

Unit 6: Opinion Essay (4 weeks)
Rationale
<i>Why is this unit important and appropriate for this grade level and at this time of the year?</i>
<p>During this unit, students will build upon their knowledge of opinion writing and paragraphing. In this unit, students will use their ability to craft a paragraph to compose a longer, more sophisticated piece of writing in the form of an essay. Students will use the essay genre to craft opinion pieces about a topic. Students will research their topic, develop a claim and craft an essay with supporting evidence in a clear and concise manner.</p>
Learning Outcomes
<i>What do we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit?</i>
<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft an essay with an introduction, body, and conclusion • Write about a topic that is personally meaningful, and that they have an opinion about • Develop a claim • Research topic to gather reasons and evidence to support the claim • Use a variety of craft strategies to enhance the piece • Cite sources (text, graphics, images) using EasyBib
Minilessons/Notes/Tips
<i>What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?</i>
<p>Possible Minilessons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using mentor personal essay texts (including student samples) to identify the components/structure of the personal essay • Generating and charting ideas for essays <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Think about life experiences by rereading writer's notebook ○ Think about current events/hot topics (Time for Kids, newspapers, radio) ○ Revisiting familiar read alouds, shared reading, independent reading texts and making a list of social issues and/or themes ○ Taking a familiar object/person/place and jotting down big ideas the writer has related to that object/person/place • Using strategies to elaborate thinking on ideas captured in notebook entries (students can use these prompts to write and/or to talk with a writing partner as a way to try out possible ideas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is important because... ○ This makes me realize... ○ To add on... ○ The surprising thing about this... • Modeling a variety of strategies writers can use to think and grow compelling ideas in their writer's notebook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Write many entries to try out possible ideas (these are not mini essays but rather entries about possible ideas) • Choosing an idea and writing it as a claim (study mentor authors) • Taking a stance about a topic and having one's opinion reflected in the thesis statement

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- Planning the essay by listing reasons for the claim/thesis with each reason serving as a topic sentence for another portion (paragraph) of the essay
 - Restating claim over and over, each time using the same transitional words such as “because” followed by a reason will help writer choose reasons that support the claim/thesis (e.g., The Dominican Republic feels like home because...my friends are there. The Dominican Republic feels like home because...my cousins are there. The Dominican Republic feels like home because...my roots are there.)
- Developing two-four congruent topic sentences/reasons to support the thesis/claim
- Gathering evidence to support topic sentences using a range of research techniques
 - Using interviews
 - Using quotes
 - Using facts from primary and/or secondary sources
 - Using observation
 - Using statistics from articles, a poll, a survey conducted
- Gathering several examples/pieces of evidence to support each reason (keeping track of each on an index card, placing index card into envelope of corresponding reason, see notes/tips)
- Noticing what reasons need to be further supported (lay out index cards for each reason) and gather necessary research
- Crafting two-four supporting paragraphs with a topic sentence and supporting details using evidence/research gathered
- Writing an introductory paragraph which introduces the opinion and briefly states the arguments
- Writing a concluding paragraph
 - Summarizing claim
 - Including personal reflection, reaction
- Using linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons
 - And
 - Thus
 - Because
 - Therefore
 - Since
 - For example,
 - Furthermore
- Using a variety of craft elements to revise and enhance piece
 - Using precise word choice (Tier 2 Academic Vocabulary and Tier 3 domain specific vocabulary)
 - Using varied sentence structure
 - Using varied sentence length
 - Using voice to convey writer’s point of view
- Editing writing to reflect grade level expectations for grammar, punctuation, capitalization (see Common Core Language Standards)

Notes/Tips:

- ***By this time of the year, students should be writing independently for 40+ minutes.***
- To plan for whole group, small group, and individualized conferences, teachers assess students before this unit begins with an on demand writing assessment.
- On Demand Writing #2: Prior to beginning the unit the teacher will administer an on demand writing piece to assess students’ ability of opinion writing. Over the course of two consecutive writing workshops students will independently compose a piece that reflects the writing process and opinion writing. One option is for teachers to have students independently read an article (on controversial topic) and have students compose an opinion piece based upon the topic of the article. Another option is for the teacher to read aloud (or have students read independently) a short story (e.g., Cynthia Rylant’s *Every Living Thing*, Eve Bunting’s *Fly Away*) and write an opinion piece about the text (character, topic, message). The teacher assesses the on demand writing pieces to identify the strategies students possess about opinion writing and areas for instruction. Resources to guide assessment can be found in the District Literacy Binder. Data collected is used to plan whole class, small group and individualized instruction in the opinion essay writing unit of study.
- Students should be encouraged to continue writing in their notebooks after meeting the goal of

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the day's lesson.

- Students should take home their notebook nightly to practice the strategies previously taught and to accumulate entries.
- Meet with guided writing groups consistently as a way to differentiate writing instruction.
- Students edit their pieces daily. Refer to the District Conventions Continuum to determine appropriate convention objectives (punctuation, capitalization, syntax) to teach during the unit. Copies are available in the grade level literacy binders and on the district website http://ww3.mamkschools.org/ela/Units_of_Study.html.
- This unit includes information, fluency and technology learning outcomes that naturally lend themselves to a collaboration between classroom and library.
- It is important to implement shared writing into the instructional schedule for the intermediate grades. By having shared writing 2-3 days a week, teachers are able to model for students the type of writing that will be discussed during workshop minilessons. During a series of shared writing sessions the teacher can model and scribe a class essay - growing compelling ideas of essays, strategies for elaborating thinking, choosing an idea and writing it as a thesis, building the structure of the essay, gathering material (evidence) for an essay, drafting and revising an essay. The teacher can use the class essay as a mentor text in workshop minilessons to model the various teaching points.
- The genre of essay will be new for many students. Therefore, it is critical that teachers collect a variety of examples and immerse students in analyzing, annotating and discussing the genre.
- Use shared reading to expose students to sample essays. Color coding and labeling each section of the shared piece will help students see the different components of the essay.
- Teachers can make the process tactile for students by using envelopes and index cards as an organizational tool. Students write the topic sentence for each of their three arguments on the front of an envelope. They use index cards to record the different research/examples they gather to support their supporting statements. Once evidence (e.g., quotes from an interview, statistics from a survey) is jotted on an index card, the card is placed in the appropriate folder. As students continue to research and collect evidence for the various supporting statements they are able to easily see which arguments need additional support by laying out the index cards for each statement. This method is also helpful to students because they can construct their essay by laying out the envelopes and index cards as a prewriting exercise before beginning to draft their essay.
- Students are encouraged to publish writing using word processing tools such as Word or other online publishing tools.
- **To view Grade 3 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 3 reading/writing page. Select “Resources” from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/.**
- To view sample unit specific anchor charts for various units of study in reading and writing use the following link: <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-charts/third-eighth-grade.html>
- To view samples of student writing across genres and grade levels use the link. <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/student-writing/third-grade.html>. For additional samples of student writing view the Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grades 3-5 by Lucy Calkins and Kathy Collins (Resources For Teaching Writing CD-ROM) and the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grade 3* by Lucy Calkins et al.

Professional Resources

What professional resources will be helpful in planning the unit?

- *The Common Core Writing Book* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grade 3* by Lucy Calkins et al
- *Units of Study for Teaching Writing: Grade 3-5* by Lucy Calkins and Cory Gillette (Breathing Life into Essays, Volume 3)
- *Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grades 3-5* by Lucy Calkins and Medea McEvoy (Literary Essays: Writing About Reading, Volume 5)
- *The No-Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing* by Judy Davis and Sharon Hill
- *Study Driven* by Katie Wood Ray
- *Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poem* by Donald Graves
- *Writing About Reading* by Janet Angelillo
- *Guided Writing: Practical Lessons, Powerful Results* by Lori D. Oczkus
- http://ww3.mamkschools.org/ela/Units_of_Study.html (See the District Conventions Continuum)