

Long Way Down — Structure as Argument: The Descent and The Rules

Teacher: Ms. J. Carter School: Riverside High School

Subject: English Language Arts Grade: 12 Class / Period: Period 3

Date: _____ Block Length: 45 minutes Framework: Danielson

Technology: Shared Chromebook cart (12 devices) — built into Phases 3 and 4

Standards Alignment & Core Objectives

Domain 1c — Setting Instructional Outcomes

Identified Standard	Student-Facing “I Can” Statement	Language Objective
11-12R5 — Analyze how an author's choices about text structure and manipulation of time create effects such as tension, surprise, or ambiguity.	I can explain how Reynolds's choice to set the whole novel inside a 60-second elevator ride forces Will — and me — to question The Rules.	Students will use <i>structural choice</i> , <i>juxtaposition</i> , and <i>ambiguity</i> in speech and writing, using the provided sentence frames, with 80% accuracy.
11-12L4 — Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words using context.	I can use context to work out what a word means when Reynolds uses it in an unexpected way.	

Key Questions & Discussion

Domain 3b — Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques

Wait time: seven seconds after every question before I take an answer. No hands up — I cold call from the roster so thinking is not optional.

Question, exactly as I ask it	Level	What a strong answer sounds like
“Reynolds gives you sixty seconds and eight floors. What does compressing the whole novel into one elevator ride do to Will’s ability to think clearly — and to yours?” (Phase 2, after teaching point 1)	Strategic thinking	Names the compression as deliberate and connects it to pressure, panic, or the impossibility of deliberation — not just “it makes it fast.”
“Whose presence in that elevator most complicates the rule about revenge, and how do you know?” (Phase 3, during station rotation)	Strategic thinking	Chooses one passenger, cites a specific page, and explains the contradiction rather than retelling who they are.
“Reynolds never tells you what Will does. Is that honest, or is it a cop-out? Take a side and defend it.” (Phase 2, after teaching point 3)	Extended thinking	Takes a position and grounds it in what the ending does to the reader — accepts that ambiguity is a choice with a cost either way.
“Which of The Rules does this book treat most sympathetically? Find the line that proves it.” (Phase 5, whip-around extension)	Strategic thinking	Distinguishes what the book depicts from what it endorses, and supplies a line rather than an impression.

Accountable-talk stems — posted on the board and on each table strip:

1. “I want to build on what ___ said, because...”
2. “I see it differently — on page ___ the text says...”
3. “Can you point me to the line that made you think that?”

Materials & Prep

Domain 1d — Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources

- Class set of Long Way Down (24 copies; confirm 4 audiobook licences are active)
- 24 copies of the Stop Analysis organizer — Appendix A, printed double-sided
- 8 copies of the scaffolded organizer — Appendix B — pre-staged at the SpEd teacher's table, not handed out from the front
- 6 table tents labeled Hunter, Baruch, City College, Buffalo, Stony Brook, Binghamton, set out before students arrive, names on the reverse

- Bilingual glossary cards (Spanish/English): structural choice, juxtaposition, ambiguity, cyclical, tension
- Slide 1 — Do-Now prompt. Slide 2 — three-column anchor chart, left column pre-filled
- Sentence-frame strips taped to each table; one sticky-note pad per group
- Chromebook cart booked — 12 devices, two per group. Charge overnight; confirm the cart is in the room before period 1
- Appendix A loaded to the class LMS as a fillable doc, so groups can type or handwrite

Student Grouping Plan

Domain 1b — Demonstrating Knowledge of Students

Six heterogeneous groups of four. Heterogeneous is right for this task because it is interpretive rather than procedural — there is no single correct answer to copy, so mixed groups raise the ceiling instead of stratifying it. Each group is assigned one stop in the descent and becomes the room's expert on it.

Group	Composition	Maps to
Hunter · City College · Stony Brook	1 strong reader + 1 ELL + 2 mid-range	Below / On lanes get embedded peer support
Baruch · Buffalo · Binghamton	1 twice-exceptional student + 3 mid-range	Above / 2e lane leads the extension

- ELL placement.** Each of the three ELLs sits beside a strong reader who shares no home language, so the working language stays English. All three hold a bilingual glossary card and sit within one step of the paraprofessional's circuit.
- IEP placement.** Distribute the four IEP students across four different groups — never two in one group. Each receives the scaffolded organizer at the table.
- Twice-exceptional placement.** Separate groups (Baruch and Binghamton) so both students drive an extension rather than competing for the role.
- Forming groups in under a minute.** Table tents are out before the bell with names on the reverse. Students find their college table as they enter — this happens during the Do-Now and costs zero instructional minutes.
- Where grouping changes.** Phases 1, 2 and 5 are whole-group facing the board. Phase 4 is fully independent — students turn their chairs out of the group.

Adults in the Room

Domain 1e — Designing Coherent Instruction

Phase 3 co-teaching model: station teaching. Three adults, six groups — each adult owns two and rotates on a fixed seven-minute cycle. Station teaching fits because the six stops are genuinely parallel tasks: no group is doing remedial work, and no adult is reduced to a monitor.

Phase	Lead Teacher	Special Education Teacher	Paraprofessional
1 — Hook (5m)	Facilitates the Do-Now, starts the timer, circulates as students write	Greets at the door, hands scaffolded organizers to the four IEP students	Distributes glossary cards; checks the three ELLs have started writing
2 — Direct instruction (14m)	Facilitates all three teaching points; circulates during both Turn & Talks	Builds the anchor chart live so students have a visual record	Circulates behind the ELL seats, points to the glossary as target words are spoken
3 — Guided practice (14m)	Stations: Hunter and Baruch	Stations: City College and Buffalo — priority on IEP students' evidence selection	Stations: Stony Brook and Binghamton — reads pages aloud on request, supplies no interpretations
4 — Mastery check (9m)	Facilitates and circulates — confers with the three students flagged in Phase 3	Scribes for the two students with writing goals in the IEP	Sits beside two reluctant readers and asks the first question aloud to start them
5 — Closing (5m)	Facilitates the whip-around;	Records responses on the	Collects tickets by group,

Phase	Lead Teacher	Special Education Teacher	Paraprofessional
	circulates to hear the quieter voices	tracker	clipped in group order

Phase 1 — The Hook / Do-Now (5 minutes)

Domain 1a — Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy

Time	Teacher steps & script	Student action
0:00–5:00	- Do-Now is on Slide 1 as students walk in. Say: “Find your college — your name is on the back of the tent. Sit down and start writing. You have three minutes and the clock is already running.” - Say: “Before we start — this book is about someone losing a brother to a gun. If you need to step out today, take the pass by the door. You don't have to ask me and you don't have to explain. That stands for the whole unit.” - Display the prompt: “The entire novel takes about sixty seconds. Reynolds could have written it over sixty days. Why sixty seconds? Three sentences.” - Circulate silently, reading over shoulders. Flag two responses that disagree with each other. - At 4:00 say: “I read two answers that contradict each other and I want both out loud. Just read what you wrote — don't defend it yet.”	- Locate table tent, sit, begin writing immediately - Note the pass location - Write three sentences independently in the reader's notebook - Two students read aloud; the rest listen without responding

Phase 2 — Direct Instruction (14 minutes)

Domain 1a — Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy

Time	Teacher steps & script	Check for understanding
5:00–19:00	Teaching point 1 — a structural choice is an argument. Say: “Where a writer puts something is not decoration. It's a claim. Reynolds put this whole story in an elevator going down, one floor at a time — and every floor makes Will's certainty a little weaker. The shape of the book is the argument.” - Add “structural choice” to the anchor chart. Teaching point 2 — juxtaposition. Say: “Juxtaposition means putting two things side by side so they argue with each other. Reynolds puts The Rules right next to people who followed them and are now dead. He never says the rules are wrong. He puts them next to the evidence.” Turn & Talk 1: “What happens to a rule when you put it next to somebody it failed?” Teaching point 3 — ambiguity is a choice, not a mistake. Say: “Reynolds ends without telling you what Will does. Some of you will call that a cop-out. I'll argue it's the most honest sentence in the novel — the second he tells you, the book stops being about your decision and starts being about his.” Turn & Talk 2: “If the ending told you exactly what Will	- Thumbs up / sideways after point 1: “Do you have the difference between what a story says and how it's shaped?” - Cold call two pairs after Turn & Talk 1. Listen for <i>juxtaposition</i> used, not merely defined. - Whiteboard hold-up: one word — what does the descent do to Will's certainty? Scan for <i>weakens</i> / <i>cracks</i> / <i>complicates</i> versus <i>changes</i> (too vague).

Time	Teacher steps & script	Check for understanding
	did, what would the book lose?" 7. Transition. Say: "Your group owns one stop. In fourteen minutes you're teaching the room what happens on it."	

Phase 3 — Guided Practice / 2e Differentiation (14 minutes)

Domain 1b — Knowledge of Students · Domain 1e — Coherent Instruction

Time	Teacher steps & script	Differentiated accommodations
19:00–33:00	1. Distribute Appendix A. Scaffolded copies (Appendix B) go to the four IEP students <i>at their tables</i>, not from the front. 2. Hand two Chromebooks to each group. Groups choose to type into the shared organizer or write on paper — either is acceptable. 3. Set a seven-minute timer and begin station rotation. You take Hunter and Baruch. 4. At 7:00 rotate. Prompt any stalled group: "Point to the line where the white space does the work." 5. At 12:00 call time and begin the report-out, Hunter through Binghamton, forty seconds each. 6. Build the descent on the board as they report. Say: "Watch what's happening on this board. We are going down. And the rules are getting quieter."	Below grade level 1. Box 1 of the organizer is pre-filled. 2. Box 2 offers three checkbox options rather than open generation. 3. Paraprofessional reads the assigned pages aloud on request; students may point to the structural feature and the adult supplies the term. On grade level 1. Complete all four boxes independently. 2. Select their own textual evidence with page numbers. Above / 2e strength-forward 1. Build the strongest case that Reynolds undercuts his own structure, then defend it under challenge. 2. Storyboard your stop as three graphic-novel panels — on paper or in Slides — and argue in two sentences which form carries the moment better.

Phase 4 — Mastery Check (9 minutes)

Domain 1f — Designing Student Assessments

Time	Assessment task	Success criteria
33:00–42:00	1. Students work independently. Half a page. I circulate rather than sit — I am listening for whether they can name a structural choice, not just a plot point. 2. Display the prompt: "Choose ONE structural choice Reynolds makes — the descent, the sixty seconds, the verse form, the ending. Explain how that choice complicates The Rules. Use one piece of text evidence with a page number, and use the word juxtaposition or ambiguity correctly." 3. Point to the sentence frames on the table strips: <i>"Reynolds chooses to _____. This complicates The Rules because _____. For example, on page _____, _____."</i> 4. Confer with three students as they write. Ask: "Which structural choice did you pick, and what does it do to The Rules?" Note the answer; do not correct it — collect it. 5. Students submit through the LMS or hand in on paper — their choice. Both are collected in group order so the sort into 3/2/1 piles takes under two minutes.	3 of 3 — names a specific structural choice rather than a plot event; explains a complication rather than summarising; cites one accurate page reference; uses the target term correctly in context. 2 of 3 — correct structural choice and evidence, but explains what happens rather than what the structure does. 1 of 3 — retells plot with no structural claim. These students begin tomorrow at the anchor chart.

Phase 5 — Closing Assessment (5 minutes)

Domain 1f — Designing Student Assessments

Time	Teacher steps & script	Data collection
42:00–45:00	1. Say: “One word. What does going down do to a person's certainty? No repeats — if yours is taken, find another. Go.” 2. Move group by group, Hunter through Binghamton. 3. Write every word on the board as it is said, in descent order. 4. Photograph the board — this becomes tomorrow's Do-Now.	1. Mark on the tracker any student who passed or repeated. Those names get a 30-second check-in tomorrow. 2. SpEd teacher records; paraprofessional collects mastery checks clipped in group order.

Phase 6 — Post-Lesson Reflection (completed by hand after teaching)

What worked well?

What would I change?

Student evidence of mastery:

Adjustments for next lesson:

Appendix A — Stop Analysis Organizer (student copy)

Print one per student. Groups complete all four boxes.

#	Prompt	Your answer
1	Who boards at your stop, and what do they carry into the elevator?	
2	Which of The Rules does their presence test?	
3	Find one line where the structure — a line break, white space, a single word alone — does the work instead of the sentence. Page _____	
4	Finish the sentence: Reynolds places this person at this stop in order to ____	

Appendix B — Scaffolded Organizer (8 copies)

Identical to Appendix A with box 1 pre-filled and box 2 offering three options to choose among. Hand out at the table, not from the front.