The Mysterious Benedict Society
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Common Core Connections—Sixth Grade Focus

Many books can meet most, if not all, CC Standards. However, we have found that some books speak strongly to a few standards. These one-page applications connect a focused text and the Common Core Standards as written for sixth graders—leaning on the text’s literary strengths.

KEY DETAILS AND IDEAS

**RL.6.1 and RL.6.2**

_The Mysterious Benedict Society_ is a book filled with many details and exciting scenes. Students may have trouble choosing a single theme for a book of this length. Help them develop the theme by suggesting some theme topics (courage, friendship, or integrity, for example) and ask them to find specific passages in the book that relate to that topic. Next, ask students to develop that topic into a theme statement for the book. Ask them to find more passages from the book to support their ideas.

**RL.6.2**

Summarizing a book with so many details may be difficult for sixth graders. Elicit a list of important events from the book from your students (you may start by asking them what they remember). After you make this list, ask students to imagine whether they could tell the same story without any of the events on the list. Continue to eliminate items until you are left with the essential details. Ask students to use the list to write a concise, one-paragraph summary of the book.

**RL.6.2 and RL.6.3**

_The Mysterious Benedict Society_ depends heavily on Reynie’s realizations about Benedict, the Whisperer, and Curtain. Help students identify passages in the text where Reynie makes a discovery that moves the plot forward. Discuss how these scenes influence the behavior of all the characters (including the adults). Ask students to plot this information on a flow chart; students can then use this chart to write a concise summary of the book.

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

**RL.6.4**

This novel includes sophisticated vocabulary that will be new to sixth-grade readers. Many of these words are used in contexts that will allow readers to determine their meaning without struggling or turning immediately to a dictionary. Ask students to keep a vocabulary journal while they read. The journal should note new words, what students think they mean in context, and why the author chose to use these words instead of synonyms students may already know. Encourage students to discuss the new words with each other. Some words that students may struggle with include:
Many of the above words are spoken by adults. The language used by adults is very different from the language used by children in this book. Discuss with students how language influences character development: what can they infer about each character based only on the language he or she uses?

**RL.6.4**

Uses of figurative language abound in *The Mysterious Benedict Society*. In addition to similes and metaphors, with which sixth grade readers should already be familiar, the book makes good use of symbolism. The character names, for example, are almost all symbolic. Ask students to consider carefully the names of the members of the Mysterious Benedict Society as well as Benedict and Curtain. They may need to research some of the names (Reynard, especially, may require some investigation). Before reading, ask students to predict character traits based on the names. After reading, ask students to respond to their predictions based on specific evidence from the book.

**RL.6.5**

Ask students to identify some scenes where characters question the motives of Benedict or Curtain and their own resolve in Benedict’s mission (“Stands and Falls” provides a good example). How do these chapters advance the plot? Discuss how characters’ internal conflicts contribute to the plot.

**RL.6.6**

The book is told primarily from Reynie’s point of view. Ask students to imagine how the book would be different if told from the perspective each of the other members of the Mysterious Benedict Society.

**INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS**

**RL.6.7**

Obtain a copy of the audio book of *The Mysterious Benedict Society*. Ask students to listen to some chapters aloud after they have read the text. Ask students to discuss, then write about, how the experience of reading differs from that of hearing. Pay special attention to how students interact with new vocabulary: do they find it easier to infer the meanings of new words in an audio context?

**RL.6.7**

Several book trailers for *The Mysterious Benedict Society* are easily accessible from websites like Youtube and Teachertube. Ask students to watch a few of these trailers (you should preview them first) and compare the experience of watching these trailers with reading the book. How did the visuals of the trailers compare to their own visualizations as they were reading?

**RL.6.8**

Young people using their wits and natural gifts to solve problems adults can’t is a common theme in middle-grade literature. Choose a title with similar themes (try *Loki’s Wolves* by K.L. Armstrong and M.A. Marr) and ask your students to compare how different authors created stories with similar themes.