

Unit 5: Nonfiction: Spotlight on Determining Importance and Synthesis (6 weeks)

Rationale

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

As students continue to gain proficiency reading nonfiction texts, their ability to determine importance and synthesize as they read and reflect must also become more sophisticated. Students will approach texts efficiently if they learn to use text features, white space, and transitional phrases to determine what matters most in a sea of raw information.

Learning Outcomes

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

Students will:

- Use a variety of strategies to preview texts
- Access their prior knowledge about the topic and the structure of the genre to get ready to read a nonfiction text
- Synthesize information presented in nonfiction texts
- Determine the importance of ideas in the text to identify and support the main idea

Minilessons/Notes/Tips

What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?

Possible Minilessons:

- Reviewing features and their purpose(s) of expository texts
- Reviewing varying structures of expository texts
- Accessing prior knowledge about a topic before beginning a new text
- Noticing and using headings, subheading, font differences and other visual cues to preview texts
- Anticipating how the text might go and what the text might be trying to teach the reader to preview texts
- Predicting content by accessing prior knowledge
 - What do I *think* I know about this topic?
 - Will this text have the usual categories (body parts, eating habits, predators, etc.) of information about the topic?
 - What do I think I'll learn about the topic?
- Modeling the ongoing practice of confirming, revising, and adding to initial expectations of the text while reading on
- Using a variety of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words
 - Substitute the hard word with a synonym and then read on to see if it makes sense
 - Break up the word into its root, prefix and/or suffix
 - Read on to see if the word is defined in the follow up sentence
 - Use the text features (e.g., illustration, timelines, charts, maps, quotes, photographs) for clues and explanations of difficult words or concepts in texts
 - Use technical content specific words in jottings and in conversations with partners as a way to take ownership of these words
- Checking what was read against expectations for predictions about what would be in the text
 - What I thought I would read and learn about was...but what I actually learned about was...
- Modeling reading a mentor text searching for main idea and supporting details
- Finding important information rather than just one main idea

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- Using a graphic organizer to identify the main idea and supporting details
 - Notice the boxes and bullets infrastructure of expository text
 - Ascertain the main idea (box) and the supporting details (bullets)
- Breaking text into chunks and identifying what that part was teaching the reader
 - After reading a chunk, ask and jot down on a Post-it, "This part teaches me..."
- Discussing, "What is the one main idea this part of the text is teaching and how do the supporting details connect?"
 - As reader reads across a book look across the main ideas of chunks or sections and ask, "How does this all fit together?"
- Looking for a stand-out sentence that summarizes the content of a passage, which may or may not be the first sentence
- Identifying when paragraphs build on previous paragraphs and when they present new information
- Synthesizing learning by working with a partner and teaching them, create a "Tips for Teaching Your Partner" anchor chart
 - Point out the details in the pictures or diagrams that highlight what you are saying
 - Link previous learning to the new information that you just encountered by flipping back and forth to show pictures that build off of each other and by explaining how those pieces go together
 - Add gestures to your explanations and use your voice to emphasize what's important
 - Act out what you have learned and invite your partner to join in
- Celebrating the end of the unit. Possibilities may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Students reflect and respond to the prompt, What are you learning about yourself as a reader?
 - Students will write a brief piece about a topic they have read across a series of texts. The piece would require the student demonstrate the strategies of determining importance and synthesis.
 - Students who read about similar topics gather together to share their new learning.
 - Students work in small groups and take turns teaching one another about their topic.
 - Have students complete a 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 nonfiction to all of your reading? Be as specific as possible. How can you apply what you have learned about reading nonfiction to the nonfiction you write? Be as specific as possible.)

Notes/Tips:

- ***Students should maintain stamina by continuing to read independently for a minimum of 45 minutes.***
- It will be important to share a range of nonfiction texts during read aloud and shared reading to provide opportunities for students to determine importance and synthesize new learning with teacher and peer support. When selecting texts make sure to choose those that vary in structure. Another consideration in choosing texts is to link to the parallel social studies/science units of study.
- To view recommended genre specific texts for read aloud and independent reading use the following link <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-libraries.html>.
- Many teachers chose to read aloud and have students independently read texts about explorers as a way to connect the reading and social studies units of study. (In one fourth grade class, the teacher read aloud *I, Columbus: My Journal 1492-1493* by Peter Roop and Connie Roop. This text also served as a mentor text for the parallel writing unit of study (Inquiry) during which students published research based journals about an explorer (e.g., Henry Hudson, Adrian Block). The mentor text was used as a read aloud to model the reading strategies nonfiction readers use. The mentor text was used in writing workshop to model the genre of journals. The mentor text was also used by the teacher and students to create a class rubric for the student research journals. Criteria for journals included a prologue, epilogue and minimum of ten journal entries. The criteria also specified that five of the ten entries must be detailed and at least two entries must have important events from the explorers journey.
- 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.
- Students should spend time reading nonfiction texts (20-25 minutes) as well time reading just right chapter books daily during independent reading to maintain reading stamina.

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- Some teachers merge this unit with the class' work around a content area theme.
- Nonfiction picture books are recommended for read aloud and shared reading.
- When reading aloud the teacher will use his/her voice to help students understand the structure of expository texts. Use intonation to emphasize main ideas and vary intonation where supporting details appear.
- During several different read-alouds and shared reading sessions model using the boxes bullets structure. Use a graphic organizer (or other tool) to record the main idea and supporting details. For example:
 - Owls don't build their own nests
 - They move into abandoned nests.
 - They live in holes in the ground.
 - They live in holes in trees.
- Allow opportunities for students to act out new learning as they explain information to partners during read-alouds and shared reading.
- Students also benefit from opportunities to stop and sketch as the teacher reads aloud, adding to the sketch as new information is gleaned from the text. Sketching prompts students to visualize, infer and
- Guided reading groups meet frequently to promote differentiation of reading instruction.
 - Use nonfiction texts in guided reading to support students.
 - Have students read articles as well as texts. In addition to the Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis articles (see professional resources) there are archived nonfiction articles (e.g., Time for Kids) available on the district website. There are also a host of articles available on the district online databases (e.g., Searchasaurus, Pebble Go, World Book Online, Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia). To access online databases login to eChalk, select My Account, click on Applications.
 - Other websites that have articles for students to use for guided reading and independent reading include the following sites:
 - www.kidshealth.org
 - www.nationalgeographic.com
 - www.sikids.com
 - www.stonesoup.com
 - www.timeforkids.com (Archived articles are available on eChalk)
 - www.worldkidmag.com
 - www.zoobooks.com
 - www.sciencenewsforkids.org
 - www.readworks.org
- Teachers College has compiled a wealth of social studies resources that teachers use during the nonfiction and historical fiction units of study. The social studies resources include the following: annotated list of museums and historical archives, list with direct links of recommended magazines. To view resources use the link <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/social-studies-resources.html>. Teachers College has also gathered text sets around time periods students are learning about as part of the social studies curriculum. To support students in doing cross-genre, cross-text work and have texts available for independent reading during the nonfiction and/or historical fiction units of study use the link <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-libraries/text-sets.html>.
- Teachers are encouraged to share copies of short typed texts they use for shared reading and/or independent reading with district colleagues. To share/view texts go to eChalk.
- **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 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
- *Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project 4th Grade Reading Curriculum Calendar*
- *Units of Study in Reading* by Lucy Calkins and Kathleen Tolan (Navigating Nonfiction in Expository Text: Determining Importance and Synthesizing, Volume 1)
- *The Comprehension Toolkit* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (Determining Importance, Book 5)
- *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
- *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis
- *Fourth Grade Readers: Units of Study to Help* by Martha Heller-Winokur and Marcia Uretsky (Chapter 3)
- *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