence at Week 14's SPO debut and the seed of the novel thesis at Week 20. The drafting reps are the protected work.

STRUCTURE ONLY. NO MECHANICS

This week's peer check is a checkmark against three criteria and nothing else. No spelling, no "I liked it," no rewriting someone else's sentence. That discipline is what makes Week 15's positive-only SPO review and Week 17's revision-versus-editing lesson possible. Every thesis stays in its author's handwriting.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ **Board: the thesis frame, big.** "[X] is the best [Y] because [R1], [R2], [R3]."
- ☐ **Last week's verdict sentence still visible on the board** (continuity anchor)
- ☐ **Peer-check cards, 1 per student** (the three criteria, below)
- ☐ **Topic menu card, 1 per table:** (a) a Magi claim, and last week's debate question counts, (b) your Hero's Journey quest film or book, (c) any arguable favorite: best season, best book, best dessert
- ☐ Gavel or stand-in object for the courtroom callback (optional, ten seconds of theater)
- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from prior weeks)
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student: warm-up, thesis drafts, reflection card
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Timer (warm-up and drafting blocks)
- ☐ **Ninja Game (The Three-Leg Build):** 3 stackable plastic cups per student, blank; inspector role cards, 1 per table

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE/TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + verdict callback + 21-Day Mission check-in	Culture

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Warm-up	5 min	Kernel expansion: "The chain was perfect." with because / but / so	Phase 1 BBS rep (written, never cut)
Main instruction	12 min	Opinions are not evidence (3) → thesis model + struck counter-model (7) → peer-check criteria (2)	Phase 2.5
Active work	22 min	Topic pick (4) → draft 2 to 3 theses (12) → The Three-Leg Build peer check (6)	Thesis drafting
Close	3 min	Strongest thesis circled and filed; binder reminder for next week	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

If over budget: shorten topic selection to a 30-second decision and break ties yourself. Never cut the drafting reps or the inspection; Week 14 is built on both.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way. One sentence of callback to the verdict still on the board: last week a jury picked a winner using criteria, not feelings.

21-Day Mission check-in: Day 15 of 21, one week left. Ten seconds, no discussion.

Warm-Up (5 min)

Board kernel:

"The chain was perfect."

Expand it with because / but / so. 4 minutes to write, 1 minute for two reads aloud.

Source anchor, if a student asks what Della actually thought of it: the story says the chain was "even worthy of The Watch," and that "Quietness and value" was a description that applied to both the chain and Jim.

Main Instruction (12 min)

0:08–0:11 (3 min) – Courtroom framing: opinions are not evidence.

"In Week 10 the jury didn't vote for the team they liked. They voted criteria. A courtroom runs on the same rule: what you *feel* is an opinion, what you can *show* is evidence. A thesis is the claim you intend to prove. It stands or falls on the reasons under it."

0:11–0:18 (7 min) – The thesis model. Build one live in the frame on the board:

"*The Gift of the Magi* is the best Christmas story because the sacrifices are mutual [R1], the ending is a true surprise [R2], and the narrator says the 'unwise' couple were the wisest givers [R3]."

R3 is checkable against the closing paragraph, which is the point. Then write the weak counter-model directly underneath and **strike it through in front of the class:**

"~~Magi is the best because I like it.~~"

One reason, and the reason is a feeling. Say why it fails out loud; the strike-through does the rest.

0:18–0:20 (2 min) – Peer-check criteria, taught straight off the card:

- 1 Is X claimed as **best, most, or should**, so that someone could argue the other side?
- 2 Are there **three** Rs?
- 3 Is each R **showable**, not a feeling?

The Ninja Game: The Three-Leg Build

Slot: the 6-minute peer check. The physical stack *is* the peer check, so it replaces a flat checking worksheet rather than adding time.

Why this game: "write three reasons" lets a student restate the same idea three different ways and call it done. A stool needs three *different* legs to stand. This makes that structure physical instead of explained, and it catches the one failure the criteria card does not test for.

How to run it:

- 1 Each student circles the strongest of their drafted theses. That is the one they build.
- 2 They write one reason per cup, three cups total.
- 3 Before a cup joins the stack, they bring it to their table's **inspector** (a rotating peer role) and say the reason aloud.
- 4 The inspector runs four checks and marks the card, checkmark or cross, nothing written in prose:
- 5 the three criteria above, against the thesis as a whole
- 6 **is this leg actually different from the legs already placed?** If it is the same idea restated, the inspector says "that leg's already there, find a new one," and the cup does not get stacked.
- 7 Only cups that pass get added. Three distinct approved reasons stack into a small tower: visible, stable proof the thesis has three real legs.
- 8 The inspector then gives the author's other theses a plain checkmark pass on the three card criteria.

The scoring is the lesson: a wobbly two-cup stack with one rejected cup *is* the feedback. No separate grade needed. The tower height tells the truth about the thesis.

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 "Count your Rs out loud. One, two, three, or it isn't a thesis yet, it's a start."
- 2 "Is that R showable? Could you point at something, a page, a scene, a fact? 'It's fun' points at nothing."
- 3 (during the check) "You are checking boxes, not fixing sentences. Their thesis stays in their handwriting."

Watch for: inspectors who wave everything through to be nice. Coach them with one test question: "Say each reason out loud. Do they sound like twins, or triplets?"

Close (3 min)

Each author circles their strongest thesis; collect and file.

Closing language (0:42): "Circle your strongest one. That sentence, claim plus three showable reasons, is the skeleton of every paragraph you'll write for the rest of the year."

Preview, and say the second half plainly: "Next week: Habit 2, and you'll write the thesis of your own life. Bring your binder. We're counting freewrites."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Thesis frame poster	1	"[X] is the best [Y] because [R1], [R2], [R3]." written large
Peer-check cards	1 per student	Three criteria, checkmark or cross only
Topic menu cards	1 per table	Magi claim / HJ quest / arguable favorite

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + thesis drafts + reflection card
Plastic cups	45 (3/student)	Stackable, one per reason
Inspector role cards	1 per table	Rotate the role if time allows
Verdict sentence	1	Left on the board from Week 10
Gavel (optional)	1	Courtroom callback
Timer	1	12-minute drafting block

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: the mentor inspects for everyone. Faster turnaround, same standard.

If more than 12 students: run two inspector rotations per table so the line does not bottleneck.

If energy is low by minute 24: allow a dessert-tier topic for the *first* thesis only ("Brownies are the best dessert because..."). Fast win, then require thesis #2 from the Magi claim or the quest.

If a student is stuck choosing a topic: assign the Magi claim from the board model and have them replace exactly one R with their own. The constraint kills the paralysis.

If a student is too shy to say their reason aloud: the inspector may read it silently off the card. Same check, no verbal exposure.

If a student's reasons keep getting rejected: "What's one more angle your side is right? Even a small one counts."

If time runs short: hold the peer check over to Week 12's binder-check block. It fits there, and checkmarks take under two minutes.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): oral thesis dictation. The student speaks the full frame aloud, a scribe transcribes, then the student reads it back and counts the Rs on their fingers. The peer check proceeds identically on the transcript.

Sub path (stall at minute 10 of the active block): run **Gear B Substitute Activity #1, Transitional Phrase Sort** for the remaining time. Thesis drafting compresses to a single thesis built from the printed worked example with the student swapping in their own topic. The peer check moves to Week 12's binder-check block.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 11: Thesis Workshop

Today your ninja drafted thesis statements in the frame "[X] is the best [Y] because [three reasons]," then had a classmate inspect them: one cup per reason, and a reason that was really a repeat of another one didn't get stacked. Three truly different reasons make a tower that stands.

At-home ask (5 minutes): At dinner, give them a topic, any topic, and have them build one out loud. The reasons have to be showable, not feelings.

Please make sure the writing binder comes to class next week. We are doing a binder check.

Looking ahead: Week 12 is Habit 2, Begin with the End in Mind, plus the second timed freewrite of the year.

Last updated: 2026-07-24 | **Consolidated from:** `W11-Thesis-Workshop.md` class plan + Week-11 print-binder draft | **Next review:** After Batch B taught

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind + Binder Depth Check

Week at a Glance

WEEK	12
HABIT	Begin with the End in Mind (Roots – explicit)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 2.5 – causal "so" doing predictive work
TEXT	Predictions on any prior text + autobiographical freewrite. Closes the Gift of the Magi arc.
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes (HABIT template: 3 + 3 + 14 + 22 + 3)
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	Freewrite #2 + one predictive "so" sentence + one mission-frame sentence + verified binder (2 freewrites minimum)

Week 12 exists to do three things: teach Habit 2 explicitly through the mission statement, close the Gift of the Magi arc by showing that Della and Jim's *plan* failed while their *vision* succeeded, and verify that every binder holds at least two freewrites. That last one is not bookkeeping. Week 27's amplification project runs on what is in these binders, and this is the first tripwire that catches an empty one while there is still time to fix it. The freewrite itself cannot be compressed without losing the ritual.

THE PREDICTION SENTENCE RUNS IN TWO LEGAL MODES, AND YOU ANNOUNCE BOTH

Both Gear B texts are finished stories by now, so a forward prediction on Magi is impossible. Mode (a) is **counterfactual** on a known text: "If Della had kept her hair, so...". Mode (b) is **forward** on the student's own Hero's Journey quest text, if that one is still unfinished. Either mode is a full credit answer.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ **Freewrite #2 prompt strips printed:** "At my 80th birthday party, the person giving the speech about me says..."
- ☐ **Binder-check tally sheet printed** (roster × freewrite-count column). The count gets **recorded, not eyeballed**.
- ☐ **Board: the H2 mission-statement frame.** "I am the kind of person who _____, so _____."
- ☐ "So"-sentence model strip, 1 per table (both modes)
- ☐ Whiteboard: the vision-versus-plan columns for Della and Jim, drawn before class
- ☐ **Timer set to exactly 5:00 for the freewrite.** The rule from Week 6 holds: the pen never stops.
- ☐ Name tags or name tents (reuse from prior weeks)
- ☐ Index cards, 3 per student
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Every student's binder physically on the table
- ☐ **"The Three Questions" copies, one per student, to hand out at the close.** Week 13 is built on this being read at home; it compresses the in-class read to three paragraphs.
- ☐ Dice + the shape deck (Unit 3's encounter runs today)
- ☐ **Ninja Game / RPG session:** the shape deck. Fallback only: masking tape timeline with NOW / 10 YEARS / 30 YEARS / 80TH BIRTHDAY signs.

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Learn the Ninja Way + binders on tables + 21-Day Mission closes	Culture
Warm-up	3 min	"Jim sold his watch so..." completed twice: intended, then resulted	Habit vocabulary (written, never cut)
Main instruction	14 min	Habit 2 explicit teach, mission statements (10) → "so" prediction model, both modes (4)	Habit 2
Active work	22 min	Freewrite #2 (5) → prediction + mission sentence (9) → pack inspection / binder check (8)	Freewrite system + Phase 2.5
Close	3 min	Mid-phase checkpoint, quest reminder, Gear C preview	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes.

If over budget: cut the Habit 2 teach to the core distinction ("Habit 1: you're the driver. Habit 2: decide where you're driving."). **Never compress Freewrite #2 and never skip the binder tally.** Both are certification infrastructure.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way. Spotlight this week is logistical: **every binder physically on the table.** The check itself happens later, in the active block.

21-Day Mission: launched Week 9, so day 21 landed just before today. Collect the trackers, one sentence of congratulations, move on.

Warm-Up (3 min)

Board stem:

"Jim sold his watch so..."

Students complete it **twice**: once with what Jim *intended*, once with what actually *resulted*.

The gap between those two answers is the whole habit in miniature, so do not explain it yet. Let them find it and then walk into the teach.

Source anchor: Jim's own line is "I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs."

Main Instruction (14 min)

0:06–0:16 (10 min) – Habit 2 explicit teach: mission statements.

(a) The carpenter's rule. Measure twice, cut once. Every thing is created twice, first in the mind and then in the world.

(b) Della as the case. She did not wander the shops hoping something would turn up. She knew the *end* before she had the means: something "nearly good enough" and "almost worth the honor of belonging to Jim." The end in mind came first, and the decision about her hair served it.

(c) The vision-versus-plan payoff (this closes the Magi arc):

DELLA AND JIM'S PLAN	DELLA AND JIM'S VISION
Buy the perfect chain, the perfect combs	Show how much they loved each other

DELLA AND JIM'S PLAN

DELLA AND JIM'S VISION

Failed. The chain doesn't fit a watch that's been sold.

Succeeded completely.

Begin with the right *end*, not the right *object*, and even a failed plan can be a total win.

(d) A personal mission statement is your end-in-mind for you. Frame on the board. **Read your own one-line mission statement aloud.** Prepare it, mean it, fifteen seconds.

0:16–0:20 (4 min) – The "so" prediction model, both modes.

Counterfactual: "Della kept only eighty-seven cents, **so** her gift had to come from somewhere other than money."

Forward: "My hero keeps ignoring his mentor, **so** I predict the ending will cost him something he loves."

The connector is doing causal work here. **So** means "therefore, and here is where this leads."

Launch line (0:06): "Della walked into the city knowing exactly what the gift had to *be* before she knew how to pay for it. That's today's habit: the ending gets written first."

The Unit 3 RPG Session — The Gate

Week 12 is Unit 3's culminating RPG session, and it is the tightest content-to-stage fit in the whole campaign: a "so" sentence is literally a step into consequence. It re-skins the active block above. Same three deliverables, same order, wrapped in the campaign. Run it from the page.

UNIT 3 • WEEK 12 • CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

The Gate

THRESHOLD

NERVE

ORANGE BELT

THE SCENE

The gate opens once, it does not negotiate, and it has one rule that is going to ruin your afternoon: whatever you say is on the other side, is. Say there is a bridge, there is a bridge. Say there is a dragon and you have brought a dragon into all our lives.

SAY THIS, THEN FOLLOW THE ROOM

"Gate's open. It opens once. And it has a rule you're not going to like: whatever you tell me is out there, is. Mochi went through first, by the way. He got stuck to it. That's not a metaphor. One sentence each, starting with what's beyond the gate, and think hard before somebody says lava."

THE OBSTACLES • SHAPE-DRAW FIRES HERE

- 1 The Pack Inspection.** The gate will not open for an empty pack, and it counts today's page. So the pack gets shown *last*, once the freewrite and the prediction are in it. This is the binder depth check, run as a story beat instead of an audit.
- 2 The Prediction.** Each ninja writes their "so" sentence: what lies beyond. *Shape draw*: the shape is the first thing they see out there, and their sentence has to account for it.
- 3 Crossing.** Roll d6 + NERVE. On 4+ they cross together. On a low roll they cross, but come out somewhere else and alone, and must describe what they see there.

ON THE CLOCK

BEAT	MIN	WHAT HAPPENS
Frame	3	The gate and its one rule; Mochi is already stuck to it
Freewrite	5	The threshold shows each ninja themselves at the end of the road FREWRITE #2
Prediction + shape	9	The "so" sentence for what lies beyond, plus the mission-frame sentence SO-SENTENCE + MISSION STATEMENT
Pack inspection	8	The last gate: each ninja shows what they are carrying, today's page included; count recorded BINDER DEPTH CHECK
Crossing	5	Roll d6 + NERVE; 4+ crosses together, a low roll crosses alone and elsewhere
Belt	2	Orange belt awarded; Vanguard unlocked

IF IT STALLS Drop the fiction, keep the "so" sentence. Say: "Ninjas adapt. Finish your prediction."

THE PACK INSPECTION NEVER BLOCKS A CROSSING

A light pack is a recovery path, not a penalty, and the gate is not a place to shame a kid in front of the party. If a ninja is below two freewrites, the gate lets them through and asks for one more thing on the way: the make-up freewrite, assigned via the Mission form, ten minutes at home with a parent holding the timer. Log the count on the tally sheet either way. The count is the point; the gate is the costume.

Why the low roll is good: a ninja who comes out alone and elsewhere has to describe what they see, which is one more predictive sentence from the student who was least likely to volunteer one.

Fallback Game: The Long Walk

(Run this only on a year where you skip the RPG session. It primes the same freewrite and the same predictive sentence, without the campaign frame.)

Slot: opens Active Work, immediately before Freewrite #2. It replaces a seated "close your eyes and imagine" instruction with a physical walk to the same destination.

Why this game: asking a twelve-year-old to picture being eighty, from a chair, produces a shrug. Asking them to physically walk there, past ten years, past thirty years, gives the visualization a body and makes the distance real before they ever pick up a pen.

How to run it:

- 1 Tape a long line across the room with mile markers: NOW / 10 YEARS / 30 YEARS / 80TH BIRTHDAY.
- 2 Read a "so" setup about a story character ("Della had no money for a gift, so..."). Students walk to the point on the line where they think the predicted outcome lands, then say their full "so" sentence justifying why they stopped there.
- 3 Run two or three rounds on text characters. Then the personal round: students walk to the 80TH BIRTHDAY marker, stand there a moment, and return to their seats to begin Freewrite #2.

The scoring is the lesson: a student who just summarizes ("So she was sad") is not predicting. Send them back toward the line and ask, "What happens AFTER that, years later?" The sentence only counts if it reaches forward in time.

Watch for: students treating the walk as a race. Slow it down. The point is standing still at the 80th-birthday marker for a beat, not getting there first.

Active Work: The Three Deliverables (22 min)

- + **0:20–0:25 (5 min) – Freewrite #2.** Prompt strips out, timer on for exactly 5:00, pens never stop, **and you write too.** Filed in the binder immediately. No sharing required; sharing is volunteer-only and only if slack appears.
- + **0:25–0:34 (9 min) – Two sentences.** One predictive "so" sentence in either legal mode, then one in the H2 mission frame: "I am the kind of person who _____, so _____."
- + **0:34–0:42 (8 min) – Binder depth check (FM5 tripwire #1).** This comes **last, and it has to.** The floor is two freewrites, and #2 is the one they just wrote, so counting before the writing block would fail every student in the room. Move table to table with the tally sheet. Confirm **two freewrites minimum physically present** per student: #1 from Week 6, #2 from today. That is the floor, not the target. Record the count per student. While you circulate, tables run the held-over Week 11 peer check if it was displaced, or read their own binder contents quietly. The instruction for that is "re-read your Week 1 self."

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 (during the freewrite) "Pens moving. If you're stuck, write 'I'm stuck at my 80th birthday' until you aren't. That's the rule and it works."
- 2 (during so-sentences) "Read me your *so*. Does the second half actually follow from the first? *So* is a promise of cause."
- 3 (during the binder check) "This isn't a grade, it's a fuel gauge. Week 29 runs on what's in this binder, and we're making sure your tank is filling."

Close (3 min)

Three things, one sentence each:

- 1 **Season 3 Testing Log mid-phase checkpoint** announced complete.

- 2 **Hero's Journey quest midpoint reminder:** "Week 13, next week, your one-paragraph quest check goes on the board. Pass or fail, public, recoverable."
- 3 **Preview + assign the read:** hand out "The Three Questions" and say the job out loud. "Read this at home before next week. All of it. Next week we only re-read three paragraphs, so if you skip it you'll be lost." Gear C and appositives start Monday.

Closing language (0:42): "Two freewrites minimum, verified, seventeen weeks before you'll need them. That's Habit 2 applied to this class itself: we just began Week 29 with the end in mind."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Freewrite #2 prompt strips	1 per student	"At my 80th birthday party, the person giving the speech about me says..."
Binder tally sheet	1	Roster × freewrite count. Recorded, not eyeballed.
H2 frame poster	1	"I am the kind of person who _____, so _____."
"So"-model strips	1 per table	Both modes, counterfactual and forward
Vision-versus-plan board	1	Two columns, drawn before class
Timer	1	Exactly 5:00 for the freewrite
Index cards	30 (3/student)	Warm-up + sentences + reflection card
Student binders	1 per student	On the tables from minute zero
Shape deck + one die	1	RPG session
"The Three Questions" copies	12	Handed out at the close for the at-home first read
Masking tape + mile-marker signs	1 roll, 4 signs	Fallback game only

Contingency Plans

If fewer than 8 students: whole-circle share of one line of each mission statement instead of pair-share.

If more than 12 students: the binder tally is the bottleneck, not the writing. Start the check during the freewrite rather than after it, and check quietly so nobody's pen stops.

If energy is low by minute 20: the freewrite *is* the energy reset. It is low-stakes, private, and timed. If the room is still flat afterward, run the so-sentences as stand-and-say before writing.

If a student is stuck on the mission-statement frame: shrink it. "Pick one word the birthday speech should say about you. Now: 'I am the kind of person who is _____, so I _____.'" One word unlocks the frame.

If a student says they don't know what to predict: "Pick any story we've read this year. What do you THINK happens to the main character five years later? Then write: 'So...'"

If a student is too shy to share the freewrite: "This one stays private unless you choose to share. I don't read freewrites unless they're offered." Hold that line exactly as you did at Week 6.

If Freewrite #2 produces sensitive content: same rule as Week 6. Private unless offered. Never read over shoulders.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): the freewrite becomes a free-*speak*, three minutes of recorded or scribed monologue on the same prompt, filed as a binder entry marked "oral." **It counts toward the depth check.** The binder floor measures captured thinking, not handwriting.

Sub path: the freewrite and the binder check are substitute-proof by design, because a timer and a tally sheet require zero judgment. If the *so-sentence* block stalls, replace it with **Gear B Substitute Activity #3, Evidence Hunt** strips. If a true substitute is running the room, Habit 2 does **not** get taught, per the Substitute Protocol. The freewrite and the tally still run verbatim off this page, and H2 shifts into Week 13's light week, absorbed by its slack and its 8-minute instruction ceiling.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 12: Habit 2, Begin with the End in Mind

Today your ninja learned Habit 2 through the mission-statement idea, and we closed "The Gift of the Magi" by looking at how Della and Jim's *plan* failed completely while their *vision* succeeded completely. Then they wrote Freewrite #2: "At my 80th birthday party, the person giving the speech about me says..."

We also verified that every binder holds at least two freewrites. That is the raw material for a big Week 27 project, so we check it now rather than discovering a gap in the spring. **If your student was assigned a make-up freewrite, it is 10 minutes, you hold the timer, the pen never stops, and it goes straight into the binder.**

At-home ask: Ask your ninja what they wrote. No corrections, just curiosity. Freewrites are theirs unless they choose to share.

Reading job (15 minutes, due next class): Your ninja came home with Tolstoy's "The Three Questions." Please make sure they read the whole story before next week. Next week's lesson only re-reads three paragraphs in class, so a ninja who skipped it will be lost.

Next week is the Hero's Journey quest checkpoint: one paragraph about their chosen film or book goes up on the board in class. Ask them tonight: "Is your quest paragraph ready?"

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Last updated: 2026-07-24 | **Consolidated from:** W12-Habit-2-End-In-Mind.md class plan + Week-12 print-binder draft + Unit 3 encounter design | **Next review:** After Batch B taught

The Long Road

WEEKS 13–16

Gear C • Phase 3 • From one good sentence to a paragraph that holds.

4 UNITS

U1 • HERO'S JOURNEY

U2 • SPEAK YOUR MIND

U3 • CROSS THE LINE

U4 • THE LONG ROAD

• OPENER

UNIT 4 — THE LONG ROAD (WEEKS 13-16)

MENTOR MANUAL

The Hero's Journey Showcase — Running It

Weeks 13 and 14 each host half the roster presenting the Hero's Journey they have been documenting in their own film or book since Week 2. This is the first time all year that **presenting is a named, watched, scored skill**. Read this page once before Week 13; it covers both weeks.

Why this artifact: it is the one thing every kid owns by mid-year. They picked it at Week 2, tracked it all semester, and the RPG campaign has been *playing* the Hero's Journey the whole time. The Showcase is where they prove they can spot in the wild the pattern they have been living at the table.

The opening line, printed to say:

"You've been playing the Hero's Journey since Week 1. Your ninja is somewhere on that road right now. Today you show us you can spot the same road in the story you've been reading all semester. Ninety seconds. Make us see it."

The three beats each ninja hits

- 1 My story, in one sentence.** ("My journey is *Moana*.")
- 2 Three stages, shown.** Ordinary World, one middle stage, and the Ordeal or the Return. Name the stage, then the moment in the story that *is* that stage.
- 3 The closer:** "The step I'm most like right now is _____, because _____."

That third beat is the whole point. It turns a book report into self-knowledge, and it is the same question the RPG asks at every Transformation.

The rubric: present-skill only, four checks

CHECK	MET WHEN
Heard	The back of the room heard every word
Faced us	Eyes on the room, not the floor and not a script
Three stages	Named three stages and tied each to a real moment
On time	Landed inside 90 seconds

Presenting is the skill under test, not literary analysis. That is what the SPO weeks are for. Do not correct content in front of the room.

Feedback is positive-only. One thing each presenter did well, said out loud by a peer. This matches the peer-review culture the class already runs and it is the same protocol Week 15 uses.

Logistics

- ✦ **Split the roster in half.** Group A presents Week 13, Group B presents Week 14. Roughly six ninjas per week at 90 seconds each fills the 9-minute block. Scale the split to your actual group size.
- ✦ **Absent or not ready** at Week 13: post the paragraph to the board as the old milestone did, and present with Group B at Week 14. Pass or fail is visible, and it is recoverable.
- ✦ **Ninety seconds is the wired number.** If your group is small (eight or fewer), you can open it to two minutes, but then the block needs the slack minutes and the appositive writing gets tight.

Gear C Launch: Appositives + "The Three Questions"

Week at a Glance

WEEK	13
HABIT	– (implicit; Gear C launch)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 3 – the appositive "noun upgrade"
TEXT	"The Three Questions" by Leo Tolstoy (first read at home, assigned Week 12)
SESSION LENGTH	40 minutes planned + 5 minutes designated slack (light week)
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	Two appositive-upgrade sentences + HJ Showcase, Group A + novel ballot distributed

Week 13 exists to do three things: launch Gear C with the appositive as the single new tool, host the first half of the Hero's Journey Showcase, and clear three light checkpoints in the close without touching the writing block. The appositive is small on purpose: one comma-phrase that tells the reader something the noun alone will not. If the closing checkpoints start eating the writing block, cut the checkpoints, not the writing.

THE READ-ALOUD IS SHORT THIS WEEK, AND THAT IS DELIBERATE

The class read "The Three Questions" at home as the Week 12 assignment, so the in-class block is a **targeted re-read of three paragraphs**, not a full performance. Those nine reclaimed minutes are what the Showcase is standing on. Do not restore the long read-aloud without moving the Showcase somewhere else.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ **Student copies of "The Three Questions"** (sent home Week 12; spares at the front table)
- ☐ **Board: two appositive models.** "The hermit, a frail old man, kept digging." / "The king, a proud ruler, dismounted alone."
- ☐ **Novel ballot strips**, five titles: The Giver, Bridge to Terabithia, The Westing Game, A Wrinkle in Time, The Hobbit
- ☐ **Showcase roster split** – who presents today (Group A), who presents Week 14 (Group B)
- ☐ HJ milestone roster marked for the pass/fail check; blank index cards as the recovery path
- ☐ **Post on the board before the close:** "Re-read at home. Mark: (1) the hermit's three answers, (2) one place the king does something surprising."
- ☐ Laminated ritual card
- ☐ Name tags or name tents; pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Timer, visible, for the 90-second pitches

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Ninja Way from the card + reading-proof check	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	Expand "The hermit was digging." with a comma-phrase	Phase 3 setup (written)

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Main instruction	8 min	Appositive direct teach (6) + the upgrade rule (2)	Phase 3
Active work	21 min	Targeted re-read + noun hunt (5) → HJ Showcase, Group A (9) → appositive writing (7)	Phase 3 (first written) + capstone
Close	3 min	Three checkpoints, one minute each	Logistics
Designated slack	5 min	Absorbs Showcase overrun or a writing extension	—

Total: 40 planned + 5 slack = 45 minutes.

If over budget: the slack exists for exactly this, so spend it. Never cut the appositive writing block; it is this week's only deliverable on paper.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way recited from the laminated card, no variation.

Spotlight: the reading proof. Every student holds up their marked copy of "The Three Questions," or a parent sign-off. Sixty-second visual check, collect the proof into a stack, no discussion. You are confirming the home read happened, because the whole shape of today assumes it did.

Warm-Up (5 min)

Board stem:

"The hermit was digging."

Students expand it in writing using the pattern: add a comma, a description, a comma.

"The hermit, _____, was digging."

Model one orally first: "The hermit, a man who never left his wood, was digging." Three minutes to write, two minutes for two volunteer reads. **No new skill is taught yet.** This is surface recognition only; the teach comes next.

Main Instruction (8 min)

0:08–0:14 (6 min) – The appositive "noun upgrade," direct teach.

Three-part definition:

- 1 An appositive **renames or describes** a noun.
- 2 It sits **inside two commas**.
- 3 It makes a sentence **richer without making it longer**.

Write the base sentence first, then insert the comma-phrase in front of the class:

"The hermit, **a frail old man who never left his wood**, kept digging even when the king arrived."

"Without the comma-phrase, I know he's a hermit. With it, I know what *kind* of hermit, and that changes how I read the rest of the story."

Second model, same move, different noun:

"The king, **a man so proud he thought a reward could buy wisdom**, dismounted from his horse alone."

"Same noun, different upgrade. The appositive is an opinion in disguise."

0:14–0:16 (2 min) – The upgrade rule. The appositive must ADD information the reader does not already have from the noun alone.

BAD UPGRADE

"The king, a male royal, asked questions."

GOOD UPGRADE

"The king, a man who doubted his own wisdom, asked questions."

Launch line (0:08): "You've been writing sentences since Week 1. Today we add a single comma-tool that turns any noun into a character study. Two commas, one phrase, double the information."

The Ninja Game: The Upgrade Hunt

Slot: the 5-minute targeted re-read. It replaces passive listening, costs no extra time, and hands every student a target before the writing block starts.

Why this game: an appositive stays abstract until a student goes looking for one. Hunting a single upgrade target per paragraph turns listening into a search.

How to run it:

- 1 Re-read **only the three appositive-target paragraphs** aloud: ¶1–2 (the king and his proclamation), ¶10 (the hermit digging), ¶15–16 (the king's questions going unanswered). The class already read the whole story at home.
- 2 Students underline **one noun per paragraph**, the noun that most wants a description. Three underlines total.
- 3 In the writing block, they turn two of those three into appositive sentences.

The scoring is the lesson: a noun only counts as a good target if the appositive would ADD something. "The king, a male royal" tells the reader nothing new. "The king, a man who doubted his own wisdom" earns its commas.

Watch for: students who underline every noun. One per paragraph forces the judgment, which is the actual skill: *which noun is hiding the most character?*

Read-aloud launch (0:16): "Your job during this read is quieter than usual. One noun per paragraph. Underline the noun that most wants an appositive. We're hunting for sentence-upgrade targets."

Active Work (21 min)

- + **0:16–0:21 (5 min) – Targeted re-read + noun hunt.** See The Upgrade Hunt above. Fast; this is re-exposure, not a performance.
- + **0:21–0:30 (9 min) – The Hero's Journey Showcase, Group A.** Roughly six ninjas, 90 seconds each. Run it off the Showcase page at the front of this unit: three beats, four checks, one peer names one thing each presenter did well, no corrections in front of the room.
- + **0:30–0:37 (7 min) – The writing block.** Each student writes **two appositive-upgrade sentences** about characters in the story. The warm-up primed the pattern and the noun hunt gave them targets.
- + **The king:** a comma-phrase that reveals his character (proud, impatient, humbled).
- + **The hermit:** a comma-phrase that reveals his method (wise, silent, frail).
- + **The wounded man:** a comma-phrase that reveals his transformation (enemy turned friend).

Circulate. Give feedback **only on appositive accuracy**: two commas? renames the noun? adds new information? No mechanics, no revision talk. That is Phase discipline and Week 17 depends on it.

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 (during the re-read, if attention drifts) "Pencils down, eyes up. Your underline is your ticket into the writing block."
- 2 (to a stuck writer) "Pick the king OR the hermit. Now ask: what does this person care about most? Write that as a comma-phrase. 'The king, a man who _____, _____.'"
- 3 (to an early finisher) "Upgrade the SAME noun a second way. 'The king, a man who feared failure, asked the hermit.' How does that change the sentence's mood?"

Close (3 min)

Three checkpoints, about one minute each:

(a) **Showcase close.** Group A's presentations are the Hero's Journey milestone, logged as delivered. Anyone who did not present, whether absent or not ready, posts their paragraph to the board now and presents with Group B next week. Visible, and recoverable.

(b) **Novel ballot.** Distribute the strips, five titles printed. Students place their strip **face-down on the table and leave it there.** The vote happens at Week 16; today is distribution only, and the ballots do not go home.

(c) **Text-return assignment.** Verbal: re-read at home, mark the hermit's three answers and one surprising thing the king does.

Closing language (0:37): "Two commas, one upgrade. That's Phase 3. Next week the commas get heavier: we build sentences that explain other sentences. Binders closed. Ballots stay on the table."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
"The Three Questions" copies	12	Sent home Week 12; spares at the front table
Board: appositive models	2	Written before class
Novel ballot strips	12	Five titles; distributed today, voted Week 16, stay in the room
Showcase roster split	1	Group A today, Group B next week
HJ milestone roster	1	Pass/fail, checked at the close
Blank index cards	~6	Recovery path for an in-class makeup
Timer, visible	1	90-second pitches
Laminated ritual card	1	Opening ritual, scripted

Contingency Plans

If energy is low by minute 15: split the re-read. Students read the king's dialogue lines chorally; you read the narration and the hermit's silences. Costs zero minutes and raises the room through participation.

If students are stuck on the appositive pattern: give the oral scaffold verbatim: "The [noun], a [description], [did what]." The student fills the blanks aloud, then writes. Still stuck, they copy a board model and swap in their own noun and description.

If a presenter freezes at the Showcase: the three beats are on their prep page in their own handwriting. "Read me beat one." Never let a freeze become the memory of the day.

If the Showcase runs long: spend the slack. If it is still long, move the last presenter to Group B rather than shortening the writing block.

If the closing checkpoints run long: the ballot is distribution only. Strips go face-down, no discussion. It can be a 20-second handout.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): the student dictates one appositive-upgrade sentence to a peer scribe, same deliverable, spoken medium, filed with "oral" noted. The HJ milestone can be completed orally with you, a one-minute retell of the stages, posted as a sticky note marked "oral."

Sub path (if the primary activity stalls at minute 10 of the active block): abandon the live re-read and switch to individual silent reading of the printed copies with the annotation task written at the top. The writing block starts two minutes later but still runs its full seven minutes. No improvisation required.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 13: Appositives + "The Three Questions"

Today your ninja started Gear C and learned the appositive, a comma-phrase that upgrades any noun into a quick character sketch ("The king, a man who thought a reward could buy wisdom, asked the hermit"). Each ninja wrote two upgrade sentences of their own about Tolstoy's story.

The Hero's Journey Showcase started today. Half the class presented the film or book they have been tracking since Week 2: ninety seconds, three stages, and one honest sentence about which step they are most like right now. The other half presents next week.

At-home reading job (15 minutes, due next class): Re-read "The Three Questions" aloud at home. Mark two things: (1) the hermit's three answers, the exact sentences, and (2) one place where the king does something surprising, something a normal king wouldn't do. Bring the marked copy; we check it during the opening ritual.

Coming up: we vote on the class novel in Week 16. Ballots were handed out today and stay in the classroom.

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Last updated: 2026-07-24 | **Consolidated from:** `W13-Gear-C-Launch.md` class plan + Week-13 print-binder draft + `Semester-1-Presentation-Capstone.md` | **Next review:** After Batch C taught

SPO Debut: Dice Game + Group Paragraph

Week at a Glance

WEEK	14
HABIT	– (implicit)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 3 → 4 – the Single Paragraph Outline is born
TEXT	"The Three Questions" (twice-read and closed ; re-read verified at the ritual)
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes exact (active block re-split for the Showcase)
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	One group SPO (solid / dotted / solid) on one character + HJ Showcase, Group B

Week 14 exists to do three things: introduce the Single Paragraph Outline as the architecture every paragraph from here to Week 29 is built on, finish the Hero's Journey Showcase with the second half of the roster, and let the dice game do the evidence-hunting so nobody stalls on a blank page. Teach the shape before the content. The SPO is three sentences: solid (your scene), dotted (the story's words), solid (your interpretation).

WHY THE SPO IS BORN ON THIS PARTICULAR TEXT

The class has now read "The Three Questions" twice, and it is closed. Nothing about the story is new today, which means the *structure* is the only new thing in the room. The dice game then randomizes which evidence each table grabs, so students practice the paragraph before they ever have to invent their own evidence. Week 15 is where they generate it alone.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ **Dice-game roll charts**, six categories printed, 1 per table
- ☐ **One die per table**
- ☐ **Board: the blank SPO diagram** – large solid box, dotted line, large solid box. Labels: **Scene / Prove it / Own words**
- ☐ **Group SPO templates**, 1 per table (11×17 if you have it, otherwise 8.5×11)
- ☐ **Verify every student has a marked copy from Week 13** (text-return check)
- ☐ **Showcase roster: who is in Group B** (everyone who did not present at Week 13)
- ☐ HJ recovery cards for any Week 13 fail who never submitted a makeup
- ☐ Name tags or name tents; pen or marker for each student
- ☐ Timer, visible, for the 90-second pitches
- ☐ Laminated ritual card

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Ninja Way + verify the two Week 13 marks	Culture
Warm-up	5 min	Appositive maintenance, with the student as the noun	Phase 3
Main instruction	12 min	Annotation review (2) + dice rules (4) + SPO debut (6)	Phase 3 → 4

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Active work	22 min	HJ Showcase, Group B (9) → dice lightning round (5) → group SPO (8)	Phase 4 + capstone
Close	3 min	Preview, third re-read assigned, group SPOs collected	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes exact.

If over budget: switch the dice game to assigned categories, handing each table two pre-printed categories and two pre-selected sentences. **Protect the 8-minute SPO block;** it is the deliverable and Week 15 builds directly on it.

There is no designated slack this week. Weeks 13 and 15 have some; this one does not, because the Showcase is borrowing the room. If the reading check turns up students who did not re-read, have them read during the lightning round rather than stealing from the SPO block.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way from the card.

Spotlight: the text-return check. Every student holds up their marked copy of "The Three Questions." You are verifying **two marks:** the hermit's three answers, and one place the king does something surprising. Sixty-second visual check, no discussion.

Warm-Up (5 min)

Put last week's appositive move on the board with a student's name in the noun slot:

"[Student], a ninja who reads carefully, wrote this sentence last week."

Students identify the appositive, copy it into their notebook, then write one new appositive about themselves:

"I, a person who _____, _____."

Two minutes to write, three minutes for two reads. This is Phase 3 maintenance; the appositive does not get taught again, it just stays alive.

Main Instruction (12 min)

0:08-0:10 (2 min) – Annotation review. Post two sentences from the text and model one annotation mark out loud:

"I underlined 'the most important time was when you were digging the beds' because that's the hermit's first answer. I wrote 'Answer #1' in the margin."

Students copy the mark style onto their own copies.

0:10-0:14 (4 min) – Dice game rules. Roll a die, pick the matching evidence category, find one sentence in the text that fits, explain to your table why it fits.

ROLL	HUNT FOR
1	A place the king shows patience
2	A place the king shows impatience

ROLL	HUNT FOR
3	Something the hermit does instead of answering
4	A sentence about helping someone
5	A sentence about revenge
6	Free choice: any sentence about "the most important"

No repeats across rounds. Tables compete for the most categories covered.

0:14–0:20 (6 min) – The SPO debut: solid / dotted / solid. Draw the diagram on the board *first*, before any sentences:

"Solid box = your voice. Dotted line = the story's voice. Solid box = your voice again. That's a paragraph."

Then build the model live, about the king:

PART	THE SENTENCE	SOURCE
Solid (Scene)	The king came to the hermit because he wanted to know the answers to three questions.	¶1 motivation; ¶11 the visit
Dotted (Prove it)	"I have come to you, wise hermit, to ask you to answer three questions."	¶11, direct quote
Solid (Own words)	The king believed that knowing the right time, the right people, and the right task would keep him from ever failing.	¶1

Point at each part as you say it: "This is a scene. This is proof. This is my interpretation. Every paragraph you write from now through Week 29 uses some version of this."

The dotted line means someone else's words. That is the whole reason it is dotted, and it is worth saying out loud.

Launch line (0:08): "Last week you gave kings and hermits extra descriptions with commas. This week we build the first real paragraph: three sentences, one architecture. The middle sentence is the only one you don't write. Everything else is your voice framing someone else's words."

Active Work (22 min)

0:20–0:29 (9 min) – The Hero's Journey Showcase, Group B. Everyone who did not present at Week 13 presents now, 90 seconds each. Same three beats, same four checks, same positive-only feedback. Run it off **the Showcase page at the front of this unit.**

Anyone absent from *both* weeks posts their paragraph to the board, which is the recoverable fallback the milestone has always had. When Group B finishes, **the Hero's Journey milestone is logged complete for the whole roster.**

0:29–0:34 (5 min) – Dice game, lightning round. Each table rolls **three times** and collects three evidence sentences under the correct categories. Stamp valid matches on the move. Speed over perfection: this feeds the SPO, it is not the point of the lesson.

0:34–0:42 (8 min) – Group SPO construction. Each table picks ONE character (king, hermit, or wounded man) and builds one SPO paragraph using ONE of their dice-game sentences as the middle block:

- + **Scene sentence (solid):** set up the moment in the story.
- + **Prove-it sentence (dotted):** quote one sentence from the text, exactly.
- + **Own-words sentence (solid):** explain what the quote shows about the character.

One student writes, the others coach. The final paragraph carries **all** the table members' names. Collect at the end of the block.

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 (during the dice game) "Roll again. If the category is impossible for your character, switch characters. Speed matters more than struggle."
- 2 (during SPO construction) "Read your dotted sentence out loud. Does it sound like the story? Good. Now frame it: what does this prove about your character?"
- 3 (to a table finishing early) "Read your paragraph backward, starting with the own-words sentence. Does it still make sense? If yes, the architecture is solid."

The Ninja Game: The Dice Game

Slot: the 5-minute lightning round inside Active Work. It replaces a "find evidence in the text" worksheet and hands each table the raw material for its SPO.

Why this game: a blank evidence search lets students freeze, or grab the first sentence they see. Rolling for a category turns evidence-hunting into a hunt with rules, and by the end each table has real sentences to build a paragraph from.

The scoring is the lesson: the dotted line of an SPO is *someone else's words*. The dice game is where students learn to pull those words on demand, because the category tells them what kind of evidence they are hunting before they go looking.

Watch for: a table stuck because their category seems impossible for their character. "Switch characters. Speed matters more than struggle." The point is sentences on the page, not a perfect match.

Dice game launch (0:10): "Roll, find, explain. No debates. If the table agrees the sentence fits, it counts. The goal is speed and coverage. Timer on."

Close (3 min)

Collect the group SPOs.

Preview: "Next week we turn group SPOs into individual paragraphs, and we meet Habit 3: First Things First."

Text-return assignment: re-read the story one more time, the third read, and circle **every** time the hermit says "now" or "most important." Count them, write the total at the top of the copy.

HJ makeup due now if a student failed Week 13 and has not presented.

Closing language (0:42): "One paragraph, three parts, one character. Next week you write the whole thing alone, and we build a habit around choosing what matters most."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Dice-game roll charts	4	One per table, six categories printed
Dice	4	One per table
Group SPO templates	4	11×17 if available
Board: SPO diagram	1	Solid box / dotted line / solid box, drawn before class
Marked copies of "The Three Questions"	12	Reuse from Week 13, with the two marks
Showcase roster (Group B)	1	Everyone who did not present at Week 13
Timer, visible	1	90-second pitches

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
HJ recovery cards	~4	Week 13 makeup only

Contingency Plans

If energy is low by minute 15: run the dice game as stand-up / sit-down. A table rep stands when they find a sentence; the first standing rep scores. No writing during the game; all writing happens in the SPO block.

If students are stuck on the SPO architecture: give the oral scaffold verbatim. "Say: [Character] did _____. The story says: '_____.' This shows that _____." The student fills the blanks from their dice-game notes, then writes.

If the Showcase runs long: it cannot borrow from the SPO block, because Week 15 needs the SPO. Trim the lightning round to two rolls per table instead of three.

If a presenter freezes: their three beats are on their prep page at the front of the unit, in their own handwriting. "Read me beat one."

If the dice game stalls at minute 8 of instruction: abandon the competitive framing. Hand each table two pre-printed categories and two pre-selected sentences, read aloud from the printed sheet. Zero improvisation, and the SPO block still runs.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): the student dictates the SPO to a peer scribe, same three-part structure, same deliverable. Put oral-track students in a group of three rather than four, so their voice still shapes the group paragraph.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 14: SPO Debut

Today your ninja built their first real paragraph using the SPO, the Single Paragraph Outline. It is three sentences with one architecture: a scene in your own words, one quote from the story, and an explanation of what the quote proves. We used a dice game to hunt the evidence, then each table built a group paragraph about a character in "The Three Questions."

The Hero's Journey Showcase finished today. The second half of the class presented the film or book they have been tracking since Week 2. Every ninja on the roster has now stood up and presented.

At-home reading job (10 minutes, due next class): Third and final re-read of "The Three Questions." Circle every time the hermit says "now" or "most important." Count them, and write the total at the top of the copy. Bring it for the opening ritual.

Looking ahead: Week 15 turns the group paragraph into an individual one, and introduces Habit 3: First Things First.

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Last updated: 2026-07-24 | **Consolidated from:** W14-SPO-Debut.md class plan + Week-14 print-binder draft + Semester-1-Presentation-Capstone.md | **Next review:** After Batch C taught

Habit 3: First Things First + Individual SPO

Week at a Glance

WEEK	15
HABIT	First Things First (Habit 3 – explicit)
WRITING PHASE	Phase 4 – the first <i>individual</i> SPO + positive-only peer review
TEXT	"The Three Questions" (third read, circles verified)
SESSION LENGTH	45 minutes (HABIT template: 3 + 3 + 14 + 22 + 3)
CENTRAL DELIVERABLE	One individual SPO paragraph + one peer review given and one received + the Mission completion celebration

Week 15 exists to do three things: teach Habit 3 through the Big Rocks demo, have every student write their first *individual* SPO with the appositive carrying the paragraph's heaviest idea, and run a positive-only peer review that builds the habit of naming what works before naming what is broken. The hinge is the metaphor itself: in an SPO, the big rock is the sentence carrying the most weight, usually the own-words line. Big Rocks is not a separate lesson from the writing. It *is* the writing. Both ask the same question: what matters most, and did you put it in first?

A GAP WORTH KNOWING ABOUT BEFORE YOU PLAN THIS WEEK

This close celebrates a 7-Day Mission, but neither Week 13 nor Week 14 launches one. The 21-Day Mission ran Weeks 9 to 12 and closed. Either launch a 7-Day Mission at the end of Week 14 so it lands here, or retitle this celebration to whatever your class actually ran. Do not read a completion roster for a mission nobody was assigned.

Pre-Class Checklist

- ☐ **Big Rocks demo props:** jar, rocks, pebbles, sand (cardboard cutouts if glass is a concern)
- ☐ **Board: the H3 frame.** "I put first things first when I _____, before I _____."
- ☐ **Individual SPO templates,** one per student, with solid / dotted / solid boxes pre-drawn
- ☐ **Positive-only peer review slips,** two per student. "I like how you _____ because _____."
- ☐ **Mission completion roster** (see the note above) and the celebration ritual ready
- ☐ Marked copies of "The Three Questions" from Weeks 13–14, for the circle-count check
- ☐ Pen or marker for each student
- ☐ **RPG session:** the shape deck and one die
- ☐ Laminated ritual card

45-Minute Flow

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE / TOOL
Opening ritual	3 min	Ninja Way + circle-count check, called out table by table	Culture
Warm-up	3 min	Appositive + transitional phrase on a model sentence	Phase 3 + 2 maintenance

BLOCK	TIME	ACTIVITY	PHASE/TOOL
Main instruction	14 min	Big Rocks demo + text connection (10) → the appositive-is-the-big-rock model (4)	Habit 3
Active work	22 min	Individual SPO writing (14) → positive-only peer review (8)	Phase 4
Close	3 min	Mission celebration, previews, HJ text-return assigned	Logistics

Total: 45 minutes exact.

If over budget: cut the Habit 3 teach to the core line, "Rocks first, sand fills the gaps. Same jar, different life."
Keep the 14-minute SPO block fully protected. It is this week's deliverable and it is certification evidence.

Opening Ritual (3 min)

Ninja Way from the card.

Spotlight: the circle count. Students hold up their marked copies and you call the totals table by table. "Table 1: six circles. Table 2: five." It takes forty seconds and it makes the third read visible. Anyone who did not re-read does it during the trials block rather than during the SPO.

Warm-Up (3 min)

Board stem:

"The king, a man who wanted answers, came to the hermit."

Students add an appositive to *the hermit*, then one transitional phrase connecting a second sentence:

"The king, a man who wanted answers, came to the hermit, a frail old man. **However**, he left with his questions unanswered."

Two minutes to write, one minute to read. This is Phase 3 and Phase 2 maintenance; neither tool gets re-taught, they just stay alive.

Main Instruction (14 min)

0:06–0:16 (10 min) – Habit 3 explicit teach: Big Rocks. See the demo below; it is the teach.

0:16–0:20 (4 min) – The appositive is the big rock. Model one SPO where the appositive carries the heaviest idea in the paragraph:

PART	THE SENTENCE	SOURCE
Solid	The hermit never answered the king's questions directly.	–
Dotted	"Here comes some one running," said the hermit.	¶17
Solid	The hermit, a man who believed action teaches more than words , showed the king that NOW mattered more than answers.	¶27, the hermit's final answer

Then say it plainly:

"Look at that third sentence. The appositive renames the hermit *and* carries the heaviest idea in the paragraph. That's the big rock. The other two sentences are the jar holding it. In your own SPO I want you to point at your big rock before you finish. If it isn't the own-words sentence, fix it."

Launch line (0:06): "You know the jar story. Sand first, rocks don't fit. Rocks first, sand fills in. Today we map that onto paragraphs, and onto your week."

The Ninja Game: The Big Rocks Jar

Slot: the Habit 3 teach, inside main instruction. The demo replaces a lecture on priorities: students watch the lesson happen before they hear the words for it. It is not displaced by the RPG session, which re-skins the active block instead.

Why this game: telling an eleven-year-old to "prioritize" produces a nod and nothing else. Filling a jar wrong, then filling it right, makes the lesson physical, and it maps straight onto the paragraph they are about to write.

How to run it:

- 1 **Sand first.** Fill the jar with sand, then try to add the rocks. They do not fit. "These are your tests, your practice, your family dinner. This is your scrolling and your snacks. Same 24-hour jar."
- 2 **Empty it. Rocks first.** Then pebbles, then sand pouring into every gap. Everything fits. "Even your boring homework fits, *after* the important stuff."
- 3 **Connect to the text.** The hermit's answer *is* Big Rocks. "Now" is the rock and "later" is the sand. The king spent the whole story planning, delegating, and consulting until the hermit handed him a spade.
- 4 **Map it onto the SPO.** The big rock of a paragraph is the sentence carrying the heaviest idea, usually the own-words line.

The scoring is the lesson: before a student calls their SPO done, they have to name their big rock out loud.

Watch for: the demo landing and the writing not. Do not let the jar be the whole lesson. Drive every student to point at their own big rock.

The Unit 4 RPG Session — The Gauntlet

Week 15 is Unit 4's culminating RPG session. It re-skins the active block: the SPO becomes a ninja's own account of the third trial, and peer review becomes testimony. Same paragraph, same review rule, wrapped in the campaign. The Big Rocks demo above still runs as the habit teach.

UNIT 4 • WEEK 15 • CHALLENGES AND TRIALS

The Gauntlet

TRIAL

NERVE

GREEN BELT

THE SCENE

Three trials, and Tolstoy already wrote them for you: the right time to act, the person you most need, and the most important thing to do. The party faces all three, and the hermit's answer is waiting at the end of each one. Then somebody else gets to say what you did well.

SAY THIS, THEN FOLLOW THE ROOM

"Three trials today. Mochi ran this gauntlet and did badly at all three, and he's still here, so relax. But everything you do, somebody else has to describe out loud afterward, so maybe do it well. Trial one: something arrives at exactly the wrong moment. Go."

THE OBSTACLES • SHAPE-DRAW FIRES HERE

- The Trial of Timing.** *Shape draw:* the shape is what arrives too early or too late. The trial resolves to the hermit's answer: the only important time is **now**.
- The Trial of Company.** Who is with you when it matters. No roll; the party decides together. Resolves to: the most necessary person is **the one you are with**.
- The Deed.** Each ninja writes their SPO paragraph as their own account of the third trial. It resolves to the hermit's last answer: the most important thing is **to do good**. One roll, d6 + NERVE, for how the deed is remembered. On a low roll it is remembered too small, and a companion has to say what it actually took.

ON THE CLOCK

BEAT	MIN	WHAT HAPPENS
Frame	3	Three trials; Mochi failed all three and is still standing
Trials 1 and 2	7	Timing and Company, with a shape draw on the first
The Deed	14	Each ninja writes their SPO as their account of the third trial INDIVIDUAL SPO
Witnessing	5	A companion testifies to what you did well POSITIVE-ONLY PEER REVIEW
Roll and belt	3	d6 + NERVE for how the deed is remembered; Green belt, Champion unlocked

IF IT STALLS Drop the fiction, keep the SPO. Say: "Ninjas adapt. Finish your paragraph."

THE LOW ROLL IS NEVER A CORRECTION

A deed "remembered too small" is a cue for a companion to say what it actually took, which is a compliment with extra steps. Positive-only is still the rule and the witness frame is what protects it. Nobody's paragraph gets criticised at this table.

Why the trials land where they do: the three trials are the hermit's three answers, in order, and the third one is the writing block. Tolstoy did the structural work; the encounter only names it.

Active Work (22 min)

0:20–0:34 (14 min) – Individual SPO writing. Each student writes ONE complete SPO about any character in "The Three Questions."

- + **Scene sentence (solid):** set up one moment from the story.
- + **Prove-it sentence (dotted):** one direct quote from the text, with quotation marks.
- + **Own-words sentence (solid):** explain what the quote shows, **including one appositive renaming the character.**
- + The own-words sentence must carry the **big rock**, the paragraph's most important idea.

Circulate with one question: "Your big rock is _____. Is that the sentence you want carrying the most weight?"

0:34–0:42 (8 min) – Positive-only peer review. Students swap papers with one partner. One slip each: "I like how you _____ because _____." No corrections. No "next time." Only what worked. Slips get stapled to the SPO and returned, and **the writer reads their compliment aloud.**

Three keep-on-track lines:

- 1 (during SPO writing) "Quote check: are those words actually on the page in front of you? If you can't put your finger on the sentence, it isn't evidence, it's memory."
- 2 (during peer review) "Only positives. 'I like how you used the king's own words as evidence' is specific. 'Good job' is sand. Give rocks."
- 3 (to an early finisher) "Write a second SPO on the wounded man. Same structure, different character. The hermit's answer applies to him too."

Close (3 min)

Mission celebration. Read the completers' names aloud with one sentence of appreciation each. Non-completers: no penalty, and the mission extends. (Check the note at the top of this week first.)

Previews: "Next week your SPO becomes a full paragraph, and you vote on your novel." Mention that three monologue options get presented next week.

Text-return assignment: in your Hero's Journey quest text, mark ONE place where a character puts first things first, or fails to. No writing required, just the mark, and be ready to describe it.

Closing language (0:42): "Completers, you kept a promise to yourself. That's Habit 3 in action. Next week your paragraph grows and your voice gets louder. Binders closed."

Materials

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Big Rocks demo props	1 set	Jar, rocks, pebbles, sand, or cutouts
H3 frame poster	1	"I put first things first when I _____, before I _____."
Individual SPO templates	12	Solid / dotted / solid boxes pre-drawn
Positive-only review slips	24	Two per student
Mission completion roster	1	Drives the closing celebration
Marked copies of "The Three Questions"	12	Reuse from Weeks 13–14, with circles
Shape deck + one die	1	RPG session

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Laminated ritual card	1	Opening ritual

Contingency Plans

If energy is low by minute 18: pause the writing for a 60-second Big Rocks chant. You call "Rocks!", the room calls "First!", three times. Resume.

If students are stuck on the SPO: give the oral scaffold verbatim. "[Character] did _____. The story says: '_____. This shows that _____.'" Fill the blanks aloud, then write.

If students are stuck on the positive-only review: give the sentence starter verbatim, "I like how you _____. This works because _____," and model one aloud on a sample paragraph you wrote. Never on a student's.

If a student writes nothing or opts out (FM9): the student dictates the SPO to a partner scribe, and the review goes oral: the partner says one thing they liked about the dictated paragraph. It counts for the Mission if their habit-tracking was oral.

Sub path (if SPO writing stalls at minute 10): replace the individual SPO with a **table SPO race**. Each table gets one pre-selected, pre-printed quote and competes to build the best SPO in eight minutes; the winner reads aloud. Peer review becomes a gallery walk with one positive sticky note per posted paragraph. Zero improvisation required.

PARENT EMAIL

Ninja Scholar – Week 15: Habit 3, First Things First

Today your ninja met Habit 3 through the Big Rocks demo: fill a jar with sand first and the rocks won't fit, but put the rocks in first and everything finds a place. Same 24 hours, different life. Then they wrote their first solo paragraph, an SPO, and gave a classmate a positive-only review, naming one specific thing that worked.

At-home ask: Ask your ninja what their big rock is this week, the one thing that goes in the jar first. Then, in their Hero's Journey quest story, have them mark one place where a character puts first things first, or fails to. No writing required, just one mark.

The Mission: completers were celebrated in class today. If your ninja extended, the finish line is the same commitment, just longer.

Looking ahead: Week 16 grows the SPO into a full paragraph, and the class votes on its novel.

Last updated: 2026-07-24 | **Consolidated from:** `W15-Habit-3-Big-Rocks.md` class plan + Week-15 print-binder draft + Unit 4 encounter design | **Next review:** After Batch C taught

*End of the **W1-15 build** – the W7-15 consolidation run is complete. Units 1-3 complete; Unit 4 is three-quarters built (W13-15 in, W16 remaining). Weeks 16-30 consolidate in later passes. RPG sessions live: W4 (The Feast), W8 (Meeting with Mochi), W12 (The Gate), W15 (The Gauntlet). The HJ Showcase is complete across W13 + W14.*