Feature Article

Crafting Expertise: Developing Talent in English Language Arts

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Abstract
The focus of this article is on the development of expertise in interpreting literature within English Language Arts (ELA). Experts and novices differ significantly in how they approach problems and acquire information, with experts demonstrating more sophisticated pattern recognition, nuances, and conceptual understandings and approaches than novices. The domain-specific nature of expertise necessitates deliberate practice and intentional support in developing disciplinary knowledge. In this conceptual article, we integrate understandings from the talent development and gifted education literature, the learning theory and development of expertise literature, and the literary analysis field to explore the following questions: (a) Why is the development of ELA expertise important? (b) What skills do ELA experts possess that need to be cultivated in novices? (c) What are the pedagogical implications and practices necessary for enhancing ELA talent and developing expertise across the lifespan?

Keywords
academic talent, talent development, language arts pedagogy, teaching for expertise

Experts and novices differ in their approach to solving problems and interpreting data. Experts are more likely than novices to notice patterns, organize information into concepts, recognize nuances based on context or condition, retrieve information quickly, and approach new situations with flexibility (Bransford et al., 2000; Chi et al.,1988). Experts are also more likely than novices to spend more time examining the problem before considering solutions or interpretations (Persky & Robinson, 2017). Expertise is domain-specific (Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2018; Subotnik et al., 2011). Each domain has common rules and specific funds of knowledge that require deliberate teaching and practice. As novices develop expertise, they need an introduction to acquiring content knowledge of the discipline (Bransford et al., 2000) before engaging in more advanced work. Mentor support, access to increasingly rigorous opportunities (Subotnik et al., 2011), guided practice with increasing difficulty (Ericsson & Harwell, 2019), and early immersion and access to appropriately advanced work in a field (Wai et al., 2010) contribute to the development of expertise and talent. Relatedly, in gifted education, much attention has been given to teaching students to "think like an expert" through exposure to methodologies and processes experts use within their field to solve problems (Beasley et al., 2017; Renzulli et al., 2000; Tomlinson et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important to consider the instructional approaches that build expertise in various domains of talent and to understand how experts within those specific fields think.

Although the development of expertise is more commonly studied in STEM fields, with an emphasis on enhancing the STEM pipeline, there are specific disciplinary ideas related to English Language Arts (ELA) and, in particular, literary analysis and interpretation, that can guide educators toward pedagogical practices that support talent development in this field (Reynolds & Rush, 2017). In this conceptual article, we integrate understandings from the literature on talent development, gifted education, learning theory, expertise, and the literary analysis field to explore the following questions:

1. Why is the development of ELA expertise important?
2. What skills do ELA experts possess that need to be cultivated in novices?
3. What are the pedagogical implications and practices necessary for enhancing ELA talent and developing expertise across the lifespan?

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We chose to narrow the focus of this article to interpreting literature in order to provide an in-depth analysis of this specific area of ELA expertise. We recognize that literary studies are much broader in scope.

Why is the Development of ELA Expertise Important?

In addition to critical thinking and communication skills, the bedrock of ELA skills is empathic engagement with texts, particularly in the case of the expert. As discussed in Sorrell (2014), empathy makes society work and enables the individual to navigate and foster social dynamics (Szalavitz & Perry, 2010). Human empathy evolved along with civilizations and cultures (Rifkin, 2008) and is crucial to interpersonal relationships (Decety & Cowell, 2014). According to Rifkin (2008) and de Waal (2009), empathy is a key element in moral progress, which can diminish human violence against one another (see description in Sorrell, 2014). The ELA expert cultivates empathy, which includes self-awareness, and develops enhanced communication skills that can be used to promote effective societies and moral progress. The reading and analysis of literature allows individuals to see and interpret themselves, others, society, and the shared lived experience in increasingly complex ways and through various perspectives. Deep interactions with key literary works capture emotions, struggles, elations, and dreams in ways that may not be as powerfully conveyed in other forms. Careful analysis of literature promotes engagement and perspective-taking and has the potential to shift thinking and improve society.

ELA study also stimulates the imagination, which is critical in both ethical thinking and creative problem-solving. Based on the work of Dewey and Nussbaum, Young (2009) argued that the study of literature across disciplines is extremely effective in the cultivation of ethical reasoning. Literature promotes understanding of the self and other selves living within various contexts, fostering "moral imagination to expand ourselves beyond the limits of our daily lives and to explore other models of living and other possibilities" (Young, 2009, p. 102). Literature promotes the realization that we exist in communities, contexts, ideologies, and institutions, and this moral imagination, which is closely aligned with empathy, affects how readers make ethical decisions and, indeed, assists readers in making ethical decisions that benefit more than just themselves (Young, 2009).

Imagination leads to creativity, which in turn leads to more advanced and innovative problem-solving techniques and creative productivity in a field. Creative problem-solving, a "framework which individuals or groups can use to: formulate problems, opportunities, or challenges; generate and analyze many, varied, and novel options; and plan for effective implementation of new solutions or courses of action" (Treffinger, 1995, p. 301), relies on thinking beyond established solutions and taking into consideration multiple options and a broader range of approaches to problems or situations. Creative problem-solving is inherent in ELA expertise and societal progress. Unlike the novice who finds simple or only plot-based interpretations of a text, the ELA expert approaches the text as a complicated problem and creatively solves the problem with a variety of interpretations. Literary interpretation requires detailed knowledge of numerous factors including history, cultures, contexts, institutions, other literary texts, and scientific theories and practices. The ELA expert draws on multiple sources and categories of information and then creatively synthesizes this information to arrive at novel interpretations and solutions. The creative interpretations and problem-solving in a text can be translated to societal problems and issues; fictional reading and interpretation, as explained in this article, can serve as a catalyst for creative problem-solving in life.

Cognitive psychologists and cognitive literary theorists have identified theory of mind (TOM) as a core tendency for successful reading and literary analysis skills. According to Zunshine (2006), TOM, or "mind reading" as it is commonly known, is the human ability to attribute mental states to others based on observable action and "explain their behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires" (p. 6). Excellence, as outlined in TOM, depends on awareness of one's own mental state (self-awareness), which enables and augments awareness of others' mental states. Engaging in literary study involves *pretending* that fictional characters and their mental states are real. The drive to read and engage in literary endeavors is derived, in part, by the recognition of one's own mental state and enjoyment in manipulating that mental state by pretending that fictional characters have mental states just as real people do (Carruthers, 1996).

Reading and interpretation fosters TOM by demonstrating not only social interactions in ourselves and others but also the process by which we understand those interactions (Zunshine, 2006). By making explicit the motivations that drive individual actions and social dynamics, reading develops the individual's capacity to see beyond simple motivations and discern the structures in place that influence real and fictional actions. ELA experts interpret these structures as functions of ideology and thus open up a range of possibilities in determining the meaning of a text.

What Unique Skills Do ELA Experts Possess That Need to Be Cultivated in Novices?

Literary experts possess honed skills that are carefully developed over time through experiences, exposure, and ongoing support structures. Experts have deep empathy for the characters and their plight, a keen ability and joy in reading and figuring out multiple interpretations of the text, openness to a variety of interpretations with the willingness to revisit ideas and hypotheses, an interest in how language works and the nuances of language, and a well-developed memory.

Together, these skills enhance one's ability to critically engage and interpret a text.

Empathy

An associated skill that suggests potential in ELA study is empathy. Not only is empathy an important need for societal enhancement, as previously discussed, but a heightened capacity for empathy also complements TOM in that the reader is not only aware of the mental state of a real or fictional person but is also actively feeling and experiencing with that person. This interplay of empathy with TOM helps the expert engage in meaning-making and interpretation. Bibliotherapy, or the use of books and character dilemmas and actions as part of discussions for personal reflection, has demonstrated that the study of literature produces empathy in children (McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013; Rozalski et al., 2010). Empathy enables a student to engage in critical thinking about a literary text, particularly character development and motivation, in a robust way. It keeps the student from leaping to interpretive conclusions, instead facilitating a deep engagement with a text and its possible interpretations. A capacity to empathize and a willingness to develop this capacity frees the student from purely plot-driven engagement with a text, encouraging the student to seek deeper meaning. The critical thinking skills cultivated in ELA study depend on a deep interaction with texts that goes beyond plot and simple character descriptions. Experts empathize with characters and situations in deeper ways that propel understanding.

Ability to Find Joy in Seeking Multiple Interpretations of a Text

A key emergent behavior in talented ELA students is pleasure in awareness of their own cognitive functioning. According to Tsur (1989), fictional narratives "disrupt" cognitive processes by allowing the individual to analyze mental states via pretense, and awareness of these disruptions signals that cognitive processes are working and should be developed further. A joy in reading and an awareness of the *idea* of reading are significant indicators that a student will flourish in ELA study. In addition, the play of multiple interpretations enhances the reader's joy in a text (Barthes, 1971). The novice tends to resist or ignore the possibility of multiple interpretations of character motivation, words, plot points, and narrative structure, while the expert relishes the possibilities available in the proliferation of meaning. Perspective-taking and relishing multiple interpretations are part of critical thinking.

Although we are referring to all ELA pieces as "texts" in this article, it is important to make a distinction between "works" and "texts" in terms of how individuals approach ELA pieces. Experts in ELA experience literature in a different way than novices in the field; in the terms of postmodern literary theorist Roland Barthes, experts read texts, and novices read works. Barthes (1989) wrote about the distinction between a work and text, arguing that a work is a static object while a text is an activity or an engagement with a piece as a process of interpretation and a plurality of meaning that is constantly changing. According to Barthes (1989), "[t]ext is not comprehensive (trying to define what the work 'means') but metonymic, the activity of associations, contiguities, cross references coincides with a liberation of symbolic energy" (p. 443). The work is symbolic only to the extent that the reader *decodes* it to find one meaning, typically what the author *intended*. Experiencing a work is the surface identification of plot, structure, and a general understanding of what a story or a poem is about. On the contrary, experiencing a text is engagement with the radical play of meaning across the text and its relationship with other texts, allowing the reader to transfer literary knowledge to other contexts. As such, the experience of a text requires knowledge of other texts that demands a recursive (and endless) production of meaning.

Openness to Interpretation and Ongoing Engagement With the Text

Reynolds and Rush (2017) explained the recursive and constant hypothesizing and literary dialoguing that experts demonstrate when confronted with a story or poem. Knowledge of how to read and ponder a text and the developed schema involved allows the expert to read across texts and to continuously process and explore the meaning of a text. Novices, on the contrary, read to understand on a surface level. Once they have arrived at a single interpretation of what the story or the poem *means*, they stop engaging or seeking to understand it. An emergent behavior of a talented ELA student is an interest in continuing interpretation beyond the initial meaning, which will eventually lead to engaging an ELA piece as a text.

This openness to multiple interpretations may cultivate Openness to Experience (or vice versa). Openness to Experience is a Big Five Personality trait that is well studied in the field of psychology. Abu Raya and colleagues (2023) explained that:

> openness is characterized by a person's tendency to seek out new experiences and to be willing to explore ideas, values, emotions, and sensations that differ from their previous experience or established preferences. This trait has been extensively studied in the field of personality psychology and has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes, such as increased creativity, curiosity, adaptability, mental flexibility, and acceptance of others. (para. 1)

Openness to experience is also correlated with higher intelligence, particularly in verbal domains (DeYoung et al., 2014). Environmental influences can enhance openness to experience (Rinn, 2020).

Therefore, it makes sense that openness to experience can be cultivated. An ELA expert who has a tendency toward openness to experience as a personality trait would also be more creative and open to textual interpretations and ongoing meaning-making. Openness to experience can be internal and external. For many great authors, it is about openness to internal experiences, and quite a few lived exceptionally quiet lives (e.g., Jane Austen, Emily Dickinson, and J. D. Salinger in his later years). They were open to sensory experiences, meaning that they paid close attention to the things that happened to them, however mundane; they experienced their surroundings deeply and intuitively. Yet for others like Oscar Wilde or Walter Pater, openness to experience is primarily external, as they consider a wide range of experiences essential to life and art. Both forms of openness can encourage expertise in ELA and assist the author to produce extraordinary works of literature and literary criticism.

Interest in How Language Works

Experts in ELA are often interested in not only the analysis of texts but also how language works, broadly speaking. Literary critics and philosophers such as J. L. Austin (1962) and Jacques Derrida (1976) analyze (or deconstruct, in Derrida's case) the ways that individuals use language to make meaning in the world. Novices in ELA often take a literal and incurious view of the capacities of language, assuming that language is a mirror that simply reflects thoughts, communications, and stories. The expert in ELA is aware of the role of interpretation and mediation in all levels of language use, from the simplest communications to the most complex story. Interest in word play, figures of speech, puns, and other kinds of language games often indicate a propensity for ELA skills and the potential for expertise or eminence. Peskin (1998) conducted a study comparing expert and novice textual interpretation and determined that:

> [the] experts employed productive interpretive strategies (such as using structure, rhythm, wordplay, and rhyme scheme as cues, scanning to contextualize, looking for meaning at the locus of binary oppositions, and making use of visual representations to highlight structural elements), whereas the novices used these strategies minimally. (p. 256)

As presented in Zunshine (2008), readers and people more broadly tend to engage with the world, words, and texts using an essentialist framework, or a cognitive ontology. This ontological framework categorizes concepts and limits words to single meanings that dictate the interpretation of a text. Experts in ELA encounter specific words and textual concepts in what Boyer (2001) called a counterontological framework. This framework holds open concepts and words so that multiple meanings can be interpreted across time. In other words, as described by Zunshine (2008), Atran (2002) and Boyer (2001) argued that counterontological readers encounter individual words, the concepts in a text, and the text as a whole as never fixed, and this is part of the joy in reading a text. These texts provide problems to the expert reader that will never be solved; instead, they are considered, mulled over, and worked through multiple times. These problems can be simple (character motivations) or complex (major plot developments), but the point is that they are continuously open to interpretation. For the expert in ELA, grappling with these problems can also lead to the generation of new stories that engage similarly counterontological concepts. By interpreting texts and writing new texts, the counterontological thinker (ELA expert) disturbs the cognitive ontological framework, leading to a deeper interpretive engagement and a new way of viewing the world.

Memory

The significance of memory in the development of ELA expertise and eminence cannot be understated. Of the poet and essayist, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson (in Greene, 1984)—himself one of the most accomplished writers and critics of the 18th century—wrote that Pope possessed a "great strength and exactness of memory," (p. 734) while John-Steiner (1997) reported that poets have vivid memories of their early childhood and engage in visualizing methods to cement and then draw on these memories in the exercise of their craft. As quoted in John-Steiner (1997), the English poet, Stephen Spender wrote, "[t]he poet, above all else, is a person who never forgets certain sense-impressions which he has experienced and which he can re-live again and again as though with their original freshness" (pp. 24–25). The ELA expert possesses not only an expansive memory but also the capacity to create memories in others. W. H. Auden (2022) asserted that poetry is "memorable speech," or language that incites others to remember it as an experience. By enhancing memory exercises at a young age, including autobiographical writing, memorization of texts or parts of texts, and visualization techniques to spur memory production, ELA teachers and mentors can nurture one of the key skills for success in the field of ELA.

What Are the Pedagogical Implications and Practices Necessary for Enhancing ELA Talent and Developing Expertise Across the Lifespan?

The development of expertise requires deliberate experiences and practices throughout the lifespan that build upon previously learned knowledge and support conceptual understandings in a field. Schema building with conceptual understanding, disciplinary literacy (or knowing habits and practices of a field or domain) and metacognition/self-awareness are crucial factors that distinguish novices and experts in all domains, including ELA study. In this section,

first, we examine how these broad ideas relate to developing expertise and then we focus on pedagogical strategies, models, and ideas to support talent and the development of expertise across the lifespan.

Conceptual Understandings and Schema-Building That Guide Content Acquisition

Experts have a well-developed schema, which aids in efficient recall and deeper connections to what is read and how the readings are interpreted. In ELA, expertise requires cumulative life experiences and knowledge of a wide array of texts to advance and interpret ideas. ELA experts understand and focus on how the parts contribute to the entire message, such as how deliberate word choices impact the overall text (Reynolds & Rush, 2017). Moreover, these interpretations facilitate TOM by involving multiple perspectives, multiple interpretations of character motivations, and insights into how text mirrors real life and the messages conveyed.

So, how do educators help students develop this schema? To build schema, one moves from the known to the unknown by increasing complexities (or relationships) and connecting new information to what has been previously known. These schemas are the building blocks for providing the organizational structure for mental models and more dynamic representations of how things work, especially causal relationships between concepts. Therefore, as students learn something new, their mental models change as new information is integrated (fitting new knowledge with current understanding), modified (revising the mental model to accommodate new knowledge), expanded (expanding the mental model by adding new layers of understanding), or reorganized (restructuring the mental model to align with new learning; Anderson et al., 1996; Chi et al., 1988).

To illustrate, Nelms and Segura-Totten (2019) asked faculty (experts) and students (novices) to read a biology text and explain their thought processes as they read. The researchers compared how the experts and novices read and thought about texts during and after the reading process. Experts were three times more likely to reduce cognitive load by summarizing key ideas, annotating concepts, and writing evaluative comments and connections when reading. Novices, on the other hand, would note facts while reading but omit key conceptual connections or evaluative comments (Nelms & Segura-Totten, 2019). Jeong and Kim (2022) focused on how experts and novices organize arguments and discovered that experts were more likely to begin with the conceptual claim and examine or validate the evidence (whole to part) instead of working from evidence to claim (part to whole) as the novices did.

Developing habits of ELA experts requires that educators teach for conceptual understanding and guide students to make whole-to-part connections. The use of conceptual organization is not new in gifted education. Much of the evidence-supported curriculum designed with gifted learners in mind includes conceptual understanding as a hallmark for developing expert thinking within specific disciplines (Hockett, 2009; Tomlinson et al., 2009; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2008). Teaching conceptual thinking builds schema and more complex mental models which allows for easy retrieval and processing as well as freeing mental space for deeper processing. Moreover, gifted students, being more abstract thinkers, are more likely to engage in whole to part and conceptually based thinking at faster and more frequent rates than their same grade/age counterparts (Rogers, 2007).

Disciplinary Literacy and Habits of ELA Experts

In the field of gifted education, many curriculum models emphasize the mirroring of thinking and acting like a professional in the field (e.g., the Integrated Curriculum Model by VanTassel-Baska, 1986; the Purdue Three-Stage Model by Feldhusen & Koloff, 1986; the Grid by Kaplan, 2009, the Parallel Curriculum Model by Tomlinson et al., 2009; the Multiple Menu Model by Renzulli et al., 2000). Understanding the methodologies within a field is reflected through the notion of disciplinary literacy, the deep understanding of how a domain works, and "an emphasis on the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within the disciplines" (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 8).

The purposes for how one reads, why one reads, and how one communicates and organizes information vary by domain and need to be explicitly taught. As Shanahan and Shanahan outlined:

> When reading in different content areas, historians are more likely to prioritize who wrote the text, whereas scientists and mathematicians are more likely to prioritize the content presented or the lab in which the work was created; in literature, analysts must weigh whether the content or the author (or both) remain the focus of analysis, based on accumulated knowledge and the actual text. We also believe that students would make greater progress in reading the texts of history, science, mathematics, and literature if instruction provided more explicit guidance that helped them to understand the specialized ways that literacy works in those disciplines. This approach stands in stark contrast with the more widely espoused content area reading approaches, which promote reading strategies that can be used in all disciplines rather than facilitating students' awareness of the specialized nature of literacy in each discipline. (p. 16)

When teaching for disciplinary literacy and talent development in ELA, many factors and pedagogical strategies need to be considered and outlined next. These pedagogical approaches contribute to the acquisition of complex mental models over time and enhance the transfer of knowledge and skills to other contexts (e.g., studying literature in various genres, understanding historical events with empathy, and relating thematic ideas to current world affairs; Perkins &

Salomon, 1996). As these pedagogical approaches are employed, the development and refinement of mental models are strengthened through the learner's use of self-regulated learning. Experts within various disciplines are aware of their thinking patterns; and what they do not know, while novices are not (Chi et al., 1988; Persky & Robinson, 2017).

Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching ELA in Ways That Promote Talent

Kirschner and Hendrick (2020) summarized research from Chi and Glasser's seminal work (Chi et al., 1979, 1982) and declared that "a novice is not a little expert" (p. 4). Novices need different types of pedagogical support than experts to become experts. Because experts read and interpret texts differently and have more developed schema and experience from which to build, it is not advisable to take expert models and insert them directly into K–12 classrooms, particularly without scaffolding and guided frameworks (Bransford et al., 2000; Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). Still, expert thinking and habits can be cultivated and enhanced as part of developing expertise.

If novices are not little experts, yet habits of experts can be nurtured, how do educators guide expert thinking in ELA and in particular, literary analysis and interpretation? Based on learning theories and TOM, talent in ELA can be nurtured by creating experiences that enhance self-awareness and increase complexity and cognitive demand, helping students develop new schema or build upon and expand existing schema. Access to knowledgeable others who can guide students to deeper levels of understanding, the teaching of models and frameworks that develop expert thought processes, introducing students to key works and texts in the field matched to their level and ability, and emphasizing discipline-specific pedagogy contribute to talent development in ELA. These strategies are described next.

Provide Increasingly Advanced and Complex Experiences That Build on Each Other

Novices need to be provided with increasingly more advanced experiences in which they are able to create conceptual understanding and engage in complex thinking (i.e., combining several factors into key ideas or considerations; Stambaugh & Mofield, 2022). Paul and Elder (2019) spent their careers studying how experts think. They asserted that novices need to understand the various components of thinking (i.e., implications, evidence and data, and assumptions) before they can determine how the components interact in complex ways (i.e., how the author's assumptions influence their interpretation of the evidence or implications of the situation). Therefore, to move students to more advanced levels, learning experiences must go beyond guiding students to recognize basic elements like setting or characters. A student is guided toward a more sophisticated understanding when they

examine how the setting is situated within a text in ways that impact the character's motivation, thus embedding conceptual understanding and multiple literary elements to guide the interpretation and promote self-awareness, empathy, and creative interpretation as previously discussed.

Help Students Extend Prior Knowledge

ELA experts build upon their own understandings and contexts to interpret a text. Educators can support students in these endeavors by creating context, providing opportunities for students to show prior knowledge, and intentionally guiding students toward new levels of understanding (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). The latter is critical in talent development, and in particular, gifted education, as it is unlikely that a student will fully develop talents if the learning or content does not enhance, challenge, or extend what is already known. And, as gifted learners are generally working a minimum of one to two grade levels above their current grade placement (Peters et al., 2017), curriculum and instruction must support and extend upon prior knowledge.

Students can also extend their prior knowledge and refine sophisticated mental models through deliberate practice. Deliberate practice "involves two kinds of learning: improving the skills you already have and extending the reach and range of your skills" (Ericsson et al., 2007, para. 18). Through this targeted practice, the learner recalls their existing knowledge and further refines it with a more accurate frame with new information from feedback or self-reflection of learning from mistakes. Deliberate practice automates routine tasks, thereby reducing one's cognitive load in learning something new. Such deliberate practice also supports the development of transfer of learning from one context to another (Sweller et al., 2011). Because deliberate practice involves increasing the complexity and variability of a task, it sets the stage for more flexible and versatile mental models that can be applied to various contexts. In considering how these ideas are translated to developing expertise in ELA, students might practice applying knowledge of literary analysis in different genres, write for diverse audiences and purposes, or extend the development of empathy with fictional characters to individuals in their own lives. Such transfer is possible when students have developed mental models that help them recognize patterns and organize these patterns into cohesive structures that generalize to other real-life and fictional contexts.

Interaction With Mentors and More Knowledgeable Others

Learning requires that students engage with others, particularly those who are more knowledgeable or able to guide learning or encourage deeper processing of ideas and concepts. Vygotsky (1978) explained that learning is ineffective if it does not advance one's development in ways that promote ongoing learning and engagement. Mastery of content

(what is known—the zone of actual development) is a precursor for engaging in more complex thought. The complexity of thought occurs when engaging with others who can guide advanced thinking through questioning, modeling, and support structures (i.e., what can be done with the help of others—zone of proximal development). Novices need to engage with mentors or others who can advance their thinking and promote self-regulation.

The role of the educator as a "guide on the side" does not enhance expertise or ongoing achievement in the same ways that explicit instruction and modeling with increasing levels of novelty does. As Kirschner and Hendrick (2020) explained, "one of the most common aims in education is to create so-called independent learners, however, allowing students to work independently is paradoxically probably a bad way to achieve this end" (p. 67). They argued that inquiry-based learning and independent learning that lack ongoing feedback, guidance, and modeling have been found to be less effective than explicit and guided instruction. This is particularly true when instruction is supported with time for reflection, independent thinking, discourse, and explicit feedback. So, academically advanced students who are progressing beyond novice-level learning still need structured support and explicit guidance to deepen their understanding, as long as these structures also ensure students have access to mentors or others who can support their progress.

Engaging in guided disciplinary discourse is essential. To promote healthy discourse about a text, educators can guide students to ask more questions about the text and work toward answering those questions, thus engaging in ongoing dialog with the text throughout their reading (Reynolds & Rush, 2017). They can also help students read with the goal of interpretation once comprehension is assured. Students need to understand that once they have read a text, they are just beginning the process of interpretation and may change their ideas as they read or re-read. Reynolds and Rush (2017) compared experts' and novices' textual interpretation when reading and found that experts consistently revised their hypotheses and interpretations, even after the reading was complete; they also appreciated and recognized the intentional use of words and questioned why specific word choices were made, instead of simply defining the words and moving on, as novices tended to do. These expert-like skills can be fostered with success and have shown documented learning gains (Levine & Horton, 2015), particularly through modeled and increasingly challenging demands, frameworks, and organizers, as described next.

Use Frameworks, Models, and Advance Organizers to Guide Complex Thinking

Simple tasks are single elements that reduce cognitive load, whereas complex tasks require that multiple elements be integrated in various ways (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). Stambaugh and Mofield (2022; adapting differentiation

definitions from VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005) defined complexity as adding variables and examining various relationships and interactions among the variables. The variables added depend upon the discipline and domain-specific topics for which one engages. The more complex the tasks, the more helpful visual frameworks and models become for supporting advanced thinking and reducing cognitive load (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). Often, educators ask complex questions that can guide students toward developing expertise, but may not make the process visible in a way that students can reproduce or rely upon later. As previously noted, explicit modeling of expert thinking promotes student learning. When advanced organizers and models are explicitly taught, achievement increases. For example, Levine and Horton (2015) introduced a three-step literary analysis interpretation framework to high school students and compared the students' pre- and post-interpretations and strategies with the interpretations and strategies of experts who read the same texts. Upon conclusion of the 4.5-week intervention, students were more likely to outline similar ideas and mimic the reading habits of the experts.

In another example, by consulting with content experts, Stambaugh and Mofield (2018) created a model to promote complex thinking and guide students to perceive the wholeness of a literary text (i.e., language *art*) as opposed to a focus on parts. The result was a model (see Figure 1) that was designed by interviewing literary scholars regarding the scholar's process for interpreting texts and then discussing how that process could be scaffolded for novices at various levels of developing expertise. The complexity of a literary expert's thinking was a common theme in conversations. Experts *instinctively* (after practice and guidance) know how to read a text and what to pay attention to when reading. Experts in ELA consider the interaction of multiple factors (i.e., plot/conflict, characters/ perspectives/motivation, literary devices, word use, symbols, tone, and mood) and how these factors interact in ways that promote conceptual understandings and interpretation. After interviews with these literary scholars, Figure 1, the literary analysis wheel, was created and vetted (with revisions) by ELA experts before piloting the impact of the model in classrooms.

Students can use the model to guide their thinking in examining and looking for individual elements (i.e., character motivation, setting, conflict) before combining various elements in more complex and expert ways (i.e., how does the setting impact the character's motivation and ongoing conflict that ensued?). This process allows students to build schema by connecting related concepts, identifying patterns in various texts (e.g., conflict shapes the character), and transferring these ideas to other texts, real-world contexts, or other disciplines. In pilot studies in which the literary analysis wheel was applied, academically advanced students showed gains between pretests and posttests ($d = 1.64$, Mofield & Stambaugh, 2016a; $d = 1.48$, Mofield & Stambaugh, 2016b, $d = 1.30$, Mofield & Stambaugh, 2016c;
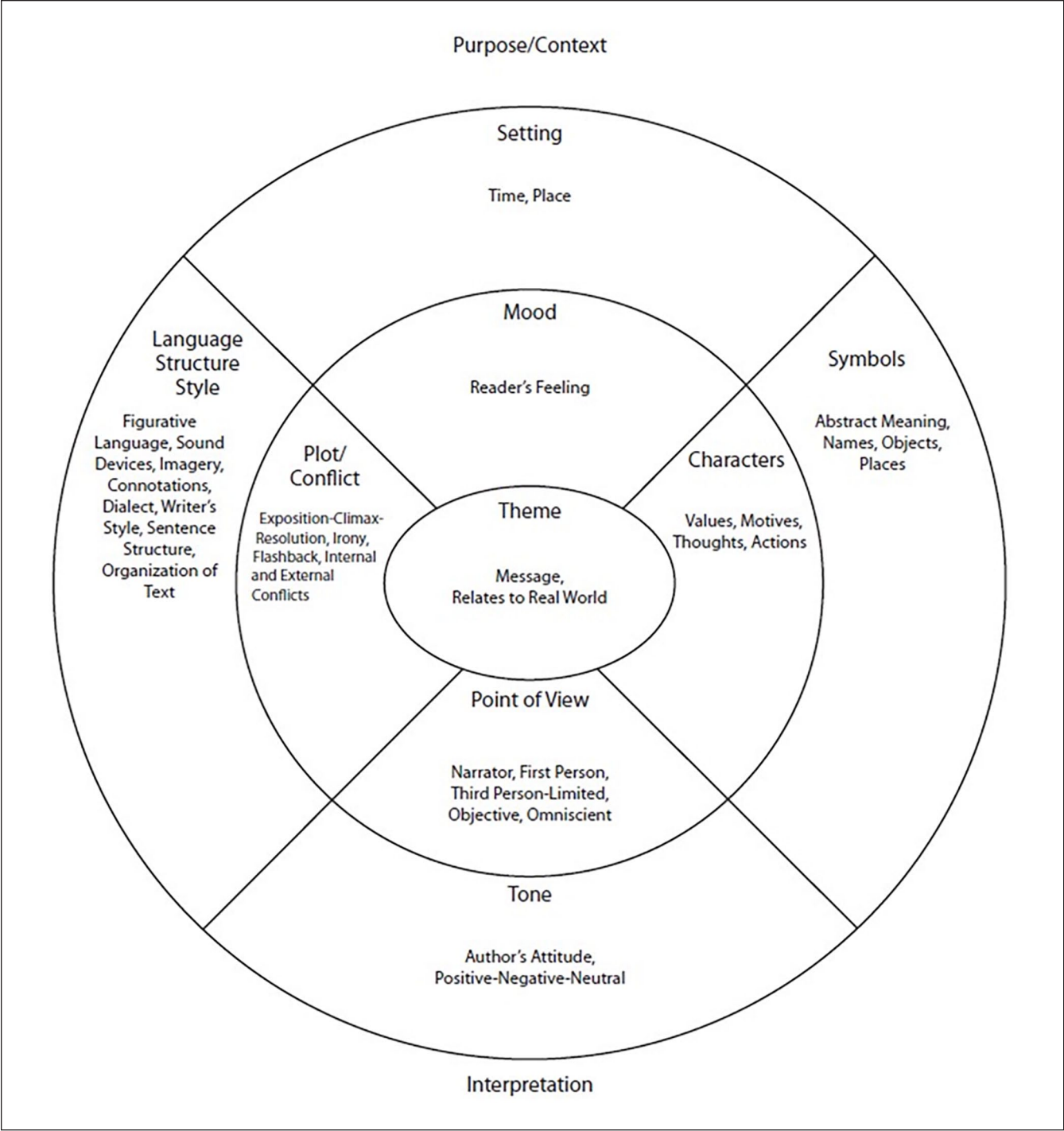
Figure 1. *Literary Analysis Wheel.*
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d = 1.10, Stambaugh & Mofield, 2018). Similar growth gains have been realized when frameworks and models are used to guide thinking in ELA. (For more information see the William & Mary ELA curriculum units; a synthesis of studies is found in Robins, 2013; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2008).

Teaching for expertise does not happen by chance but through the intentional development of educators' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). When teaching for domain-specific talent development, it is not enough that an educator knows the content of literature, nor is it enough that an educator knows instructional strategies in literacy. The intersection

of both knowledge and strategies is PCK (Shulman, 1986) and is particularly relevant in teaching students to engage with text as an expert. An educator must understand both how to effectively represent the content and how students conceptualize new learning, including any misconceptions they may have (Berry et al., 2016). Frameworks, models, and organizers can facilitate this understanding by guiding student thinking. Through explicit modeling of using the literary analysis wheel for varied levels of complexity during professional learning, educators gained skills to teach students how to mirror the thinking of experts within ELA with an emphasis on making connections among variables by scaffolding questions from more simple (single elements) to complex (multiple elements) on the wheel.

Match Works and Texts to Students' Academic Levels; Provide Access to Key Works in the Field as Students Are Ready

Gifted students tend to process information at a faster rate, develop schemas and conceptual understandings more quickly and deeply with fewer repetitions, and are likely to read and comprehend texts well beyond their typical age range. As such, literary texts need to match students' reading levels (not grade/age levels) and must include more abstract conceptual understandings and discussions. VanTassel-Baska (2017) provided criteria for selecting appropriate reading materials for academically advanced learners who show precocity in ELA. She wrote:

> As educators, we must take care in our literature selections, not only making them as personalized as possible but also ensuring that gifted students are reading texts that are challenging, interesting, and motivating enough to keep them absorbed in multiple worlds. While choice of reading is important for this population, so is quality and intellectual content. (p. 183)

When books are appropriately matched to the advanced reader, students are more likely to gain deeper conceptual understanding, recognize how interactions among multiple literary elements lead to interpretation, note patterns within and across texts, enjoy rich vocabulary and language structures, see social-emotional connections that allow for self-reflection, and understand the importance of multiple perspectives, beliefs, and cultures (VanTassel-Baska, 2017). Rich text selections are coupled with complex discussions in ways that build upon and develop additional schema, challenging and verifying assumptions and beliefs, and contributing to empathy and deeper understandings. Linking back to previous discussions about TOM, it is important to recall that for students to fully engage with a text, it has to be appropriately challenging and engaging enough to evoke empathy, encourage ongoing creativity and multiple interpretations, and incorporate vocabulary that is interesting and challenging enough to question or play.

Vygotsky's (1978) zone of actual versus proximal development is also relevant when selecting texts. A combination of appropriately matched (actual development) and slightly advanced texts that need conversation and guidance to fully process and understand (proximal development) are important for ongoing advancement in ELA. Stambaugh (2018) argued that although scaffolding is typically touted as a special education strategy, it is important for gifted students to have appropriate scaffolds as well if they are actively learning. In other words, if the content is challenging enough to promote learning (in one's zone of proximal instead of actual development) additional and advanced support structures or scaffolds/models need to be considered, particularly as the cognitive demand increases. It cannot be assumed that students with high potential and ability in ELA will automatically glean the skills necessary to learn something new or advance to increased levels of understanding and talent without deliberate instruction and ongoing feedback.

If learning is to take place, students need to engage in reading selections and discussions that are closer to their zone of proximal development and prior knowledge than their zone of actual development at key points in their learning journey. Consequently, as students progress in their development as expert readers, the types of works and texts selected for analysis become even more deliberate and increasingly important in developing literary expertise. As argued earlier in this paper, one major purpose of ELA study is to understand the lived experiences of others and to see the world through a variety of perspectives in ways that allow one to promote change. The deliberate choice of books that cultivate the beauty of language and lived experiences impacts emotions and passion and can promote a deeper understanding of perspectives.

That being said, a key element of ELA eminence is the ability to break away, to a greater or lesser extent, from the teaching and influence of mentors and previous writers. As Harold Bloom (1973) argued in *The Anxiety of Influence*, earlier masters can hamper a writer's creativity at crucial moments in the production of a text. A marker of eminence is the knowledge of when to eschew or purposely challenge the teachings or works of others and courageously voyage into uncharted waters. This requires confidence, radical creativity, and the discernment to identify moments when previous thinkers and mentors are stifling creative or analytical literary production. What we are calling radical creativity combines what Bloom calls "misprision" with the cultivated creativity fostered in ELA education. It is the capacity to intentionally misread previous masters to avoid becoming derivative or only a reflection of the great artists of the past by using multiple tools, including an advanced understanding of the play of meaning in literary analysis. The techniques for radical creativity are inherent in the capacity to formulate multiple readings of a text, specifically those that add to, critique, challenge, break with, or even denounce standard interpretations and explicit authorial intentions.

Radical creativity can assist the ELA learner to achieve expertise or eminence, while the lack of this kind of skill can limit the individual to plateau at mastery.

Include Overlapping Skills and Intentional Practices at Key Stages Across the Lifespan

The strategies discussed in this section are overlapping. Schema building, the teaching of disciplinary literacy, and the use of advanced organizers, models, and frameworks work together to create substantive and deliberate experiences that can move students to new levels of understanding and talent development in ELA. Schema theory suggests that reading and reading comprehension are interrelated practices between the reader, their experiences, and the text. An (2013) summarized the schema theory literature and explained that reading comprehension and the development of schema involves inductive and deductive reading and reasoning as interactive and complex actions; readers gain details to make interpretations while also fitting what is read into preconceived categories. These categories include formal, content, cultural, and linguistic interpretations and interactions. The formal schema is the actual rhetorical interpretation of a text (e.g., plot, character, setting, and interactions among elements). Content schema allows for an understanding of the events or references in the story, while cultural and linguistic experiences impact overall interpretations from one's perspective and prior knowledge. Therefore, educators must be cognizant of pedagogical and content interactions and how to deliberately teach in ways that enhance learning and move students to new levels of developing understanding and growth in a field.

Align Pedagogical Approaches to Talent Development Trajectories. There is little information available about specific teaching strategies regarding when or how a student must engage with texts and in what ways, if they want to achieve eminence or expertise; still, inferences can be made about activities that nurture the ongoing development of talent. Subotnik et al. (2011) synthesized the talent development literature and explained that the process begins with teaching for falling in love (exposure), then teaching for skill (and developing efficacy), and finally teaching for expertise, which may lead to eminence or creative productivity. Examples of pedagogical strategies that can be cultivated at each stage of an individual's talent development trajectory are outlined in Table 1. The actual implementation of the dose and timing of the strategy will depend upon the individual differences and readiness of students, understanding that in most instances, teaching for developing expertise in ELA can be scaffolded in the earlier grades, but is unlikely to be fully focused until students are achieving advanced levels of education such as accelerated high school courses, college, and graduate school.

Advancement in creative productivity begins in the exposure phase, as educators and mentors encourage students to create authentic products of experts in the field and introduce specific criteria for feedback and judging the quality of works and interpretation, within age-appropriate ways that promote teaching for falling in love. As students advance, their creative productions become increasingly more expert-like and similar to the larger field products that are valued and propel the field forward. Subotnik et al. (2011) discussed this little c and big c creativity; Plucker (2016) further outlined that over time, as one's creativity develops, the quantity of products, if intentionally cultivated by deliberate practice, are more likely to become quality products. One's potential is not enough for success in a field (Ericsson & Harwell, 2019; Subotnik et al., 2011). Ability intersects with one's access to ongoing and advanced learning opportunities. Psychosocial skills such as motivation, mindset, psychological strength, and perseverance play a greater role in the development of talent as one progresses in a field and these skills may determine to what extent one realizes success (Subotnik et al., 2011). Experiences, self-awareness, nurturing a love of wordplay and conversations about text, and inclusion of appropriately challenging texts that promote engagement and discourse can be motivating. Access to mentors, meaningful feedback, examining multiple perspectives and interpretations, and changing hypotheses can promote mindset and psychological strength; and, perseverance can be encouraged through ongoing engagement with increasingly challenging texts, mentor support, and product creation that mimics the field.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored the reasons for cultivating ELA expertise, the skills that need to be cultivated for expertise, and the pedagogical practices that will facilitate the development of ELA talent across the lifespan. The increasing importance of ELA skills to success in many areas of life suggests that talent development in this field is critical for all students. As educators and mentors, we can promote continual learning gains based on one's readiness and requirement for developing talent. Talent development is domain-specific and educators must approach the development of expertise in ELA with intentionality and understanding of the field. As experts differ from novices in how they approach and interpret texts, the pedagogical strategies and skills that need to be developed to move students from novices to experts and creative producers are emphasized. Nurturing talent over the lifespan as described in this article can serve as a model for ELA education and demonstrate that expertise is an ongoing process that may reach peak development later in life than other fields like sports or music. The process of development across the lifespan can be fostered through decades of education, deliberate practice, cultivation of potential, and lived experience. From the joy of the neophyte to the peak productivity of the expert, the ELA learner experiences the richness of interpretive practice that informs not only academic enterprises but also everyday life.

Table 1. Pedagogical Considerations That Enhance Talent Development Across the Lifespan.

Level	Pedagogical considerations
Teach for enjoyment (Exposure)	- Expose students to various genres and works - Create word plays and puns - Welcome a variety of ideas and interpretations of a text - Focus on comprehension and understanding - Ensure that the texts are engaging and rich in content, culture, context, concepts, and vocabulary use - Create experiences that will enhance one's world's view and perspective-taking - Include recitations of memorized portions of text to convey meaning through tone, pacing, and emphasis - Develop oral reading skills to help student internalize meaning of a text through expression of emotion and clarity - Allow opportunities for students to take on roles of characters and deeply feel or engage in the text - Engage in conversations about self-awareness - Help students develop empathy of characters and situations - Teach and develop concepts and generalizations about a text - Connect multiple texts with concepts and lived experiences
Teach to enhance advanced skills (Efficacy)	- Introduce and practice of habits of the discipline (i.e., literary dialoguing, asking and answering own questions) - Make comprehension more rote so that the emphasis can be on interpretation - Provide increasing levels of difficulty of texts, engagement with texts, and concepts close to the text and in society - Provide texts that begins with experiences familiar to the student and then shift to texts that explore increasingly different and more complex content and contexts - Continue to develop schema through advance organizers, models, language, and practices of the discipline - Provide opportunities for near and far transfer by generalizing interpretations to other contexts - Encourage interpretive and purpose driven questioning and reading of a text, including why the author word choice was selected and how interactions among variables and elements of a text contribute to one's understanding or the text interpretation (i.e., how setting contributes to the theme, or how the use of specific language enhances the character's motivation or conflict) - Teach visualization skills as part of developing memory - Read with the goal of interpretation - Help students develop perseverance and ongoing analysis that goes beyond the text or extends after reading - Model purposes for reading and how to read with a critical lens - Gradually move from interpreting works to interpreting texts - Promote creative problem-solving skills - Provide opportunities for students to build self-efficacy by engaging with challenging texts and tasks - Continue to develop experiences that deepen one's self-awareness, perspective-taking, and empathy
Teach to develop expertise (Expertise)	- Provide appropriate mentors in the discipline to guide one to specific texts, interpretations, and critical lenses - Use specific criteria in the field for judging authentic products - Guide students toward creating products such as literary critiques through a variety of critical lenses or approaches - Help students accept constructive feedback and examine their work through a critical lens - Encourage psychosocial skills such as psychological strength and overcoming criticism, mindset, openness to feedback and multiple interpretations, and ongoing perseverance and motivation - Provide opportunities for entrance into the field including interactions with other experts and submissions to key readings in the field - Expose students to literary theory - Ensure that specific texts are read and interpreted through a variety of perspectives - Encourage self-reflection throughout the process of deliberate practice of interpreting complex text, considering revision of thinking when new perspectives are introduced. - Provide opportunities for students to revisit texts multiple times considering shifts in meaning and interpretation
Find outlets for creative productivity and ongoing development (Creative Productivity)	- Enhance empathy and counterontological thinking through the lens of life experiences and personal reflections - Produce analytical and creative written work that augments interpretive skills - Work with other experts in the field to challenge and negotiate novel contributions to the field - Continue to develop and enhance skills - Engage in curiosity and creative endeavors (such a creative writing or other artistic production) that maintain one's openness to interpretations (Note: experts can sometimes get "stuck" in their own expertise) - Challenge previously held notions and prior schema - Boldly venture into radical creativity to break away from conventional approaches into novel territory of interpretation and production

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