

NINJA SCHOLAR 2.0 • STUDENT BINDER

Ninja Scholar 2.0 — Student Binder

A year-long training manual • Grades 6–8 • 30 Weeks



GRADES 6–8 • 30 WEEKS

DORYOKU • EFFORT, REWARDED OVER TIME

FRONT MATTER

Front Matter

FRONT MATTER

STUDENT BINDER

Welcome, Ninja. You're Not Ready. Perfect.

Read This First

You are going to become a stronger scholar than you are right now. Not because you were born for it, but because you're going to start before you feel ready and get better on the way. That's the whole trick. That's the whole year.

Everything after this page is detail.

Meet Mochi

This is Mochi. He is a mochi. He is also, technically, a ninja.

He is the worst-built ninja who has ever lived. He is round. He is soft. He is sticky. He squeaks when he walks and gets stuck to walls, which are two things a ninja is specifically not supposed to do. By every rule of what a ninja is, Mochi should not work.

Mochi works anyway. He's the sharpest scholar in the building, and he earned his headband by refusing to wait until he was good at it.

That's you this year. Not built for it. Doing it anyway. Getting dangerously good.



What Is a Ninja Scholar?

A ninja scholar is someone who:

- 1 Starts before they feel ready.
- 2 Makes a small promise and keeps it.
- 3 Notices the detail everyone else walks past.
- 4 Learns to see themselves as the main character of their own story.
- 5 Never uses their skills to make someone else feel small.

You'll practice sentence-level writing until sentences feel like tools instead of traps. You'll map a great story onto The Hero's Journey. You'll study the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. You'll read a novel with your class. And every single week, you'll add one new skill to your toolkit.

THE NINJA WAY

we begin before we are ready, we keep going when it is hard, and we never use our skills to make someone else feel small.

Why This Class, Why Now

Anyone can *make* things now. Computers can crank out an essay in four seconds. So the thing that's actually rare, the thing that makes you dangerous in a good way, isn't how fast you can produce. It's what you can *see*. Whether you can tell the difference between fine and great. Whether you notice the detail that's off.

That's called taste, and it's the one thing that can't be downloaded. This class is a taste factory. We slow down on purpose so you learn to see.

The differentiator is not what you can produce. It is what you can see.

How to Use This Binder

Bring it every week. Write in it. Fold the corners. Make it yours. Here's the decoder ring for what you'll find inside each week:

SECTION	WHAT IT IS
This Week at a Glance	A quick map: which writing phase, which text, which habit, what to take home.
Learn the Ninja Way	One ninja trait to chew on all week, plus a way to connect it to your own life.
Ninja Writing Tool	The sentence skill we're building. It stacks: each week adds to the last.
The Hero's Journey Quest	Your year-long mission to track one story through all ten hero steps.
Class Game / Activity	The loud, social, interactive thing. Always useful. Usually chaos.
Reflection Card	A quick closing check-in so your mentor knows what stuck.
At-Home Assignment	The one thing to do before next class. Never more than 30 minutes.
Parent Email	Exactly what your parents will read, so everyone's on the same page.

Forget what a section is for? Come back here. Ninjas know their tools.

The Point

At the end of the year, this binder will hold proof, in your own handwriting, that you became a stronger scholar than you were in Week 1. One sentence, one habit, one weird true detail at a time.

Turn the page. We start by lying to each other. (You'll see.)

FRONT MATTER

STUDENT BINDER

Your Mission: Ninja Certification, Level I

How You Get Certified

Mochi wasn't a great ninja on day one. He got certified by *starting things and finishing them*, not by being perfect. Same deal for you.

To earn Ninja Certification Level I, you need:

- ✦ At least 8 of the 10 requirements below, AND
- ✦ At least 2 Hero Training Missions completed.

That's it. You don't have to do everything. You have to *start before you're ready and keep going*. Progress counts. Nobody's going to nag you. This is your quest, not a chore chart. Fill in the boxes as you go and watch the year stack up.

The 10 Requirements

Check the box when you've done it. Write the date so future-you can see the streak.

✓	#	REQUIREMENT	DATE DONE
☐	1	Pick a film or book and document its Hero's Journey (all 10 steps)	
☐	2	Play in the class RPG game	
☐	3	Complete the 7-day Hero Training Mission ("Heed the Call")	
☐	4	Complete 2 in-class free writes (keep them in your binder ALL YEAR)	
☐	5	Take part in the class debate	

✓	#	REQUIREMENT	DATE DONE
☐	6	Complete the 14-day Hero Training Mission	
☐	7	Write a paragraph at home using the class-generated thesis statement	
☐	8	Complete the 21-day Hero Training Mission	
☐	9	Do the annotation activity : one of each type	
☐	10	Complete a peer review in class	

Requirements done so far: _____ / 10 (*you need 8*)

HERO TRAINING MISSIONS

A Hero Training Mission is a promise you make to yourself and actually keep. Pick a real goal, track it every day, don't break the chain. You need **at least 2** of these done to certify. (Your class will decide the rules together, like whether the days have to be in a row. Ninjas usually vote for the strict version. Of course they do.)

✓	MISSION	LENGTH	STARTS	MY GOAL	DATE DONE
☐	Heed the Call	7 days	Week 2		
☐	The 14-Day Mission	14 days	Week 5		
☐	The 21-Day Mission	21 days	Week 9		

Missions done so far: _____ / 3 (*you need 2*)

Am I Certified Yet?

Check both when they're true:

☐ I have at least **8 of 10** requirements

☐ I have at least **2 Hero Training Missions**

If both boxes are checked, **you're a certified Ninja Scholar, Level I.** Mochi is proud. He's soft, so he's a little weepy about it, but proud.

The Deal (for you AND your mentor)

Inspire, don't require. Progress gets praised out loud. Nobody gets shamed for what they haven't finished, and nobody gets a private reminder unless they truly need one. This sheet is a map of where you're going, not a list of ways to fall short. You started before you were ready. That already makes you a ninja.

UNIT 01

Hero's Journey (Weeks 1–4)

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

UNIT 1 — HERO'S JOURNEY (WEEKS 1-4) •
WEEK 01STUDENT
BINDER

Meet Mochi. Also, One of Us Is Lying.

Before We Start: This Is Mochi

This is Mochi. He is a mochi. He is also, technically, a ninja.

He is the worst-built ninja in the history of ninjas. He is round. He is soft. He is sticky. He cannot sneak up on anyone because he squeaks when he walks and gets stuck to walls. By every rule of what a ninja is supposed to be, Mochi should not work.

Mochi works anyway. Mochi is the smartest scholar in this building, and he became a ninja by refusing to wait until he was good at it.

That is the entire class in one sticky rice blob. You are going to be a little bit like Mochi this year: not ready, not built for it, doing it anyway, and getting dangerously good in the process.



THE NINJA WAY

*we begin before we are ready, we keep going
when it is hard, and we never use our skills to
make someone else feel small.*

This Week at a Glance

WEEK	1
HABIT	None (foundation week)
TEXT	None yet. <i>You</i> are the text this week
WRITING FOCUS	Phase 0: Kernel Expansion (say it before you write it)
CENTRAL QUESTION	What have you started before you felt ready for it?
TAKE-HOME	Pick a book or movie for your Hero's Journey Quest (due Week 2)

Don't panic about the words you don't know. **Phase 0** = the first sentence trick. **Kernel expansion** = take a boring little sentence and grow it one detail bigger. That's the whole lesson. We'll do it out loud before you write a single word.

One of Us Is Lying

Your mentor is about to tell you three things about themselves. Two are true. One is a bald-faced lie.

Your only job: catch the lie. Vote with your hand. If you vote wrong, you have been out-lied by a grown-up on day one, and you will have to live with that.

Here's the thing nobody tells you: **you already have the superpower this whole class is built on.** You can feel when a detail is *off*. That little "wait, that's not right" feeling is the muscle a scholar uses. It helps you read closely, argue well, and write sentences that land. We're just going to make it stronger.

Write down what the lie turned out to be:

The lie was:

What Is a Kernel? (Ask Mochi)

A **kernel** is the smallest sentence that still works. A subject and a verb. Short, true, and boring on purpose.

An **expansion** is that same sentence, grown by exactly one detail: *when, where, why, or how*. Not all four. **One**. Ninjas are precise.

Watch what happens to Mochi:

KERNEL (BORING, TRUE)	EXPANSION (ONE DETAIL BIGGER)
Mochi swims.	Mochi swims laps in my bathtub every night while judging my life choices.
Mochi reads.	Mochi read a 400-page book in one sitting because he forgot he had a body.
Mochi trains.	Mochi trains at dawn, mostly by falling off things on purpose.

Notice: the expansion only answers **one** question. That's the rule. Add one true, weird, specific detail and stop.

Your turn: Round 1. Write a boring kernel about yourself or someone you just met:

Round 2. Grow it by ONE detail: when, where, why, or how:

Speed-Dating (For Sentences, Not Romance)

Two lines. Face a partner. You get 30 seconds and **one** question. Then everybody rotates and you never see them again. It's the fastest, loudest way to notice something true about another human, which is the raw material of every good sentence.

Steal any of these questions:

- + What's the weirdest thing you own?
- + Best movie you've seen this year?
- + If you had one superpower, what's the dumb version of it?
- + What's something you're secretly good at?

After 3–4 rounds: pick ONE person. Write a boring kernel about them, then grow it.

PARTNER	KERNEL (BORING)	EXPANSION (ONE WEIRD, TRUE DETAIL)

The bounty: weirdest *true* sentence in the room wins **Mochi's Seal of Approval**. "Bella reads." No. "Bella read a whole book in one day because she forgot to eat lunch." *That's* a ninja sentence. Weird and specific beats neat and tidy every single time.

The Hero's Journey (You Already Know It)

Here's a secret you can't un-know once you know it: almost every story you love is built from the **same ten steps**. Harry Potter, Star Wars, Moana, Spider-Man, The Hobbit: different paint, same skeleton.

This year you'll pick ONE story you love and track it through all ten steps. By spring you'll see the pattern everywhere: in books, in movies, and (weirdly) in your own life.

You'll get the full ten steps in your binder to keep. For now, just one question:

A book or movie I might want to map this year:

My favorite part of it:

(Full 10-step map is on the next page. Read it if you're curious. We'll dig in all year.)

The Hero's Journey: 10 Steps (Keep This)

- 1 The Ordinary World** The hero starts home, ordinary, not yet great. *(Frodo in the Shire.)*
- 2 The Call to Adventure** Something calls the hero away from home. *(Harry gets his Hogwarts letter.)*
- 3 Meeting the Mentor** A guide with special knowledge shows up. *(Glinda points Dorothy to the yellow brick road.)*
- 4 Crossing the Threshold** The hero leaves the safe world behind. *(Frodo leaves the Shire.)*
- 5 Challenges and Trials** Tests of wit, strength, and nerve. *(Rey fights the Empire.)*
- 6 The Special Weapon** A tool only this hero can use. *(Arthur pulls the sword from the stone.)*
- 7 The Supreme Ordeal** The one big battle above all others. *(Luke faces Vader.)*
- 8 Reward for Victory** Recognition or a prize is won. *(Indiana Jones and the true Grail.)*
- 9 Final Test / Transformation** One last test, or the hero is forever changed.
- 10 The Return Home** The hero comes home, different than they left. *(Frodo returns to the Shire.)*

REFLECTION CARD: WEEK 1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Write your best expanded sentence one more time:

2 One book or movie you want to map onto the Hero's Journey this year:

3 Circle one thing that stuck today:

- ☐ Ninjas begin before they're ready (see: Mochi).
- ☐ A kernel is a short, boring, true sentence.
- ☐ An expansion adds exactly one detail.
- ☐ Weird and specific beats neat and tidy.

AT-HOME ASSIGNMENT: WEEK 1

Your first real ninja mission. Talk to a parent and **pick one book or movie** that follows the Hero's Journey. Choose something you already love. You'll be thinking about it for a couple months.

Write your choice here:

Title:

Why I picked it:

Stuck? Any of these work: *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Moana*, *The Lion King*, *The Hobbit*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, *Percy Jackson*, or anything family-friendly your parent okays.

Bring this page back next week.

PARENT EMAIL: WEEK 1

(The same note your mentor will send home.)

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

UNIT 1 – HERO’S JOURNEY (WEEKS 1–4) • STUDENT
WEEK 02BINDER

SMART Goals + Kernel Set-Up

This Week at a Glance

Use this table like a dashboard. It tells you where we are going before we start the engine.

WEEK	2
HABIT	– (foundation week)
TEXT	Self-selected Hero's Journey film or book (chosen this week)
WRITING FOCUS	Phase 0 – Kernel expansion (written)
CENTRAL QUESTION	How do ninjas set goals they can actually hit?
TAKE - HOME	Confirm your Hero's Journey film or book choice (make sure you can watch or read it this month)

Last week you learned that ninjas begin before they feel ready. This week you learn what to aim at once you have begun: **ninjas set a target, then they move.** Random effort is just noise. A SMART goal gives your effort a direction.

This week is all about direction. You choose the story you will track all year. You learn how to turn a vague wish into a goal you can check off. And you write three kernel-expanded sentences about your hero before they ever become one.

LEARN THE NINJA WAY – WEEK 2

Every week in Ninja Scholar, we stop and practice one ninja trait. These traits are not costumes. They are habits – small choices you make over and over until they become part of who you are.

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

You can walk fast and still get lost. You can practice hard and still not improve. What separates a ninja from someone who is just busy? A target.

Think about it. An archer does not shoot arrows in every direction and hope one hits. A basketball player does not close her eyes and throw the ball. A ninja does not say, "I want to be a better writer" and then wonder what to do. A ninja says, "Today I will write one sentence with a specific detail in it."

Targets make effort useful.

Your turn: Name one thing you want to get better at this year – but make it specific. Not "writing." Something you could actually aim at.

Write it below:

This year, I want to get better at

BONUS: How will you know when you have hit that target?

What Makes a Goal Ninja-Ready?

A **goal** is something you want to do. A **SMART goal** is a goal you can actually aim at.

SMART is a checklist. If your goal passes all five checks, it is ninja-ready.

LETTER	QUESTION	VAGUE GOAL	NINJA-READY GOAL
S – Specific	What exactly will I do?	"Get better at writing."	"Write one kernel-expanded sentence about my hero's ordinary world."
M – Measurable	How will I know I did it?	"Read more."	"Read three chapters of my Hero's Journey book this week."
A – Attainable	Can I really do this?	"Read a whole book tonight."	"Read one chapter before bed on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday."
R – Relevant	Does this matter to me?	"Memorize the state capitals."	"Memorize the lines for my monologue because I want to perform them."
T – Time-based	When does it end?	"Drink more water."	"Drink one full water bottle at lunch every day for 7 days."

Notice: the ninja-ready goals are smaller. They are also clearer. You can check them off. That is the point.

Your turn: Pick one vague goal from the list below and turn it into a SMART goal.

Vague goals to choose from:

- + "Be nicer to my sister."
- + "Get stronger."
- + "Do better in Math."
- + "Read more."

Vague goal:

S – Specific:

M – Measurable:

A – Attainable:

R – Relevant:

T – Time-based:

My SMART goal:

The Lie Detector Returns — Hero Edition

Here is the truth about sentences: they get sharper when you know how to add one true detail. To prove it, we are playing the Lie Detector game again – this time with heroes.

Your mentor will read three sentences. Two are true. One is a lie. Your job: vote on which one is the lie.

Example about Harry Potter:

- 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.

The lie: #3. Fluffy is a three-headed dog, not Harry's pet dragon.

Notice what made this work: every sentence starts with the same kernel – "Harry Potter, a wizard who lives under the stairs..." That kernel is about Harry's **ordinary world** – his life before the adventure starts.

Your turn: Write three sentences about your hero's ordinary world. Two true. One lie. Your classmates will vote.

1.

2.

3.

The Hero's Journey Quest — Choose Your Story

Last week you learned the ten steps of the Hero's Journey. This week you choose one story to map all year.

You do not have to read something new. Pick a book or movie you already love – something you would not mind thinking about for the next month or two. You will track the hero through all ten steps. By May, you will know this story better than you thought possible.

Here are some good choices:

- + *Star Wars: A New Hope*
- + *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
- + *The Hunger Games*
- + *Moana*
- + *The Lion King*
- + *The Hobbit*
- + *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

- + *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*
- + *The Wizard of Oz*
- + Another family-friendly story your parent approves

Write your choice here:

Title:

Hero's name:

Why I chose it:

Step 1: The Ordinary World

Every hero starts somewhere normal. Before the adventure, before the danger, before the transformation – there is just a kid living a regular life.

In the Hero's Journey, this is called **The Ordinary World**. It is the hero's everyday life before the story really starts. The ordinary world matters because later, when the hero has changed, the reader needs to remember what "normal" looked like.

HERO	ORDINARY WORLD
Harry Potter	Lives in a cupboard under the stairs at the Dursleys', treated like he does not belong.
Moana	Lives on the island of Motunui, learning to be a chief, forbidden from sailing past the reef.
Luke Skywalker	Works on his uncle's moisture farm on Tatooine, dreaming of leaving for the academy.

A kernel sentence about the ordinary world is short and true.

- + Harry lives with the Dursleys.
- + Moana stays on her island.
- + Luke works on a farm.

An expansion adds one detail – when, where, why, or how.

- + Harry lives with the Dursleys in a tiny cupboard under the stairs because he has nowhere else to go.
- + Moana stays on her island even though she longs to sail past the reef.
- + Luke works on his uncle's farm on Tatooine while he dreams of joining the Imperial Academy.

Your turn – Round 1: Write a kernel sentence about your hero's ordinary world.

Round 2: Add ONE detail. Use When? Where? Why? or How?

Round 3: Write two more kernel-expanded sentences about your hero's ordinary world.

1.

2.

SMART Goal Workshop

In class today, you will do three things in one workshop:

- 1 Choose your Hero's Journey story.** Lock in your title and hero.
- 2 Write three kernel-expanded sentences** about your hero's ordinary world – one detail at a time.
- 3 Set one SMART goal for this class.** Something you will hit by a specific date.

Use the workspace below during class:

MY HERO'S ORDINARY WORLD – 3 SENTENCES

1.

2.

3.

MY SMART GOAL FOR THIS CLASS

I will

by

because

Remember: a kernel is short and true. An expansion adds one detail – when, where, why, or how. Specific details make ninja sentences.

REFLECTION CARD – WEEK 2

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1 Your hero's name and film/book title:

2 One thing you want to find out about their Hero's Journey by the end of the year:

3 Write one SMART goal for this class:

I will

by

because

4 Circle one thing you learned today:

- ☐ Ninjas set a target before they start moving.
- ☐ A SMART goal is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based.
- ☐ The Ordinary World is the hero's life before the adventure.

☐ A kernel-expanded sentence starts short, then adds one detail.

AT-HOME ASSIGNMENT – WEEK 2

At home this week, confirm your Hero's Journey story choice.

Talk with your parent or guardian about the story you picked. Make sure it is one you can watch or read again this month. Write the final title below:

Title: _____

Parent initials: _____

Return this page to class next week.

PARENT EMAIL – WEEK 2

(This is the same email your mentor will send home.)

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

UNIT 1 — HERO'S JOURNEY (WEEKS 1-4) •
WEEK 03STUDENT
BINDER

Paradigms & Principles + BBS Intro

This Week at a Glance

Use this table like a dashboard. It tells you where we are going before we start the engine.

WEEK	3
HABIT	Paradigms & Principles (the foundation)
WRITING FOCUS	Phase 1 – Because / But / So (first written BBS)
TEXT	A short clip selected by your mentor
CENTRAL QUESTION	How do ninjas see what other people miss?
TAKE-HOME	One BBS sentence about a paradigm shift

You chose a goal last week. Now you need two tools that separate civilians from ninjas: **paradigms** (the glasses you wear) and **BBS connectors** (because, but, so). Paradigms help you notice what is driving a person. Connectors show the relationship between ideas. Put them together and you can explain *why* a character did what they did, not just *what* they did.

LEARN THE NINJA WAY – WEEK 3

Every week in Ninja Scholar, we stop and practice one ninja trait. These traits are not costumes. They are habits: small choices you make over and over until they become part of who you are.

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

Everybody wears invisible glasses. The glasses color everything you see. Most people never take them off. Ninjas do.

Two kids get a zero on the same 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. The first pair is a **fixed paradigm**. The second is a **growth paradigm**. Same world. Different results.

Your turn: Write down one thing you used to believe about yourself that turned out to be wrong.

I used to think

Now I think

The evidence that changed my mind:

The Ninja Connector Tool: Because / But / So

Last week you expanded sentences by adding detail. This week you connect ideas with one of three words.

CONNECTOR	WHAT IT SHOWS	EXAMPLE
Because	Reason or cause	<i>The hostess kept still because she felt the cobra on her foot.</i>
But	Conflict or surprise	<i>The colonel talked about control, but the hostess actually showed it.</i>
So	Result or effect	<i>The American saw the boy carry milk outside, so he knew a cobra must be nearby.</i>

Try it. Pick any sentence from today's clip or from class. Write it three ways, once with each connector. Notice how the meaning changes.

Original sentence:

BECAUSE:

BUT:

SO:

How to Spot a Paradigm Shift

A paradigm shift happens when someone swaps one pair of glasses for a new one. In stories, you can spot it by asking three questions:

- 1 What did this character believe at the start?
- 2 What evidence forced them to see it differently?
- 3 What did they do after the shift?

Those three answers fit neatly into a BBS sentence.

[Character] believed [X] BECAUSE [evidence from the start], BUT [new evidence] SO [what changed].

Your turn: Use the frame above to write one sentence about someone in today's clip.

Circle your connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

The Ninja Game: Flip the Glasses *(if your mentor runs it)*

Your mentor reads a setback out loud: a zero on a test, a missed team, or a friend who walked right past you. Then someone grabs the **Ninja Goggles**, the giant clown glasses.

- 1 One ninja puts on the goggles and reacts in the **fixed** voice: *"I'm just bad at this. Why try?"*
- 2 A second ninja **snatches the goggles**, puts them on, and replays the *same event* in the **growth** voice: *"I don't get this yet. I need a different strategy."*
- 3 Together, lock the shift into one BBS sentence: *"I thought I was bad at this, BUT I'd never tried a new plan, SO now I know I just don't get it yet."*

You only win the Ninja Eye if your flip changes what the person would **DO** next, not just how they feel. A pep talk is not a paradigm shift.

REFLECTION CARD — WEEK 3

Name: _____ Date: _____

- 1 Write one BBS sentence about a paradigm shift: yours, a classmate's, or one from today's clip.

Circle your connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

2 One thing from this week that made you see something differently:

3 Circle one thing you learned today:

- ☐ A paradigm is the glasses you wear; it colors what you see.
- ☐ A paradigm shift changes what you DO, not just how you feel.
- ☐ Because / But / So show reason, conflict, and result.
- ☐ Ninjas question what they believe before they believe what they think.

AT-HOME ASSIGNMENT – WEEK 3

At home this week, hunt for a paradigm shift outside of class.

Ask someone at home about a time they changed their mind about something important. Write their answer as one BBS sentence below.

Circle the connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

Return this page to class next week.

PARENT EMAIL – WEEK 3

(This is the same email your mentor will send home.)

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"?

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

– Ninja Scholar Mentor

UNIT 1 — HERO'S JOURNEY (WEEKS 1-4) •
WEEK 04STUDENT
BINDER

Annotation Bookmark + Discussion Protocol

This Week at a Glance

WEEK	4
HABIT	— (implicit only)
WRITING FOCUS	Phase 1 — BBS warm-up on a text sentence
TEXT	"The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner
CENTRAL QUESTION	How do ninjas leave marks on paper?
TAKE-HOME	Show someone your annotation bookmark and one mark you made

Last week you practiced the because / but / so connector. This week you do two ninja moves at once while you read: **annotate** (leave marks on the page) and **ask Discussion Questions** the ninja way. Civilians finish a story clean. Ninjas leave it covered in marks.

The short story for this week is "The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner. A colonial official and his wife are hosting a dinner party in India when a secret visitor: a cobra: slips into the room. The story is short, but every paragraph carries a choice, a surprise, or a reversal. Your job is to catch the moves the author makes.

LEARN THE NINJA WAY – WEEK 4

This week's trait: "Ninjas read with a pen in their hand."

Most people read the way they watch TV: they let the story wash over them. Ninjas talk back. They underline, circle, star, and question the page.

A pen in your hand turns reading from something that happens to you into something you do. When you mark the page, you are saying: *I noticed this. This mattered to me.*

Your turn: Before you read, write one thing you hope to notice in "The Dinner Party" today.

Today I want to watch for _____

The Annotation Bookmark

Use these four marks while you read. Keep your bookmark nearby all year.

MARK	WHAT IT MEANS	WHEN TO USE IT
Underline	This line surprised me or made me react.	A sentence you want to come back to
Circle	I don't know this word or this detail matters.	Unfamiliar words, names, or repeated images
Star	This is the most important moment so far.	A turning point, a choice, or a reveal
?	I have a question or I am confused.	Anything that makes you stop and wonder

Example marks for "The Dinner Party":

- + Underline the sentence where the American sees the hostess's face change: "She is staring straight ahead, her muscles contracting slightly."
- + Circle the word "veranda" if it is new to you.
- + Star the moment the hostess reveals what she knew: "Because it was lying across my foot."
- + Put a question mark next to the colonel's claim that women always scream in a crisis.

Your turn: As your mentor reads the story aloud, make at least four marks. Quantity matters more than perfection today.

BBS Warm-Up: One Sentence from the Story

Your mentor will read this sentence aloud:

"The American did not join in the argument but watched the other guests."

The connector is **but**. Why? Because the sentence sets up tension: the American stayed silent, *but* he was paying attention. The word *but* signals that two things are happening at once.

Your turn: Choose another sentence from the story and say which connector fits.

Sentence from the story:

Connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

Why this connector fits:

The Discussion Protocol

Ninjas do not shout answers over each other. They use a protocol: a repeatable set of moves: so every voice gets heard.

STEP	WHAT YOU DO
Write	Everyone writes one question on an <u>INDEX</u> card
Sort	Put questions in three piles: thin (one answer), thick (many answers), or ninja (starts a real discussion)
Draw	The mentor draws one name. That person picks a thick or ninja question
Facilitate	The person whose name was drawn reads the question and calls on three classmates to answer

Thick questions are better than thin questions. A thin question asks for a fact: "Who saw the cobra first?" A thick question asks for a judgment: "Who really showed control in the story, the colonel or the hostess?"

Your turn: Write one thin question and one thick question about "The Dinner Party."

Thin question (one answer):

Thick question (many answers):

The Story: "The Dinner Party"

*by Mona Gardner – first published in The Saturday Review of Literature, January 31, 1941.
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The country is India. A colonial official and his wife are giving a large dinner party. They are seated with their guests – army officers, and government attachés with their wives, and a visiting American naturalist – in their spacious dining room. It has a bare marble floor, open rafters, and wide glass doors opening onto a veranda.

A spirited discussion springs up between a young girl who insists that women have outgrown the jumping-on-a-chair-at-the-sight-of-a-mouse era and a colonel who says that they haven't.

"A woman's unfailing reaction in any crisis," the colonel says, "is to scream. And while a man may feel like it, he has that ounce more of nerve control than a woman has. And that last ounce more is what counts."

The American does not join in the argument but watches the other guests. As he looks, he sees a strange expression come over the face of the hostess. She is staring straight ahead, her muscles contracting slightly. With a slight gesture, she summons the native boy standing behind her chair and whispers to him. The boy's eyes widen, and he quickly leaves the room.

Of the guests, none except the American notices this or sees the boy place a bowl of milk on the veranda just outside the open doors.

The American comes to with a start. In India, milk in a bowl means only one thing – bait for a snake. He realizes there must be a cobra in the room. He looks up at the rafters – the likeliest place – but they are bare. Three corners of the room are empty, and in the fourth the servants are waiting to serve the next course. There is only one place left – under the table.

His first impulse is to jump back and warn the others, but he knows the commotion would frighten the cobra into striking. He speaks quickly, the tone of his voice so arresting that it sobers everyone.

"I want to know just what control everyone at this table has. I will count to three hundred – that's five minutes – and not one of you is to move a muscle. Those who move will forfeit fifty rupees. Ready!"

The twenty people sit like stone images while he counts. He is saying "two hundred and eighty" when, out of the corner of his eye, he sees the cobra emerge and make for the bowl of milk. Screams ring out as he jumps to slam the veranda doors safely shut.

"You were right, Colonel!" the host exclaims. "A man has just shown us an example of perfect control."

"Just a minute," the American says, turning to his hostess. "Mrs. Wynnes, how did you know the cobra was in the room?"

A faint smile lights up the woman's face as she replies. "Because it was lying across my foot."

The Ninja Game: Three Stars

You get **exactly three Star tokens** for the whole read-aloud. A star marks "the most important moment so far." Once you spend a star, it's gone: and the cobra reveal is still coming.

- 1** As your mentor reads, decide when to spend a star. Hold it for a bigger moment, or spend it now? You only get three.
- 2** Call "**Freeze!**" to stop the read and name your mark: *"Star: the hostess just froze her muscles, that's the turning point."*
- 3** If the room agrees it's a real move, everyone makes that mark on the page.

The moments that get the most stars become our discussion questions. **Spend your last star on the moment that matters most: that's the ninja move.**

REFLECTION CARD

Before you leave, complete three things:

- 1** One BBS sentence about the story.

Circle your connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

- 2** One annotation that surprised you today.

I marked

because

- 3** **At home:** Show your annotation bookmark to someone and explain one mark you made.

UNIT 02

Speak Your Mind (Weeks 5–6 partial)

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

UNIT 2 – SPEAK YOUR MIND (WEEKS 5–6
PARTIAL) • WEEK 05STUDENT
BINDER

Dinner Party Discussion + Connector Upgrade

This Week at a Glance

WEEK	5
HABIT	– (implicit only)
WRITING FOCUS	Phase 1 – Connector Upgrade (first evidence)
TEXT	"The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner (revisited)
CENTRAL QUESTION	How do you turn a boring question into a ninja question?
TAKE-HOME	Explain the difference between an apprentice question and a ninja question

You annotated last week. Now comes the ninja move: the **Connector Upgrade**. A plain question asks for a fact. A connected question asks for a reason, a conflict, or a result.

You will write questions about "The Dinner Party," pass them to a partner, add a because / but / so connector, and expand them with evidence from the story.

LEARN THE NINJA WAY – WEEK 5

This week's trait: "Ninjas don't ask questions that have answers. They ask questions that start fights."

Not real fights. Thinking fights – the kind where everyone lands somewhere different and the room gets loud because people actually care.

An apprentice question has one answer. A ninja question has many answers, and the answers matter.

APPRENTICE QUESTION	WHY IT IS THIN
"What did the hostess do?"	One answer: she stayed calm.
"Who saw the cobra first?"	One answer: the American (and the hostess).
"Where did the story take place?"	One answer: India.

A ninja question adds a connector. The connector forces people to explain reasons, conflicts, and results.

NINJA QUESTION	WHY IT IS THICK
"The hostess stayed calm because she knew about the snake – but was that fair to the colonel?"	It asks for judgment, not just fact.
"The colonel was so sure he was right that he missed the truth – is confidence always a strength?"	It connects the story to a bigger idea.
"The story ends quietly because the real fight was already won – do quiet endings have more power?"	It asks about the author's choice.

Your turn: Change one apprentice question below into a ninja question.

Apprentice: Why did the American stay silent?

Ninja: _____

The Connector Upgrade Machine

Follow these four steps to upgrade any question.

- 1 **Write a plain question** about the story.
- 2 **Add a connector.** Pick because, but, or so.
- 3 **Add evidence.** Point to something that already happened in the story.
- 4 **Add a twist.** Turn the statement into a question that starts a discussion.

Example:

- 1 Plain question: What did the hostess do?
- 2 Add connector: The hostess stayed calm because...
- 3 Add evidence: ...because she already knew the cobra was in the room.
- 4 Add twist: ...but was staying silent fair to the other guests?

Final ninja question: "The hostess stayed calm because she already knew about the cobra, but was staying silent fair to the other guests?"

Your turn: Run your own question through the machine.

Step 1 – Plain question:

Step 2 – Add connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

Step 3 – Evidence from the story:

Step 4 – Twist that starts a discussion:

Final ninja question:**Paraphrase Practice**

A ninja does not just COPY words from the story. A ninja puts the idea into new words. That is called **paraphrasing**.

Echoing (weak): "The book says the hostess summoned the boy." Paraphrasing (strong): "The hostess quietly called the servant over without drawing attention."

Your turn: Paraphrase one sentence from "The Dinner Party" in your own words.

Original sentence:**Your paraphrase:****The Ninja Game: Divide the Room**

A real ninja question doesn't have one answer – it splits a room. Here's how we test yours.

- 1 Your table runs a question through the Connector Upgrade Machine and reads it out loud.
- 2 The whole room votes with their feet: **YES** on one side, **NO** on the other, **undecided** in the middle.
- 3 Your question's score is **how split the room is**. If everyone clumps on one side, it was an apprentice question – one answer. If the room splits and people start arguing, you built a ninja question.

The table whose question divides the room the most – and gets people talking – wins **Ninja Question of the Day**.

REFLECTION CARD

- 1** Write your table's ninja question with one connector and evidence from the text.

Circle your connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

- 2** Paraphrase one sentence from the story.

- 3** **At home:** Explain to someone what makes a question "ninja" instead of "apprentice."

UNIT 2 – SPEAK YOUR MIND (WEEKS 5-6
PARTIAL) • WEEK 06

STUDENT
BINDER

PBA + Freewrite #1

This Week at a Glance

WEEK	6
HABIT	Personal Bank Account (Roots – explicit)
WRITING FOCUS	Phase 1 – BBS warm-up with PBA vocabulary
TEXT	None (autobiographical; student is the text)
CENTRAL QUESTION	What is in your relationship bank account?
TAKE - HOME	Bring your freewrite notebook every week

You turned plain questions into ninja questions last week. This week the text is you. You will learn about the **Personal Bank Account** – every relationship has deposits and withdrawals – and you will begin your **freewrite binder**, where messy, honest thinking is allowed.

LEARN THE NINJA WAY – WEEK 6

This week's trait: "Ninjas make deposits before they need withdrawals."

You cannot ask someone to trust you if you have never kept a promise. You cannot ask for help if you have never helped. Every relationship – with parents, friends, siblings, even yourself – has a bank account. You are the banker.

Deposits build trust:

- + Keeping promises
- + Being kind when no one asked
- + Listening first
- + Apologizing when you mess up

Withdrawals drain trust:

- + Breaking promises
- + Gossip
- + Not listening
- + Telling secrets

Your turn: Name one small deposit and one small withdrawal you made this week.

One deposit I made:

One withdrawal I made:

The PBA Ledger

On your INDEX card, make a ledger for this week. Be honest. The goal is not to look perfect; the goal is to see the pattern.

Deposits (this week):

1.

2.

3.

Withdrawals (this week):

1.

2.

3.

Big Rocks First

Imagine a jar. You have rocks, sand, and water.

- + **Rocks** = your most important relationships and responsibilities.
- + **Sand** = small tasks that fill the cracks.
- + **Water** = extra stuff that can wait.

If you put sand in first, the rocks do not fit. If you put the rocks in first, everything else finds a place. That is what "First Things First" means – but this week we are starting with the jar itself: your relationships.

Your turn: Name one "big rock" in your life this week – one person or responsibility that deserves space first.

My big rock this week:

Freewrite Ritual #1

This is your first freewrite. Here are the only rules:

- + No grammar checks.
- + No spelling corrections.
- + No wrong answers.

Your job is to get thoughts on paper, not to make them pretty.

Prompt: *My biggest rock this week.*

This does not mean "what did you do." It means what took up space in your head. Good or bad. The thing that mattered.

Start writing here and keep going for the full five minutes.

The Ninja Game: The Trust Account

Meet **Sam**. Sam has a bank account with his sister – but it isn't money. It's trust. We're going to watch it rise and fall across one week.

- 1 Your mentor reads one of Sam's actions at a time: *"Sam promised to help his sister study, then bailed to game."*

- 2** The room votes: **deposit or withdrawal – and how big?** A broken promise to your sister isn't the same size as one to a stranger. The balance meter moves.
- 3** Then the twist: **Sam needs to borrow his sister's bike.** Does his account have enough?

That's the whole secret of the Personal Bank Account: **you make deposits *before* you need a withdrawal.** Then open your own ledger below.

REFLECTION CARD

- 1** One BBS sentence about your PBA.

I made a deposit / withdrawal BECAUSE / BUT / SO

Circle your connector: BECAUSE BUT SO

- 2** A sentence about your freewrite experience.

One thing that surprised me while freewriting was

- 3** **Assignment reminder:** Bring this notebook to class every week. Lost notebook = you replace it in class.



End of W1–6 vertical slice. Weeks 7–30 consolidate in later passes. Per UNIT-MAP.md: Unit 1 = W1–4 (complete), Unit 2 = W5–8 (W5–6 in this slice; W7–8 pending §1.1 merge fix).