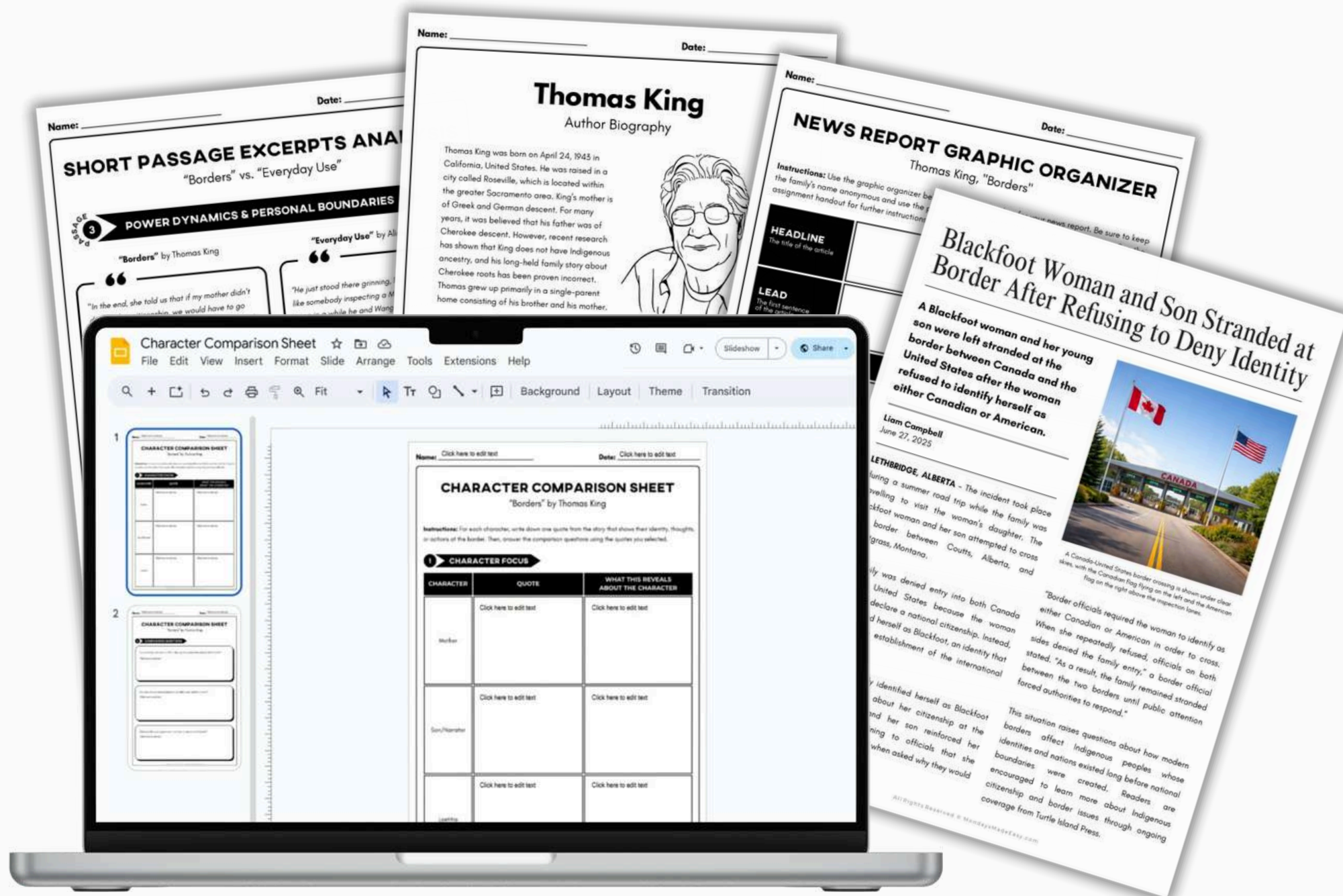


“Borders” Short Story Unit

This short story unit explores “Borders” by Thomas King through the study of theme, characterization, plot structure, and expository writing



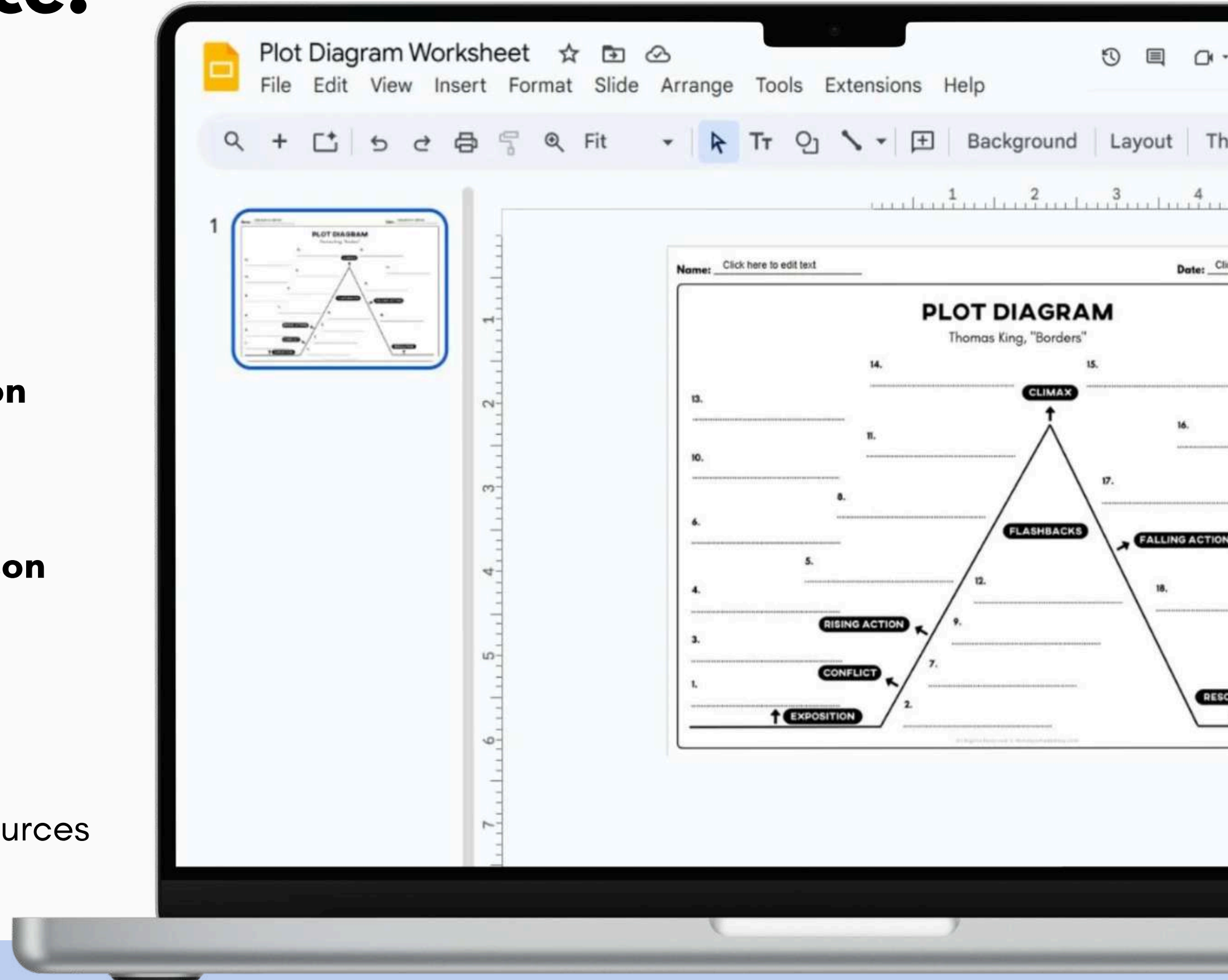
- **Build deep understanding of “Borders”** through guided reading questions, plot analysis, and character comparisons that scaffold literary analysis skills.
- **Examine identity and cultural perspective** using reflection, theme posters, and cross-text comparisons to foster higher-level thinking.
- **Assess comprehension and writing skills** with a news report assignment, editable rubrics, and exemplar answers.

Updated in 2026 to reflect current scholarship on Thomas King’s identity

PURCHASE HERE

Included with this resource:

- ✓ **Author Biography** for Thomas King
- ✓ **Guided Reading Questions** for "Borders"
- ✓ **Plot Diagram Activity**
- ✓ **Character Comparison** and **Identity Reflection**
- ✓ **Theme Poster Assignment**
- ✓ **"Borders" vs. "Everyday Use" Text Comparison**
- ✓ **News Report Writing Assignment**
- ✓ **Answer Keys, Example Answers,** and **Rubrics**
- ✓ **Teacher Instructions** for how to use these resources



Includes Digital Version for Google Drive®

See what others are saying...

Here's what teachers like you are loving about this **"Borders" Short Story Unit!**

 **Extremely Satisfied**

This was an excellent resource for teaching this powerful story to my 12th grade students. The materials were thoughtful, well-organized, and encouraged deep analysis of both literary elements and cultural themes. It sparked rich classroom discussions and helped students connect meaningfully with the text. A valuable, ready-to-use bundle that made planning and instruction easy—highly recommend!

– Cortney K.

 **Extremely Satisfied**

My students loved the layout and order of this booklet and it was perfect for our novel study unit! The questions really got them thinking and engaged with the novel more than they normally would.

– Ms. Smith

Informational Biography about Thomas King


Explore the life and experiences of Thomas King, including his development as a writer, his immigration to Canada, his political activism, and his cultural identity.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Thomas King

Author Biography

Thomas King was born on April 24, 1943 in California, United States. He was raised in a city called Roseville, which is located within the greater Sacramento area. King's mother is of Greek and German descent. For many years, it was believed that his father was of Cherokee descent. However, recent research has shown that King does not have Indigenous ancestry, and his long-held family story about Cherokee roots has been proven incorrect. Thomas grew up primarily in a single-parent home consisting of his brother and his mother.



After failing out of Sacramento State University, Thomas King traveled to Australia and New Zealand while working in the fishing industry. At the age of 21, he began working as a photographer and photojournalist. He continued this work for three years before determining that photography was more of a hobby and less of a career in which he wished to pursue professionally.

King began his studies at Chico State University in California and earned his Bachelor's and Masters degrees. He began work as a photojournalist while completing his studies at the University of Lethbridge in 1986.

King's American studies. He was primarily interested in the time that he immigrated to Canada. He studied at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta. He was where he really felt as though he belonged. He met his wife Helen Hoy, and began to write professionally and his literary voice.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Thomas King

Author Biography

in a number of different forms, including children's literature. His first novel, *Medicine*, depicts the day lives of different modern Blackfoot people. The novel is brought to life through plenty of oral storytelling. The novel uses an unconventional use of a non-linear plot line. It is a story about his activism and involvement in Canadian politics. He was a party candidate for the Guelph District in Ontario. He is known for his Indigenous land ownership and aboriginal rights activism.

King has received several achievements and has received the Governor General's Award (2005) and the Governor General's Award for Best Canadian Fiction—an annual event led by acclaimed writer Margaret Atwood. At the time, he was a member of the Order of Canada, a fellow of the Royal Canadian Academy, but this is now understood differently because of his Indigenous ancestry.

King is a member of the Order of Canada, a fellow of the Royal Canadian Academy, and has contributed to Canadian society and culture. He is married to Helen Hoy; they are parents to three children.

ESSENTIAL TERMINOLOGY

Thomas King, "Borders"

1 DEFINITIONS

Instructions: Define the following terms in your own words.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| ACCLAIMED | |
| BLACKFOOT | |
| CHEROKEE | |
| CONTEMPORARY | |
| FELLOWSHIP | |
| PHOTOJOURNALIST | |
| POLITICAL ACTIVISM | |
| UNCONVENTIONAL | |

Name: _____ Date: _____

THOMAS KING BIOGRAPHY QUESTIONS

Thomas King, "Borders"

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

Answer in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. Describe King's **childhood** and **young adulthood**.

2. When did King begin to develop his **literary voice**? What **factors** do you think contributed to this development?

3. How does King's first novel connect to his **academic work**? How does it draw on **Indigenous culture** and storytelling, even though King himself is not Indigenous?

Name: _____ Date: _____

THOMAS KING BIOGRAPHY QUESTIONS

Thomas King, "Borders"

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

Answer in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. Has King been considered an **acclaimed** Canadian?

2. How does King's cultural **identity** become more **complex**, especially in light of the **recent discovery** about his ancestry?

**2-PAGE
AUTHOR
BIOGRAPHY!**

Includes **Vocabulary Terms** and **Short-Answer Questions!**

Comprehension Questions and Discussion Prompts

Facilitate a guided reading of Thomas King's short story, "Borders"

Worksheet 1: GUIDED READING QUESTIONS
Thomas King, "Borders"
Name: _____ Date: _____

6 Where does the mother tell the **Canadian border guard** they are going? How does the border guard **respond**?

7 Why does the family spend the night at the duty-free shop parking lot?

8 What happens once the **media** arrives?

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Worksheet 2: GUIDED READING QUESTIONS
Thomas King, "Borders"
Name: _____ Date: _____

3 Who is Mrs. Manyfingers? What **role** does she play in the story?

4 Describe the American border guards.

5 What is Laetitia's **relationship** like with her mother? **Explain** using evidence from the text.

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Worksheet 3: GUIDED READING QUESTIONS
Thomas King, "Borders"
Name: _____ Date: _____

PART 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 When the family approaches the border with Laetitia at the beginning of the story, the narrator mentions a **museum**. What might the museum **symbolize**?

2 Does the narrator's mother know what is likely to happen at the border? How does the author **foreshadow** this?

3 a. Define **idiom**.
b. Find one idiom in the text and **explain** the meaning.

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Worksheet 4: GUIDED READING QUESTIONS
Thomas King, "Borders"
Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Answer the following questions below using **full sentences**. Wherever possible, include **supporting evidence** from the text. If you are referencing direct quotations, be sure to include a page number.

PART 1 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1 In the first paragraph of the story, the narrator mentions that their sister has moved "across the line." What is the **meaning** of this statement?

2 Describe the **setting** of this short story.

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Plot Diagram Activity for "Borders"

Using the story's major plot events, students will map out the plot from exposition to resolution

Name: _____ Date: _____

PLOT DIAGRAM

Thomas King, "Borders"

14. _____

15. _____

11. _____

16. _____

8. _____

17. _____

5. _____

12. _____

18. _____

9. _____

7. _____

2. _____

1. _____

CLIMAX

FLASHBACKS

RISING ACTION

FALLING ACTION

EXPOSITION

RESOLUTION

Inspector Pratt interrogates the narrator's mother inside of the border office; their family remains at the office for four hours.

The family is rejected by the border guards before spending a second night in the duty-free shop

Laetitia's boyfriend Lester shows her brochures about Salt Lake City and tells her about the temple, Liberty Park, and the skiing.

The narrator wakes up at the border; they spend the day at the duty free shop before Mel, the manager, asks the

The narrator and their mother watch the sun shine over the prairies before approaching the border guards.

The Canadian border guard asks the family if they know Mike Harley; she tells them they need to be American or Canadian.

The narrator's mother drives Laetitia to the border; on the way, the narrator inspects an abandoned museum.

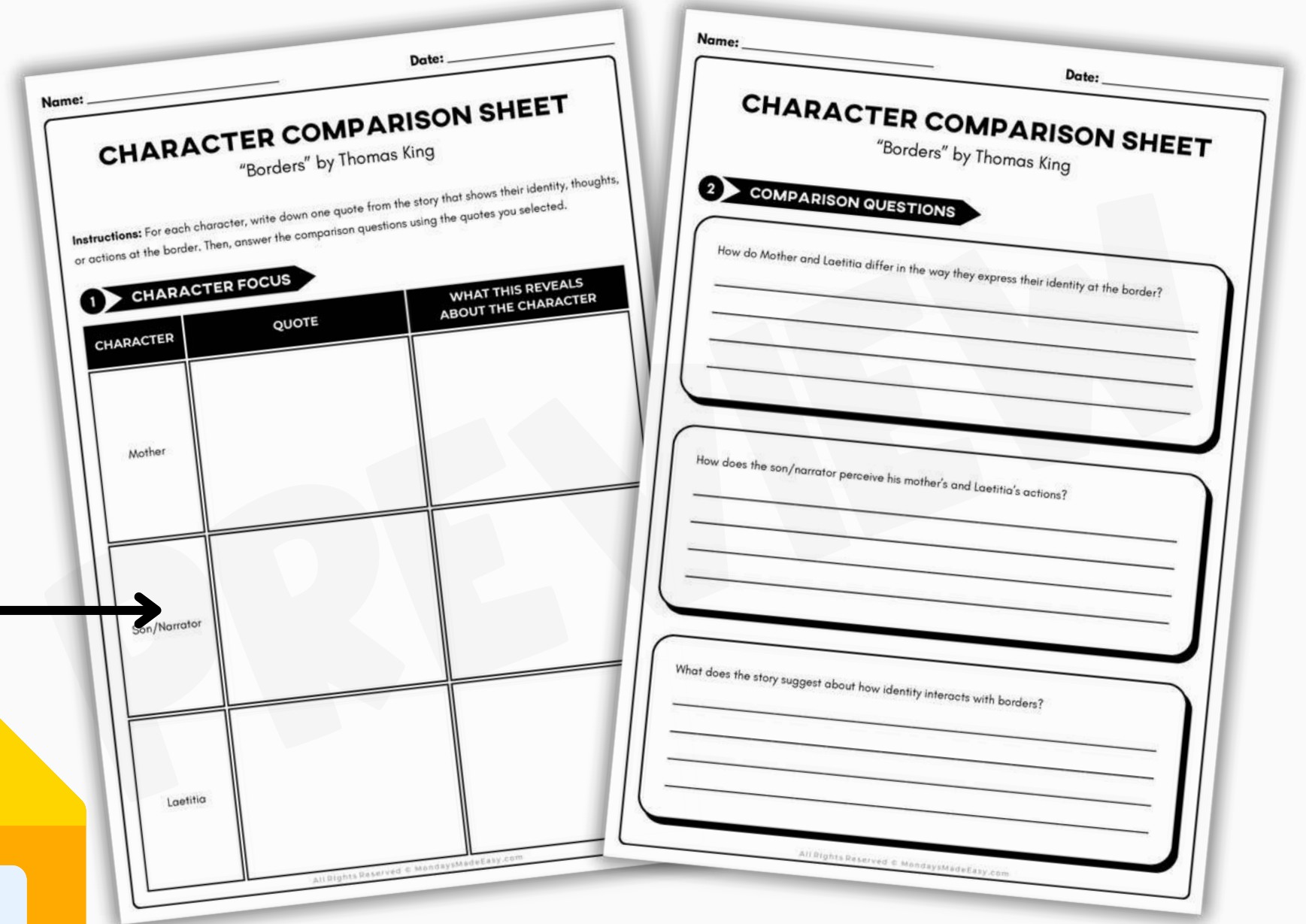
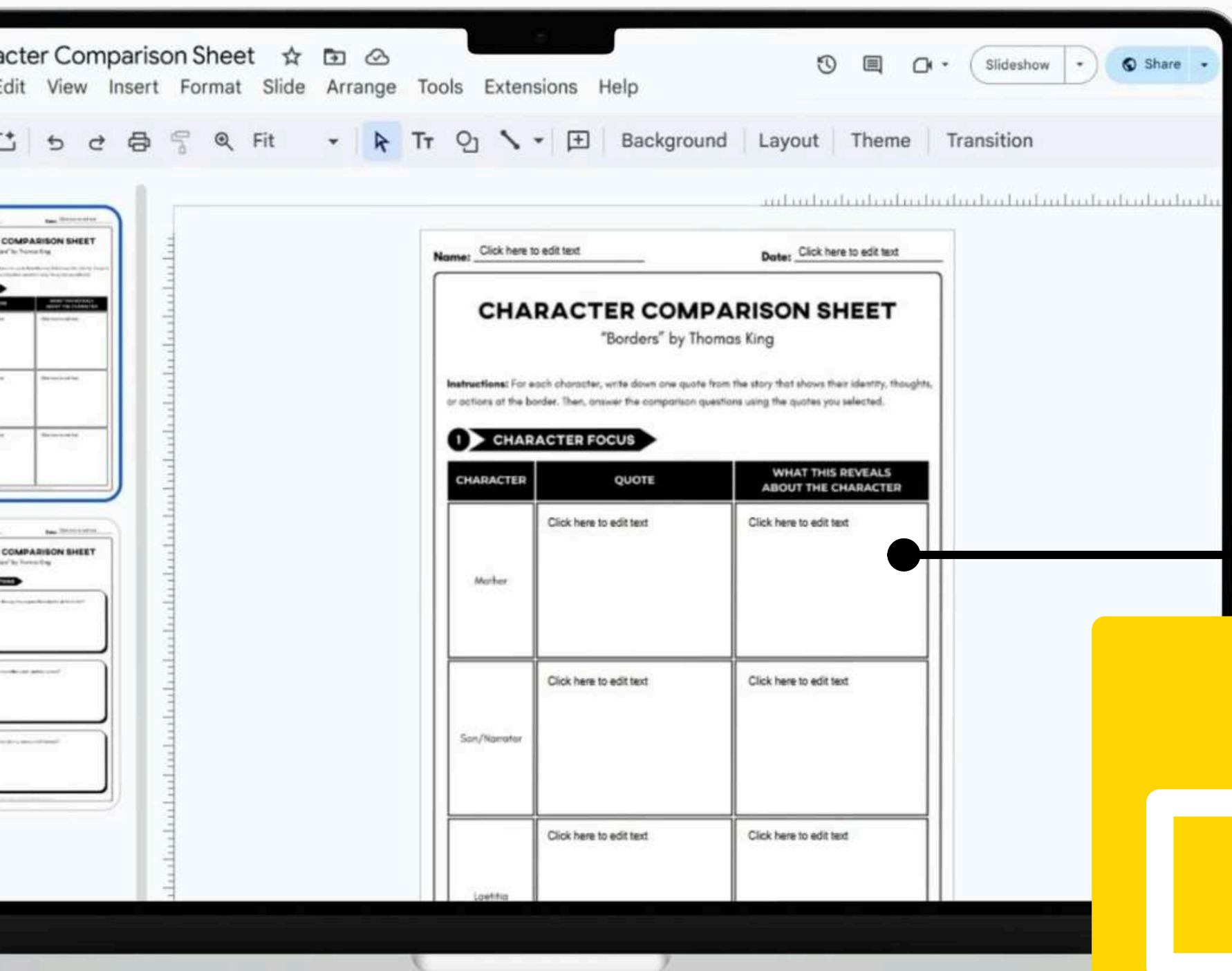
The media arrives at the border and interviews the family; Mel tells the family to not give up.

INCLUDES ANSWER KEY!

This visual format helps solidify their understanding of narrative structure and theme.

Character Comparison Activity

Help students analyze the contrasting traits, motivations, and identities of the mother and narrator in "Borders"



Locate text evidence and examine how each character responds to the story's **central conflict**

“Borders” vs. “Everyday Use” by Alice Walker

Guide students through a comparative literary analysis and encourage thoughtful discussion about identity, culture, and perspective using two popular short stories for teens

Short Passage Excerpts Analysis

File Edit View Insert Format Slide Arrange Tools Extensions Help

Background Layout Theme Transition

SHORT PASSAGE EXCERPTS ANALYSIS
"Borders" vs. "Everyday Use"

Name: Click here to edit text Date: Click here to edit text

Instructions: Read the paired passages from "Borders" by Thomas King and "Everyday Use" by Alice Walker. Then, answer the questions that follow each pair. Use text evidence to support your analysis.

IDENTITY CHOICES & PERSONAL AGENCY

"Borders" by Thomas King

"Everyday Use" by Alice Walker

1 How does each character assert control over how they are identified?
Click here to edit text

2 In what ways do these identity choices challenge authority or tradition?
Click here to edit text


3 What consequences follow from these choices in each text?
Click here to edit text

Name: _____ Date: _____

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES
"Borders" vs. "Everyday Use"

Author Information: Alice Walker

Alice Walker is an American novelist, poet, essayist, and activist, best known for her novel *The Color Purple*. She was born in Georgia and grew up in the racially segregated American South, experiences that strongly shaped her writing and worldview. Walker's work often explores themes of race, gender, identity, resilience, and social justice.



Walker is a prominent voice in contemporary American literature and has been deeply involved in civil rights and feminist movements. Her writing frequently centers on the lived experiences of Black women and highlights the effects of systemic racism and sexism. She is also credited with popularizing the term womanism, which emphasizes Black women's perspectives within feminist thought.

Throughout her career, Walker has written across genres, including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction essays. She has received numerous awards for her contributions to literature, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Her work continues to be widely studied for its emotional depth, cultural significance, and social impact.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

STORY VS. AUTHOR REFLECTION SHEET
"Borders" vs. "Everyday Use"

1 Does knowing anything about Thomas King or Alice Walker's background change how you interpret these lessons? Why or why not?

2 Do an author's experiences matter when telling a story? Why or why not?

3 How can comparing these two stories help me better understand identity and cultural belonging?

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Example Answers Provided!

News Report Writing Assignment

Invite students to retell the events of the narrator's family in "Borders" through the lens of a news report!

The collage features several overlapping documents:

- News Article Snippet:** Titled "Blackfoot Woman and Son Stranded at Border After Refusing to Deny Identity" by Liam Campbell, dated June 27, 2025. It includes a photo of a Canada-US border crossing and text describing a Blackfoot woman and her son being stranded at the border.
- Graphic Organizer:** A "NEWS REPORT GRAPHIC ORGANIZER" for Thomas King's "Borders". It has sections for WHY, HOW, LOCATION, PHOTOGRAPH DESCRIPTION, and WHEN.
- Completed News Report Example:** A finished news report for Thomas King's "Borders" that follows the structure of the graphic organizer.
- News Report Format Template:** A "News Report Format" template with sections for HEADLINE, LEAD, AUTHOR, DATE, LOCATION, PHOTOGRAPH, PHOTOGRAPH DESCRIPTION, SUPPORTING PARAGRAPHS, and CONCLUSION.

Model success criteria and expectations with this completed **news report example**

Includes Editable & Ready-to-Print 4-Level Rubrics

Modify these rubrics to meet the unique needs of your classroom

Expository News Report: 4-Level Rubric

Name: _____ Grade (%) _____

| Category | Level 1 (0-49%) | Level 2 (50-64%) | Level 3 (65-79%) | Level 4 (80-100%) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge | News report requires more important information from the short story Article does not successfully integrate textual evidence See comments below | News report highlights some important information from the short story Article integrates textual evidence with some success See comments below | News report highlights important information from the short story Article integrates relevant textual evidence successfully | News report thoroughly highlights important information from the short story Article integrates highly relevant textual evidence flawlessly |
| Inquiry | Approaching success with selection, explanation, and organization of information Limited identification of main ideas or answers to WS-H See comments below | Selection, explanation, and organization of information are somewhat successful Identifies main ideas and answers WS-H adequately See comments below | Successful selection, explanation, and organization of information Effectively identifies main ideas and answers WS-H in detail | Selection, explanation, and organization of information significantly exceeds expectations Skillfully identifies main ideas and answers WS-H in detail |
| Communication | The grammar and mechanics require improvement Image caption is limited Paragraph does not contain citations See comments below | The grammar and mechanics contain some lapses Image caption is adequate Citations are not referenced according to MLA standards See comments below | The grammar and mechanics are excellent Image caption is effective Citations are referenced successfully according to MLA standards | The grammar and mechanics are flawless Image caption is highly relevant and engaging Citations are referenced perfectly according to MLA standards |
| Application | News report requires more connection to ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Grammatical tense is incorrect See comments below | News report somewhat relates to ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Report is written in the correct grammatical tense throughout some of the report See comments below | News report incorporates information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions | News report expands on information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions |

Expository News Report: 4-Level Rubric

Name: _____ Grade (%) _____

| Category | Level 1 (0-49%) | Level 2 (50-64%) | Level 3 (65-79%) | Level 4 (80-100%) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Knowledge | News report requires more important information from the short story Article does not successfully integrate textual evidence See comments below | News report highlights some important information from the short story Article integrates textual evidence with some success See comments below | News report highlights important information from the short story Article integrates relevant textual evidence successfully | News report thoroughly highlights important information from the short story Article integrates highly relevant textual evidence flawlessly |
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| Application | News report requires more connection to ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Grammatical tense is incorrect See comments below | News report somewhat relates to ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Report is written in the correct grammatical tense throughout some of the report See comments below | News report incorporates information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Article is written in the correct grammatical tense throughout the majority of the report | News report expands on information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Article is written in the correct grammatical tense throughout the entire report |

Comments: _____



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