



HxA High School Classroom Activity Series

Mini-Unit Two: Why Does Free Speech Matter?

This mini-unit builds a foundation for student engagement in discussion with others by presenting the importance of free speech and viewpoint diversity. The focus of this mini-unit is *All Minus One*, an edited version of John Stuart Mill’s essay “On Liberty.” Mill’s three arguments for free speech and viewpoint diversity are presented and illustrated in *All Minus One*. By understanding the importance of free speech and viewpoint diversity, students will be better prepared to engage in dialogue with people who hold a diverse range of viewpoints.

By completing this mini-unit, students will:

- Be able to come to terms with an author.
- Understand the three central arguments presented by Mill for free speech.
- Be able to illustrate Mill’s three central arguments for free speech.

This mini-unit applies lessons from *How to Read a Book* presented in Mini-Unit One. If Mini-Unit One was not taught, review pages one and two of “[Fundamentals of Analytic Reading: A Guide for Teachers](#)” to share with your students how to be a demanding and analytic reader.

Standards

This mini-unit addresses the Common Core State Standards outlined in the table below.

	Grades 9 – 10	Grades 11 – 12
English Language Arts — Reading: Informational Texts		
<i>Key Ideas and Details</i>	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

	Grades 9 – 10	Grades 11 – 12
<i>Key Ideas and Details</i>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.3</p> <p>Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.3</p> <p>Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.</p>
<i>Craft and Structure</i>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4</p> <p>Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4</p> <p>Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.</p>
English Language Arts — Literacy in History/Social Studies		
<i>Key Ideas and Details</i>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2</p> <p>Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2</p> <p>Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that clarifies the relationships among the key details and ideas.</p>
<i>Craft and Structure</i>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4</p> <p>Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/ social science.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4</p> <p>Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.</p>
	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5</p> <p>Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5</p> <p>Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.</p>

Time

Plan to spend 9 to 15 days (50 minutes per day) reading and discussing *All Minus One*. *All Minus One* is a complicated text. The amount of time spent reading and discussing the text will depend on students' reading level (9th and 10th-grade students will require more time to read and digest the text than 11th and 12th-grade students). The primary focus should be on ensuring that students understand Mill's three arguments for free speech.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Warm-Up Activity: "On Being Wrong" (see below)	Warm-Up Activity: Recap the previous day's activities	Warm-Up Activity: Recap the previous day's activities	Warm-Up Activity: Recap the previous day's activities	Warm-Up Activity: Recap the previous day's activities
Read <i>All Minus One</i>	Read <i>All Minus One</i>	Read <i>All Minus One</i>	Read <i>All Minus One</i>	Read <i>All Minus One</i>
Activity: "Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill"	Activity: "Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill"	Activity: "Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill"	Activity: "Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill"	Activity: "Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill"
Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"	Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"	Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"	Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"	Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	
Warm-Up Activity: Recap the previous day's activities	Warm-Up Activity: Recap the previous day's activities	Warm-Up Activity: Ask students: What illustration or argument presented in <i>All Minus One</i> resonated with you most?	Warm-Up Activity: Ask students: How would you illustrate <i>All Minus One</i> ?	
Read <i>All Minus One</i>	Read <i>All Minus One</i>	Activity: "Discussion Guide: "All Minus One""	Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"	
Activity: "Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill"	Activity: "Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill"			
Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"	Activity: "Understanding <i>All Minus One</i> through Illustrations"			

Warm-Up Activity

Each day of this mini-unit starts with a warm-up activity. The following section, titled “On Being Wrong,” outlines the activity for the first day of the mini-unit. The activity for each subsequent day is outlined in the “time” table above. The first day can be a whole class discussion, but for each subsequent day, have students work in pairs to discuss the topic or answer the question(s). Because the pace of reading *All Minus One* will depend on the skill level of your class, the “recap the previous day’s activities” will depend on where you are at in the book on that day.

On Being Wrong

Start this mini-unit by having students share with a conversation partner one time that they were wrong about something. Then have students watch the TED Talk [“On Being Wrong”](#) by Kathryn Schulz. After watching the talk, pose the questions: What does being wrong feel like? How do you know that you are wrong? According to Schulz, what three assumptions do we have about people who disagree with us? Have you ever had the same assumptions about people who disagree with you?

Tell students: Most of us do everything we can to avoid being wrong. But to find truth, we must step outside of the space of rightness, and be able to say, “Maybe I’m wrong.” In this mini-unit we will read *All Minus One* to understand John Stuart Mill’s three arguments for free speech and viewpoint diversity to seek truth.

Read *All Minus One*

Read *All Minus One* as a class. While reading the text, follow the guide [“Coming to Terms with John Stuart Mill”](#) to help students understand the important words that Mill utilizes. And pose questions about the illustrations from [“Understanding All Minus One through illustrations”](#) to help students understand Mill’s arguments while they read.

Plan to spend a minimum of two days reading and discussing each of Mill’s three arguments. This suggestion is for high-level readers. Average or low-level readers will likely need more time to read and grasp the content.

Discuss *All Minus One*

After reading *All Minus One* in its entirety, use the Socratic seminar method to pose the discussion questions found in [“Discussion Guide: ‘All Minus One.’”](#) In a Socratic seminar, desks are arranged in a circle or U-shape, and the teacher poses the discussion questions, but they are not the center of questioning. A successful seminar involves students asking each other questions with the teacher only stepping in as facilitator to pose focus questions and bring the discussion back to the book if it veers off course.

Illustrate Mill’s Arguments

To assess student understanding of the three arguments for free speech presented by Mill, and the importance of free speech and viewpoint diversity, have them create their own illustrations of Mill’s arguments. Instructions for this activity are located at the end of the discussion guide [“Understanding All Minus One through Illustrations.”](#)

Looking Ahead

Mini-Unit Three has students practice engaging with someone who holds a view different from their own, helps students understand their worldview and the difference between facts and beliefs, and further develops their understanding of the importance of free speech and viewpoint diversity and introduces the concept of open inquiry.