

# Nonfiction Activities Bundle

## OVERVIEW: The Rise of Skateboarding

Skateboarding, a solo sport established in the early-to-mid 20th century, is going mainstream: for the very first time, we'll be seeing skateboarding in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. For the young sport that found its roots in street culture, it's a big achievement. The sport will be on display for the entire world.



Skateboarding was born on the west coast of the United States, where skateboards began as deconstructed scooters. When they gained popularity, the boards began to be mass-produced and found surfers, who used them as a way to ride a board even when waves.


## ENCRYPTED: Codes & Codebreakers

If you've ever played an escape room or game, you've spent some time solving mysteries and thrillers, history is full of influential codes and codebreakers. Codebreaking, also called cryptanalysis, has many real-world uses.



So why are codes still used in wartime, it's important to understand the technology, finances, and the military. Skilled codebreakers can help your plans and saving lives. Encryption is used for information, like bank transactions and a lot of devices; it has changed our past, present, and future.


## Demystifying Fear



Why do people enjoy being scared? (AJB Photography)


## A PORTRAIT: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams

"A people who do not make progress and suffering are not..." -Dr. Williams



## DOUBLE TROUBLE: The Fascination with Twins


Our society is captivated by twins. Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen are cultural icons. Tia and Tamara Mowry had an entire show. People swear that twins have a special connection. There's no doubt that twins, despite sometimes being "identical", present fascinating individuals.



This is true through many centuries and many cultures. With twins, their rarity has sparked questions and mysteries.

## ECHOES: Abandoned Places

During your own personal world tour, your trip might take you to the Eiffel Tower or the canals of Venice. You might want to marvel at the pyramids of Egypt. But there are interesting (and creepastic) abandoned places that can be quite an experience you're ever allowed to visit.



Optimized for 8th & 9th grade

# 10 ARTICLES TO ENGAGE RELUCTANT READERS



## SUPERPOWERS

There are also stories of twins who harness a special telepathic connection. Twins claim to sense when the other twin is in trouble. But is there science behind the twins with special powers?

It would be pretty cool, but unfortunately, the psychic connection between twins is easily explained. It goes back to the concept of environment. Because twins grow up often wearing similar clothes, attending the same classes, and ultimately sharing the same experiences, they often seem to make the same decisions based on their shared environment. This explains why twins sometimes share thoughts and feelings. So, next time you think twins have a strangely close connection, remember there's a reason that isn't as mystical as it may appear (Davis).

## THE DARK SIDE

even today, although most twins are healthy and balanced, psychologists think the relationships between twins may be because of their shared environment.

## DOUBLE TROUBLE: *The Fascination with Twins*

Our society is captivated by twins. Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen are cultural icons. Tia and Tamara Mowry had an entire show, *Sister, Sister*, centered on their relationship. Some people swear that twins have a psychic connection. There's no doubt that twins, despite sometimes being "identical", prove to be unique and fascinating individuals.

This obsession isn't new. It has traveled through many centuries and many cultures. With twins only accounting for 3% of natural births, their rarity has sparked questions and mysteries throughout history (Openshaw).

### SCIENTIFIC GAINS

Identical twins share the same genes. Understanding this key fact has allowed scientists to identify differences based on genetics versus outside factors. That means twins can help us understand how genetics affect diseases, weight gain, eating disorders, and more. Recently, a set of twins even volunteered their services to help us understand how genetics may be affected by space travel. One twin went into space for a year, while the other stayed earthbound. Through samples of blood, saliva, and urine, scientists studied the effects of long-term space travel on humans (Than). Through studies like these, twins have made significant contributions to science.



Mark and Scott Kelly, twin astronauts for NASA.

Not all studies were positive. In fact, some were horrific. In the early 1900's, scientists experimented on twins to further the study of eugenics, selective human breeding. Eugenicists forced those with "superior" traits to reproduce and forbade those with "less desirable" traits from doing so. Oftentimes, victims were sterilized against their will. Eugenicists hoped that studies proved that "superior" traits were hereditary to justify their beliefs.

The most well-known example of this is Adolf Hitler, who believed blonde-haired, blue-eyed people were superior to other groups. He persecuted and murdered Jewish people, ethnic groups, and homosexuals. Only one of Adolf Hitler's twin brothers survived (Openshaw).

Studies have shown that upbringing plays a larger role in developing intelligence, strength, and other desirable traits than genetics.

RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL TRADITIONS

## ROBSON & CRANE IN



"COMEDY OF ERRORS"

In Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors*, two sets of twins leads to trickery, deception, and antics.

## TWINS TODAY

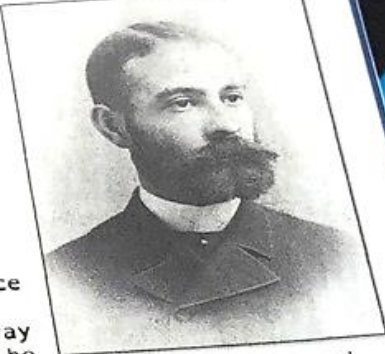
Today, science has dissolved and how twins are born. But it's still celebrated! Many people go to the extent of worshipping or fearing the twins. In the Olsen twins, the aforementioned successful entrepreneurs. If you go to Twinsburg, Ohio, where a town is named after twins, you'll think you're seeing double!

Sources: Berman, Robby. "Scenes from the Play *A Comedy of Errors*." *How Twin Culture Came to Be*.  
Dona. "How Twin Culture Came to Be."

# Double Trouble: The Fascination with Twins

## A PORTRAIT: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams

"A people who do not make provision for their own sick and suffering are not worthy of civilization."  
-Dr. Daniel Hale Williams



When you think of the most important doctors in American history, be sure to include Daniel Hale Williams, an African American doctor in the 1800s who was a pioneer of open heart surgery. His other accomplishments were many and extremely impressive, marking him as one of history's most important doctors.

Daniel Hale Williams was born in 1856 to Sarah Price Williams and Daniel Hale Williams II. Williams was the oldest of eight children. His father passed away from Tuberculosis while Daniel was still a boy, so he was sent to live with relatives. After becoming a shoemaker's apprentice and attempting to follow in his father's footsteps as a barber, Daniel Hale decided neither career was to his liking and decided to continue his education. He then began an apprenticeship with Dr. Henry Palmer, a surgeon, and then went on to attend Chicago Medical School.

"Dr Dan," as Dr. Williams was often called, opened his own practice on the south side of Chicago, IL, and began employing sterilization techniques to keep his equipment clean and his patients healthy, utilizing new research for the time period. He also began to teach Anatomy at Chicago Medical School, sharing his expertise with his students. At the time, slavery was newly abolished, and segregation was still the norm. Williams, however, made history when he opened the first integrated hospital, which employed a racially diverse staff.

Williams later took on a role as chief surgeon at Freedman's hospital in Washington, DC. The facility, which provided care for previously enslaved African Americans, had a high mortality rate. Williams took over the hospital and continued to improve the hospital and the lives of the patients.

## A Portrait: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams

Williams' work at Freedman's hospital led to his involvement with the American Medical Association, which precluded the membership of African American doctors. Williams was a founding member of the National Professional Medical Organization for African American Physicians and Surgeons.

Each nonfiction article (~500-800 words) introduces a topic, shares perspectives, and makes connections to literature and history



# WORD WORK: Close Reading

## DEMYSTIFYING

What does this article aim to teach us about fear? Why does fear need to be demystified?

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

What does the article argue would happen if we were truly afraid of a situation? Do you agree with the idea of self-preservation? Why or why not?

## SELF-PRESERVATION

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

## DROVES

According to the article, why do people go to horror movies in droves?

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Summarize how your brain triggers a feeling of fear.

That's So Scary! Demystifying Fear

# DYING AROUND THE WORLD

- 6. What contrast does the author draw between funerals in Spain and other countries?
  - a. Funerals in Spain are somber.
  - b. In Spain, funerals are conducted very quickly.
  - c. Sometimes, the Spanish forego funerals entirely.
  - d. In Spain, funerals are eco-friendly.
- 7. How does the German cemetery underscore the cultural expectations for a cemetery?
  - a. Graves are only for the wealthy.
  - b. Death is a source of pride.
  - c. Cemeteries are a source of pride.
  - d. No talking is allowed.
- 8. Which detail best shows how the maluka are viewed in Tana Toraja?
  - a. The author notes that they are expensive.
  - b. They are still treated as a part of family life.
  - c. They are still treated as a part of family life.
  - d. They are still treated as a part of family life.
- 9. What cultural difference in the treatment of death and dying is presented in the paragraph about South Korea?
  - a. Graves are rented for a short span of time in South Korea.
  - b. Loved ones are celebrated at funerals in South Korea.
  - c. South Korea has artistic ways of handling the deceased.
  - d. South Koreans can plan and pay for funerals in advance.
- 10. Which two cultures mentioned in the article have different ways of handling the deceased?
  - a. The United States and South Korea.
  - b. The United States and Tana Toraja.
  - c. Tana Toraja and South Korea.
  - d. Tana Toraja and the United States.

Answer the following questions based on the article "Dying Around the World." Choose the best answer for each question.

- 1. According to the article, why is the impermanence of graves a norm in some countries?
  - a. Some countries lack space for additional graves.
  - b. Once no living person remembers the deceased, there's no point in a grave.
  - c. Some religious observances forbid permanent graves.
  - d. Graveyards spread diseases, so it's better to cremate people.
- 2. Which detail best shows how the maluka are viewed in Tana Toraja?
  - a. Funerals are expensive in Indonesia.
  - b. Deceased loved ones are still treated as a part of family life.
  - c. Families lie and tell everyone their loved ones are just sick.
  - d. Families like to watch the mummification process.
- 3. Which is NOT a key difference between American burials and other practices?
  - a. Grave recycling
  - b. Bodies not being buried immediately or at all
  - c. Embalming practices
  - d. Coffin decor/customization
- 4. Which key cultural difference in the treatment of death and dying is presented in the paragraph about South Korea?
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Dying Around the World

Includes comprehension check activities: vocabulary in context, short answer questions, or multiple-choice quizzes.



## CREATIVE WRITING: *Flash Fiction*

**Flash Fiction** is a very short story that still has plot, character development, and conflict. Since you don't have pages and chapters to develop your ideas, it can be challenging to draw your audience into the story. The trick is to get right to the heart of what's important to the story you want to tell.

### WHAT STORY WILL YOU TELL?

#### STORY STARTS

For each **Story Start**, imagine which of the abandoned places you could write about. Write down notes about your reactions and first ideas.

1. You are trapped in this place. How do you escape? What obstacles do you encounter?

2. Surprise! You've won a vacation to...one of these creepy, abandoned places! It's time for survival mode. How do you make the best of it?

3. When you arrive in the abandoned place of your choosing, you realize someone is already there...and you aren't welcome. Who is this mystery person, and why are they protecting this place?

WINCHESTER MYSTERY HOUSE



Choose one of the abandoned places you read about in the article and write a (short story) based on one of these Story Starts.

Novelle ELA

Abandoned Places

## YOU'RE THE EXPERT: Write a Tutorial

**PREWRITE:** This activity will help you break a topic into parts. It will also help you plan the three parts of your article: the introduction, the procedure, and the conclusion.

**CHOOSE A NARROW TOPIC:** Take two of the activities from your list and think of specific aspects to think of one skill or technique from the activity.

Activity	Idea #1	Idea #2
(example) Dog Training	Teaching a dog to "sit"	Using verbal cues

Circle your choice.

**Introduce** yourself and your skill:

- What will your readers learn to do?
- What equipment will they need?
- Why are you an expert on this topic?

Break your skill into steps.

**Step**

(example) Teach your dog to sit on a verbal cue.

## YOU'RE THE EXPERT: BRAINSTORM

**TASK:** You write for a major blog and have been asked to write an article. You are encouraged to choose something you already know about. Your final article should include an introduction, the procedure, and a conclusion. Additionally, you should include diagrams.

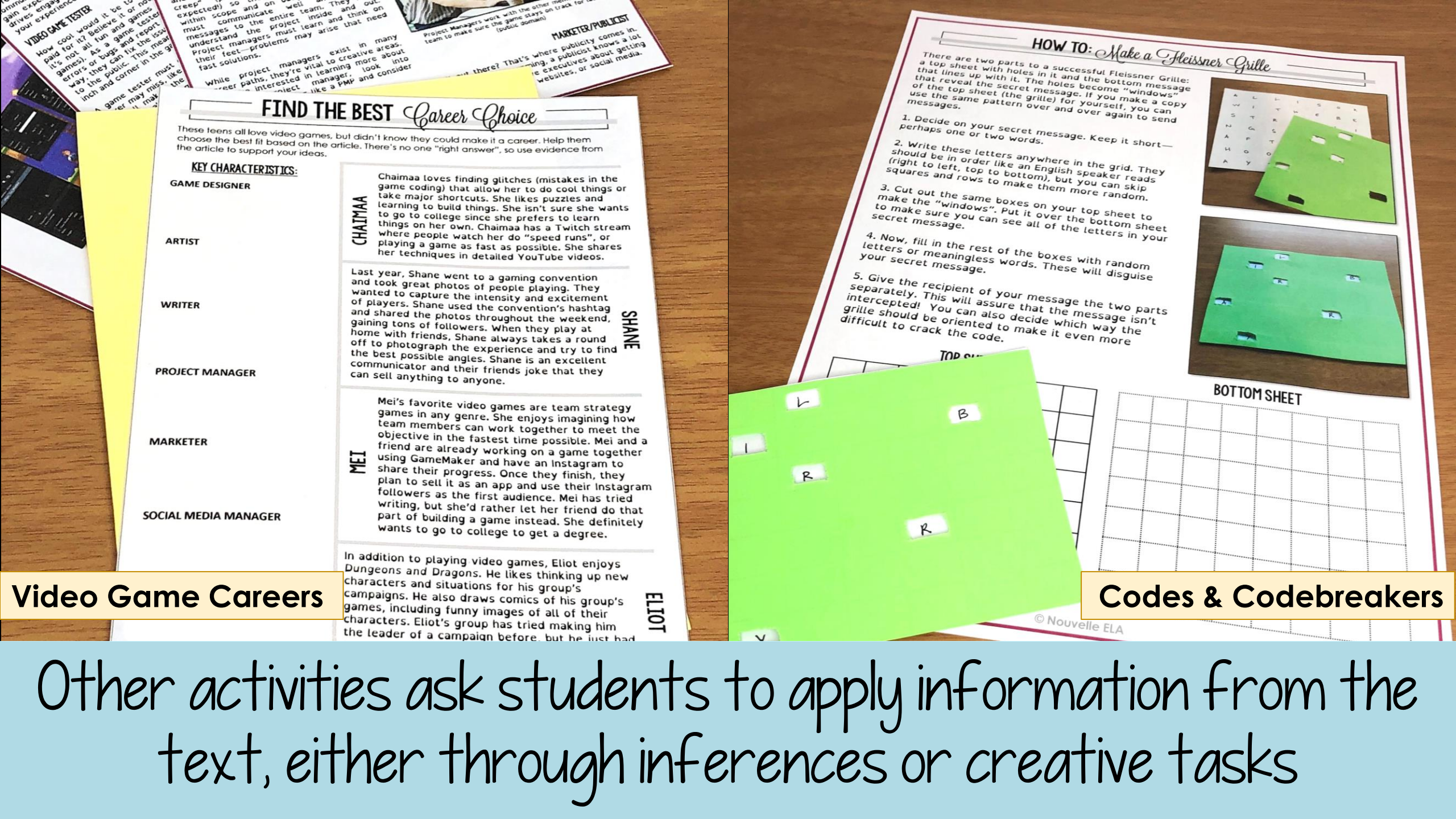
First, analyze the tutorial you were given using the chart below. Then, analyze the videos (and analyze them as well. You don't have to love them.)

Video/Article Title & Source	How does the "how-to" begin?	How does the speaker introduce the "how-to" interest?

You're the Expert: Write a Tutorial

Some activities include creative writing and research.





## Video Game Careers

## Codes & Codebreakers

### FIND THE BEST Career Choice

These teens all love video games, but didn't know they could make it a career. Help them choose the best fit based on the article. There's no one "right answer", so use evidence from the article to support your ideas.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

**GAME DESIGNER**

**CHAIMAA**  
Chaimaa loves finding glitches (mistakes in the game coding) that allow her to do cool things or take major shortcuts. She likes puzzles and learning to build things. She isn't sure she wants to go to college since she prefers to learn things on her own. Chaimaa has a Twitch stream where people watch her do "speed runs", or playing a game as fast as possible. She shares her techniques in detailed YouTube videos.

**ARTIST**

**SHANE**  
Last year, Shane went to a gaming convention and took great photos of people playing. They wanted to capture the intensity and excitement of players. Shane used the convention's hashtag and shared the photos throughout the weekend, gaining tons of followers. When they play at home with friends, Shane always takes a round off to photograph the experience and try to find the best possible angles. Shane is an excellent communicator and their friends joke that they can sell anything to anyone.

**WRITER**

**PROJECT MANAGER**

**MEI**  
Mei's favorite video games are team strategy games in any genre. She enjoys imagining how team members can work together to meet the objective in the fastest time possible. Mei and a friend are already working on a game together using GameMaker and have an Instagram to share their progress. Once they finish, they plan to sell it as an app and use their Instagram followers as the first audience. Mei has tried writing, but she'd rather let her friend do that part of building a game instead. She definitely wants to go to college to get a degree.

**MARKETER**

**SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER**

**ELIOT**  
In addition to playing video games, Eliot enjoys Dungeons and Dragons. He likes thinking up new characters and situations for his group's campaigns. He also draws comics of all of their characters. Eliot's group has tried making him the leader of a campaign before, but he just had

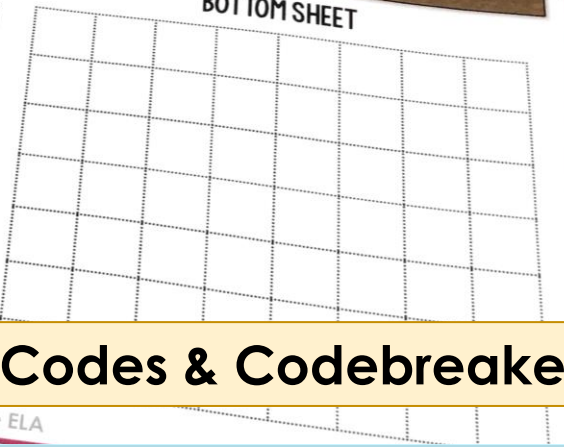
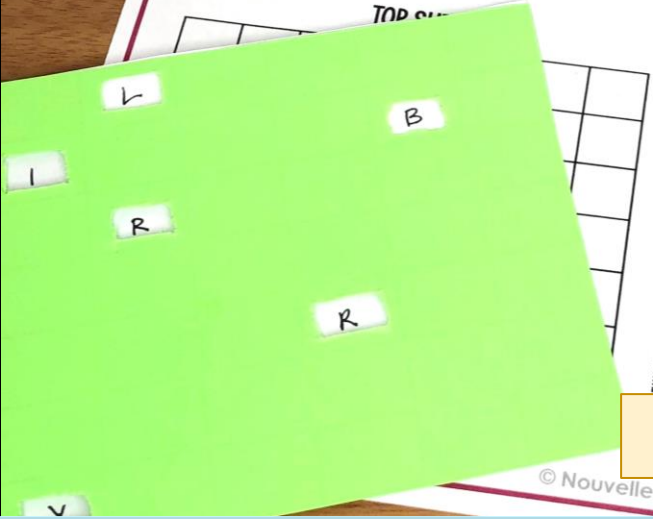
### HOW TO: Make a Fleissner Grille

There are two parts to a successful Fleissner Grille: a top sheet with holes in it and the bottom message that lines up with it. The holes become "windows" that reveal the secret message. If you make a copy of the top sheet (the grille) for yourself, you can use the same pattern over and over again to send messages.

1. Decide on your secret message. Keep it short—perhaps one or two words.
2. Write these letters anywhere in the grid. They should be in order like an English speaker reads (right to left, top to bottom), but you can skip squares and rows to make them more random.
3. Cut out the same boxes on your top sheet to make the "windows". Put it over the bottom sheet to make sure you can see all of the letters in your secret message.
4. Now, fill in the rest of the boxes with random letters or meaningless words. These will disguise your secret message.
5. Give the recipient of your message the two parts separately. This will assure that the message isn't intercepted! You can also decide which way the grille should be oriented to make it even more difficult to crack the code.



BOTTOM SHEET



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## Train Heists & Outlaws

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE DIGITAL VERSIONS

Worksheets presented in fillable Google Slides & quizzes as Google Forms

Train Robberies - Flash Fiction brainstorming ☆ 📄 🌐

File Edit View Insert Format Slide Arrange Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was on March 19, 2020

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## WHAT STORY WILL YOU TELL?

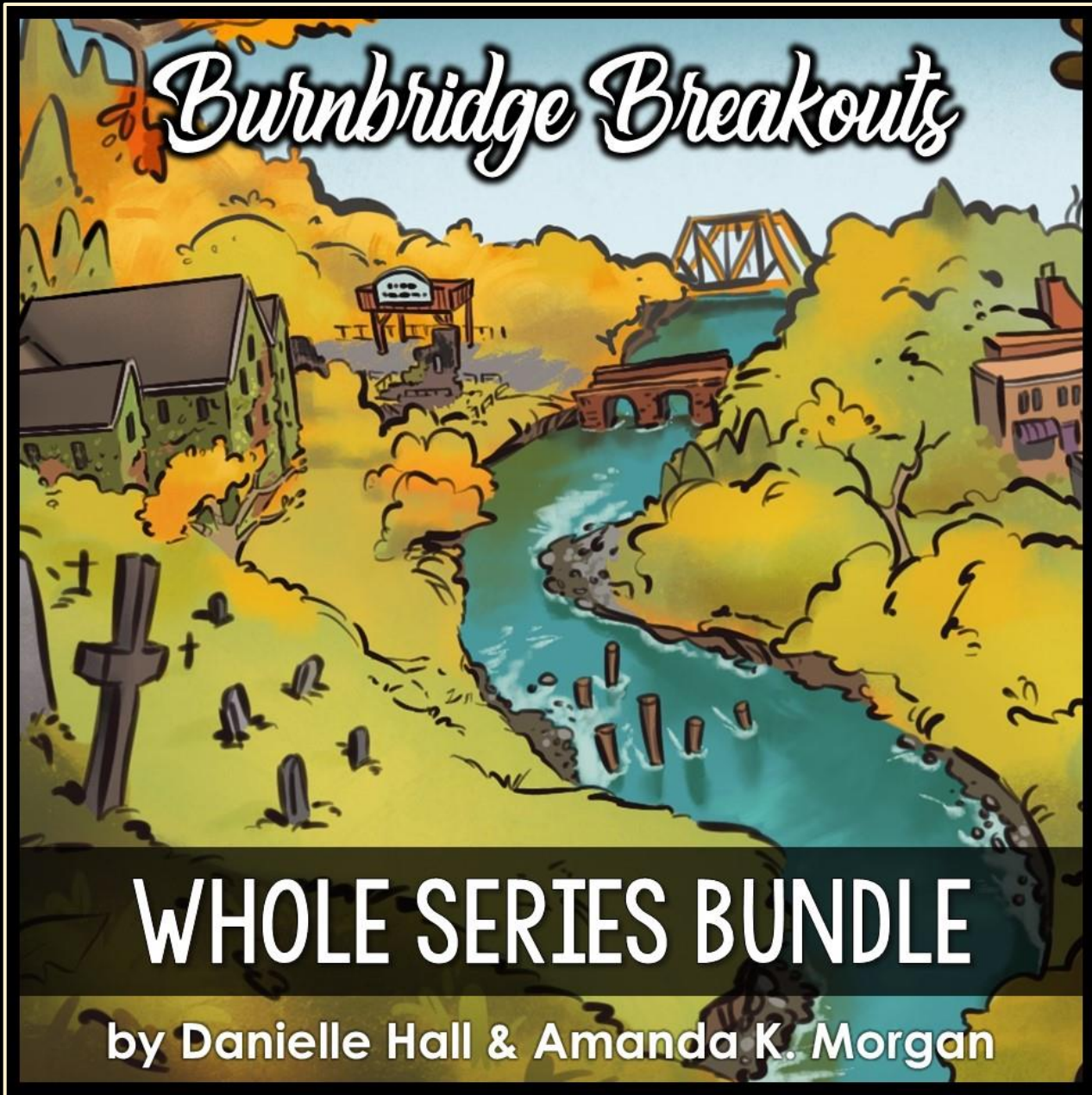
### STORY STARTS

1. You're a steward working on the Cripple Creek Short Line in 1880 and your train is being robbed. What do you do?

For each **Story Start**, imagine which of the prompts you could write about. Write down notes about your reactions and first ideas.

(type)

You're Laura Bullion, and you've retired from a life...



Looking for more inspiration?

These readings were originally created to accompany the Burnbridge Breakout series: escape games designed to help reluctant readers work at grade level.

**PERFECT FOR READING INTERVENTION  
OR ENRICHMENT**