

Unit 3: Narrative Nonfiction: Spotlight on Questioning (3 weeks)

Rationale

Why is this unit important and appropriate for this grade level and at this time of the year?

Narrative nonfiction is a unique genre that requires a different approach than expository nonfiction. Students need explicit instruction in the structures and features of this genre so that they can effectively read, understand, and gather information. Students will transfer their skills of analyzing character from fiction texts (learned in the previous unit) to narrative nonfiction texts during this unit.

Learning Outcomes

What do we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit?

Students will:

- Identify the similarities and differences between expository and narrative non-fiction
- Demonstrate an understanding of the structure and features of narrative nonfiction and how a reader approaches this genre of nonfiction differently than expository nonfiction
- Use explicit information learned from narrative non-fiction text to infer the importance of the person or event which is highlighted
- Use questioning before, during, and after reading to expand comprehension of the text

Minilessons/Notes/Tips

What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?

Possible Minilessons:

- Noticing the features and structure of narrative nonfiction
 - Divide up nonfiction texts from classroom library into two piles: one pile of true stories (narrative nonfiction) and one pile of all about texts (little courses on topics)
- Exploring narrative and expository nonfiction texts to create a T-chart listing similarities and differences
- Exploring how readers read an entire narrative nonfiction text in order to learn what the author wants to teach, not to answer a specific question or to mine for an interesting fact
- Noticing how narrative nonfiction follows a structure similar to fiction
- Noticing that narrative nonfiction teaches both information and ideas
- Recognizing that most narrative nonfiction focuses on
 - The goals and struggles of a central character (which could be an animal or object)
 - That the text conveys an underlying idea
 - That many narrative nonfiction texts culminate in an achievement or disaster
- Activating prior knowledge and generating questions about a topic before reading to learn new information
- Recognizing the important events, decisions, and obstacles in a character's life
- Determining what important events and decisions reveal about a character
- Inferring the "big idea" lessons of a text
 - Making inferential retellings of texts read by first responding to the prompt
 - "This text (or this part of the text) is mostly about..." and then to make it a more inferential retelling adding, "And the big new thing it teaches me is..." or "And the big way this adds to what I already knew about this subject is..."
- Using tools (e.g., Post-its, graphic organizers) to track learning as the narrative progresses

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- Developing theories about the characters in narrative nonfiction
- Asking questions-taking on an inquiry stance to guide reading
- Wondering as new information is learned
- Listing and categorizing questions
- Noticing that some questions are answered in the text and others are not
- Differentiating between thick global questions and thin clarification questions
- Celebrating the end of the unit. Possibilities may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Students share the clues they use to determine if a text is expository or non narrative nonfiction.
 - Students share how they use the text structure to read an expository text and compare/contrast that with how they use text structure to read a narrative nonfiction text.
 - Have students complete a narrative nonfiction study reflection. (What did you learn about reading nonfiction that you did not know before? How can you apply what you have learned about reading narrative nonfiction to all of your reading? Be as specific as possible.)

Notes/Tips:

- **Students should build reading stamina by reading independently for a minimum of 45 minutes.**
- During read aloud and shared reading expose students to texts that range in genre (fiction, expository nonfiction, narrative nonfiction, poetry, etc.).
- Read aloud and shared reading provide daily opportunities for students to turn and talk which will prepare them for engaging in conversations about texts read with reading partners and book club members.
- Meet with guided reading groups consistently as a way to differentiate reading instruction for all students.
- Many students' independent reading level for nonfiction texts will be slightly lower than their fiction independent reading level.
- Collect a variety nonfiction texts that reflect the reading levels of students. Divide into piles based on how those texts are put together you will end up with two piles. One pile will be true stories (narrative nonfiction) and one pile will be all about texts (little courses on one topic). Readers read these two types of texts in very different ways. With narrative nonfiction, for example, readers read it like narrative fiction – a story. “When we know we have narrative nonfiction in our hands, we know we can read it like narrative fiction. A story is a story is a story.” (Lucy Calkins)
- If the narrative nonfiction texts students have access to are short, they should spend a portion of their independent reading time reading narrative nonfiction. The rest of the time should be spent reading their just right books.
- It is crucial for teachers to collect a set of narrative nonfiction texts for students to explore during this unit. Most classroom libraries have many books of this genre hiding in the nonfiction section. Also, explore the list of leveled narrative nonfiction texts using the link below to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, Columbia University website. Building librarians are another great resource for texts that students can read for independent reading. Recommended titles of picture books for the unit include *Cactus Hotel*, *Wilma Unlimited*, *Owen and Mzee*, *Tarra and Bella*, *Koko's Kitten*, *Suryia and Roscoe*, *Who Is Series*, *DK Readers* (King Tut's Tomb, Disasters At Sea) and other similar type texts. There are archived narrative nonfiction short typed texts available on the district website. To access the articles login to eChalk, select Grade 4 ELA Resources, choose the related folder.
- Texts selected for students must be: at difficulty levels where students can read with fluency, comprehension, and accuracy, highly engaging, varied enough to allow students to have some choice over what topics they read about.
- It is helpful if students have time to work with partners every few days as a way to synthesize their learning and teach their partner about the topic being studied. When partners read about a similar topic they are able to work collaboratively to develop an inquiry stance which often results in increased student engagement, motivation and learning.
- Teachers should confer into partnerships to support the strategies the students are learning and practicing.
- The comprehension strategies should be modeled during read aloud and shared reading as well as during the workshop minilessons.
- To view recommended genre specific texts for read aloud and independent reading use the following link <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-libraries.html>.
- **To view Grade 4 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 4 reading/writing page. Select “Resources” from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link**

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http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/.

- Additional resources of sample anchor charts for reading and writing units of study include the following: <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-charts/third-eighth-grade.html>.

Professional Resources

What professional resources will be helpful in planning the unit?

- *The Common Core Lesson Book K-5* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis
- *The Comprehension Toolkit* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (Strategy Guide 3 Ask Questions)
- *The Comprehension Toolkit 3-6: A Source Book of Short Text* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis
- *Toolkit Texts: Grades 4-5: Short Nonfiction for Guided and Independent Practice* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (Supplementary guide of articles for Grades 2-3 is also available.)
- *Nonfiction Matters* by Stephanie Harvey (Chapter 3)
- *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project 4th Grade Reading Curriculum Calendar 2010-2011*
- *Units of Study in Reading* by Lucy Calkins and Kathleen Tolan (Navigating Nonfiction in Narrative and Hybrid Text, Volume 2)
- *Teaching for Comprehension and Fluency* by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell
- *The Next Step in Guided Reading: Focused Assessments and Targeted Lessons for Helping Every Student Become a Better Reader* by Jan Richardson