1. Find one word you don’t know the meaning of and look up its definition.
2. Demonstrate evidence of a close reading (text coding and/or responses in margins).
3. Write a reflection using 7th Grade Writing Expectations in response to the following prompt:

Write a letter to your school counselor or principal advocating for or against purchasing an online-bullying system for MCMS.

**Reporting of school bullies goes high-tech**

By BRIAN BURNES The Kansas City Star 09/21/2014 9:21 PM <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article2198530.html>

Belton middle school students used to drop complaints about bullies into slotted-lid boxes bolted to hallway walls.

This year, the “Bully Boxes” are gone.

But student reporting of bullies is trending up, because Belton now subscribes to an online reporting service that allows students to call out bullies with discretion.

The Park Hill and Platte County school districts also allow students to report bullying through the online site, called Sprigeo.

“No one has to know it was you, unless you want them to know,” said Halle Reach, a Lakeview Middle School eighth-grader in the Park Hill district.

Though school bullies have been around as long as there as there have been playgrounds, administrators in the Belton and Park Hill districts believe Sprigeo can help reduce it by meeting students on their own digital turf.

Students accessing the site are prompted to click on drop-down boxes to identify locations — in the cafeteria, in the bathroom, at the bus stop — where the bullying occurred, and to name the bully and the bullied. Reports are routed within minutes to designated administrators, who can start investigating.

Just Wednesday night, James Beard, assistant principal at Belton Middle School/Freshman Center, heard his phone ding while watching the Kansas City Royals game at home. A bullying report had arrived.

“I looked at the report and this morning called in the student who submitted it,” Beard said Thursday. “Bullying is something that often occurs over time. and the middle school student often will suffer in silence. But with this service, students are reporting early and we can be more proactive.”

Administrators like Beard insist that online reporting services do not replace traditional responses to bullying, such as face-to face meetings between students and counselors. But Sprigeo allows a student to avoid the “stigma” often associated with students who, in the past, could be spotted slipping a paper report into a Bully Box.

Sprigeo is one of several online reporting services that have appeared in the last few years, said Sameer Hinduja, criminology and criminal justice professor at Florida Atlantic University and co-director of the Cyberbullying Research Center there.

While 49 states, including Missouri and Kansas, have anti-bullying statutes, 11 states also require school districts to offer websites, hotlines or texting services that allow students to report bullying anonymously. Neither Kansas nor Missouri requires districts to offer those, said Hinduja, who endorses the principal concept behind online reporting.

“Most teenagers have good hearts, want to help and are looking for a way to speak out, “ said Hinduja. “But they are also very worried about retaliation, so while they want to serve as eyes and ears they want to do so in a medium they are comfortable with.”

Kids are logging on in Belton, administrators said.

Since classes began in mid-August, middle-schoolers have submitted reports alleging 12 bullying instances.

Almost all of the reporting is being done from students’ homes, said Deanna Feeback, assistant principal of Mill Creek Upper Elementary in Belton.

That means students have had several hours to process the events and tell their parents about them.

Some bullying incidents fall into the category of “peer mistreatment,” said Feeback. In some instances — perhaps where two students will engage in an argument by text — administrators will consider bringing the two students in for a mediation session, she said. But in many cases, the bully and victim are not brought together, said Beard.

Belton students who participated in a 2012 anti-bullying summit assembled a map of Mill Creek Upper Elementary “hot spots” and listed what they sometimes witnessed.

That included “gossipy rumors” in the girls’ rest rooms, “bad language,” “name calling” and “pushing” on the bus, and “physical bullying” on the playground.

Across the country about 28 percent of students ages 12 to 18 were bullied during the 2009-2010 school year, according to federal education officials. Victims are more likely to consider suicide than nonvictims, according to studies by Yale University. A 14-year-old Florida boy who committed suicide this month in a restroom at his middle school had been bullied for years, his family said.

Though Sprigeo allows administrators to respond more rapidly, tackling the problem still relies on traditional follow-up, said Paula Fite, an associate psychology professor at the University of Kansas and an organizer of an anti-bullying conference last week in Lawrence.

“If a report has little specific detail, there will be little that an administrator can follow up on,” she said. “There needs to be information about where the incident took place and who was involved. And it has to be clear about what the bullying looked like, if somebody was threatening to take their lunch, or if it was physical.

Students reporting through Sprigeo are prompted to supply the bully’s name, the name of the person being bullied and, finally, their own name. That calls for trust that school administrators will honor the students’ anonymity.

“These systems should ask the kids for their names, because it helps the investigation process,” Hinduja said. “But we also want to remind kids that they are under no obligation to do so. We just want the information, because some information is better than not knowing anything.”

More than 1,000 school districts in 27 states now subscribe to Sprigeo, said Joe Bruzzese, a former educator who esablished the Santa Barbara, Calif.-based site. The discreet reporting may help Belton administrators make their schools safer, said Bruzzese.

“Traditional reporting about bullying has always involved a three-page report that you fill out while everyone else stands around and watches,” he said.

“A kid’s natural tendency is not to want to do that.”