times. Accomplished teachers demonstrate that language is an evolving human invention, and they capitalize on the language diversity in a learning environment to examine the words that constantly enter English from other languages.

Accomplished English language arts teachers understand how historical events have influenced the growth of the English language. For example, they help students explore how advancements in the field of technology have changed the language, from the printing press to modern technology, or how words from specialized fields can become part of everyday usage. Teachers might have students identify words such as “mouse” that have acquired new definitions as new technologies have been invented. Furthermore, accomplished teachers show students how English came to have abundant synonyms and how some words became taboo words while others were accepted as formal and proper. An accomplished teacher might help students understand the concept of how language changes by asking students to predict which of their own slang terms and casual expressions will find their way into the mainstream language and perhaps into the dictionary.

Accomplished English language arts teachers accept that language use and language contexts are always evolving. New words enter the language, old words develop new meanings, and grammatical structures are modified. Accomplished teachers understand that rapidly developing technology has not only resulted in the introduction of new words, but also has affected the speed with which these words become widely used in everyday language. Teachers realize that the language of youth and popular culture is rapidly spreading to the world at large. Accomplished teachers are aware of changes not only in vocabulary, but also about the alterations taking place in the use of grammar and punctuation and in what constitutes acceptable usage. For example, teachers are aware of the increasing tendency to use as verbs certain words that were once used only as nouns. Accomplished teachers welcome alterations in language as tools for teaching and deepening students’ appreciation for language’s role in communication.

Accomplished English language arts teachers use the study of literature as a natural opportunity to survey the history of the English language. By reading novels and plays, students can notice how language has shifted over time and across locations. Accomplished teachers help students learn how to read earlier forms of language and understand their social and historical contexts. For example, a teacher might have students compare the language in different translations of Beowulf.

Language in Context

Accomplished English language arts teachers recognize and value the diversity of language forms in the United States and know that dialects are richly expressive communicative tools. Teachers realize that each student speaks with a dialect that reflects a particular regional upbringing, ethnicity, occupation, age, and socioeconomic class, and teachers continually affirm their students’ entitlement to and pride in the variations of English that they and their communities employ. At the same time, accomplished teachers know that effective use of Standard English not
only facilitates oral and written communication, but also creates greater access to the economic, political, and academic advantages of society. Therefore, teachers strategically integrate the rules of grammar and usage in the language arts curriculum by showing students how to apply conventions in formal writing and speaking.

Accomplished English language arts teachers recognize that early adolescents and young adults who use a nondominant dialect frequently experience anxiety when asked to speak and write according to the more broadly accepted language conventions; students may view complying with this request as a relinquishment of their cultural identity. Teachers therefore proceed sensitively, respecting the integrity and value of their students’ home or group languages while modeling and teaching the formal conventions of English. Accomplished teachers may initially focus more on written rather than spoken language when teaching standard conventions. They know when and when not to emphasize error correction to encourage risk taking, promote a positive attitude toward learning, and facilitate students’ engagement in classroom discussions. In essence, accomplished English language arts teachers do not try to eradicate dialectal variation from their learning environments; rather, they seek to expand their students’ range of communicative competencies. (See Standard VII—Speaking and Listening.)

Accomplished English language arts teachers explain the necessity of reading the situation in which one is communicating, and they model how to select the language that suits the context. For example, a teacher might explain that it would be appropriate to employ formal language when receiving an award from a community group, persuading the school board to change the dress code, or emailing an authority figure. However, it would be acceptable to use less formal English when writing or speaking to family and friends.

Accomplished English language arts teachers expose students to many regional and global variations of English. They seek out texts that demonstrate variations in vocabulary and dialect and analyze how these differences lend authenticity and local color to the text. For example, a teacher might have students explore the way that the language used in the works of Sharon Draper, Junot Díaz, or Willa Cather conveys a sense of place and culture. Accomplished teachers may also explore fictional dialects such as those created for The Hobbit or Star Trek to examine the stereotypes and character traits that variations in speech can suggest.

Accomplished English language arts teachers discuss the emotional impact of language. For example, teachers help students see how words can cause harm to others, sometimes unintentionally. Accomplished teachers urge students to use language carefully across all contexts, from formal papers to text messages. Teachers help students understand the results, including legal consequences, of the careless or immature use of language. Teachers model for students the use of unbiased language such as gender-neutral terminology and demonstrate how to harness the power of language to effect positive change in the world. Students of accomplished teachers see language as a tool, one that can help them not only communicate fairly,
but also advocate for themselves, for others, and for their beliefs. (See Standard II—Fairness, Equity, and Diversity and Standard XII—Advocacy.)

Accomplished English language arts teachers deliberately point out examples of how and why authors use formal, informal, and inflammatory language, discussing the reasons behind these choices. For example, the characters in *The Outsiders* speak in language that some audiences find objectionable, but an accomplished teacher would sensitively point out that this language is used in the novel to convey character.

**Instructional Approaches**

Accomplished English language arts teachers make strategic decisions about which elements of language study to emphasize and how to teach them based on the backgrounds and needs of their students. Teachers possess a repertoire of instructional strategies to engage students with language—including its grammar, meaning, and conventions. Accomplished teachers guide students in the exploration of language both through planned units of study and through teachable moments that arise in all the strands of language arts.

Accomplished English language arts teachers know how to convey to students that conventions are the underlying rules of language. Teachers understand that, while isolated lessons on particular aspects of grammar and usage may occasionally be useful, the rules of grammar can most effectively be elucidated and applied in context. Accomplished teachers use formal and informal assessment methods to identify the areas where their students struggle with grammar, usage, and mechanics, and then they create planned interventions to make improvements. Teachers draw on both students’ writing and published texts that can serve as models for how to effectively use the conventions being studied. (See Standard IV—Instructional Design and Implementation and Standard X—Assessment.)

Accomplished English language arts teachers use multiple strategies for teaching vocabulary. For the most part, they approach vocabulary within the context of speech and written texts, pointing out how authors’ and speakers’ choices of words affect meaning. Teachers present a range of vocabulary strategies to help students access challenging texts and to develop precision in using English. For example, when preparing students to read an informational text, a teacher might provide students with instruction on how to use their knowledge of Latin roots and affixes to interpret technical terms. Similarly, by using literary texts as models, students can see how word choice affects meaning as well as style and tone.

Accomplished English language arts teachers incorporate resources such as newspaper reports, song lyrics, commercials, and political speeches to study the power of language. They may point out how a writer’s or speaker’s control of denotation and connotation can influence the reader or listener. For example, accomplished teachers might help students uncover examples of denotation and connotation that enhanced national propaganda in times of war, shaped nations’