

UNITS of STUDY READING

PILOTED BY
3,000+
TEACHERS

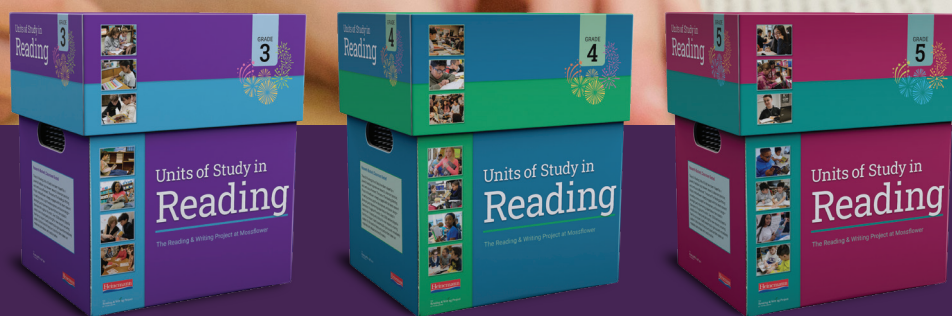
GRADES 3–5

Units of Study in Reading

Authored by The Reading & Writing Project at Mossflower



THE
Reading & Writing Project
AT MOSSFLOWER



Welcome to *Units of Study in Reading*

The new *Units of Study in Reading* for Grades 3–5 invite you and your students into a world of joyful, purposeful reading. Every unit is grounded in the latest research on how children learn to read—weaving the science of reading, as well as key research around comprehension and knowledge building, into lessons that feel authentic and engaging, and emphasize critical thinking. You'll find structured whole-class instruction that lifts every reader—explicit phonics lessons for Grade 3, rich opportunities to grow fluency and oral language, and abundant chances to build knowledge, grapple with text-dependent questions, and read closely. These units nurture not just comprehension, but also curiosity, agency, and a lifelong love of reading.



Research-Based

The *Units of Study in Reading* are grounded in decades of classroom practice and academic research. They have been designed and re-designed in collaboration with thousands of teachers, researchers, and literacy leaders across the world. Built on key principles of the science of reading and best practices in literacy instruction, the curriculum integrates research-backed principles such as:

- **Explicit, systematic instruction** in foundational skills, comprehension, and higher-level thinking, with daily opportunities for guided and independent practice. This design reflects research showing that explicit, systematic phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction strengthens reading achievement.
- **Gradual release of responsibility**, giving students scaffolding through model texts, sentence stems, and visual supports while steadily fostering independence.
- **Assessment-driven small groups**, allowing teachers to meet students where they are and move them forward with targeted instruction. This approach aligns with research emphasizing differentiated, responsive instruction.
- **Repeated structures and routines** that free teachers to observe, confer, and provide feedback while ensuring students develop confidence as independent readers.
- **Integration of social-emotional learning**, drawing from Responsive Classroom® and CASEL competencies to strengthen collaboration, empathy, and classroom community.

“I am most excited to have curriculum that integrates all of the essential blocks of literacy. I feel like I have one place with so much depth to support and guide my instruction and help me be responsive to student needs.”

5TH GRADE PILOT TEACHER

RESEARCH THAT INFORMS THE UNITS OF STUDY

Scaffolding & Independence

Pearson & Gallagher – *Gradual Release of Responsibility* (students move from modeling → guided practice → independence)

Phonics & Word Recognition

National Reading Panel – Explicit, systematic phonics builds decoding and fluency Ehri – *Orthographic Mapping* explains how words are stored for automatic recognition

Spelling & Morphology

Moats – Decoding and spelling strengthen each other when taught explicitly

Vocabulary & Comprehension

Duke & Cartwright – High-frequency word instruction in meaningful contexts supports fluency & comprehension

Inferential Thinking

Beers & Probst – *Notice and Note* signposts help students track themes, characters, and deeper meaning

Social-Emotional Learning

Responsive Classroom® & CASEL – Evidence-based practices build empathy, collaboration, and strong classroom communities

Content-Area Integration

Next Generation Science Standards® (NGSS®) – Provides the foundation for nonfiction research units in science and beyond

Knowledge Building

Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro – Background knowledge is critical for comprehension and inferential thinking

I'm so excited about clear and cohesive alignment across each workshop—from the teaching point and mid-workshop teaching to the share and extensive read-aloud guide—all working together to create such a rich and engaging reading and learning experience. Every component is thoughtfully designed and builds beautifully over time.

4TH GRADE PILOT TEACHER

Student Outcomes with *Units of Study*

Stronger Fluency & Accuracy

Students grow into fluent, confident readers through systematic phonics, repeated practice, and engaging texts.

Deeper Comprehension

Readers learn to ask questions, infer meaning, and synthesize across texts—supporting long-term comprehension and critical thinking.

Expanded Vocabulary

Daily vocabulary extensions and content-rich units build robust academic vocabulary that transfers across subjects.

Critical & Interpretive Thinking

Students analyze themes, arguments, and perspectives—preparing them for success on state assessments and real-world problem solving.

Engagement & Independence

Research-based workshop structures foster independence and choice, helping students see themselves as lifelong readers.

Collaboration & Empathy

Book clubs, partner reading, and discussion protocols strengthen students' ability to listen, debate respectfully, and build community.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT CHARTS

GRADE 3



GRADE 4



GRADE 5



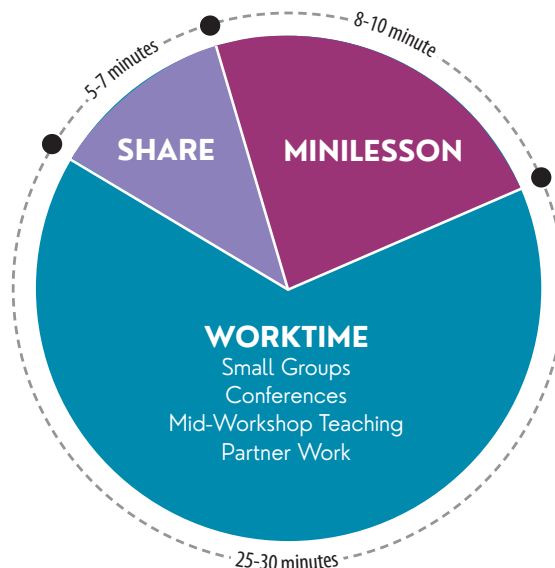
+GRADE 3

PHONICS AND MORPHOLOGY



The Workshop Model Framework

The *Units of Study* curriculum is based on a workshop model framework that provides predictable structures across days and grade levels, allowing teachers and students to focus fully on rich, meaningful content. This framework balances structure with flexibility, giving teachers the autonomy to adapt lessons to meet their classroom needs or integrate instruction throughout the day.



1

MINILESSON:

Begin each day in reading workshop with whole-group, teacher-led explicit instruction.

2

WORK TIME:

Provide differentiated instruction through small-group work and 1:1 conferences. Share quick tips during the Mid-Workshop Teaching.

3

SHARE:

Wrap up the day's learning with students reflecting on what they've learned to crystallize their learning.

ADDITIONAL INCLUDED LITERACY COMPONENTS

Read-Aloud: Daily 15-20-minute read-alouds perfectly aligned to unit goals—rich with drama, discussion, vocabulary, and close reading.

Vocabulary: Daily 5-minute, research-based lessons emphasizing active use of words and morphemes.

Phonics and Morphology: Complete year-long word study sequence for Grade 3, with 15-minute lessons focused on syllable types, multisyllabic words, and a study of key morphemes.



Units of Study in Reading, 3–5 Series Components

Units of Study in Reading (3, 4, 5)

The *Units of Study* provide daily, explicit instruction aligned to the standards and organized around essential questions, knowledge-building, vocabulary, writing about reading, and assessment. Each session features a focused minilesson connected to priority standards, strategies for supporting all learners, and a structured work time. It includes If/Then charts, conferring, small groups, as well as mid-workshop teaching and a share. Each grade level has 5 Units. Each Unit has 21 sessions and is divided into three “bends”: the first introduces key skills and concepts, the second extends and deepens learning, and the third offers new ways to apply it—ensuring that skills are revisited and strengthened across the year and grade levels.

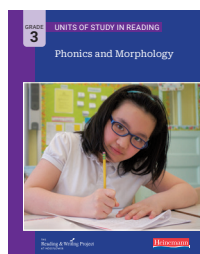


Read-Aloud Plans

Within each session, you’ll find read-aloud plans aligned to the minilessons that build high-level comprehension skills. Each plan highlights essential vocabulary to deepen understanding and enrich academic conversations, while structured opportunities for partner talk and whole-class discussion promote collaborative, text-based thinking. Close reading support is included, featuring text-dependent questions. There are also knowledge-building activities and culminating tasks to extend and solidify learning.

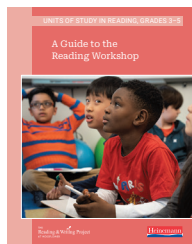
Vocabulary Extensions

Within each session, you’ll also find daily instruction for vocabulary is provided through brief five-minute lessons. Across each unit, students learn new words and engage in a variety of vocabulary games. Students also learn a collection of morphemes, including prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Instruction emphasizes active use, giving students frequent opportunities to apply new words in speaking and writing, helping them master vocabulary, and expanding their oral language skills.



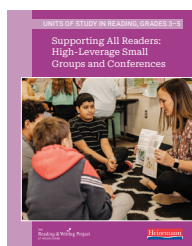
Phonics and Morphology (3)

The Grade 3 word study curriculum includes five units that strengthen foundational word knowledge by explicitly teaching the six syllable types, introducing common prefixes and suffixes, and providing high-frequency word instruction. Students also learn consistent strategies for decoding multisyllabic words, all within playful, engaging themes that connect to their reading work. Phonics instruction is not provided for Grades 4–5, as most students have mastered these skills by that point; however, additional phonics support is recommended for students who still need it.



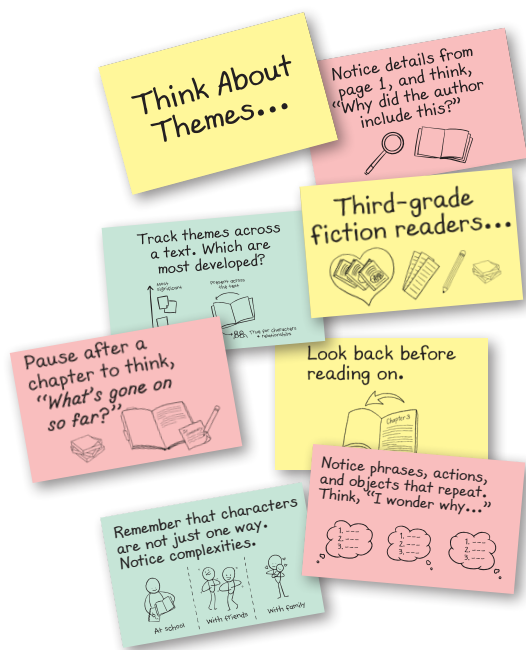
A Guide to the Reading Workshop (3–5)

This guide provides a comprehensive introduction to the essentials of reading instruction and development. It explains how reading workshop fits into the school day, outlines the architecture and principles of effective minilessons, and offers strategies for leading powerful work-time instruction.



Supporting All Readers: High-Leverage Small Groups and Conferences (3–5)

This book supplements the units, providing teachers with ready-to-use small-group lessons, conferences, charts, and tools. Whether the goal is to increase reading volume, improve multisyllabic word reading, build vocabulary, or deepen character analysis, teachers will find progressions of small groups at varying levels of support, ensuring accessible and challenging options for every reader.



Digital Resources

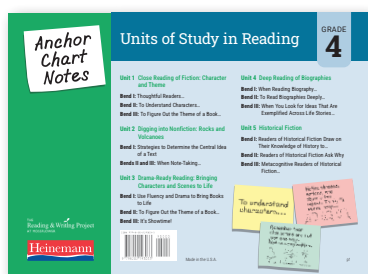
Each Unit of Study comes with a rich collection of digital resources to support teaching—such as teaching slides, anchor charts, assessment tools, demonstration texts, and materials for small groups and conferring—along with additional supports.

Anchor Chart Sticky Notes

The Anchor Chart Sticky Notes feature each day's teaching point and help teachers create and evolve anchor charts across the units.

Trade Book Packs

Each Unit of Study Trade Book Pack includes grade-level appropriate books that teachers use as demonstration texts to model the skills and strategies they want students to try. These books are used in both the *Units of Study* themselves, and in the read-alouds.



What's New

We've reimaged every detail to make these units more powerful, more practical, and more joyful than ever.

Teaching Slides – Each unit now includes ready-to-use teaching slides that streamline and simplify planning.

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners – Built-in scaffolds help MLLs thrive, with predictable workshop structures and collaborative routines. Spanish translations of key resources are included.

Minilessons Made Simple – Every session is a two-page spread with quick-glance charts for materials, vocabulary, and read-alouds. Less prep, more teaching.

Skills That Stick – Each bend zeroes in on one essential skill, with small groups designed to build mastery and confidence.

Vocabulary in Just Minutes a Day – 5-7 minute, research-based routines tied to unit topics upcharge students' word knowledge and build morphological awareness.

Read-Alouds That Do It All – Daily 15-20 minute read-alouds perfectly aligned to unit goals—rich with drama, discussion, and test-ready close reading days.

Phonics Where You Need It – Grade 3 now includes a complete year-long word study sequence for rock-solid foundational skills.

Knowledge-Building with Text Sets – A balanced mix of fiction and nonfiction grows vocabulary and deepens understanding. Science-aligned nonfiction topics—like plant adaptations, earth processes, and space—spark curiosity and meet Next Generation Science Standards.

Ensuring Access – Practical strategies for adapting instruction and expectations so all students engage with essential content, plus If/Then charts for addressing real-world challenges.

Aligned with Writing – Designed to work seamlessly with the newly revised *Units of Study in Writing*, Grades 3–5.



“I am thrilled to see that there is now an even deeper cohesion between read-aloud, the sequence of minilessons that follows and students’ independent practice. The new read-aloud and vocabulary teacher’s guide is a phenomenal tool!”

**5TH GRADE
PILOT TEACHER**

A Look Inside One Day of Reading Workshop

Session 5

Use Evidence to Support Character Theories

Session at a Glance	
Vocabulary 5 min.	Play "Words All Day" to Consider Word Meaning Across Contexts
Read-Aloud 15–20 min.	Read Chapters 10, 11, and 12, Studying How Characters Respond to Their Problems—And Reveal Their Vulnerabilities
Reading Workshop: Support Ideas with Evidence From Across a Text	
Minilesson 8–10 min.	The minilesson begins with you reminding kids that in the read-aloud, they grew the idea that Opal isn't someone who takes no for an answer. The example, then, was that she kept at Otis until he let her develop an installment plan for purchasing a leash for her dog. Now, you teach that once readers get an idea about something that might be important in a book, it's important to not only carry that idea forward as you read on but also to sometimes reread, thinking, "Might that have been true earlier in the book, and I just didn't notice it?"
Work Time 25–30 min.	You ask readers to use all they know to read well and to jot a big theory they have about their main character on the page in their writing packet titled Character Theory. Kids should meanwhile be reading about 15–20 pages in school and similar amounts at home.
Mid-Workshop 3 min.	You rally the class to ensure that students have written a theory and some evidence in their packet of writing-about-reading pages.
Share 5–7 min.	In this share, you set students up to use partner talk, not just to present ideas, but to grow them through thoughtful dialogue. One partner shares a character theory and reads aloud supporting text evidence, while the other listens closely and asks questions to push the thinking further. The goal is for students to revise or deepen their ideas based on the conversation, showing that real insight comes from collaboration.
Phonics and Morphology 15 min.	Read Words with Suffixes <i>-y</i> and <i>-ish</i> in Context

GETTING READY

FOR VOCABULARY AND READ-ALOUD...

- display Vocabulary Word Cards: **generous**, **industrious**, **forgiving**, **resourceful**, **tolerant**, **inventive**, **big-hearted**, **traits** (see Vocabulary).
- display the "Opal's Problems" list you created in Session 2 (see Read-Aloud).

FOR READING WORKSHOP...

- add a sticky note to the anchor chart, "When Thinking About Fiction:"
- ensure students have their packet of writing-about-reading pages. Today, they'll write on their third page, titled "Character Theories."

"Session at a Glance" outlines the focus of the day's teaching and learning, so you understand the key objectives before digging into the details of the session.

You can easily see how to prepare for each session with the "Getting Ready" section.

"Ensuring Access" sections define the main priorities of the session and give teachers tips and guidance to help all students reach the day's learning goals with the right level of support.

Daily Vocabulary Extensions give students a quick, engaging way to grow their word knowledge through explicit instruction, playful practice, and meaningful use in reading, writing, and conversation—all in just five minutes a day.

ENSURING ACCESS

YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL TODAY is to elevate students' comprehension by encouraging them to track character patterns and gather evidence across a chapter book. This work builds interpretation skills and strengthens a reader's ability to revisit earlier parts of a text in order to test or refine a theory. All students should walk away with the feeling that they are *detectives of character behavior*—noticing details, forming ideas, and then proving or adjusting those ideas based on text evidence.

- Don't be too critical about the ideas that students generate. The act of developing an idea and collecting evidence in support of that idea is important even if you aren't convinced this is the wisest possible idea in the first place.
- Students who are multilingual may need additional support with vocabulary words like *theory* and *evidence*. Provide definitions for these words, as well as examples. You can also display sentence frames for them to scaffold their thinking. These can include "I think the character is ____ because ____" and "This part shows that he/she is ____."
- Some students might recount what the character did rather than explain what it might mean. You could model the difference by using a two column T-chart where the left side displays "What the character did" and the right side displays "What that might show."
- Keep an eye out for students who are finishing books, and be ready to help them locate a new book. Keep in mind that at the start of Bend III, kids will be in clubs, with members of each club starting a new book, in sync with each other. Some readers can't handle finishing one book while starting the next, so channel them to brief books.

VOCABULARY

Play "Words All Day" to Consider Word Meaning Across Contexts

RALLY/TRY IT #1

Invite readers to think and talk about one of their trait words in a new context.

"Readers, you've done so well using our trait words to describe what people and characters are like deep down. But here's a new challenge. Lots of words can be used in slightly different ways in different parts of your life. We've talked about someone being **generous** in the classroom. But how might someone be **generous** at the supermarket? At the movie theater? On the bus? Tell your partner your idea for a minute."

TRY IT #2

Set partners up to play a round of "Words All Day," where they brainstorm how a word might fit into different contexts you provide.

"Now, let's play 'Words All Day.' I'll say a word that represents a trait, and you and your partner decide on what that trait might look like in that situation."

- How could someone be **industrious** during art class?
- How might someone be **forgiving** on the playground?
- What would it look like to be **resourceful** in the cafeteria?
- How could a student be **tolerant** during group work?
- How could someone be **inventive** at home on a rainy day?
- And here's a challenge! Let's say your class is on a field trip and your friend accidentally spills their lunch all over your backpack. How could you show that you're **big-hearted** and **forgiving** in that situation? What might you say or do to show those traits?

A Look Inside One Day of Reading Workshop

READ-ALOUD

Read Chapters 10, 11, and 12, Studying How Characters Respond to Their Problems—And Reveal Their Vulnerabilities

Read-Aloud Summary

You'll read three important chapters today and three equally important chapters tomorrow. To give you extra time, we suggest that you might extend this Bend by a session. One way to do that would be to treat today's read aloud almost as if it is a minilesson, postponing this session's minilesson until tomorrow, when you might actually read aloud a little from the next day. The reason that Bend II is so packed is that because kids will be finishing their Bend II books now, we wanted to reach the point in *Because of Winn-Dixie* where we could teach character change and life lessons. Today, you'll mostly read these all-important chapters straight through.

BEFORE READING

Ask kids to anticipate the work they'll need to be doing now in their books, referring to the Story Road Map. Draw their attention to the question, "How is the character responding to trouble, to problems?" Refer to a list of Opal's problems that you and the kids created in Session 2. Set children up for a lot of listening today.

"Readers, let's think about our road map and about the work we can expect to be doing now as we read." Show the road map. "So, what work do you think we might be doing as we read now?"

Kids will say that the class should think about what gets in the way for Opal, what the troubles are, and what the character does in response.

"Earlier in our read-aloud, we made a little list of Opal's problems. As we move into the next chapters, let's think about whether she's tackling some of those problems and whether some remain."

"I'll start reading. Picture the scene. Opal is on Gloria Dump's front porch, and Gloria has said, (on page 66) 'Why don't you go on and tell me everything about yourself, so I can see you with my heart.' What an invitation! As you listen today, will you think about whether some of Opal's problems have been resolved. Think, also, about which remain."

DURING READING

As you read Chapter 10, tap items that are addressed from the list of Opal's problems. Read the all-important Chapter 11—the story of the thunderstorm and Winn-Dixie's pathological fear of thunderstorms—quickly, dramatically, straight through. Stop only towards the top of page 78, when Opal is afraid the preacher will send Winn-Dixie away because the dog has this pathological fear, a weakness.

Page 68: "When Opal she talks about becoming friends with Otis and Miss Franny Block, tap the first two items. And Gloria tells her she can come anytime. Opal still has some problems—like the Dunlap boys that she calls stupid, mean, bald-headed, and ignorant and sour-faced Amanda. But a lot of her problems are getting better."

Read Chapter 11.

Pause towards the top of page 78, when Opal says, "Yes sir" and thinks, "I was afraid that maybe he would say we couldn't keep a dog who went crazy with pathological fear..."



Teachers, the read-aloud of Chapter 11 is hugely important.

Read-Aloud sessions are written to fit tongue-in-groove into the unit, so that each day's teaching builds off of work in the read-aloud, and so that the read-alouds provide additional practice around key skills.

Each session guides teachers through before-, during-, and after-reading moves, making it easy to bring powerful, standards-based instruction to life.

"Opal must be terrified. She loves Winn-Dixie so much, and what if the preacher says there are so many storms in Florida, they best send Winn-Dixie away to a part of the country where there aren't so many storms? It's interesting that Winn-Dixie is this lovable, almost perfect dog, and he's got this weakness. This pathological fear."

"Let's read on. Opal is afraid that the preacher will send Winn-Dixie off. Instead, listen."

Resume reading at the top of page 78, "We'll have to keep an eye..."

Read Chapter 12 straight through.

AFTER READING

Invite students to reflect on Otis and how his life experiences impact him today.

"Now, we've learned a bit about Otis—he, too, has trouble in his life story. But, here is my question. Will you get into corner groups to discuss this?"

Does the fact that Otis has been in jail make him better or worse at caring for pets in the pet store? Explain why.

You and your students will soon learn that it's not just Winn-Dixie who has vulnerabilities, every character does. That becomes a big part of this story.

Kids might suggest that his fears confine him to the store and that can't be healthy, but they could also argue that his sympathy for animals in cages makes him a far better person to work at that store. "It's the source of his magic."



MINILESSON

Support Ideas with Evidence From Across a Text

CONNECTION

Remind readers of the pattern in Opal's behavior up to now and let them know it could be a widespread pattern across the whole book, or it could be a coincidence.

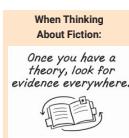
"Readers, as we've been reading *Because of Winn-Dixie*, we've gotten some pretty exciting ideas about Opal. We've seen that she doesn't take no for an answer very easily, right? Opal doesn't get turned away or put off easily. When Otis wouldn't agree to her plan for getting the leash and collar, she kept coming up with one more way in which the plan could work. And, when the boys told her not to go into the yard of the 'dog-eating witch,' Opal went on in anyway.

"The thing is, this could be a widespread pattern in Opal's behavior that we're noticing, or it could just be a coincidence. We'll have to read on and see, and we also might need to look backwards to see if there's any evidence earlier in the book we missed."

★ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to remind you that when you get an idea, or a **theory**, these ideas are called, about something that might be important in a book, you can carry that idea forward as you read on. You can even sometimes reread, thinking, 'Might that have been true earlier in the book and I just didn't notice it?' Once you get an idea about your character, it's fun to look for evidence of that idea everywhere."

Add a new sticky note to the "When Thinking About Fiction:" anchor chart.



TEACHING

Demonstrate going back to an earlier scene to check for the pattern you've found in character behavior. Read the scene aloud and ask students to check it with you.

"Readers, let's check if our new idea about Opal shows up earlier in the book. Does she push past obstacles in the first few chapters? Let's go back and remember what happened earlier. Remember how Opal worried that her dad wouldn't let her keep Winn-Dixie? She came up with all these ways to convince him. She washed and brushed the stray before she brought him home. She thought of ways to persuade her dad, like explaining that this is a suffering dog in need. She explained to Winn-Dixie that when he was in the Friendly Corners Trailer Park, he had to act like an exception.

"Even after all that, even after Opal came up with a very nice speech about Winn-Dixie being a 'Less Fortunate' and asking only if he could stay with them 'for a little while,' what did her dad say?"

"I'll read it." Read page 17, mid-page:

"No dogs," the preacher said. "We've talked about this before. You don't need a dog"

"Opal then tried another tack. 'I know I don't need a dog. But this dog needs me. Look.' She then did one more thing. She brought Winn-Dixie in, and he put his head right on the preacher's lap. Five minutes later, the preacher said to the dog, 'Are you looking for a home?' and then, when Winn-Dixie wagged his tail, the preacher said, 'I guess you have found one.'"

"So, what do you think? Is that evidence of our idea or theory that Opal is someone who doesn't take no for an answer, who pushes past barriers? Turn and talk."

98

BEND II - GROW IDEAS ABOUT CHARACTERS AND LIFE LESSONS

Embedded professional learning appears in the margins at point of use—and is designed to be your personal coach—providing bits of wisdom, research, and guidance when leading the lesson.

Each unit highlights optional opportunities for formative assessment. These checkpoints help you monitor students' progress and include suggested next steps to guide and strengthen future instruction.

Streamlined, explicit minilessons are always tied to a focus standard, so that you have plenty of time left for responsive teaching and targeted next steps inside of small groups and conferences.

Anchor charts build across sessions and help students hold onto the most important parts of each day's teaching.

"Whooo-yeel I agree! This is some great, solid evidence. And now I'm thinking of examples of this everywhere in the book, even when she gets Winn-Dixie to be allowed in the library or the church—Opal is not one to let a small thing or someone's hesitation stand in her way! Opal pushes past; she doesn't just take the first no as the final answer."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Restate the teaching point. Then encourage students to jot their theory and their evidence in their informal writing packets.

"Readers, do you see how when we started finding a pattern of behavior for our character, we didn't just read forward with it in mind, we also read backward? This is something you can do also—if you've noticed something about a character, if you've grown ideas. That is, if you've grown some theories, it's time to check and see if they are big ideas that go across the book or if they are one-time observations.

"Right now, look back over the sticky notes that you have about your character; the ideas you are making about the character. Find one or two notes that you suspect are big ideas—theories about the character that will go across the whole book. Put a star on those sticky notes. Thumbs up when you have a theory about your character.

"For now, I'm not going to suggest you reread, although during reading time today, you might. For now, will you just think, 'Are there more examples of this throughout the book?' As you think about that, as you look for more evidence, oftentimes your original theory changes a little to be sure it matches the evidence. Let that happen.

"I'm going to give you some time to jot your thinking in your packet. You'll be answering that question: What is this character like as a person? Be sure to cite evidence. I'm going to study what you do so I understand your progress in learning to think about a character's traits."

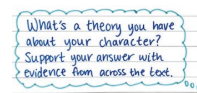
LINK

Remind students to do this reading work today as they continue on in their books.

"Readers, use all you know to read well today! And yes, as part of your reading work today, read forward looking to see if the theory you have about your character is actually supported in many parts of the book. Is it going to end up being super important in the book?"

"I know you now have a theory about your character and a bit of evidence written in your packet. As you read on and think more deeply, continue to ask yourself, 'Is there evidence of this theory at the beginning of the chapter book too? For a theory of a character to be strong, there will usually be evidence in the beginning and the middle of the book. If you find more evidence, add it right to your booklet.

"During the Share today, you'll show your partner what you found and you can decide if you've developed an important theory or not. Okay, go ahead!"



Duke and Pearson's influential work on effective comprehension instruction highlights the importance of teaching young readers to engage in meaning-making strategies, including forming and testing inferences using evidence from the text. They argue that the ability to cite evidence is essential to comprehension, not merely an advanced skill, and can be nurtured as early as primary grades through scaffolded instruction.

Formative Assessment Opportunity

This question very closely resembles a question students worked with during the constructed response pre-assessment. Collect students' responses, using the learning progression for "Inferring About Character" to identify next steps for instruction.

SESSION 5 - USE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CHARACTER THEORIES

99

A Look Inside One Day of Reading Workshop

WORK TIME

SMALL GROUP: Find Text Evidence that Matches a Theory

RALLY

Explain to readers that one way to think deeply about texts is to write about your thinking.

"Third graders, lots of people say that the best way to become super thoughtful (you could say, super smart) is to write. So, when I suggest that you take whatever theory it is that you have about your character and write the theory on page in your special writing packet, and then jot down the evidence that supports your theory, I'm suggesting that you use writing to make your ideas be as smart as they can be.

"But, here's the thing. It's not the writing itself that makes you smart. It's what you do in your mind as you write that makes you smart. So, you need to ask yourself, 'Does this evidence actually support my theory?' When you write your thoughts down, you might think, 'Wait... this doesn't exactly match.' The evidence shows something, but it's not quite right.

"Let me show you what I mean. My theory is this: My friend Roy is a great singer. And my evidence is that I saw a production that he organized and it was terrific. Let's think together: Does that evidence really support my theory? The answer is, not quite. So, I need to either alter my theory or find some different evidence."

TRY IT #1

Invite partners to study a picture with a claim and evidence. Ask them to play "Prove It," working to carefully match evidence to ideas.

"I've got a picture here with a claim about the picture and some pieces of evidence. Can you work with your partner to play 'Prove It'? Read each piece of evidence and ask, 'Does this match the idea? Does this somewhat match the idea? Or does it really not match the idea?'"

TRY IT #2

Transition partners into trying this work with the texts they are reading.

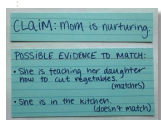
"Right now, can you take out an idea you are having about a character in your story? And also take a look at the evidence you gathered. Now, with your partners, give your own evidence a test. State your idea, then read the evidence. Ask these three questions, 'Does this match the idea? Does this somewhat match the idea? Or not match the idea?' If it matches your idea, awesome work! If it doesn't exactly match, consider if there are other places in the text that support your theory—or change your theory!"

Coach partners as they try out this work.

LINK

Remind students of the importance of matching evidence to thinking, and send them off to read.

"Readers, whenever you have big ideas about the characters in your books, it's important to ground those ideas in evidence that matches. And remember, the more evidence you have, the stronger the idea tends to be. So, don't forget to be thinking about whether your evidence really matches your claim any time you are building ideas about your stories."



Coach the students using prompts like:

- "Say, 'Can you show us the part in the text that made you think that?'"
- "Try using the sentence frame: I think _____ because on page _____ it says..."

100

BEND II · GROW IDEAS ABOUT CHARACTERS AND LIFE LESSONS

Every session includes grab-and-go Work Time supports for powerful, responsive instruction that requires little or no advance preparation for the teacher.

Additional Work Time supports are found in *Supporting All Readers: High-Leverage Small Groups and Conferences*, a resource included in each grade level kit, and Skill Progressions at the end of each Bend.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Help Each Other to Have Character Theories and Text Evidence

"Readers, can I stop you for a moment? I love that you're engrossed in your books, but I'm noticing that some of you haven't yet paused to figure out what your theory is about your character, now that you are pretty far into your book. Will you hold up the page in the packet I gave you, the one on which you are going to write your theory and your evidence? I want to check that you've got a theory and got some evidence."

Scan the room, giving thumbs up and nods. "I'm noticing there are a fair number of you who haven't got anything written yet. Will you do that now?"

"If you do have a theory and some evidence, do a quick check with the people right near you. If someone is still working on their theory and evidence, help them out if you can. If you're all set, keep reading, and keep looking for even more evidence to support your ideas."

SHARE

Share Ideas and Evidence in Order to Grow New Ideas

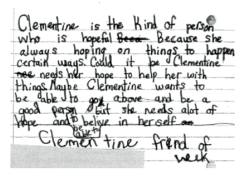
Set Partner 1 up to share their theory and evidence, reading aloud parts from the text that support their thinking. Channel Partner 2 to listen, think, and ask questions in response.

"Third graders, it would be easy for one partner to say, 'This is my theory. Here is my evidence,' and then the other partner could say the same. And that would be a waste of time. The reason to share is because by talking deeply and well, we change our minds, we grow new ideas.

"So, I'm again going to ask that only one person share your work. Partner 1, you'll share today. I'm sure your theory of your character is something you could say in a sentence, but will you say it in a paragraph? Say a lot about it. Then, go to the places in the text that supports your theory and read those aloud.

"Partner 2s, you will have the really challenging job of listening really, really intensely so you understand what your friend thinks about this character. And then, read the passages that your friend thinks makes the point. And—question. You say things like, 'How does this show...?' and 'Might a better word be...?'"

"Together, think really hard about the theory and the evidence. I'm hoping you revise whatever you have written based on your talk, as that will show me you invented new ideas by talking, which is the goal."



SESSION 5 · USE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CHARACTER THEORIES

101

Mid-Workshop Teaching is an opportunity to remind students of the day's goals, offer additional tips, or provide instruction for the remainder of their independent work time.

The Share is framed by a small amount of teacher talk, before offering students more practice with a given skill or repertoire of strategies or celebrating student work.

At the end of each Bend, you'll find a sequence of small groups, arranged from most supportive to more advanced, designed to target specific skills such as inferring about characters or decoding multisyllabic words.

Small Groups use the Rally, Try #1, Try #2 structure, a consistent routine that quickly engages students in active work while helping teachers and students become comfortable with the process.

SKILL PROGRESSION

Use the Story Road Map to Think Deeply About Story Elements

SMALL GROUP #1: Extra Practice Using the Story Road Map to Track Parts of a Story

You'll need a copy of the Story Road Map to display. Students will need copies of Ellie's Beach Day, as well as their story road map from their book baggies. 🍌

RALLY

Prompt students to review and discuss the parts of the story road map.

"Pull out your story road map. With your partner, will you trace your finger along the story road map? Pause when you get to each signpost, remind each other of that part, and reread the questions that readers can ask."

TRY IT #1

Guide students through the first half of a shared short story.

"It's helpful for readers to track these main elements when reading a story. Let's try this with a teeny-tiny text, *Ellie's Beach Day*. We'll read it together, out loud, and pause to consider the questions along the journey. Keep an eye out for signposts." Read aloud with students, pausing after "...but he wasn't Grandma."

"Hmm, let's ask the questions on the story road map. What kind of person is the main character? What does the main character want? Where and when is this? Turn and talk to your partner."

Display a version of the story road map with prompts added, so students have language to discuss each signpost.

"Let's keep reading. Be thinking now about the problem." Stop after "The wind tugged at Ellie's hat, and seagulls called from above."

"I'm seeing Ellie's problem. Are you? Turn and talk with your partner. What is getting in the way? What's the trouble?" Coach students to use the prompts you've added to the story road map as they discuss.

TRY IT #2

Set partners up to continue reading the rest of the short text together, using the story road map to think about plot and theme.

"Okay, I'm going to pass the baton to all of you. Read the rest of this text with your partner. Use the Story Road Map to keep thinking about plot and theme. Ask your partner, 'What does the character do? Is there a change? What lessons might be learned from this story?' Go ahead and read and talk." Coach partners as they work.

LINK

Celebrate the work students did tracking story elements. Remind them to do this thinking whenever they read.

"Nice work tracking these story elements as you read this story. Remember, read stories, the story road map can help you to track the most important setting, problem, plot, and theme. Continue using this tool with your own stories."

118

SMALL GROUP #2: Readers Consider Character Motivation

Students will need a copy of the teeny-tiny text *The Taco Truck*, as well as their story road map from their book baggies. Be ready to display two questions for students to consider. 🍌

RALLY

Distribute *The Taco Truck*. Give out a familiar short story and prompt students to retell the main events of the story.

"Readers, today let's explore character motivation, what it is that makes characters do the things they do. We'll use *The Taco Truck* to help us. To get started, will you and your partner skim this story and do a quick retell of the main events?"

TRY IT #1

Set students up to use guiding questions to dig into character motivation in *Taco Truck*.

"One way we can get to know the characters in our stories better is to understand their motivations. Motivations are what drives us to make certain decisions or act or behave in certain ways. We can pause at important moments in the text and study what is happening and ask why." Post two questions and read them aloud.

What does my character really want?

What are they doing or not doing because of that motivation? Why?

TRY IT #2

Prompt students to try this same line of thinking in one partner's chapter book.

"Now, it's your turn to try this in one of your chapter books. Partner 1, grab the book you are reading. Together with your partner, open your book and do this same thinking work. Look at an important moment in the story. Ask these same questions. 'What does my character really want? What are they doing or not doing because of that motivation? Why?'"

LINK

Restate the teaching point.

"This digging will help you understand the character in any book you read as well as when you study the people in your lives. By considering a character's motivations, you can better understand them and the choices they make."



BEND II • SKILL PROGRESSION

119

A Look Inside One Day of Reading Workshop

Each Unit features Gold Pages—powerful, easy-to-use coaching prompts that teachers can rely on again and again to boost student learning and strengthen key skills.

Fiction Comprehension Coaching Guide

Coaching to Support Attending to Story Elements

- "Where are you in the Story Road Map? Ask yourself those questions."
- "Can you use what you know about how stories usually go to guess what might happen next?"
- "What's the trouble or challenge the character is facing? How is it getting worse?"
- "Do you notice any change in the character? What caused that change?"
- "How is the setting affecting what's happening in the story?"

Coaching to Support Summarizing and Synthesizing

- "What are the big events that have happened so far?"
- "Try using this sentence starter: Somebody (character) wanted ____, but ____, so ____."
- "What are the most important things that have happened in the story?"
- "How does this part connect to what happened earlier in the story?"
- "Think about how the story started and where it is now. What's changed?"
- "What is something new you've realized about the character?"
- "How would you explain this book to a friend? What are the most important parts?"

Coaching to Support Questioning of the Text

- "What questions do you have as you read?"
- "Did anything surprise you? Why?"
- "How does this part connect to what we read earlier?"
- "On this page, the author says ____. What do you think that means? Why do you think that?"

Coaching to Support Character Analysis

- "Can you reach for a more precise word to describe this character. The trait word is ____."
- "Think about what the character says or doesn't say. What does that reveal about the character?"
- "What is making this character act this way?"
- "Think about what the character does, says, and thinks. What does this make you think about the character?"
- "Does the character act this way all the time? Or is this something new? What's different about this time?"
- "You think this character is _____. Can you find two parts in the book that show this?"
- "Has your idea about this character changed? What new clues made you think that?"

xx

Vocabulary, Word Solving, and Fluency Coaching Guide

Coaching to Support Vocabulary Building in Fiction

- "What new or interesting words have you noticed? What do you think they mean?"
- "What clues in the text help you understand what this word means?"
- "Try rereading the sentence before and after. Do those sentences give you clues about this word's meaning?"
- "Can you connect this word to other words you know?"
- "What word parts do you recognize? What might those parts mean?"
- "That is the prefix (suffix) ____. It means _____. How does that help you understand the word?"

Coaching to Support Multisyllabic Word Reading

- "Can you find the vowels in the word? Remember, every syllable has a vowel."
- "Try breaking the word into parts you know. What smaller words, prefixes, or suffixes do you see?"
- "Look for familiar syllable patterns like 'open' or 'closed' syllables. Can you break the word into chunks?"
- "Read the word part by part, then blend it together. Does that sound right?"
- "(Point to the syllable) 'You tried this part with a (long/short/schwa/etc.) vowel sound. This time, try it with a (long/short/schwa/etc.) sound.'"
- "Have you heard that word before? If yes, say, 'Read it again so you can make sure you've got it.' If not, 'That word means _____. Say it with me.'"

Coaching to Support Fluency: Automaticity in Word Recognition and Pacing

- "Read in a way that helps you and others understand your text—not too fast or too slow."
- "That's a high-frequency word. You can read that word in a snap."
- "You saw that word earlier. Do you remember it? Nice! Study it so you can remember next time."
- "After you word solve, reread the sentence to make your reading smooth."
- "Now that you know what the words say, go back and smooth that part out."
- "Reading should sound just like talking. Make your reading sound like how you talk."
- "Why don't you two try echo reading? Partner 1, you read first, and Partner 2, you be the echo and read it right after."
- "Listen to me read it. Now you try."

UNIT 3 • THE ELEMENTS OF STORY

xxi

Session 5: Read Words with Suffixes -y and -ish in Context

YOU WILL NEED...

- to display sentences ready to model decoding.

GETTING READY

STUDENTS WILL NEED...

- to have copies of the decodable text, *The Lightless Night*, for partner reading.

CONNECTION

Revisit how suffixes can help us describe characters.

"Yesterday you learned about two new suffixes: -y and -ish that can be used to help us describe characters. Imagine you're teaching a student who's new to our class about these suffixes. What would you teach? Decide which partner will be the teaching partner and which partner will be the new student. Go!"

After a minute, say, "Wow! Such impressive teaching and learning has happened. I heard you say that suffix -y means 'like' or 'having the qualities of'; like in funny, which means 'having the quality of fun.' I also heard you share that -ish means 'sort of'; 'somewhat'; or 'like,' like in childish, which means 'like a child.' Great job explaining those suffixes and using examples to make them clear!"

"Today you'll see how these suffixes can bring characters in stories to life by showing us more about their traits and actions."

★ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that when readers see words with suffixes like -y and -ish in context, they stop to think about what those words mean. They do this by breaking off the suffix, reading the base word, and blending the parts back together."

TEACHING

Model identifying and interpreting the meaning of words with suffixes in sentences.

Display the sentence.

The sleepy puppy curled up by the fire.

"I'll start by scanning this sentence for words that have suffixes -y and -ish. Here's one!" Tap sleepy. Box the -y in sleepy. "Now we're left with the base word sleep, so sleepy just means 'having the qualities of sleep.'"

"Oh, the next word ends in -y, too." Box off -y in puppy. "Hmm...if I box off the -y in this word, I tap puppy. 'I'm left with the base word pupp. Hmm...in this word, I don't think y is acting as a suffix. I think it's just a part of the word. Let me read this sentence: The sleepy puppy curled up by the fire. Can't you picture that? The puppy is full of sleep and very tired, so he's ready to take a nap by the fire."

Display another sentence.

The selfish prince refused to share his riches.

"Let's try another one. Do you see any words with suffixes -y or -ish? Yeah, this one right here." Tap selfish. "I'll box off the suffix." Box off -ish. "That leaves me with self, and adding -ish means 'having the characteristics of.' Selfish means 'acting like someone who only thinks of themselves.' Let's read the whole sentence." Use the all-call signal, inviting stu-

dents to read the sentence aloud with you. "The selfish prince refused to share his riches. That tells us he only cared about himself!"

"Did you notice how when I got to words with suffixes, I boxed off the suffix first to focus on the base word? Then, I thought about what the suffix meant and blended the parts together to understand the whole word. This strategy helps us not only figure out tricky words, but also picture what's happening in the story."

"And remember, just because you see y or ish at the end of a word, that doesn't always mean they're acting as suffixes. As readers, it's important to double check. Ask yourself, 'When I box off that part, does what I'm left with make sense on its own?' If it doesn't, then y or ish might just be a part of the whole word!"

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Read a short story featuring words with suffixes -y and -ish.

For you and your partner, together, filled with words with suffixes -y and -ish. When you see one, be sure to think about the meaning and how it affects the character. If it's a suffix, box the suffix.

The Lightless Night

In the middle of a bright, busy city, a million power outages turned everything lightless. The streetlights went dark. Windows were black. Even the tall buildings went dark.

Inside one small apartment, a girl named Tasha and her friend, Tasha, sat in her pitch-black room. It was a little scary.

"This is so unusual," said Tasha. "It was bright and sunny earlier today!" "I wonder what happened," said Tasha.

They went backlights and glow sticks.

Tasha put on a silly hat and held her flashlight, shivering. They took turns pretending to be animals in the wild. They talked out around in the dark.

Tasha began to feel a little better. Tasha said, "You are brave, and I can give you the most helpful hands. Together, we can make this night fun too!"

By the end of the night, the power had not come back, but Tasha and Tasha had made the most of their lightless evening, yet magical evening.

They fell asleep slowly, wrapped in blankets, surrounded by their glow sticks.

Transferable Coaching Moves for Decoding

- "Look at the word. Do you see a way to break it into parts?"
- "What does the suffix mean? How does it change the base word?"
- "Does the sentence make sense when you put the words back together?"

You can always use words with these suffixes in your characters!"

UNIT 3 • SUFFIXES TO HELP US TALK ABOUT CHARACTERS

For 3rd Grade, daily Phonics and Vocabulary sessions follow a three-day replicable structure. During Day 1, students learn a new concept and read words with that concept in isolation. During Day 2, students review the concept, learn related tips, and read words with that concept in context. During Day 3, the focus shifts to spelling, and students learn how to spell words that include that context.

Phonics and Vocabulary sessions are brief, just 15-20 minutes in length, and provide multiple opportunities for explicit instruction and for student practice. Sessions build in complexity across the year and also include cumulative review.

“The read-aloud plans for each unit make it easy for teachers to weave high-level comprehension into daily lessons while keeping students engaged with rich, purposeful conversations. The careful alignment between the minilessons and the read-alouds [will] allow teachers to focus less time on planning from scratch and more on the joy of reading and discussing great books!”

PK–5 PILOT INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

“I’m excited to have more formative assessment opportunities built into the Units so that I can be more responsive to students’ needs.”

5TH GRADE PILOT TEACHER



A Fully Coordinated K–5 Reading Curriculum

The *Units of Study in Reading* offer a carefully designed, fully coordinated progression of instruction from kindergarten through grade 5. Each year’s curriculum builds deliberately on the foundations of the previous grade, ensuring that students’ reading skills, strategies, and habits develop in a powerful, connected way. This continuity gives students the confidence and competence they need to thrive as readers today—and for years to come.

Across the elementary grades, students:

- **Develop Strong Foundations**

Children establish the building blocks of reading—phonics, phonological awareness, and early decoding—while also cultivating comprehension and fluency.

- **Strengthen Core Skills Year by Year**

Students grow their capacity in comprehension, vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, and stamina. Each grade level raises expectations in ways that are challenging yet achievable.

- **Engage with High-Quality Texts**

From beloved picture books to rich chapter books, students read a wide variety of diverse, high-quality texts that expand their perspectives and deepen their love of reading.

- **Talk and Write About Reading**

Discussion and writing are woven throughout the curriculum, helping students make meaning, build arguments, and articulate insights about what they read.

- **Become Independent, Joyful Readers**

Above all, students learn to see themselves as readers—choosing books that matter to them, setting goals, and reading with confidence, curiosity, and joy.

With *Units of Study in Reading*, schools can be assured that every child, every year, is supported with a curriculum that is intentional, seamless, and deeply aligned with the developmental journey of young readers.

**LEARN MORE
ABOUT THE
UNITS OF STUDY
IN READING,
GRADE K–2 HERE:**

Click [here](#).

“The research references sprinkled throughout the sessions in each unit are very helpful for understanding why a particular practice is used. Now I have the research at my fingertips when I am talking to a stakeholder about why we are doing what we are doing.”

PILOT INSTRUCTIONAL TEACHER

Our Literacy Resources

The Reading & Writing Project at Mossflower and our publishing partners at Heinemann are proud to offer an array of resources that bring powerful, practical literacy teaching to life in classrooms around the world.



UNITS OF STUDY IN WRITING

A proven, workshop-based curriculum that empowers students to write with independence, creativity, and skill in grades K–8.



UNITS OF STUDY IN PHONICS

Explicit, systematic, and joyful phonics instruction for grades K–2.



CLASSROOM LIBRARIES

Curated collections of engaging and level-appropriate books that nurture a love of reading in grades K–8.



UNITS OF STUDY IN READING

A comprehensive, research-based curriculum that helps students become engaged, thoughtful, and independent readers for grades K–8.



UP THE LADDER

Scaffolded units designed to strengthen essential reading and writing skills and prepare students for grade-level work in grades 3–6.



DECODABLE TEXT SELECTIONS

Carefully sequenced decodable books that build early reading confidence through engaging stories and accessible text.

- Jump Rope Readers Fiction
- Jump Rope Reading Nonfiction
- Moonlit Mountain Readers



Implementation Support

As authors of the *Units of Study in Reading, Writing, and Phonics*, The Reading & Writing Project at Mossflower is uniquely positioned to provide professional development for the curriculum. Below are professional development options designed to support your school or district in implementing the curriculum effectively.

UNITS OF STUDY IN WRITING

Units of Study days are one-day conferences designed to support teachers in implementing the *Units of Study in Reading, Writing, Phonics*, or decodables. Each day is tailored to your school's priorities and can be delivered in person or virtually.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

PD partnerships offer sustained, hands-on support. While flexible in design, most schools find that at least five PD days per grade band creates the deepest and most lasting impact. Every partnership begins with co-designing a plan that aligns with your goals and priorities.

RWP-M staff developers bring theory into practice by working directly with teachers in labsite classrooms, modeling lessons, supporting small groups, and studying student work to plan next steps. Partnerships may also include grade-level study groups and full-day workshops, with all schedules and focus areas set collaboratively with leadership.

Partner schools and districts gain access to the Mossflower Learning Community, including invitations to Leadership Conferences, opportunities to pilot pre-publication curricula, and membership in the Mossflower Treasure Chest—our expanding digital library of resources. Schools and districts receiving five or more PD days also receive a 20% discount on RWP-M workshops and institutes.

WORKSHOPS & INSTITUTES

RWP-M hosts virtual and in-person events throughout the school year for teachers, coaches, leaders, learning specialists, and support staff. Some workshops focus on implementing the *Units of Study*, while others address timely, research-based topics to strengthen literacy instruction schoolwide.

EXPLORE EVENTS:

Click [here](#).

EXPLORE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES:

Click [here](#).

I love the support these Units provide for teachers who have a range of learners in their classrooms: the 'Ensuring Access' sections, the progressions of small groups for key skills, the tips for multilingual learners . . . my toolkit is ready to go!

PILOT INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

Getting Started

The *Units of Study in Reading* are authored by The Reading & Writing Project at Mossflower and published by Heinemann. Together, we are committed to helping teachers bring this powerful K–5 reading curriculum to life.

When you choose *Units of Study*, you don't just receive materials—you gain access to the authors themselves. The Reading & Writing Project offers professional development and implementation support designed to ensure your teachers have the tools, knowledge, and confidence to make the curriculum thrive in every classroom.

NEXT STEPS

1

HAVE A SALES REPRESENTATIVE CONTACT YOU

to bring the *Units of Study in Reading* to your classrooms.

Click [here](#) to join the list.

2

COORDINATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH THE READING & WRITING PROJECT

to design an implementation plan
tailored to your school or district.

Click [here](#) to explore our professional
development offerings.

Click [here](#) to schedule
a meeting directly.