Skills Focus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Strategies</td>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Direct/Indirect Objects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotation</td>
<td>Phrases</td>
<td>Infinitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepositional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clauses</td>
<td>Dependent/Subordinate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Materials and Resources
The following are websites that offer students additional practice in identifying and writing infinitive phrases:
- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_verbals.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_verbals.html)
- [http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/course/sentence/2_4d.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/course/sentence/2_4d.htm)
- [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/phrases.htm](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/phrases.htm)

Other lessons in the LTF guides which deal with infinitive phrases are
- Sentence Structure Basics
- Sentence Variations
- The Poetry of Phrases

Lesson Introduction
Infinitive phrases are introduced in the sixth grade, along with prepositional phrases. This lesson uses both literary and rhetorical texts that include many infinitive phrases for students to work with as well as activities that require students to write sentences that include infinitive phrases.

Definitions and Examples
You may want to review direct objects and prepositional phrases before asking students to complete the Middle School Activities.
Identifying and Writing Infinitive Phrases
One Skill at a Time Lesson

An infinitive is a verbal (a verb not functioning as a verb) that is easy to recognize. All infinitives begin with the word “to” and end with a verb. An infinitive phrase consists of the infinitive plus any other modifying words. Infinitives can function as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

A.
Look at the poem below, “Woman Work,” by Maya Angelou. The first stanza contains several infinitives which are bolded. Think about the effect of using these infinitives.

I’ve got the children to tend
The clothes to mend
The floor to mop
The food to shop
Then the chicken to fry 5
The baby to dry
I got company to feed
The garden to weed
I’ve got the shirts to press
The tots to dress 10
The cane to be cut
I gotta clean up this hut
Then see about the sick
And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine 15
Rain on me, rain
Fall softly, dewdrops
And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here
With your fiercest wind 20
Let me float across the sky
‘Til I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes
Cover me with white
Cold icy kisses and 25
Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone
Star shine, moon glow
You’re all that I can call my own. 30

“Woman Work”, copyright © 1978 by Maya Angelou, from AND STILL I RISE by Maya Angelou. Used by permission of Random House, Inc.
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1. List the verbs in stanza one that follow the word “to.”

2. Convert the following infinitives from the lines of the poem into the verb of the sentence. For example:
   I’ve got the children to tend becomes: I tend the children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original with infinitive</th>
<th>Revised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’ve got the children to tend</td>
<td>I tend the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clothes to mend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The floor to mop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food to shop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then the chicken to fry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The baby to dry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got company to feed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The garden to weed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve got the shirts to press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tots to dress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cane to be cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Read the first stanza aloud in its original form. Then read the revised stanza. Fill in the blanks below to explain the effect of changing the infinitives to verbs.

_Angelou uses infinitive phrases in the first stanza of “Woman Work” to _______________________. In the original form, the last word of each line is a _, _____________ emphasizing _. The repetition of _ ____________ calls attention to ______________________. In the revision, the last word of each line is _____________, taking the focus away from ______________________ and placing in on _______________________.}_
Middle School Activities:

B.
The following are lines of poetry containing infinitive phrases.

- First underline the infinitive phrase in the line of poetry.
- Then fill in the blanks, substituting your own infinitives and other elements to create your own line of poetry.

1. To see a world in a grain of sand— from “Auguries of Innocence,” William Blake
   
   To _______ in a _______ of ________.

2. Three fields to cross till a farm appears –from “Meeting at Night,” Robert Browning
   
   Three _______ to _______ till ________

3. To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees—from “To Autumn,” John Keats
   
   To _______ with _______ the ________

4. How dull it is to pause, to make an end
   
   To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
   
   As though to breathe were life!—from “Ulysses,” Alfred, Lord Tennyson

   How dull it is to _______ , to _______

   To _______ not to _______

   As though to _______ were life!

5. To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.—from “Ulysses”
   
   To _______ , to _______ , and not _______

6. The mermaids in the basement
   
   Came out to look at me—Emily Dickinson

   The _______ in the _______

   Came out to _______ at _______
C. 

- Fill in the blanks with infinitive phrases.
- Try to add modifiers such as direct objects and prepositional phrases onto the “to + verb” construction.
- The first one is done as an example.

1. I want to finish this exercise in a few minutes. 
   - infinitive
   - direct object
   - prepositional phrase
   (all parts together create the infinitive phrase)

2. I need to
   - infinitive
   - direct object
   - prepositional phrase

3. I like to
   - infinitive
   - direct object
   - prepositional phrase

4. I have to
   - infinitive
   - direct object
   - prepositional phrase

5. I plan to
   - infinitive
   - direct object
   - prepositional phrase

Notice that in each of these sentences, the infinitive phrase is functioning as the direct object. The infinitive itself can also have a direct object (exercise), as in example #1 above.

- Now complete the sentence using an infinitive phrase as the subject of the sentence.
- The first one has been done for you.
- Try to add direct objects and dependent clauses to your sentences.

1. To love others as you love yourself is a noble lifelong goal. 
   - infinitive
   - direct object
   - dependent clause

“To love others as you love yourself” is the infinitive phrase functioning as the subject of the sentence. Notice that the infinitive phrase may contain other modifiers such as direct objects and dependent clauses.

2. To ______ is ___________________________ what I want out of life.

3. To ___________________________ is my favorite activity.

3. To ______ is ___________________________ a perfect example of foolish behavior.

4. To ______ is ___________________________ every teenager’s dream.
D.

“To” can be used to introduce both prepositional phrases and infinitive phrases. The difference is that a prepositional phrase contains a preposition and a noun (or pronoun) but NO verb. An infinitive is created with the word “to” plus a VERB. An infinitive phrase may contain a noun but a prepositional phrase never contains a verb.

- Read the following excerpt from Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Speech.
- Phrases from the speech containing the word “to” are highlighted and each is numbered.
- In the activity below the speech, circle the word preposition if the “to” phrase is a prepositional phrase. If the phrase is an infinitive, circle the word infinitive and write the verb from the phrase in the blank.

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office (1), there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued (2), seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public (3) as to myself (4); and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all (5). With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it (6) is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war (7). All dreaded it—all sought to avert it (8). While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war (9), insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war (10)—seeking to dissolve the Union (11), and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.”

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right (12), let us strive on to finish the work we are in (13); to bind up the nation’s wounds (14); to care for him who shall have borne the battle (15), and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations (16).

1. preposition  infinitive  
   ________________________________  (verb)

2. preposition  infinitive  
   ________________________________  (verb)

3. preposition  infinitive  
   ________________________________  (verb)
Identifying and Writing Infinitive Phrases
One Skill at a Time Lesson

4. preposition infinitive (verb)
5. preposition infinitive (verb)
6. preposition infinitive (verb)
7. preposition infinitive (verb)
8. preposition infinitive (verb)
9. preposition infinitive (verb)
10. preposition infinitive (verb)
11. preposition infinitive (verb)
12. preposition infinitive (verb)
13. preposition infinitive (verb)
14. preposition infinitive (verb)
15. preposition infinitive (verb)
16. preposition infinitive (verb)

Look again at the last paragraph of the speech. List the infinitives from that paragraph in the blanks below:

to __________ , to __________ , to __________ , to __________ , to __________ .

What effect do you think Lincoln intended to achieve by using all these infinitives at the end of his speech? What was his purpose?

Write three or four sentences that explain how the infinitives help Lincoln achieve his purpose.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________