Revising and Adding Commentary
Linking Devices to Meaning: “Riding Is an Exercise of the Mind”

About this Lesson
This lesson focuses on N. Scott Momaday’s “Riding Is an Exercise of the Mind” and addresses the persistent problem area in student analytical writing: lack of commentary that connects devices to meaning. This lesson uses a student essay and guides students through the revision process by giving specific advice for revising and adding commentary that links devices to meaning.

Passages for LTF® lessons are selected to challenge students, while lessons and activities make texts accessible. Guided practice with challenging texts allows students to gain the proficiency necessary to read independently at or above grade level.

This lesson is included in Module 5: Connecting Devices to Meaning.

Objectives
Students will
- revise a student essay to strengthen its use of evidence and commentary.
- link devices to meaning.

Level
Grades Six through Ten

Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts
LTF Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Depth of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.1</td>
<td>Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it. Cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.10</td>
<td>Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.4</td>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.5</td>
<td>Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>III</td>
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</table>
W.9  |  Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  |  Analyze  |  III  
W.10 |  Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.  |  Apply  |  III  

Implicitly addressed in this lesson

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<tr>
<td>L.1</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.3</td>
<td>Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.2</td>
<td>Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LTF Skill Focus
The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

### Levels of Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td><strong>Composition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>written, spoken, and visual texts</td>
<td>purposeful use of language for effect</td>
<td>written, spoken, and visual products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Types (modes)
- Expository
- Analytical

#### The Process of Composition
- Revision of Multiple Drafts
- Content
- Organization
- Precise diction
- Unity

#### Structural Elements
- Introduction
- Thesis
- Body
- Incorporation of quotes
- Topic sentence
- Use of commentary
- Use of evidence

#### Style/Voice
- Selection of Detail
- Selection of Vocabulary
- Use of Literary Elements

### Connections to AP*
Linking devices to meaning is a skill that is required of students in both the free response and multiple choice sections of the AP English Language and Literature exams. In addition, analytical essays written for the AP Language and Literature exams are judged on the quantity and quality of evidence and analysis (commentary).

*Advanced Placement and AP are registered trademarks of the College Entrance Examination Board. The College Board was not involved in the production of this material.

### Materials and Resources
- annotated excerpt from N. Scott Momaday’s “Riding is an Exercise of the Mind”
- student analysis essay over “Riding is an Exercise of the Mind,” included with this lesson
- or a student paper and text of your choosing
Assessments
The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:
- revised paragraphs

Teaching Suggestions
This process can be used with any writing sample for any topic. Teachers should choose one student essay, retype it, and add specific instructions for revision. Students will be able to compare the original with the revised essay, making it clearer to them what full commentary should look like.

Students need to be made aware of the difference between analysis and critique. Many times, students want to praise writers, complimenting their use of diction, imagery, etc. rather than analyzing how the devices are used to create meaning. Point out the differences whenever you find this occurring in student papers. This can be seen in the student paper from this lesson.

Students should follow the explicit instructions on the handout to revise this paper.

Teachers should discuss and show the best revisions to the class as a whole.

Answers
Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses.
Revising and Adding Commentary

Linking Devices to Meaning: “Riding Is an Exercise of the Mind”

Read the following two paragraphs, written by a 7th grade student for the 2007 Laying the Foundation® Posttest free response question. As you work to improve the essay, remember that the writer of the passage “Riding Is an Exercise of the Mind” carefully crafted his sentences to convey one special idea: He was connected to his new environment of Jemez Pueblo. As you think about the words and images he chose to describe this place, keep in mind that he had this one important purpose and that every choice he made with diction and imagery was made carefully and purposefully. Follow the directions to improve the original paragraphs. Highlighted elements need to be revised.

Read the following paragraph.

**Paragraph 1:**

1. N. Scott Momaday has created a masterpiece by using diction and imagery alone. (2) One good example of diction is when he uses the words “exotic corner.” (3) He could have just said cool corner or amazing corner, but he uses good word choice (or diction) to make the story more enticing. (4) Another good example of diction is when he uses the word “embarked.” (5) He could have just used the word “went” or “traveled.” (6) Yet again, Momaday has used good diction to help make his story ever more fantastic. (7) Finally, Momaday has once again made a fine word choice when he uses the word “landscape.” (8) He could have used the words “place” or just “land.” (9) Overall, N. Scott Momaday has used extremely good word choice.

**Directions:** Revise Paragraph 1 according to the italicized instructions given after each sentence(s).

1. N. Scott Momaday has created a masterpiece by using diction and imagery alone. (2) One good example of diction is when he uses the words “exotic corner.” *Revise the thesis statement. It presently critiques the text rather than analyzing it. Make sure your revised sentence relates to the author’s purpose.*

In “Riding is an Exercise of the Mind,” N. Scott Momaday effectively uses diction and imagery to ____________________________________________

1. He could have just said cool corner or amazing corner, but he uses good word choice (or diction) to make the story more enticing. (4) Another good example of diction is when he uses the word “embarked.” (5) He could have just used the word “went” or “traveled.” *Avoid the highlighted phrases. Revise using something like the fill-in-the-blank template below. Add two or three sentences of analysis by explaining what the words “exotic corner” do for the description. Show how those words reveal that the writer is connected to his environment. Review the previous activities in which you analyzed the effect of these words.*
When Momaday uses the words “exotic corner,” he [---------------------------------]

[Eliminate words/sentences that don’t analyze and add two or three sentences of analysis by explaining how this special word “embarked” shows the writer is connected to his environment. What are the connotations and associations of the word “embarked”?]

He uses the word “embarked” to associate his journey with [---------------------------------]

creating a feeling of [---------------------------------]

(6) Yet again, Momaday has used good diction to help make his story ever more fantastic. [Instead of writing a “review” of the piece, write a sentence of commentary about how Momaday’s word choice reveals his purpose]

This choice of words strengthens his purpose by [---------------------------------]

(7) Finally, Momaday has once again made a fine word choice when he uses the word “landscape.” (8) He could have used the words “place” or just “land.” (Avoid the “what if,” and deal with the what is—what is in the text, not what might have been chosen.) [What is special about “landscape” in this context? Find some additional text to add in order to create a stronger analysis. Add two or three sentences of analysis by explaining how the word “landscape” shows that the writer is connected to his environment.]

[---------------------------------]

(9) Overall, N. Scott Momaday has used extremely good word choice. [Revise this concluding sentence with a stronger statement of the effect of his word choice]

Momaday’s word choice is effective because it [---------------------------------] and because it also [---------------------------------]
Read the following paragraph.

**Paragraph 2:**

(10) Momaday uses excellent imagery in his well-written passage. (11) When he says “in the bright New Mexican morning,” he really shows that he woke up on a bright morning. (12) It really gives you an image of a bright morning. (13) Another good example of imagery is when he says “I looked southward into the plain; there a caravan of covered wagons reached as far as the eye could see,” he really shows that covered wagons were all over the plains as far as the eye can see. (14) Finally, a very good example of imagery is when he says “It was as if that whole proud people, the Dine, had been concentrated into one endless migration.” (15) It shows how descriptive Momaday was when he wrote this. (16) You can see it when you read it. (17) N. Scott Momaday did a fantastic job writing “Riding is an Exercise of the Mind.” (18) He used a lot of excellent diction and imagery.

**Directions:** Revise Paragraph 2 according to the italicized instructions given after each sentence(s).

(10) Momaday uses excellent imagery in his well-written passage. (11) When he says “in the bright New Mexican morning,” he really shows that he woke up on a bright morning. (12) It really gives you an image of a bright morning. [**These sentences contain unnecessary repetition. Remove the repetition and add two or three sentences to explain how a “bright New Mexican morning” shows that Momaday is connected to his environment. How do the details of the fact that it was “morning” and that it was a “bright” morning add to our understanding that the writer was connected to his environment?**]

When he says “in the bright New Mexican morning,” he connects waking up with__________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

(13) Another good example of imagery is when he says “I looked southward into the plain; there a caravan of covered wagons reached as far as the eye could see,” he really shows that covered wagons were all over the plains as far as the eye can see. [**This sentence contains evidence and paraphrase only. Remove everything that follows the quotation, and replace it with two or three sentences which explain how this particular image shows the writer’s connection to the environment. Think about how this sight conveys the writer’s excitement or pleasure and how his feelings reveal his connection to his environment.**]

Momaday adds, “I looked southward into the plain; there a caravan of covered wagons reached as far as the eye could see.” He feels a sense of__________ and ________ because he is again inspired by__________
(14) Finally, a very good example of imagery is when he says “It was as if that whole proud people, the Dine, had been concentrated into one endless migration.” (15) It shows how descriptive Momaday was when he wrote this. (16) You can see it when you read it. [Your job is not to compliment Momaday on his writing style. Your job is to explain how this specific image from the passage contributes to our understanding that Momaday was connected to his environment. Remove these last two sentences, beginning with “It shows. . .” Add two or three sentences that focus on the evidence and why the writer would have used this image to convey his feelings of connection.]

Momaday’s imagery shows his deep connection to _______________ and _______________. Another example of _______________.

(17) N. Scott Momaday did a fantastic job writing “Riding Is an Exercise of the Mind.” (18) He used a lot of excellent diction and imagery. [Can you improve this concluding sentence? Can you remind your reader of your goal in this essay, i.e., to analyze how the diction and imagery contribute to our understanding of Momaday’s connection to his environment? It’s fine to appreciate a writer’s abilities, but think about how you want to really finish your essay. Think about what might motivate someone to write about his home.]