Text Rationale for *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom

**Rationale:** While perhaps a bit low on lexical difficulty, *TwM* offers students an insightful, engaging, moving, and powerful portrayal of an old professor of sociology facing the great mystery of death. *TwM* allows teachers to slowly teach the art of annotating—since it does not challenge on a superficial level—and symbolism, all surrounding a deep focus on thematic topics. Students also have an opportunity to student aphorisms, allusions, and organizational structure.

**Summary:** Suffering from ALS, Morrie Schwartz, a retired professor of sociology at Brandeis University, has a chance interview with Ted Koppel on *Nightline*, which serendipitously catches the attention of sports journalist Mitch Albom, for whom Morrie had great affection as Albom’s teacher. With every weekly Tuesday visit, Albom portrays the grace and humility of Morrie through the geriatric’s insights into love, marriage, death, life, and joy. Upon Morrie’s death from ALS, Albom dedicated and wrote this short memoir to Morrie in order that others may also benefit from Morrie’s wise aphorisms.

**Merit:** The work has consistently been a bestseller for non-fiction ever since its publication. Its praises come from publications including *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*; notable literary luminaries who also extol the work include Rabbi Harold Kushner, Robert Bly, Amy Tan, Stephen Levine, and Dr. Jane Greer.

**Benefit to Students:** Every year, freshmen students nearly always name this their favorite work we have chosen to study. Seemingly simple, Albom’s lucid style belies a sophisticated organizational approach that makes the book like a classroom, led by the inimitable Morrie, its teacher; furthermore, Morrie guides the readers through a wise yet never pedantic overview of current cultures, its ills and all. As stated above, the short work offers close annotation and analysis, helping students understand that sometimes simplistic syntax can help achieve greater communicative purpose. The work also allows for a variety of expository and analytical prompts of student interest and preparation for the STAAR test.

**TEKS:**

(2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

(A) analyze how the genre of texts with similar themes shapes meaning;

(B) analyze the influence of mythic, classical and traditional literature on 20th and 21st century literature; and

(C) relate the figurative language of a literary work to its historical and cultural setting.

(6) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary
nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze how literary essays interweave personal examples and ideas with factual information to explain, present a perspective, or describe a situation or event.

(7) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the role of irony, sarcasm, and paradox in literary works.

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the controlling idea and specific purpose of an expository text and distinguish the most important from the less important details that support the author's purpose.

(15) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to:

(A) write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:

(i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;

(ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;

(iii) a controlling idea or thesis;

(iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; and

(v) relevant information and valid inferences;

Possible Objections: Perhaps the focus on death, however ennobling Albom portrays it.