

Grade 9-10 Informative/Explanatory Writing Standard W.9-10.2

Grade 9-10 Informative/Explanatory

W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

The Reading/Thinking/Writing Task

Students read Ursula Le Guin's novel *The Wizard of Earthsea* independently. Students identified central themes, collected quotes, and tracked the development of these themes individually and in groups. The students then wrote independently to respond to the Focus of the Task: *"Please identify a central theme that emerges in your text. Analyze its development over the course of the novel and unpack the message the author leaves us at the end."*

This writing piece assesses students' ability to address the Common Core Reading Standard RL.9.2, *Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details.* To do this well students need to be able to do three things. First, they must identify a major theme. Second, they need to make meaning of how it evolves over time. This requires a particular organization structure in their essay, usually chronological. Finally, students must be able to synthesize the events and the evolution of the theme in order to interpret a message.

Focus of the Writing Task

Please identify a central theme that emerges in your text. Analyze its development over the course of the novel and unpack the message the author leaves us at the end.

The Writing Task in the Curriculum

How is the writing embedded in curriculum/content?

★ *Class*

- heterogeneous 9th grade English class

★ *Curriculum unit*

- part of a unit addressing the development of a theme. This followed a short story unit examining character change.

★ *Standards*

- Reading: RL9.1, RL9.2, RL 9.10
- Writing: W.9.2, W.9.9, W.9.10

How did students build the knowledge they needed?

★ *Text*

- *The Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula Le Guin

★ *Reading, re-reading, note-taking, and seminars*

- students read the first few chapters and identified themes, then refined categories through guided class discussion
- students read independently and took notes on quotes and events that pertained to central themes
- guided seminars involved rereading key passages and discussing the evolution of theme(s) using textual evidence and inferential questions

What instructional approaches were used to teach writing?

★ *Craft lessons*

- students had already worked with expository structures (Painted Essay® in many forms and more) including such elements as introductions, transitions and conclusions
- teacher gave specific instruction and practice in creating a thesis that drives the organizational structure of the essay
- students read and analyzed a teacher-written model about another text using the same prompt about the evolution of a theme

★ *Writing approaches*

- students wrote and proofread their first drafts independently. The pieces here are all first drafts. After submitting these pieces, students had conferences and revised in order to submit final, polished drafts.

What was the timeframe?

Ten eighty-five minute blocks with considerable independent reading and note-taking required outside of class

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Proficient

Power Essay

The evolution of power has been evident in a boundless number of texts throughout history, we see it as a main theme in *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin as well. The main character, Ged struggles with the responsibility of immense power. Coming from humble upbringings, Ged doesn't appear to be the type to crave power, but when he discovers his gift at a young age he is almost immediately after forced to push himself to the limits. By doing so he is almost killed, but the taste of power that he got, makes him hungry for more. He continues to struggle with the responsibilities of being a wizard, and he is eventually faced by a physical form representing his own power. Over the course of the book Ursula K. Le Guin explores the theme of power, with a particular focus on its responsibility.

In the beginning of the book Ursula K. Le Guin introduces the concept of power by showing how tempting it can be. The first example of this is early in the book when the boy was just taken in by Ogion, "For he hungered to learn, to gain power"(20). This shows that the boy was eager to learn and grow stronger because he wanted to find the extent of his powers. Once Ged had gotten a taste of the abilities that he possessed, he wasn't able to resist the temptation to use them. The last example is when Ged is mocked by Jasper for being less experienced than him, "Standing there with rage in his heart, looking after Jasper, Ged swore to himself to outdo his rival, and not in some mere illusion-match but in a test of power. He would prove himself, and humiliate Jasper"(52). This shows that Ged being young and foolish, may let his anger towards Jasper control his actions. Ged sees childish nagging as a direct attack on his lack of magic ability and immediately caves to the temptations of abusing his power. All these examples show that in the beginning of the book, Ursula K. Le Guin makes a connection between power and the many temptations that come with it.

Later in the book, Ursula K. Le Guin shows how power can be dangerous when used wrongly. The first example of this is when Ged and Jasper get in a confrontation about who has more knowledge and experience, "Even foolery is dangerous," said Jasper, "in the hands of a fool"(52). This shows that not only great power is dangerous, but all is if it's used with a lack of responsibility and wisdom. Ged was being warned that if he didn't use his powers thoughtfully,

they could be very dangerous, but blinded by hate and envy towards Jasper those warnings were overlooked. The next part in the book that shows the danger of power is when the new archmage Gensher is talking to Ged about his actions and how they caused the death of the archmage Nemmerle, "You have great power inborn in you, and you used that power wrongly"(78). The build up to this moment was clearly emphasised on throughout the book, and it represents the moment that Ged was no longer able to resist the temptations, and chose to bring the full and dangerous extent of his powers to life. The shadow, summoned from the underworld by Ged, was created by the author to bring to life the dangers of having power. All this shows how Ursula K. Le Guin focuses on how power can be dangerous when used wrongly.

Towards the end of the book, Ursula K. Le Guin shows how power can be used for good with responsibility. The first example of this is during Ged's final battle with his shadow, "Ged reached out his hands, dropping his staff, and took hold of his shadow, of the black self that reached out to him. Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one"(212). This is showing how Ged takes responsibility for his actions, and resolves the problem of the shadow. When the author wrote, "Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one"(212) she was portraying how Ged "took hold" of his fears and power, which the shadow was made up of. The final example that shows the importance of responsibility with power is after Ged defeated his shadow, "The wound is healed," he said, "I am whole, I am free." Then he bent over and hid his face in his arms, weeping like a boy"(214). Ged cries because he is overcome with the relief of maturity. By conquering and taming his fears, embodied by the shadow, Ged has finally realized what true power is, and the responsibilities that come with it.

In the end Ursula K. Le Guin shows how power can first be tempting, then dangerous and finally it can be used for good, if responsible. The author seems to display power as a significant responsibility. Ged begins the book as a innocent child, with newly found powers beyond his belief. In the middle he is opposed by many on the island of Roke, and fails to resist the temptations of his powers. Concluding his journey, he was able to find resolution in the undoing of his prior actions. *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin suggests that power isn't always about being superior to others, but it's about being responsible with power so it can be used for good.

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Approaching

Ged's Transformation

Books are commonly used as ways to escape from the modern world and to distract us from our problems. Fantasy books are especially good at that, the magical cities and characters are what draw us readers in. Ursula K. Le Guin's fantasy, *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, follows the life of a young boy (Ged) turned to man through his actions as a wizard. Through the course of the story Le Guin describes Ged's transformation from a innocent boy, to an arrogant student, to a wise and understanding wizard.

In the beginning of the book Le Guin introduces Ged and his village. He lives in a small town called Ten Alders with his father, and his aunt. One day Ged sees his aunt use a spell to enchant some goats to follow her to make herding them easier. Later Ged repeats the rhyme he had heard to the goats "Noth hierth walk man hiolk han merth han!"(3). Ged says this spell not knowing the significance of the words he said. His aunt has to save him after the goats start chasing him through Ten Alders. It shows how at the beginning Ged is knowledgeable about the magic he can learn to control. As Ged's village is being attacked by barbarians he thinks about some of the magic he could try to save his friends and family. "The boy had no such skill, but his intent was different" (11). Even though Ged hadn't learned a spell to protect his town yet, he knew he had it in him. This action is what sparked the rest of his adventures and gained the attention of a great wizard.

Later in the story Ged becomes the apprentice to a great wizard named Ogion. He ends up leaving his teachership to go to a magic school where he believes he can learn more. There Ged starts to exceed his peers and it starts to go to his head. Ged had started a bit of a feud with a student above him, the other student's name was Jasper. "I could have done better", he said to himself, in bitter envy" (60). This is when Ged really starts to think Jasper is below him, and in the following months he only thought that more and more. So when Jasper taunted him to try and match his own skill level Ged immediately tried to equal Jasper. Ged had read a dark spell in Ogion's house years ago but had been told never to use it. He now saw it as the perfect spell to prove Jasper he was stronger. The spell was meant to bring someone dead back to life, but instead it caused incredible danger for Ged "ripping open the fabric of the world"(72). Ged's

arrogance and cockiness could have lead to his demise if the Archmage hadn't come to save him. But the Archmage died saving Ged's life

As aftermath to Ged's spell he was unconscious/hurt and couldn't continue his learning. When he did finally wake up he was quiet and secluded, but he had new found purpose in life and was much more modest about the way he approached life. After a long two years of more learning Ged was approached by one of the nine masters and was asked to figure out their name to be able to graduate. When he can't first figure out a way to gain the knowledge that is asked of him, he says "I must sit out in the fields here, I think and fast till I grow thin enough to slip through" (87). At the beginning of his schooling Ged might have been too stubborn to wait it out until he found a way to solve a problem. Now he has the maturity to wait and figure it out. When Ged can't find the magic loophole he goes up to the master and says "I am content to stay here, and learn or serve, whatever you will"(87). Now Ged is willing to stay longer to be able tackle any problem that approaches him, something that only wiser people could ask for.

Through the course of the story, Le Guin describes Ged's transformation from innocent boy, to arrogant student, to wise and modest wizard. He first saves his village. Then he gets too cocky and it costs someone their life. After that he learns from his mistakes and becomes a better person because of it.

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Beginning

Wizard of Earthsea

Ged, the main character of the story, is a special boy in his village. He has the ability to utilize magic. When his village is attacked by Kargish raiders, who are said to be a savage people, he utilizes magic to help combat the evil. A great wizard that lives on the island hears of this boy's great feat and goes to see who this boy is. He finds that the boy is very good when it came to using magic. He gives him the choice to either stay on Gont to train with him or to go to a prestigious school on the island of Roke, where wizards can go to learn harder and darker magic. He creates a very good friendship with another boy named Vetch, who helps him with problems with another boy named Jasper. Jasper pushes Ged to do the impossible, revive a soul from the dead. When it doesn't go to plan, there is an evil spirit that escapes. The Archmage dies trying to revive him and Ged is sent into a deep coma, which leaves him incapacitated for several months while healing. The spirit that was released follows him around and Ged tries to escape it. Over the course of the story, the author uses magic as a way of explaining power, because in this world magic is power.

In the beginning of the story, the author introduces the use of magic as a form of power over others, simply because if someone can perform magic they are seen as powerful. When the Kargs invade Duny's village, he uses magic to form a smoke screen to disorient the invaders. The use of this spell drains Duny and he is sent into a state of paralysis. He is then revived by a wizard by the name of Ogion, who gives him his real name, Ged. Ogion brings him to his house to train and heal him. When he finds a book that contains a dark spell that can revive the dead, he decides to read it. He sees a dark being in the dark corner of the house. After that Ogion gives him a choice, go to train on Roke where many great wizards have gone to train. The other choice was to stay with Ogion, and he chose to go to Roke to train. He is talking to one of the Mages on Roke about how to change one thing to another. The mage goes on to say, "The rock flickered from shape to shape as named them, and returned to a rock. 'But that is mere seeming. Illusions fools the beholders senses; it makes him see and hear and feel that the thing is changed. But does not change the thing. To change its true name. '" (pg 51). Here the Mage is explaining how to change one thing to another thing and how much magic it takes.

In the middle of the story, it starts to make more sense. Ged is training on Roke and getting really good. But when he has an altercation with Jasper, another boy training there on Roke, his life starts to go downhill. He is challenged by Jasper to use the summoning spell he learned to summon a spirit from the dead. He goes to a place where magic is most powerful and attempts to summon a spirit. He does summon the spirit but also summons a dark being that lashes out and attacks him. The Archmage suddenly appears and save Ged's life but at the expense of his own. In the end the Archmage dies and Ged is sent into a deep coma that he will not awake from for several months. He soon leaves the island of Roke and becomes the village wizard in the Inmost Sea. He is soon seeing the ghostly outline of the shadow again, following him around. He tells the leaders of the isles that he must leave because he was putting them in danger. They told him that he could not leave because there were dragons that could come to the island and destroy them. Ged ventures out to the island of Pendor, where the dragons live in an old burned out and crumbling port town. When he arrives he slays several dragons and when he calls out the oldest and wisest dragon, "He spoke again: Yevaud! Swear by your name that you and your sons will never fly over to the Archipelago; Flames broke suddenly bright and loud from the dragon's jaws, and he said, 'I swear it by my name!'" (pg 109). Here we see that the use of names have power over others. If you were to know the true name of anything then you can control it. This further explains that when you know the true name of something, you can control it.

In the final part of the book, we see that the meaning of power through the use of magic changes so that it is, if you can use it and control it, then sometimes you need restraint. To better explain that, "A mage can control only what is near him, what he can name exactly and wholly" (pg 56). In the final chapters of the book, we see that Vetch and Ged meet up again in Vetch's hometown. We also see that Ged tries to escape from the shadow and ends up fighting it while on the island of Osskil in the North Reach. Ged is on the island of Osskil trying to escape the shadow when he meets it in the street. He fights it and combines with it. He wakes up in the palace where the king resides and is greeted with the sight of a familiar woman. He is greeted by the girl who he met while picking flowers behind Ogion's house on Gont. She tells him that there is a stone that he can use to know the name of the shadow. He figures out that this is a ploy to tie him to the stone so he can never leave. He and the girl escape from the clutches of the king. He flies all the way to Gont where he meets Ogion again and he is saved when Ogion removes the changing spell from him. He then goes and stumbles on Vetch on his home island while passing

through. He meets him only by chance while walking through the streets. Vetch is surprised to see his old friend but happy nonetheless. Ged and Vetch sail from the island of Iffish to the island of Last Land, the last island before there is nothing but open ocean. They go there to see if there is land beyond the Far Reach. When the story ends, they return to Iffish and Vetch's sister Yarrow is running down to meet them at the docks.

Overall by the end of the story, Ursula Le Guin shows how the use of magic in this world is power because you have something that not everyone else has. She seems to say that if you have power, you must find a way to restrain yourself from using while not thinking about the consequences of such actions. In the beginning of the story, Duny (Ged) is a simple boy who lives in a village in the North Reach. When the story ends, he is a powerful wizard that can work many spells. While he is trying to know more spells, he interacts with a dark spirit that follows him throughout the story. Like the world today, not everyone is given the same opportunities. There are ways in the world today that some people can get certain opportunities based on who they are. When people try to gain something without thinking of the consequences of their actions, something happens that changes everything. She reminds us that in order to gain something there must be sacrifice of some kind and when we act without thinking of the consequences are worse. We see that in Earthsea, Ged acts without thinking until it is too late, he is being followed and tormented by a spirit. In the end, no matter how powerful you are, you must always think about how your actions will affect the world.

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Exceeds

Facing the Shadow

Ursula K. Le Guin has won many awards for her fantasy and science fiction books. One of these books is *The Wizard of Earthsea*. In this fantasy book the main character Ged goes through a journey of discovery. He starts as a normal young boy in the village of Ten Alders, but as he grows up he starts to learn magic. He runs into a situation while learning magic that will follow and torment him until he faces it. Through this situation Ged learns things about himself and the world. He also experiences the concept of the human shadow; which is where a person hides their unwanted traits like arrogance, fear, etc.. Over the course of the book Le Guin explores the theme and connection of evil and the human shadow.

In the beginning of the story Le Guin introduces the theme of evil and the human shadow by showing us the common man's idea of evil and how evil can be more than a physical form. The book starts with Ged describing his home, family life, and how he first discovers magic. Through this he mentions a form of evil known across the lands as the Krag. He describes the Krag as “savage people, white-skinned, yellow-haired, and fierce, liking the sight of blood and the smell of burning towns.”(pg 8) Ged describes these people as “savage”, showing us that people see them as fierce, violent and even evil. They are a physical evil. This isn't a very complex form of evil but is a general person's idea of the concept. Later Ged learns about a new form of evil while studying with his master, Ogion. When he meets this thing “He was cold. Looking over his shoulder he saw that something was crouching beside the closed door, a shapeless clot of shadow darker than the darkness. It seemed to reach out towards him, and to whisper, and to call to him in a whisper: but he could not understand the words.”(pg 26) Instead of knowing the evil like with the Krag, this new evil is “shapeless”. Ged is entering a whole new world of evil and discovery he didn't know existed. This shows how evil can be more than physical, and goes beyond first glances.

Later in the book, after Ged gets his first glimpse of evil and the human shadow, Le Guin shows how people are connected to evil and the human shadow. Ged has now left master Ogion and has gone to the school of Roke, a school of magic. Here he has made friends and “frenemies”. While trying to show up another student he tried to summon a spirit but created

something else. After a run in with this thing one of his teachers told him ““you were moved to do this by pride and by hate. ... It is the shadow of your arrogance, the shadow of your ignorance, the shadow you cast.””(pg 78) This is the first clear connection between the shadow, evil, and Ged. He has summoned an evil shadow created from his worst traits. Once Ged leaves Roke he leaves the protection it provides. He then realizes that the shadow might be lurking trying to find “a foothold in a dark soul and there waiting and watching Ged and feeding, even now, on his weakness, on his uncertainty, on his fear.”(pg 116) This is showing that the connection between the shadow and Ged goes further than being created. The shadow is “feeding” on Ged, meaning it is using parts of him to gain strength for itself. Le Guin is starting to show us the connections between Ged, evil, and the shadow. She is also starting to reveal that the shadow in the book is a metaphor for the human shadow.

At the end of the book Le Guin shows us how the shadow in the book connects to the human shadow and how Ged overcomes it. Ged is now wandering around the world trying to find a safe place from the shadow. After running for so long he ends up in his old master's house, Ogion. Ogion tells Ged, ““If you go ahead, if you keep running, wherever you run you will meet danger and evil, for it drives you, it chooses the way you go. You must choose. You must seek what seeks you. You must hunt the hunter.”” (Pg 151) Ogion is telling Ged to go face his fears, or he'll never be free. When Ogion says the danger, as in the shadow, “chooses” what Ged does Le Guin uses it as an opportunity to show the human shadow. She is saying that the traits you put in your shadow still influence your actions even though you try to ignore them, and the only way to truly get rid of them is to face them. Later, after chasing his shadow Ged finally catches up with it. When he comes face to face with the shadow he speaks “ the shadow’s name and in the same moment the shadow spoke ... saying the same word: ‘Ged.’ ... Ged reached out ... and took hold of his shadow, of the black self that reached out to him. Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one.”(Pg 212) When Ged says his own name to take control of the shadow we see that he realized that he and the shadow were the same person. We also see that once he realized that this evil thing was him he could control it and could refuse it power over him. Le Guin uses this to show us we also have to face our shadows if we want to have power over it. All of this shows us that we have to face our fears, our shadows to have power over them and to have complete control of our actions.

Overall, Le Guin shows how evil can be simple at first glance but the more you look the more complicated it gets; it can be physical, magical or it could be in you or apart of you. The common thing with all of these forms of evil is to conquer them you have to face them. Ged started out as a simple boy, but as he grew he learned more. He started to see and learn things about himself he never would have known without this experience. Although this story is set in a different world and time the message Le Guin sends still applies to us. She shows us that our shadows, like Geds, will forever haunt and control us if we don't realize that they are us. We have to choose to face these shadows so in turn we can make our own decisions and choose our own paths.

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Proficient

Power Essay

The evolution of power has been evident in a boundless number of texts throughout history, we see it as a main theme in *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin as well. The main character, Ged struggles with the responsibility of immense power. Coming from humble upbringings, Ged doesn't appear to be the type to crave power, but when he discovers his gift at a young age he is almost immediately after forced to push himself to the limits. By doing so he is almost killed, but the taste of power that he got, makes him hungry for more. He continues to struggle with the responsibilities of being a wizard, and he is eventually faced by a physical form representing his own power. Over the course of the book Ursula K. Le Guin explores the theme of power, with a particular focus on its responsibility.

In the beginning of the book Ursula K. Le Guin introduces the concept of power by showing how tempting it can be. The first example of this is early in the book when the boy was just taken in by Ogion, “For he hungered to learn, to gain power”(20). This shows that the boy was eager to learn and grow stronger because he wanted to find the extent of his powers. Once Ged had gotten a taste of the abilities that he possessed, he wasn't able to resist the temptation to use them. The last example is when Ged is mocked by Jasper for being less experienced than him, “Standing there with rage in his heart, looking after Jasper, Ged swore to himself to outdo his rival, and not in some mere illusion-match but in a test of power. He would prove himself, and humiliate Jasper”(52). This shows that Ged being young and foolish, may let his anger towards Jasper control his actions. Ged sees childish nagging as a direct attack on his lack of magic ability and immediately caves to the temptations of abusing his power. All these examples show that in the beginning of the book, Ursula K. Le Guin

Introduces the topic: the writer gives context that sets the stage for the essay; includes **topic**/focus of the piece and directly addresses the prompt.

Organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions: the writer organizes chronologically to appropriately address the target reading standard (RL.9.2), which examines the development of a theme.

Develops the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient details, quotations and examples

Transitions clarify relationships among complex ideas and concepts: this sentence links the two pieces of evidence presented in this paragraph.

makes a connection between power and the many temptations that come with it.

Later in the book, Ursula K. Le Guin shows how power can be dangerous when used wrongly. The first example of this is when Ged and Jasper get in a confrontation about who has more knowledge and experience, “Even foolery is dangerous,” said Jasper, “in the hands of a fool”(52). This shows that not only great power is dangerous, but all is if it's used with a lack of responsibility and wisdom. Ged was being warned that if he didn't use his powers thoughtfully, they could be very dangerous, but blinded by hate and envy towards Jasper those warning were overlooked. The next part in the book that shows the danger of power is when the new archmage Gensher is talking to Ged about his actions and how they caused the death of the archmage Nemmerle, “You have great power inborn in you, and you used that power wrongly”(78). The build up to this moment was clearly emphasised on throughout the book, and it represents the moment that Ged was no longer able to resist the temptations, and chose to bring the full and dangerous extent of his powers to life. The shadow, summoned from the underworld by Ged, was created by the author to bring to life the dangers of having power. All this shows how Ursula K. Le Guin focuses on how power can be dangerous when used wrongly.

Towards the end of the book, Ursula K. Le Guin shows how power can be used for good with responsibility. The first example of this is during Ged's final battle with his shadow, “Ged reached out his hands, dropping his staff, and took hold of his shadow, of the black self that reached out to him. Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one”(212). This is showing how Ged takes responsibility for his actions, and resolves the problem of the shadow. When the author wrote, “Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one”(212) she was portraying how Ged “took hold” of his fears and power, which the shadow was made up of. The final example that shows the importance of responsibility with

This quote shows a minor misinterpretation of Jasper's intent and the student's explanation is vague. However, given the rest of his evidence throughout the essay, the writer's overall analysis of the theme remains strong.

Provides analysis of relevant content: the writer adequately addresses the development of the theme and reading standard RL.2 (developing a theme).

The student addresses author's intent based on concrete evidence from the text.

Uses transitions to link the major sections of the text, creating cohesion: in this case, each topic sentence signals that the writer organizes evidence chronologically.

Provides analysis of relevant content: the writer breaks down and interprets textual evidence.

power is after Ged defeated his shadow, "The wound is healed," he said, "I am whole, I am free." Then he bent over and hid his face in his arms, weeping like a boy"(214). Ged cries because he is overcome with the relief of maturity. By conquering and taming his fears, embodied by the shadow, Ged has finally realized what true power is, and the responsibilities that come with it.

Establishes and maintains a formal style by using **precise language and domain-specific vocabulary**

In the end Ursula K. Le Guin shows how power can first be tempting, then dangerous and finally it can be used for good, if responsible. The author seems to display power as a significant responsibility. Ged begins the book as a innocent child, with newly found powers beyond his belief. In the middle he is opposed by many on the island of Roke, and fails to resist the temptations of his powers. Concluding his journey, he was able to find resolution in the undoing of his prior actions. *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin suggests that power isn't always about being superior to others, but it's about being responsible with power so it can be used for good.

Provides a concluding statement that follows from and supports the explanation presented: the writer reflects on the larger idea of author's intent after synthesizing the evolution of the theme.

Final Thoughts
(Gr 9 Informative: Proficient)

Overall, this piece shows a solid understanding of the author's treatment of power in the story. The writer has a clear and consistent focus throughout, and the focus of the development of a theme drives the structure and organization of the essay, with evidence that tracks the theme's evolution chronologically. This organization helps the writer build meaning over the course of the essay, so that the conclusion can adequately address the overall development of the theme of power. The evidence throughout includes clearly introduced quotes that are broken down and tied to the focus. While the writer includes one quote that suggests a minor misunderstanding, the overall structure and analysis attests to a proficient understanding of the story and all elements of the task (the writer identifies the theme of power, traces its evolution, and then uses specific evidence to interpret the author's message about power – the theme).

The writer uses basic transitions to link sections, and more nuanced transitions to link ideas and sections within paragraphs. The conclusion provides a synthesis of the writer's argument, but lacks a reflection on the significance of the topic or an extension of the concepts.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 9 Informative: Proficient)

Control of Conventions: Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions. However, the writer could benefit from practice with apostrophes for possessives, consistence use of present tense while writing about literature, and general punctuation practice.

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Approaching

Ged's Transformation

Books are commonly used as ways to escape from the modern world and to distract us from our problems. Fantasy books are especially good at that, the magical cities and characters are what draw us readers in. Ursula K. Le Guin's fantasy, *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, follows the life of a young boy (Ged) turned to man through his actions as a wizard. Through the course of the story Le Guin describes Ged's transformation from a innocent boy, to an arrogant student, to a wise and understanding wizard.

In the beginning of the book Le Guin introduces Ged and his village. He lives in a small town called Ten Alders with his father, and his aunt. One day Ged sees his aunt use a spell to enchant some goats to follow her to make herding them easier. Later Ged repeats the rhyme he had heard to the goats "Noth hierth walk man hiolk han merth han!"(3). Ged says this spell not knowing the significance of the words he said. His aunt has to save him after the goats start chasing him through Ten Alders. It shows how at the beginning Ged is knowledgeable about the magic he can learn to control. As Ged's village is being attacked by barbarians he thinks about some of the magic he could try to save his friends and family. "The boy had no such skill, but his intent was different" (11). Even though Ged hadn't learned a spell to protect his town yet, he knew he had it in him. This action is what sparked the rest of his adventures and gained the attention of a great wizard.

Later in the story Ged becomes the apprentice to a great wizard named Ogion. He ends up leaving his teachership to go to a magic school where he believes he can learn more. There Ged starts to exceed his peers and it starts to go to his head. Ged had started a bit of a feud with a student above him, the other student's name was Jasper. "I could have done better", he said to himself, in bitter envy" (60). This is when Ged really

Introduces the topic:
the writer gives appropriate context which summarizes the topic for a reader.

The topic/focus of the piece fails to address the prompt directly. Instead of analyzing the development of a theme, the writer's thesis suggests an essay that will analyze the main character's transformation.

Organizes evidence chronologically, effectively supporting a focus that *does not* address the prompt

The writer tries to **organize and analyze** evidence to show an evolution of Ged's expertise chronologically. However, the quotes selected here do not precisely convey this character change. The writer attempts to explain this evolution, but provides a vague analysis that makes the argument unclear.

starts to think Jasper is below him, and in the following months he only thought that more and more. So when Jasper taunted him to try and match his own skill level Ged immediately tried to equal Jasper. Ged had read a dark spell in Ogion's house years ago but had been told never to use it. He now saw it as the perfect spell to prove Jasper he was stronger. The spell was meant to bring someone dead back to life, but instead it caused incredible danger for Ged "ripping open the fabric of the world"(72). Ged's arrogance and cockiness could have lead to his demise if the Archmage hadn't come to save him. But the Archmage died saving Ged's life

Attempts to show character changes, but lapses into occasional summary between quotes

Uses **precise language and domain-specific vocabulary** in descriptions

As aftermath to Ged's spell he was unconscious/hurt and couldn't continue his learning. When he did finally wake up he was quiet and secluded, but he had new found purpose in life and was much more modest about the way he approached life. After a long two years of more learning Ged was approached by one of the nine masters and was asked to figure out their name to be able to graduate. When he can't first figure out a way to gain the knowledge that is asked of him, he says "I must sit out in the fields here, I think and fast till I grow thin enough to slip through" (87). At the beginning of his schooling Ged might have been too stubborn to wait it out until he found a way to solve a problem. Now he has the maturity to wait and figure it out. When Ged can't find the magic loophole he goes up to the master and says "I am content to stay here, and learn or serve, whatever you will"(87). Now Ged is willing to stay longer to be able tackle any problem that approaches him, something that only wiser people could ask for.

Attempts to **establish and maintain a formal style**, but includes some minor informal constructions ("he was unconscious/hurt")

The writer uses some **well-chosen, relevant quotations** and analysis to track character change. However, proficiency requires a focus that directly responds the prompt, and this focus addresses character change instead of theme.

Through the course of the story, Le Guin describes Ged's transformation from innocent boy, to arrogant student, to wise and modest wizard. He first saves his village. Then he gets too cocky and it costs someone their life. After that he learns from his mistakes and becomes a better person because of it.

Begins to **provide a concluding statement that follows from the information presented:** however, more synthesis is needed to pull the essay together.

Final Thoughts
(Gr 9 Informative: Approaching)

Overall, this piece shows a solid understanding of the novel. The writer analyzes the main character's transformation over the book. The focus is clearly stated and the organization of the piece, based on chronological chunks of evidence, on the whole follows from that focus logically. Most of the evidence supports the focus, although there are a few lapses into summary. **However, the writer's focus does not address the prompt, and therefore, the piece cannot be proficient.** The writer includes some reflection in appropriate places, but this does not go far enough in showing the thinking of the writer or connecting to and deepening the focus.

Next steps in moving towards grade-level proficiency for this writer would be to build a more precise focus statement that directly addresses a prompt. In addition, the writer can practice selecting quotes which directly support the focus, along with analysis that clearly links the evidence to the purpose of the piece. While we see evidence of some of this in the piece, the writer was not able to do all these things consistently.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 9 Informative: Approaching)

Control of Conventions: Although there are some errors (including tense changes throughout the text) the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Beginning

Wizard of Earthsea

Ged, the main character of the story, is a special boy in his village. He has the ability to utilize magic. When his village is attacked by Kargish raiders, who are said to be a savage people, he utilizes magic to help combat the evil. A great wizard that lives on the island hears of this boy's great feat and goes to see who this boy is. He finds that the boy is very good when it came to using magic. He gives him the choice to either stay on Gont to train with him or to go to a prestigious school on the island of Roke, where wizards can go to learn harder and darker magic. He creates a very good friendship with another boy named Vetch, who helps him with problems with another boy named Jasper. Jasper pushes Ged to do the impossible, revive a soul from the dead. When it doesn't go to plan, there is an evil spirit that escapes. The Archmage dies trying to revive him and Ged is sent into a deep coma, which leaves him incapacitated for several months while healing. The spirit that was released follows him around and Ged tries to escape it. Over the course of the story, the author uses magic as a way of explaining power, because in this world magic is power.

Attempts to **introduce the topic** with an extended summary: the writer does not include the book title or author's name. The list of events included is long and confusing.

States a **topic/focus** that begins to respond to the thinking required by the prompt

In the beginning of the story, the author introduces the use of magic as a form of power over others, simply because if someone can perform magic they are seen as powerful. When the Kargs invade Duny's village, he uses magic to form a smoke screen to disorient the invaders. The use of this spell drains Duny and he is sent into a state of paralysis. He is then revived by a wizard by the name of Ogion, who gives him his real name, Ged. Ogion brings him to his house to train and heal him. When he finds a book that contains a dark spell that can revive the dead, he decides to read it. He sees a dark being in the dark corner of the house. After that Ogion gives him a choice, go to train on Roke where many great wizards have gone to train. The other choice was to stay with Ogion, and he chose to go to Roke

This paragraph begins with a topic sentence which suggests an **organizational** structure that is chronological. This approach suggests an attempt to address the part of the prompt asking about the evolution of the theme.

to train. He is talking to one of the Mages on Roke about how to change one thing to another. The mage goes on to say, “The rock flickered from shape to shape as named them, and returned to a rock. ‘But that is mere seeming. Illusions fools the beholders senses; it makes him see and hear and feel that the thing is changed. But does not change the thing. To change its true name. ““ (pg 51). Here the Mage is explaining how to change one thing to another thing and how much magic it takes.

This paragraph lapses into summary. It includes extraneous **facts** and a quote which is not clearly **relevant** to the topic sentence/focus of the paragraph.

In the middle of the story, it starts to make more sense. Ged is training on Roke and getting really good. But when he has an altercation with Jasper, another boy training there on Roke, his life starts to go downhill. He is challenged by Jasper to use the summoning spell he learned to summon a spirit from the dead. He goes to a place where magic is most powerful and attempts to summon a spirit. He does summon the spirit but also summons a dark being that lashes out and attacks him. The Archmage suddenly appears and save Ged’s life but at the expense of his own. In the end the Archmage dies and Ged is sent into a deep coma that he will not awake from for several months. He soon leaves the island of Roke and becomes the village wizard in the Inmost Sea. He is soon seeing the ghostly outline of the shadow again, following him around. He tells the leaders of the isles that he must leave because he was putting them in danger. They told him that he could not leave because there were dragons that could come to the island and destroy them. Ged ventures out to the island of Pendor, where the dragons live in an old burned out and crumbling port town. When he arrives he slays several dragons and when he calls out the oldest and wisest dragon, “He spoke again: Yevaud! Swear by your name that you and your sons will never fly over to the Archipelago; Flames broke suddenly bright and loud from the dragon’s jaws, and he said, ‘I swear it by my name!’” (pg 109). Here we see that the use of names have power over others. If you were to know the true name of anything then you can control it. This further explains that when you know the true name of something, you can control it.

Transitions are vague and do not help to build meaning

This evidence and analysis supports the claim that magic is power. However, it does not help the writer track the evolution of this theme or its significance. When he connects magic and power, the writer begins to respond to the prompt, but this idea needs to be explored and expanded in a proficient piece of writing.

In the final part of the book, we see that the meaning of power through the use of magic changes so that it is, if you can use it and control it, then sometimes you need restraint. To better explain that, “ A mage can control only what is near him, what he can name exactly and wholly” (pg 56). In the final chapters of the book, we see that Vetch and Ged meet up again in Vetch’s hometown. We also see that Ged tries to escape from the shadow and ends up fighting it while on the island of Osskil in the North Reach. Ged is on the island of Osskil trying to escape the shadow when he meets it in the street. He fights it and combines with it. He wakes up in the palace where the king resides and is greeted with the sight of a familiar women. He is greeted by the girl who he met while picking flowers behind Ogion’s house on Gont. She tells him that there is a stone that he can use to know the name of the shadow. He figures out that this is a ploy to tie him to the stone so he can never leave. He and the girl escape from the clutches of the king. He flies all the way to Gont where he meets Ogion again and he is saved when Ogion removes the changing spell from him. He then goes and stumbles on Vetch on his home island while passing through. He meets him only by chance while walking through the streets. Vetch is surprised to see his old friend but happy nonetheless. Ged and Vetch sail from the island of Iffish to the island of Last Land, the last island before there is nothing but open ocean. They go there to see if there is land beyond the Far Reach. When the story ends, they return to Iffish and Vetch’s sister Yarrow is running down to meet them at the docks.

Overall by the end of the story, Ursula Le Guin shows how the use of magic in this world is power because you have something that not everyone else has. She seems to say that if you have power, you must find a way to restrain yourself from using while not thinking about the consequences of such actions. In the beginning of the story, Duny (Ged) is a simple boy who lives in a village in the North Reach. When the story ends, he is a powerful wizard that can work many spells. While he is trying to know more spells, he interacts with a dark spirit that follows him

The final topic sentence attempts to address the development of the theme, however the evidence used to support it comes from early on in the book, challenging the writer’s implication of chronological evolution.

Due to parallel sentence structure, the tone is repetitive. The voice is appropriately **formal** but not varied or **precise**.

The writer lapses into detailed summary, but excludes the book’s climax. The events selected do not necessarily relate to power or magic. These details are not analyzed nor explained in terms of the development of the theme of power.

The writer attempts to return to the focus, but struggles to articulate a precise statement that responds to the prompt and synthesizes the topic of the essay.

throughout the story. Like the world today, not everyone is given the same opportunities. There are ways in the world today that some people can get certain opportunities based on who they are. When people try to gain something without thinking of the consequences of their actions, something happens that changes everything. She reminds us that in order to gain something there must be sacrifice of some kind and when we act without thinking of the consequences are worse. We see that in Earthsea, Ged acts without thinking until it is too late, he is being followed and tormented by a spirit. In the end, no matter how powerful you are, you must always think about how your actions will affect the world.

The writer extends the essay by reflecting on the author's message after including a summary. The final reflections are disjointed and fragmented. They do not always **follow from and support the information presented.**

Final Thoughts
(Gr 9 Informative: Beginning)

Overall, this piece shows some understanding of the general topic, and an attempt to examine the author's theme. However, the writer tends to lapse into summary and lose sight of the focus. While the writer returns to the theme of power on occasion, the evidence and analysis are vague, when included. The reflection is often disjointed and the piece does not build to a coherent whole. The student is beginning to form and follow a focus in writing. However, the piece is not coherently organized throughout.

The student would benefit from instruction in evidence selection, analysis (tied to the focus), and organization. The student also lacks the flexibility and facility with language needed to be able to successfully explain the evolution and significance of the theme. Additional instruction in tracking a theme and the language used to interpret this would be useful.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 9 Informative: Beginning)

Partial Control of Conventions: Although the writer has some control over language and conventions, the student could benefit from instruction in the following skills:

- citation formatting (MLA conventions for citing quotes, italicizing titles, etc.)
- precise language
- tense consistency

Standard W.9-10.2
Grade 9
Exceeds

Facing the Shadow

Ursula K. Le Guin has won many awards for her fantasy and science fiction books. One of these books is *The Wizard of Earthsea*. In this fantasy book the main character Ged goes through a journey of discovery. He starts as a normal young boy in the village of Ten Alders, but as he grows up he starts to learn magic. He runs into a situation while learning magic that will follow and torment him until he faces it. Through this situation Ged learns things about himself and the world. He also experiences the concept of the human shadow; which is where a person hides their unwanted traits like arrogance, fear, etc.. Over the course of the book Le Guin explores the theme and connection of evil and the human shadow.

In the beginning of the story Le Guin introduces the theme of evil and the human shadow by showing us the common man's idea of evil and how evil can be more than a physical form. The book starts with Ged describing his home, family life, and how he first discovers magic. Through this he mentions a form of evil known across the lands as the Krag. He describes the Krag as “savage people, white-skinned, yellow-haired, and fierce, liking the sight of blood and the smell of burning towns.”(pg 8) Ged describes these people as “savage”, showing us that people see them as fierce, violent and even evil. They are a physical evil. This isn't a very complex form of evil but is a general person's idea of the concept. Later Ged learns about a new form of evil while studying with his master, Ogion. When he meets this thing “He was cold. Looking over his shoulder he saw that something was crouching beside the the closed door, a shapeless clot of shadow darker than the darkness. It seemed to reach out towards him, and to whisper, and to call to him in a whisper: but he could not understand the words.”(pg 26) Instead of knowing the evil like with

Introduces the topic clearly: the writer gives appropriate context which summarizes the issue/topic for a reader. While this writer doesn't include a hook, her introduction is clear, if not compelling. It sets the stage for insightful analysis that follows.

Introduces topic/focus that responds directly and appropriately to the thinking required by the prompt: in addition, the writer includes a **definition** of the human shadow as a lens through which to analyze Le Guin's treatment of evil.

Organizes complex ideas both thematically and chronologically in order to effectively track the development of a theme

Develops the topic with well-chosen, relevant and sufficient facts and quotations: the evidence used is precise, and the analysis breaks down quotes in order to unpack meaning, which is directly tied to the focus.

Uses appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts

the krag, this new evil is “shapeless”. Ged is entering a whole new world of evil and discovery he didn’t know existed. This shows how evil can be more than physical, and goes beyond first glances.

Later in the book, after Ged gets his first glimpse of evil and the human shadow, Le Guin shows how people are connected to evil and the human shadow. Ged has now left master Ogion and has gone to the school of Roke, a school of magic. Here he has made friends and “frenemies”. While trying to show up another student he tried to summon a spirit but created something else. After a run in with this thing one of his teachers told him ““you were moved to do this by pride and by hate. ... It is the shadow of your arrogance, the shadow of your ignorance, the shadow you cast.””(pg 78) This is the first clear connection between the shadow, evil, and Ged. He has summoned an evil shadow created from his worst traits. Once Ged leaves Roke he leaves the protection it provides. He then realizes that the shadow might be lurking trying to find “a foothold in a dark soul and there waiting and watching Ged and feeding, even now, on his weakness, on his uncertainty, on his fear.”(pg 116) This is showing that the connection between the shadow and Ged goes further than being created. The shadow is “feeding” on Ged, meaning it is using parts of him to gain strength for itself. Le Guin is starting to show us the connections between Ged, evil, and the shadow. She is also starting to reveal that the shadow in the book is a metaphor for the human shadow.

At the end of the book Le Guin shows us how the shadow in the book connects to the human shadow and how Ged overcomes it. Ged is now wandering around the world trying to find a safe place from the shadow. After running for so long he ends up in his old master's house, Ogion. Ogion tells Ged, ““If you go ahead, if you keep running, wherever you run you will meet danger and evil, for it drives you, it chooses the way you go. You must choose. You must seek what seeks you. You must hunt the hunter.”” (Pg 151) Ogion is telling Ged to go face his fears, or he’ll never be free. When Ogion says the danger, as in the shadow,

The writer slips into informal, general language here. However, throughout most of the piece the writer uses an appropriately **formal style and objective tone.**

Quotes and concepts are precise and clearly explained

Provides thoughtful analysis of content; uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to do so

“chooses” what Ged does Le Guin uses it as an opportunity to show the human shadow. She is saying that the traits you put in your shadow still influence your actions even though you try to ignore them, and the only way to truly get rid of them is to face them. Later, after chasing his shadow Ged finally catches up with it. When he comes face to face with the shadow he speaks “ the shadow’s name and in the same moment the shadow spoke ... saying the same word: ‘Ged.’ ... Ged reached out ... and took hold of his shadow, of the black self that reached out to him. Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one.”(Pg 212) When Ged says his own name to take control of the shadow we see that he realized that he and the shadow were the same person. We also see that once he realized that this evil thing was him he could control it and could refuse it power over him. Le Guin uses this to show us we also have to face our shadows if we want to have power over it. All of this shows us that we have to face our fears, our shadows to have power over them and to have complete control of our actions.

Organizes ideas and information so that each new element builds to create a unified whole

Overall, Le Guin shows how evil can be simple at first glance but the more you look the more complicated it gets; it can be physical, magical or it could be in you or apart of you. The common thing with all of these forms of evil is to conquer them you have to face them. Ged started out as a simple boy, but as he grew he learned more. He started to see and learn things about himself he never would have known without this experience. Although this story is set in a different world and time the message Le Guin sends still applies to us. She shows us that our shadows, like Geds, will forever haunt and control us if we don’t realize that they are us. We have to choose to face these shadows so in turn we can make our own decisions and choose our own paths.

Provides a concluding statement that follows from and supports the explanation presented:
the writer pulls the piece together and then reflects on the significance of the topic.

Final Thoughts
(Gr 9 Informative: Exceeds)

Overall, this essay shows solid and insightful understanding of the topic. While many elements of this piece are proficient, the precise focus and the depth of analysis helps it exceed the standard. The writer tracks the overall evolution of the theme chronologically, but she also tracks tensions within her smaller categories, such as the tension between the simple externalized evil of an enemy and the more amorphous evil of a shadow in a room. This shows that she can address complexity while still supporting her focus. The writer also breaks down quotes with specificity and spells out connections clearly. She uses precise language to navigate the complex ideas she presents.

The writer's organization is clear and logical throughout and each section helps her build meaning. Her conclusion adequately reflects on the author's message and the significance of the theme. Overall, the piece is solid, however, with her more nuanced treatment of the theme, the piece exceeds the threshold of proficient.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 9 Informative: Exceeds)

Partial Control of Conventions: Although the writer has some control over language and conventions, the student could benefit from instruction in the following skills:

- Citation formatting (MLA conventions for citing quotes)
- Capitalization
- Possession (apostrophes)
- Commas
- General editing for typos