



Middle School ELA Emergency Sub Binder

Emergency sub plans for middle school ELA, grades 6 to 8. The sub needs no ELA background: every step is on the page.

PREVIEW

What is included

- 7 front pages: binder cover, important information, note to the sub, the lesson plan filled in, schedule, class list and dismissal, how it went
- 9 activities, each with its own sub script and student pages (30 pages)
- 3 individual activities and 6 partner, team or whole-class activities
- A Say this to the class script for every activity, a star challenge on every worksheet, every answer in a key
- Color and ink-saver B&W, US Letter and A4

How it works

1. Leave the binder out. The lesson plan lists every activity with its page and minutes.
2. The sub reads the Say this to the class box word for word.
3. Students work from their own pages, with the steps on the page. The sub needs no ELA background: every answer is in the key.
4. No prep and no tech: print and go.

The 9 activities, 35 to 45 minutes each

1. **Quiet Reading**, 45 min **SOLO**: central idea, vocabulary in context, inference, text structure, evidence, character and theme
2. **Grammar Detective**, 40 min **SOLO**: editing: agreement, pronouns, its and it's, comma splices, fragments, verb tense, modifiers, apostrophes
3. **Writing Menu**, 45 min **SOLO**: narrative writing with dialogue, a claim with evidence and a counterclaim, sequence and transitions
4. **Partner Check**, 40 min **PAIRS**: figurative language, point of view, sentence types, parts of speech, context clues, prefixes, structure and tone
5. **Write the Rulebook**, 40 min **PAIRS**: purpose and audience, clear procedural writing, commands, vague pronouns and exact words
6. **Word Puzzle Tournament**, 41 min **TEAMS**: roots, prefixes and suffixes, context clues, antonyms, idioms, homophones, connotation, analogies and anagrams
7. **The Book Talk Mix-Up**, 40 min **TEAMS**: close reading and inference: genres from blurbs, details in quotes, reasoning from clues instead of guessing
8. **Which Evidence Wins? Stand-Off**, 40 min **WHOLE CLASS**: evaluating evidence: fact or opinion, relevance, specific details, trustworthy and current sources, enough data
9. **Whiteboard Quiz Game**, 35 min **WHOLE CLASS**: a review of this binder: grammar, word parts, figurative language, reading terms and evidence

What this preview shows: the note to the substitute, the lesson plan, the other front pages, one page of every activity, a sub script, four more student pages and one ink-saver page. Every product page is watermarked, and no answer key is shown. The full binder has 37 pages.



Note to the Substitute

Middle school ELA, grades 6 to 8 · 9 one-period activities · no prep, no ELA background needed

Thank you for covering my class

Everything you need is in this binder. The front pages (important information, lesson plan, schedule of the day, class list) are filled in for today. After them come 9 ELA activities: the first 3 are individual work, the other 6 are for partners, teams or the whole class. Each one fills most or all of a period of 40 to 50 minutes, runs from the printout alone, and carries its own texts and answer key, so you never have to teach a new lesson or work anything out yourself. Everything reviews reading, writing and grammar skills the class has met before.

The first page of every activity is your script. It says what the activity practices, how to set it up, and how long each step takes. The box marked **Say this to the class** is written to be read aloud word for word. Every answer is in a key on the script page (for the logic mystery, on the page right after the script). Keep those pages with you and hand out only the student pages. Every student worksheet has a **Challenge** box for early finishers (in the logic mystery, the bonus question on the slip).

The 9 activities

- **Quiet Reading** quiet single · 45 min · p. 7
- **Grammar Detective** quiet single · 40 min · p. 12
- **Writing Menu** quiet single · 45 min · p. 15
- **Partner Check** pairs · 40 min · p. 19
- **Write the Rulebook** pairs, project · 40 min · p. 22
- **Word Puzzle Tournament** teams, puzzles · 41 min · p. 25
- **The Book Talk Mix-Up** team logic · 40 min · p. 28
- **Which Evidence Wins? Stand-Off**
whole class · 40 min · p. 32
- **Whiteboard Quiz Game** whole class, teams · 35 min · p. 35

If the class is loud

- Switch to one of the quiet single activities (Quiet Reading, Grammar Detective or Writing Menu). Nobody needs to move.
- In the scored games (Word Puzzle Tournament, Which Evidence Wins? Stand-Off and Whiteboard Quiz Game), the scoring keeps the class honest.
- If an activity is not working, stop it and switch. Every activity can start at any point in the period.
- The games are optional: a fun way to end the class or to use extra time.

Which activity when?



- A student says the class never learned this? Every activity reviews earlier work. Ask them to try the first item with a partner, and leave me a note.
- The same activity in every period is fine: each class sees it once. The lesson plan (next page) lists all 9. Dictionaries: follow my rule on the Important Information page.
- First thing in the day, or a class that needs to settle: start with a quiet single activity.
- After lunch or with a restless class: a group activity uses the energy.
- Short period? These fit: Whiteboard Quiz Game (35 min) and one reading of Quiet Reading (about 25 min).

Before you leave

Please fill in the How It Went page at the back. It takes two minutes and I read every word. Thank you!





Lesson Plan

Filled in for today: 9 activities, 35 to 45 minutes each. Write the time of each period you use.

ACTIVITY	PLAN	PAGE
Quiet Reading Quiet single · about 45 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One reading and its question sheet per student; fast finishers take the other Silent reading and questions, about 20 minutes per reading Read the answers out from the key, or collect for me 	p. 7
Grammar Detective Quiet single · about 40 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand out both case sheets; pencils only Students find the one wrong sentence in each piece, name the mistake and fix it Read the key out at the end, or collect for me 	p. 12
Writing Menu Quiet single · about 45 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three sheets on the desk: A Story Starter, B Make Your Case, C Notes to Paragraph Students choose one, plan, write alone in silence, then check with the checklist Collect for me; the models are on the script 	p. 15
Partner Check Pairs · about 40 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pairs: one Partner A sheet and one Partner B sheet Both do row 1, then compare: the answers must match Different answers? Reread and talk it through. The key is on the script 	p. 19
Write the Rulebook Pairs, project · about 40 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pairs or threes, one Part 1 sheet and one Part 2 sheet per group Part 1 together (keyed), then invent a word game and write its rulebook Check the rulebooks with the checklist on the script; collect for me 	p. 22
Word Puzzle Tournament Teams, puzzles · about 41 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams of 3 or 4, one puzzle sheet and one answer sheet per team One round at a time, 1, 2 or 3 points per puzzle Every answer is on the key. The key settles arguments 	p. 25
The Book Talk Mix-Up Team logic · about 40 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams of 3 or 4, one case file and one grid per team Warm-up together on the board, then the case on their own Teams hand in their slip; check it against the key and reveal 	p. 28
Which Evidence Wins? Stand-Off Whole class · about 40 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both stand-off sheets to every student; everyone stays seated Read a round, 20-second guess, count hands, then a minute to decide One speaker per side, then read the answer from the key 	p. 32
Whiteboard Quiz Game Whole class, teams · about 35 min Time ____ : ____ to ____ : ____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw the 5 by 5 board (or tape up the board sheet); 3 to 5 teams Teams take turns picking a category and value; you read the question Right answer: points on the scoreboard. Optional, for the end of class 	p. 35

Fast finishers

Any quiet single activity can follow any other activity: Quiet Reading (p. 7), Grammar Detective (p. 12) and Writing Menu (p. 15).

Collect / leave for me

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1. Quiet Reading, 45 min (solo)

2. Grammar Detective, 40 min (solo)

3. Writing Menu, 45 min (solo)

4. Partner Check, 40 min (pairs)

5. Write the Rulebook, 40 min (pairs)

6. Word Puzzle Tournament, 41 min (teams)

7. The Book Talk Mix-Up, 40 min (teams)

8. Which Evidence Wins? Stand-Off, 40 min (whole class)

9. Whiteboard Quiz Game, 35 min (whole class)



The Book Talk Mix-Up

Sub script: a team logic mystery with reading clues

One period • teams of 3 or 4

This activity practices: close reading and inference: genres from blurbs, details in quotes, reasoning from clues instead of guessing



SAY THIS TO THE CLASS

"The sign-up sheet for this week's book talks got soaked, and your team rebuilds it from the notes. Read the blurbs carefully first, because some clues only make sense once you know each book's genre. We start with a short warm-up together."

Materials

- Teams of 3 or 4. Each team gets one case file and one grid sheet (the grid sheet has the answer slip).
- Pencils (erasers help) and the board for the warm-up.
- Jobs: **reader** (reads the clues out), **book expert** (matches each blurb to its genre with the genre guide), **marker** (the only one who writes in the grid) and **recorder** (fills in the slip).
- Keep this page and the next one: together they are your key.

Run it (40 minutes)

- Set up.** Make the teams, hand out the sheets. 3 min
- Read the story and the five blurbs.** A volunteer reads them out loud. 4 min
- Warm-up together** on the board, as shown below. 6 min
- Teams solve the case.** Walk around. After about 10 minutes, give a hint from the next page to any team that is stuck. Fast teams answer the bonus question. 22 min
- Reveal.** Collect the slips, then read the answer and the full solution from the key. 5 min

The warm-up: teach the grid (6 minutes)

Draw this grid on the board. Students have the same one on their case file. Anouk, Basil and Cyra each read one book: a biography, a fantasy or a mystery. Read the two clues:

- Anouk's book tells the true story of a real inventor's life.
- Basil has never read a book with magic in it.

Then show it step by step:

- Clue 1 first: a true story of a real person's life is a biography. Circle Anouk under biography. A circle means the rest of that row and that column get an X.
- Clue 2: a book with magic is a fantasy, and Basil has never read one. Only fantasy and mystery are left, so Basil has the mystery and Cyra the fantasy. Circle both.
- Check it against both clues out loud.

The two rules to say out loud: one circle in every row and every column of each small grid; and in this case, decide what a clue really tells you (which genre, which format) before you mark the grid. An X means no, a circle means yes.

	biography	fantasy	mystery
Anouk			
Basil			
Cyra			

Answer: Anouk, biography; Basil, mystery; Cyra, fantasy.



Grammar Detective Cases 1 to 5

Each piece has exactly one sentence with a mistake. Find it, name it with a letter from the Error Bank, and rewrite it.

Grammar Detective



How a detective works: read each sentence on its own and ask: does the verb match its subject? Is every word the right one? Could it stand alone as a sentence? The one that fails is your suspect.

Error Bank

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>A. Sentence fragment
B. Verb tense shifts for no reason
C. Subject and verb do not agree
D. Wrong pronoun (I or me)
E. Apostrophe in a plural
F. Double comparison (more or most with -er or -est)</p> | <p>G. Comma splice: two sentences joined by only a comma
H. Its and it's mixed up
I. Dangling modifier: the opening phrase describes the wrong thing
J. There, their or they're mixed up</p> |
|---|--|

1 Bettina's writing

Wrong sentence ☐ Error letter ☐

① Our school library opened a new reading corner this fall. ② The stack of graphic novels by the window are always the first thing to disappear. ③ Students line up before the first bell to check them out.

Rewrite it correctly _____

2 Emrys's writing

Wrong sentence ☐ Error letter ☐

① Last Saturday, my cousin and me painted the fence behind the garage. ② It took us the whole morning and two cans of paint. ③ Afterward, Grandpa thanked us with lemonade and a plate of warm pancakes.

Rewrite it correctly _____

3 Fiorella's writing

Wrong sentence ☐ Error letter ☐

① The town pool is closed for repairs this week. ② Its diving board cracked during the last big storm. ③ Now its opening eight days later than usual.

Rewrite it correctly _____

4 Lorcan's writing

Wrong sentence ☐ Error letter ☐

① In October, our class planted tulip bulbs along the front walk. ② We covered them with soil and a layer of leaves. ③ Then we forgot about them for the whole winter. ④ In April the first green shoots appeared, everyone rushed to the window to see them.

Rewrite it correctly _____

5 Nerys's writing

Wrong sentence ☐ Error letter ☐

① The marching band practiced on the field for two hours. ② Because the first football game is on Friday night. ③ By the end, even the drummers were tired.

Rewrite it correctly _____



Challenge

Pick one mistake from the Error Bank. Write a NEW sentence that makes that mistake, then write it again correctly.

Name _____ Score _____ / 15



 Writing Menu A Story Starter

Plan first, then write a short scene that begins with the opening line.

Writing Menu

Opening line: The note taped to my locker was written in green ink, and it was not signed.

Who is telling the story?

What does the main character want?

What is the problem?

What is the turning point?

How will it end?

My scene Title:

[illegible]

My checklist

- ☐ The scene starts with the opening line.
- ☐ At least two lines of dialogue, each in quotation marks with the right punctuation.
- ☐ One detail for a sense other than sight (a sound, a smell, a texture).
- ☐ The problem changes or gets solved by the end.
- ☐ A title.



 **Challenge** Add a clue early in your scene that only makes sense at the end (foreshadowing). Underline it.

Name



Partner Check Partner A

Circle one choice in each row, then compare with your partner. The answers should be the same. If not, talk it through.

Partner Check

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

1 The old school bus groaned all the way up the hill.

simile metaphor personification hyperbole

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

2 This backpack weighs a thousand pounds.

simile metaphor personification hyperbole

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

POINT OF VIEW

3 I grabbed my umbrella, but the rain had already stopped.

first person second person third person

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

SENTENCE TYPE

4 Although the bell rang, the class kept reading.

simple compound complex

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

SENTENCE TYPE

5 The lights flickered, and the movie stopped.

simple compound complex

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

PART OF SPEECH OF THE UNDERLINED WORD

6 The team quickly cleared the tables.

noun verb adjective adverb

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

MEANING FROM CONTEXT

7 After the long climb, the hikers were famished and ate everything in their packs.

very hungry very tired very angry very bored

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

MEANING OF THE PREFIX

8 unfair, unkind, unsafe

not again before too much

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

TEXT STRUCTURE

9 Heavy rain fell for three days. As a result, the river rose over its banks and flooded the park.

cause and effect compare and contrast problem and solution chronological order

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

TEXT STRUCTURE

10 The results would be posted at noon. I checked the clock again: 11:52. My hands would not stop shaking.

cheerful worried bored proud

Why? (a few words)

☐ Same as my partner

★ Challenge

The new phone case was sold as unbreakable, and it cracked the first time it slid off a desk.

verbal irony situational irony dramatic irony

Compare again. Then, together, write your own example on the back.

My name _____

Partner _____



Word Puzzle Tournament

Puzzle sheet

Solve each puzzle with your team. Write your answers on the answer sheet.

Word Puzzle Tournament



Round 1: Word Parts

1 PT EACH

- The root *aud* means hear. Name a group of people who listen to a concert or a play.
- The root *dict* means say. Name the book that tells you what words mean.
- The prefix *pre-* means before. Name the short look at a movie that you see before it comes out.
- Add the suffix *-less* to describe a night with no sleep at all.
- The prefix *tri-* means three. Name a bike with three wheels.
- The prefix *mis-* means wrongly. Write the word that means to spell wrongly. Careful with the letters!
- The root *port* means carry. Which word means able to be carried?
- The root *chron* means time. Which word describes events told in the order they happened? (Hint: _____ order)



Round 2: Meaning Match

2 PT EACH

- "After the long hike, the scouts were so *lethargic* that they fell asleep before dinner." What does *lethargic* mean?
- Write an antonym (an opposite) of *generous* that starts with *st*.
- What does it mean if someone has bitten off more than they can chew?
- Put these words in order from weakest to strongest: *furious*, *annoyed*, *angry*.
- Fill each blank with a different word that sounds the same: _____ going to leave _____ bikes over _____.
- One word fits both blanks: "Please _____ the box with tape." "The _____ balanced a ball on its nose."
- One word fits both blanks: "We sat in the front _____." "It took an hour to _____ the boat across the lake."
- Which word sounds the most positive: *nosy*, *curious* or *snoopy*?



Round 3: Word Logic

3 PT EACH

- Finish the analogy. chapter : book :: verse : _____
- Finish the analogy. brave : cowardly :: ancient : _____
- Rearrange the letters of STAPLE to name the colored parts of a flower.
- Rearrange the letters of RESCUE to make a word that means safe and firmly fixed.
- An animal is hidden across two words of this sentence. Find it: "Did Jessica melt the chocolate for the cookies?"
- Find one word that can go in front of all three: _____light, _____burn, _____flower.
- A palindrome reads the same forward and backward. Write the five-letter palindrome that names a narrow boat you move with a paddle.
- Which word does not belong, and why? *chuckle*, *giggle*, *whisper*, *snicker*



Challenge Tiebreaker

Rearrange the letters of RECITAL to make a word for a piece of writing in a newspaper or a magazine.

Name or team _____

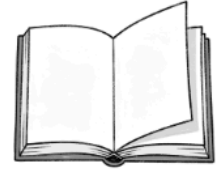


Every Word Needs Evidence Article

Read the whole text before you look at the questions.

Quiet Reading

Every Word Needs Evidence



- 1 Every year, dictionary makers announce a list of new words, and every year somebody complains. How can a word that hardly existed a few years ago suddenly count as a real word? The answer surprises many people. Dictionary editors do not invent words, and they do not hold a vote on which words are good. They watch how people actually write and speak, and they report what they find.
- 2 The work starts with evidence. Editors read books, newspapers, magazines, websites and transcripts of speeches, looking for words that are new or are being used in new ways. Each time they spot one, they save the sentence, where it appeared and when. These saved examples are called citations. A single citation proves very little, because anyone can make up a word once. What editors want to see is a word used by many different writers, in many different places, over several years.
- 3 Citations also show editors what a word means. Nobody hands them a definition. Instead, they read dozens of example sentences and work out the meaning from context, the same way a reader figures out an unfamiliar word in a story. If the examples show a word being used in two different ways, the entry may get two numbered definitions.
- 4 This method is older than you might think. In the 1800s, the editors of what became the Oxford English Dictionary asked readers across the English-speaking world for help. Volunteers copied sentences onto slips of paper and mailed them in, and the editors sorted the slips word by word. The work took so long that the complete first edition was not finished until 1928.
- 5 Dictionaries can also shape a language. In 1828, Noah Webster published *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. He chose spellings such as color and center instead of the British colour and centre, and many of his choices became the standard spellings in the United States.
- 6 So the next time you hear that a word has made it into the dictionary, remember what that really means. Enough people used it, for long enough, that the editors had the evidence to describe it.

In the full binder

A whole ELA sub day, planned and ready to print.

37 pages in color and ink-saver
B&W, US Letter and A4

9 activities of 35 to 45 minutes, one
per class period

7 front pages: note to the sub,
lesson plan, schedule, class list

3 + 6 individual activities +
partner, team and
whole-class activities

Use it your way

- A sudden sick day: emergency sub plans that are ready before you need them.
- Any middle school ELA class, grades 6 to 8: every activity fits a 40 to 50 minute period and reviews reading, writing and grammar skills the class has met before.
- Your sub tub: print it once and keep it all year.
- Your own no prep day: teach it yourself when you need a break from planning.

Thank you! If this works for your class, a quick review helps other teachers find it, and earns you TpT credits.



Classroom
REVIEW GAMES