Read this selection from *The Best Bedroom in Brooklyn* by Carol Snyder:

When I came home from school, Phyllis greeted me at the door with a smile. She had baked chocolate-chip cookies and had a glass of cool milk ready for me. We crunched cookies and talked about boys and how they're actually shy sometimes, but that's when they usually do something gross so you won't know it. Then she said she'd bought a home permanent if I wanted to curl my hair and give it some body. My hair hung limply around my face. “Baby-fine hair,” my mother calls it. “Stringy and straight,” I call it. The stuff didn’t smell great, but I let her do it.

I would never let my mother touch a chemical to my hair. I would be sure it would permanently frizz my hair or change its color. She once tried to cut my bangs, and I needed first aid and a month to get them to grow back straight. Phyllis can do anything. She’s perfect.

After a few days I was telling my friends all about her. Like how she puts together outfits like in a fashion show. And how she even sews her own hats. She has a framelike gauze hat and she covers it with burgundy velvet and decorates it just so with velvet-covered cherry shapes.

My mother once offered to hem my jeans and she did great, except when I tried to put them on I couldn’t because she’d sewed the leg openings together. That’s when she found Clara, the dressmaker. I bet if I had a mother like Phyllis, she’d sew all my clothes just right and make me skirts and blouses in the latest styles. And I would be happy on open house night at school, when she would listen to the teacher and not ask a million questions. And I would not be embarrassed because she had on slacks that were too short because she did not have time to read the label and had put them in the dryer instead of laying them out flat to dry.

“Isn’t Phyllis the greatest?” I said to my mom one night.
“Yeah, the greatest,” my mom said sarcastically. “I don’t know the greatest what yet, but she’s the greatest.”

When my friends would come over, Phyllis would laugh and joke with us like one of the girls, polishing our nails right on the coffee table in the living room even if the remover bottle left a ring on the wood.

It seemed like Phyllis and Charlie would be with us forever. In my closet, my clothes were pushed to one side and Phyllis’ and Charlie’s beautiful things had lots of space.

And on my dresser, my things were pushed into a corner and Phyllis’ make-up and polishes and brushes and lotions and hairsprays and jewelry and scarf holders and nail files and curling iron took up all the space.

And my stuffed animals were piled up in a basket and my scrapbook was stuck up on a shelf. It hardly even seemed like my room anymore except for the wood carving of my name, “Lisa,” that still hung on the wall.

And all the kids always wanted to come over after school for fresh-baked carrot cake from scratch or cupcakes baked in ice-cream comes with sprinkles or some neat treat and sewing lessons and jewelry making—all taught by Phyllis. And crab sessions about whose mom did the dumbest things weren’t as much fun anymore. I don’t even think my friends would have noticed if I was missing.

One day I left them all gabbing with Phyllis and went and sat quietly in my room under my name with the basket of stuffed animals in my lap. I was gone a good hour, just enjoying the privacy. Just enjoying the feel of my own bed under me.

That night, for dinner, Phyllis cooked the best roast any of us have ever tasted.

The next day, a month to the day of their arrival, Charlie insisted he take us all out to a nice restaurant in Manhattan. So Phyllis and I set out to take the train from the Avenue J station in Brooklyn to Rector street in Manhattan, like I’ve done a million times.

My mom can get anywhere. She never gets lost or frightened of street people. She always gives the homeless lady at the train station some money and whishes her good luck and better times. Then the lady smiles.

Phyllis wouldn’t let me stop and give her anything. And she kept asking, “You sure you know what station we get off, Lisa? You sure?” And when the local suddenly
switched to being an express and I said, “Uh-oh, we better switch trains,” I thought she was going to faint.

And when some ordinary soot got on her white jacket, you’d have thought she was having a heart attack. I was really embarrassed.

When we got to my parent’s store, my mom was busy helping customer, adding up bills on the machine, climbing up ladders to get some man a shirt in the right size. And old-time customers would greet her with a hug. She had this wonderful smile and could juggle three things at once and be sweet to everyone.

“How does she do it, Lisa?” she asked.

And for the first time I saw Phyllis as she really was. And for the first time I saw my mother as she really was. Each one being the best they could be. Each one her own special self. Each one with different things I could learn from and add to and become my own grown-up me someday.

I ran up to my mom and I hugged her tightly. “I love you, Mommy,” I whispered in her ear. “Tomorrow could we order in from Joy Fong?” I asked.

She smiled at me and whispered, “You got it.”

The next day when I got home from school, I rang the doorbell. There was no answer. I let myself in as always. There was nothing baking the oven. There were no dishes in the sink. I went to my room. There was no red suitcase or make-up case. My things were all back in their proper place. I opened my closet door. There was plenty of room with just my clothes in it on my bed was a box with beautiful wrapping and a handmade bow. A card said:

To Lisa with thanks for letting me use your room. Enjoy!
Love, Phyllis
P.S. Charlie got called away on business suddenly and we’re off to Peru. That’s life. I’ll write. I’ve learned so much from you and your wonderful family. Please keep in touch.

I opened the package, saving the bow. I hugged the gorgeous white angora sweater and whispered to the air, “Good-bye, Phyllis and Charlie, and thanks.”
Mom and Dad brought Chinese food home from Joy Fong and we caught up on the news and Mom and Dad thanked me for being so understanding and nice to Phyllis and Charlie. And I thanked them for calling some business friends in Peru and recommending Charlie as a sales representative. And Mom said she’d asked Phyllis for her chocolate-chip cookie recipe and would also bake cookies now and then, but warned that they might not come out as light and wonderful but that we could still bake them together, just the two of us.

“And if worse comes to worst,” I said, “We’ll use them as hockey pucks.” And we all laughed. Together again. Our family - as always.

That night I slept in my own bed. In my own room. And it was wonderful!
Multiple Choice Questions

Read the following excerpt and then answer the two questions that follow.

My mother once offered to hem my jeans and she did great, except when I tried to put them on I couldn’t because she’d sewed the leg openings together. That’s when she found Clara, the dressmaker. I bet if I had a mother like Phyllis, she’d sew all my clothes just right and make me skirts and blouses in the latest styles. And I would be happy on open house night at school, when she would listen to the teacher and not ask a million questions. And I would not be embarrassed because she had on slacks that were too short because she did not have time to read the label and had put them in the dryer instead of laying them out flat to dry.

1. In thinking about the time her mother hemmed her jeans, Lisa shows that
   A. she wants to get along better with Phyllis
   B. she wants to spend more time with her mother
   C. she wishes her mother were more like Phyllis
   D. she wishes her mother would learn to sew

2. What phrase best supports your answer?
   A. “she did great”
   B. “if I had a mother like Phyllis”
   C. “she would listen to the teacher”
   D. “I would not be embarrassed”

Read the following excerpt and then answer the two questions that follow.

One day I left them all gabbing with Phyllis and went and sat quietly in my room under my name with the basket of stuffed animals in my lap. I was gone a good hour, just enjoying the privacy. Just enjoying the feel of my own bed under me.

3. In this excerpt, Lisa reveals that
   A. she is angry with Phyllis
   B. she is lonely
   C. she misses spending time alone
   D. she is tired
4. Which word from the excerpt above best supports your answer?
   A. “gabbing”
   B. “quietly”
   C. “hour”
   D. “privacy”

Essential Questions

5. How do good readers support their analysis of text?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

6. Why is it important to determine the central idea and supporting details of a text?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

7. How does a writer develop a narrative that establishes a context and point of view?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
Writing Task

The story you just read ends with Lisa enjoying her family and having her bedroom back to herself. What do you think will happen the next time Phyllis comes to visit? How do you think Lisa will react? Write a story about what happens when Phyllis comes back to stay with Lisa and her family.

Your story should include:

• a well-structured narrative in which Phyllis returns to visit Lisa and her family
• dialogue between Phyllis and Lisa
• detailed descriptions
• a conclusion
• correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation
Scoring Guide: Grade 8, Unit 1 pre-assessment

Multiple Choice

1. C  
2. B  
3. C  
4. D

Questions 5, 6, and 7 are the standards-based Essential Questions for the unit. Review responses to determine what students already know and understand about the learning targets for the unit.

Writing Task – Use rubric below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct Measured</th>
<th>Score Point 4</th>
<th>Score Point 3</th>
<th>Score Point 2</th>
<th>Score Point 1</th>
<th>Score Point 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Reading:** comprehension of key ideas and details | The response provides an accurate analysis of what the text says explicitly and inferentially and cites convincing textual evidence to support the analysis, showing full comprehension of complex ideas expressed in the text(s). | The response provides an accurate analysis of what the text says explicitly and inferentially and cites textual evidence to support the analysis, showing extensive comprehension of ideas expressed in the text(s). | The response provides a mostly accurate analysis of what the text says explicitly or inferentially and cited textual evidence, shows a basic comprehension of ideas expressed in the text(s). | The response provides a minimally accurate or inaccurate analysis of what the text says, and cited textual evidence shows limited or inaccurate comprehension of ideas expressed in the text(s). | No response; or the response is:  
- unintelligible or undecipherable  
- not written in English  
- too limited to evaluate |
| **Specific scoring notes:** Response convincingly describes a believable encounter between Lisa and Phyllis and uses dialogue and description to significantly develop action that is consistent with the passage. | **Specific scoring notes:** Response depicts a believable encounter between Lisa and Phyllis and develops action that is consistent with the passage. | **Specific scoring notes:** Response depicts an encounter between Lisa and Phyllis that is consistent with the passage but offers no significant development of the action. | **Specific scoring notes:** Response depicts Lisa and Phyllis in a way that bears little or no resemblance to the characters as presented in the passage and does not develop the action. | No response; or the response is:  
- unintelligible or undecipherable  
- not written in English  
- too limited to evaluate |
| **Writing:** development of ideas | The response addresses the prompt and provides effective and comprehensive development of the claim, topic and/or narrative elements by using clear and convincing reasoning, details, text-based evidence, and/or description; the development is consistently appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience. | The response addresses the prompt and provides effective development of the claim, topic and/or narrative elements by using clear reasoning, details, text-based evidence, and/or description; the development is largely appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience. | The response addresses the prompt and provides some development of the claim, topic and/or narrative elements by using some reasoning, details, text-based evidence, and/or description; the development is somewhat appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience. | The response addresses the prompt and develops the claim, topic and/or narrative elements minimally by using limited reasoning, details, text-based evidence and/or description; the development is limited in its appropriateness to the task, purpose, and/or audience. | No response; or the response is:  
- unintelligible or undecipherable  
- not written in English  
- too limited to evaluate |
| **Writing:** organization | The response demonstrates purposeful coherence, clarity, and cohesion and includes a strong introduction, conclusion, and a logical, well-executed progression of ideas, making it easy to follow the writer’s progression of ideas. | The response demonstrates a great deal of coherence, clarity, and cohesion, and includes an introduction, conclusion, and a logical progression of ideas, making it fairly easy to follow the writer’s progression of ideas. | The response demonstrates some coherence, clarity, and/or cohesion, and includes an introduction, conclusion, and logically grouped ideas, making the writer’s progression of ideas usually discernible but not obvious. | The response demonstrates limited or no coherence, clarity, and/or cohesion, making the writer’s progression of ideas somewhat or entirely unclear. | No response; or the response is:  
- unintelligible or undecipherable  
- not written in English  
- too limited to evaluate |
| Writing: clarity of language | The response establishes and maintains an effective style, while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline. The response uses precise language consistently, including descriptive words and phrases, sensory details, linking and transitional words, words to indicate tone, and/or domain-specific vocabulary. | The student response establishes and maintains an effective style, while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline. The response uses mostly precise language, including descriptive words and phrases, sensory details, linking and transitional words, words to indicate tone, and/or domain-specific vocabulary. | The response establishes and maintains a mostly effective style, while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline. The response uses some precise language, including descriptive words and phrases, sensory details, linking and transitional words, words to indicate tone and/or domain-specific vocabulary. | The response has a style that has limited or impaired effectiveness, with limited or highly deficient awareness of the norms of the discipline. The response includes limited if any descriptions, sensory details, linking or transitional words, words to indicate tone, or domain-specific vocabulary. | No response; or the response is
• unintelligible or undecipherable
• not written in English
• too limited to evaluate |

| Writing: knowledge of language and conventions | The response demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English consistent with effectively edited writing. Though there may be a few minor errors in grammar and usage, meaning is clear throughout the response. | The response demonstrates a generally consistent command of the conventions of standard English. There are a few patterns of errors in grammar and usage that may infrequently impede understanding. | The response demonstrates limited command of the conventions of standard English. There are multiple errors in grammar and usage demonstrating minimal control over language. There are multiple distracting errors in grammar and usage that sometimes impede understanding. | The response demonstrates little or no command of the conventions of standard English. There are frequent and varied errors in grammar and usage, demonstrating little or no control over language. There are frequent distracting errors in grammar and usage that often impede understanding. | No response; or the response is
• unintelligible or undecipherable
• not written in English
• too limited to evaluate |