

Unit Overview: Parent Guide

The Witch of Blackbird Pond, Grade 6

What is the goal of this unit?

- Your child will read fiction and nonfiction texts to understand the influence of family expectations and religious values on the development of one’s personal identity.

What topics and skills is your sixth grader learning in this unit?

- Impact of family and religion on personal identity
- Identity
- Theme
- Setting
- Informational writing
- Research

What tasks will your child engage in to help them consider the topics and skills of this unit?

- **Culminating Writing Task:** Your child will bring together all her learning near the end of the unit by writing an essay in response to the question: *Who is Kit most loyal to in The Witch of Blackbird Pond?*
- **Extension Task:** Your child will work in a small group to conduct research on a selected historical figure who took action to overcome obstacles when his or her individual values and beliefs conflicted with family, religious, or social norms.

Your child will read these texts, watch these videos, and listen to these audio clips:

Text Title	Author/Source	How it is used in the Unit
<i>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</i>	Elizabeth George Speare	Main text of the unit
“Choices”	Nikki Giovanni	Student text
“Puritans”	Michael Kaufman (The New Book of Knowledge, Grolier Online)	Student text
“The Road Not Taken”	Robert Frost	Student text
<i>History of the United States of America</i>	Henry William Elson (transcribed by Kathy Leigh)	Student text

Strange Phenomena of New England in the 17th Century including the "Salem Witchcraft, 1692," from the writing of Cotton Mather, New York, 1846	The Library of Congress	Student text
<i>Salem Witch Trials ("Life in Salem 1692: Religion and Witchcraft")</i>	Discovery Education	Read aloud
<i>Salem Witch Trials ("The Story of the Witch Hunt" (Video))</i>	Discovery Education	Read aloud

Ideas for discussing personal identity

- Are you born with an identity?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How does a person's identity develop over time?
- How has your family shaped who you are?
- How has your society shaped who you are?
- How has your religion or culture shaped who you are?
- How are you different from your family, society, religion, or culture?
- What do you think makes you unique?

Want to deepen your and your child's knowledge on the topic being studied?

Here is a suggested book list:

Title	Author
<i>Does my Head Look Big in This?</i>	Randa Abdel-Fattah
<i>Saints</i>	Gene Luen Yang
<i>True Believer</i>	Virginia Wolff

What does independent reading look like at home?

Independent reading gives your child the opportunity to read and interact with books that are on her reading level and that address topics that she chooses. Supporting independent reading at home helps build your child's confidence with reading, her reading stamina and reading achievement, and will help her do better in school.

Here are some ways you can encourage independent reading at home:

- Let your child pick out books that she finds interesting
- Prioritize reading. Protect time every day for reading (weekends and school breaks too!). Before bedtime is a great time to read.
- Read together
- Read aloud
- Discuss your child's reading. Ask questions like:
 - Tell me about what you read today.
 - What did you like about it?
 - What didn't you like about it?
 - What did you learn?
 - What questions do you have about what you read?
 - What didn't you understand about what you read?
 - What do you want to learn more about after reading?
 - How does what you've read connect to other things you've read?