



GRADE FIVE
Sample Sessions

UNITS OF STUDY *for* Teaching Reading

LUCY CALKINS

with COLLEAGUES *from the* READING AND WRITING PROJECT

Heinemann
DEDICATED TO TEACHERS™

GRADE FIVE Components

- ◆ **Four Units of Study:** including two units in reading fiction and two in reading informational texts.
- ◆ **A Guide to the Reading Workshop, Intermediate Grades:** Details the architecture of the minilessons, conferences, and small-group strategy sessions and articulates the management techniques needed to support an effective reading workshop.
- ◆ **If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 3–5:** Contains additional units to support and extend instruction and to prepare students for work in the main units as needed.
- ◆ **Reading Pathways, Grades 3–5:** Puts a system for assessing reading into teachers' hands and into the hands of students.
- ◆ **Online Resources for Teaching Reading:** A treasure chest of additional grade-specific resources, including bibliographies, short texts, illustrations to show completed anchor charts, reproducible checklists, pre- and post-assessments, homework, mentor texts, videos, and Web links.
- ◆ **Large-Format Anchor Chart Post-it® notes:** Preprinted Post-it® notes with summarized, illustrated teaching points help teachers create and evolve anchor charts across each band and unit.
- ◆ **Trade Pack:** Grade-level book set for teacher demonstration, modeling, and read-aloud (recommended optional purchase; available in bundles with the units and also separately).

For complete details, please visit unitsofstudy.com/teachingreading



“Powerful instruction produces visible and immediate results; when youngsters are taught well, the thinking, talking, and writing about reading they produce becomes far more substantial, complex, and significant. Good teaching pays off. When you provide students with constant opportunities to read and to write and when you actively and assertively teach into their best efforts, their literacy development will astonish you, their parents, the school administrators, and best of all, the students themselves.”

—LUCY CALKINS

Welcome to the Grade 5 *Units of Study for Teaching Reading* Sampler. This booklet includes sample sessions from each of the four units of study for this grade level, chosen to broadly represent the range of work that students will do and to provide a snapshot view of how instruction develops across the school year.

SAMPLER CONTENTS

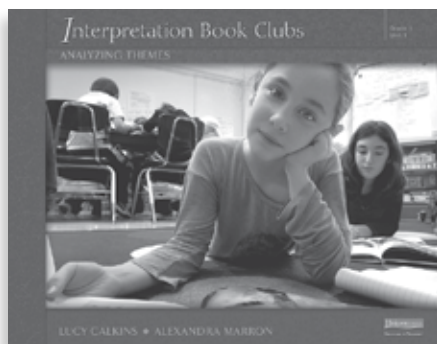
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GRADE 5 ♦ UNIT 1 OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

Interpretation Book Clubs

Analyzing Themes

LUCY CALKINS ♦ ALEXANDRA MARRON

Right from the start, this unit goes for the gold, teaching students the best of what it means to read literature. The fact that students work in clubs within a week or two of the start of fifth grade is emblematic of the way this unit conveys that fifth grade will be a time for an intellectual independence and heady expectations.

In Bend I, you'll set students up to participate in an intellectual growth spurt by rallying them to take seriously the challenge to write well about their reading. For now, your children will read fiction books of their own choice. Meanwhile the strategies you teach to lift the level of their writing about reading will remind them to draw on a repertoire of ways for reading closely and thoughtfully, alert to the interaction of story elements and aware of details that seem to represent big ideas. You'll help them look at the text through the lens of their first tentative ideas and questions, so that as they read on in a text, they develop evidenced-based accountable theories. You'll demonstrate this work using a rich read-aloud text—we've built the unit around *Home of the Brave* but you could substitute another text if you prefer.

Then in Bend II, you organize the class into clubs, each of which convenes around multiple copies of a shared novel. You'll channel those clubs to study novels with nuanced characters and multiple subplots, and then you'll help students read asking, "What might this book be *really* about?" Fifth graders are at an age when almost everything stands for something else. Sneakers can be a symbol of fitting in or of individuality, an overheard comment can mean (at least for the moment) the ending of a friendship. Asking your students to take seriously the challenge of reading interpretively in the company of friends is a

perfect way to start fifth grade!

After your students name the most important thing a text teaches, you'll teach them to think, "Okay, and what else might this teach?" The expectation that a novel supports more than one theme will nudge them to take up aspects of the text that aren't accounted for by the theme that springs first to mind. As this bend unfolds, you will help students know that their job is not just to think about more than one overarching idea, but also to weigh which details from the text best support each of those themes and which theme is most important in this story. Sorting, categorizing, and ranking details needs to become a natural part of the interpretive process.

By Bend III, you'll lift the level of students' thinking about texts by helping them notice the ways different authors develop the same theme, and you'll help them compare and contrast several texts that develop a similar theme. How do these two texts—both of which deal with the issue of loss—develop their theme differently? As students approach middle school, expectations for analytic reading increase. Think of analytic reading as the sort of intellectual work that a scholar does, pulling back from a text and surveying it with dispassionate objectivity, hoping to understand how the pieces fit together. This is work that the Common Core and other global standards highlight, and it is work that students who write and who read like writers have long done. When students step back from a text and think, "How does this part contribute to the whole text?" or "What is the work this portion of the story does for the whole story?" or "Why might the author have done this?" the payoff is immense, both in reading and students' own writing.

An Orientation to the Unit

BEND I ♦ Writing about Reading with Voice and Investment

Start with Assessment

1. Taking Charge of Your Reading Life
2. Writing Well about Reading

A Day for Assessment

3. Writing about Reading Means Reading with a Writerly Wide-Awakeness
4. Grounding Your Thinking in the Text and Carrying It with You as You Read On
5. Whose Story Is This, Anyway?: Considering Perspective and Its Effects
6. Learning to Think Analytically
7. Having Second Thoughts: Revising Writing about Reading

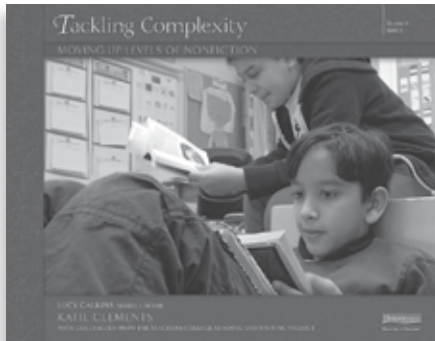
BEND II ♦ Raising the Level of Writing and Talking about Literature

8. Launching Interpretation Book Clubs
9. Characters—and Readers—Find Meaning in the Midst of Struggle
10. Seeing a Text through the Eyes of Other Readers
11. Linking Ideas to Build Larger Theories and Interpretations
12. Reading On, with Interpretations in Mind
13. Debating to Prompt Rich Book Conversation: Readers Have Different Viewpoints, Defending with Claims, Reasons, and Evidence
14. Reflecting on Ourselves as Book Clubs

BEND III ♦ Thematic Text Sets: Turning Texts Inside Out

15. Two Texts, One Theme: A Comparison Study
16. Rethinking Themes to Allow for More Complexity
17. Comparing Characters' Connections to a Theme
18. Studying the Choices an Author Did Not Make to Better Understand the Ones They Did
19. Delving Deeper into Literary Analysis: Reading as Writers
20. Celebrating with a Literary Salon





GRADE 5 ♦ UNIT 2 OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

Tackling Complexity *Moving Up Levels of Nonfiction*

KATIE CLEMENTS

The nonfiction texts your fifth graders are reading are complex; they raise significant challenges. Gone are the supportive headings and subheadings, as well as the pop-out sentences that highlighted main ideas in the passages your students used to read. What's more, engaging visuals and catchy fonts can make these texts appear deceptively simple, leaving readers to gloss over complexities and lose track of meaning.

This unit teaches students to embrace complexities in their high-interest nonfiction texts. Across Bend I, you'll rally students to join you in a giant investigation into the ways nonfiction texts are becoming complex, and you'll equip students with skills and strategies that help them tackle these new challenges.

Reading complex nonfiction requires strong foundational reading skills, so this bend emphasizes fluency, orienting to texts, and word solving. A particular spotlight is placed on increasing vocabulary demands, and you'll teach students to look around words and look inside words to determine the meaning of new words. Taken together, this work supports students as they summarize complex texts.

If your fifth graders expect to encounter complexities in their texts, and if they learn that instead of becoming discouraged they should turn to strategies for support, then they will be able to independently tackle challenges in texts.

Across Bend II, your fifth graders will pursue independent inquiry projects on the topic they are most interested in, be it infectious diseases, outer space, or their favorite pop star. You'll rally students to first learn through primary research, conducting surveys, interviews, and observations, and to use that

research to identify main ideas, so they return to texts on their topics with expert eyes. The first unit for fifth grade, Interpretation Book Clubs: Analyzing Themes, placed a special emphasis on writing about reading from fiction texts, and your teaching now will help students write about their nonfiction reading in ways that are similarly engaging and productive. Across this work, you will support students in transferring everything they've learned about making meaning from complex texts to texts on their inquiry topic.

Reading analytically is a very big deal for fifth graders. You'll support students in analyzing differences in perspective across texts, particularly differences that tie into craft or structure decisions an author makes. You'll also support skills such as cross-text synthesis. As students read across texts on their inquiry topics, they need to not only form categories that capture their learning as they read deeply within a subtopic, but they also need to notice contradictions within texts and think deeply about what might be causing those contradictions. Then, too, growing ideas matters. You'll encourage your fifth graders to move beyond reading a text and taking its ideas at face value, to instead thinking deeply about a text, to make their own connections and spark their own ideas, so they are ready to contribute their own thinking to the grand conversations on their topics.

Across this unit, you will communicate to students that following interests of their own matters and is valued in your classroom. Being a strong reader of nonfiction and an independent researcher leads you to live more deeply.

An Orientation to the Unit

BEND I ♦ Working with Text Complexity

Start with Assessment

1. The More You Know, the More You See
2. Orienting to More Complex Texts

A Day for Assessment

3. Uncovering What Makes a Main Idea Complex
4. Strategies for Determining Implicit Main Ideas
5. Using Context to Determine the Meaning of Vocabulary in Complex Texts
6. Inquiry into Using Morphology of Words to Tackle Tricky Vocabulary
7. Complex Thinking about Structure: From Sentence Level to Text Level
8. Rising to the Challenges of Nonfiction
9. Summarizing as Texts Get Harder

BEND II ♦ Applying Knowledge about Nonfiction Reading to Inquiry Projects

10. Learning from Sources
11. Learning from Primary Research
12. Coming to Texts as Experts
13. Writing about Reading in Nonfiction
14. Lifting the Level of Questions (Using DOK) to Drive Research Forward

15. Synthesizing across Subtopics

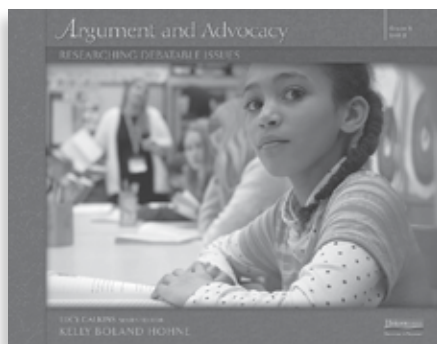
16. Writing about Reading: From Big Ideas to Specifics

17. Comparing and Contrasting What Authors Say (and How They Say It)

18. Critically Reading Our Texts, Our Topics, and Our Lives

19. Living Differently Because of Research





GRADE 5 ♦ UNIT 3 OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

Argument and Advocacy *Researching Debatable Issues*

KELLY BOLAND HOHNE

This unit continues to take students along the path of the ambitious reading work in which it is necessary for them to engage in order to meet the expectations of global standards, as well as to live as active, critical citizens. The standards call for students to read across multiple points of view on topics or issues, comparing ideas, information, and perspectives. This is also work that is at the heart of being an informed citizen—understanding different positions on issues and the reasons behind these positions, analyzing the strengths and merits of each of these positions and ultimately, forming one’s own thoughtful viewpoint on an issue.

In Bend I of this reading unit, you’ll rally students into work that is foundational to the unit—the work of analyzing arguments—with a one-day argument intensive in which students read and analyze a variety of arguments. With this experience in mind, students will then work in research clubs, each club studying a debatable, current issue. To study the issue, students will read text sets included in the unit which are designed to offer different perspectives on each issue. Students will read a variety of informational and argumentative texts, and then debate the issue, work which will push their cross-texts synthesis skills to new heights, as well as support their abilities to make their own arguments. Across the bend, they will continue to engage in debates, while you ramp up the level of their research, teaching them that research is a cycle of reading and thinking in response to that thinking and showing them how to summarize arguments.

This start of the unit, then, rallies students into the work of listening closely to others, summarizing them in a recognizable way, and making your own relevant arguments.

In Bend II, you will continue to push students to dig deeper into research. They’ll develop deeper questions and new ideas on their issue, and they will engage in more complicated conversations. You will teach them to read and reread more difficult texts with a critical eye, showing students that they can consider and compare perspective, craft, and strength of argument, in addition to the information and ideas of the author as they read across texts on a topic. By the end of the bend, the debates you hear should be deeply informed and nuanced, showing students’ firm grasp of the complexity of the issues they have been studying.

In Bend III, you’ll rally students to study a new issue, reminding them to use all they have learned about research, reading informational and argumentative texts, and using conversations as tools for understanding. You’ll push them into higher-level critical literacies work by asking them to consider why texts were made and who benefits from them. Students will continue to apply critical and analytical lenses to the texts they read as they work to understand their new issue, debate these issues and formulate thoughtful, ethical, evidence-based, logical positions. By the end of the unit, you’ll show them the relationship between argument and advocacy and students will apply their argument writing practices to raise the awareness of others on the issue.

An Orientation to the Unit

BEND I ♦ Investigating Issues

Start with Assessment

1. Argument Intensive
2. Organizing an Ethical Research Life to Investigate an Issue

A Day for Assessment

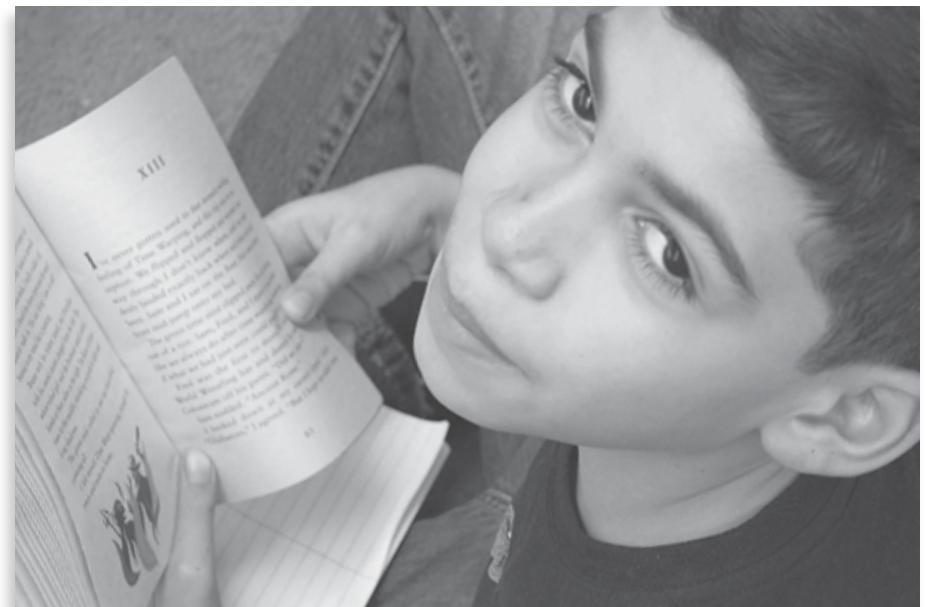
3. Letting Nonfiction Reading on an Issue Spur Flash-Debates
4. Mining Texts for Relevant Information
5. Strengthening Club Work
6. Readers Think and Wonder as They Read
7. Summarizing to Hold On to What Is Most Essential
8. “Arguing to Learn”

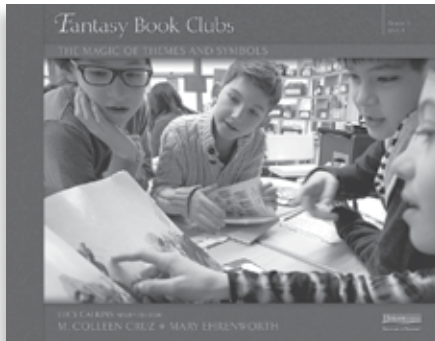
BEND II ♦ Raising the Level of Research

9. Moving beyond Considering One Debatable Question
10. Raising the Level of Annotating Texts
11. Reaching to Tackle More Difficult Texts
12. Who Said What? Studying Perspective
13. Considering Craft
14. Evaluating Arguments
15. Day of Shared Learning

BEND III ♦ Researching a New Issue with More Agency

16. Diving into New Research with More Agency and Independence
17. Letting Conversations Spark New Ideas
18. Talking and Writing Analytically across Sources
19. Reading Nonfiction with the Lens of Power
20. Advocacy
21. Readers Take Their Researcher-Debating Selves into the World





GRADE 5 ♦ UNIT 4 OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

Fantasy Book Clubs

The Magic of Themes and Symbols

M. COLLEEN CRUZ ♦ MARY EHRENWORTH

In this fourth and final unit of fifth grade, you'll find an emphasis on developing students' knowledge of literary traditions, encouraging students to read with more maturity and independence. The unit reflects an acute awareness that students will be going on in middle school and the rest of their lives as truly independent readers. We need to ensure they are ready to make their own way through longer and more complicated books, to form their own study groups around reading, and to work through hard parts with a toolkit of strategies and a sense of resiliency.

The unit is structured so children work in small book clubs, reading fantasy series. They'll read several novels so they become deeply immersed in this literary genre, and also so they can develop the kind of higher level thinking skills needed to study how authors develop characters and themes over time. Indeed, whether students are reading *Dragon Slayers' Academy* or *The Harry Potter Series*, they'll synthesize details and make connections across hundreds of pages in this unit of study.

There is a tremendous emphasis on transfer in this unit. The teacher introduces new work through a read aloud of a riveting fantasy novel for children (we suggest *The Thief of Always*), as well as a few short texts. Meanwhile, students will practice this work across the several fantasy novels, each time exploring how the work differs slightly in different texts.

At the start of the unit, students will find that they need to read analytically right away, as they consider the work authors do at the very beginning of

a novel to develop the setting as a physical place and a psychological one. Comprehension work really matters in more complex narratives. You'll alert students to ways that novels become more challenging and lead your readers through more tricky narratives, teaching them, for instance, to learn alongside the main character, and to suspend judgment as they carefully analyze scenes that introduce new and complicated characters and places.

In Bend II, you'll lead students to think metaphorically and analytically, teaching them to explore the quests and themes within and across their novels. You'll also lead students to engage ever more deeply by considering the implications of the conflicts, themes, and lessons in the stories they read for the lives students lead and want to lead.

As you move into Bend III, you'll focus students on dealing with the challenges that harder novels pose. Part of this work will involve really working on kids' habits as readers—getting them, for instance, to go outside the book to build knowledge, or to not ignore hard words but to study how authors introduce them, and to use a variety of strategies to actively learn new vocabulary as they read.

Finally, in Bend IV, readers learn to capitalize on their expertise by investigating fantasy as a literary tradition—and studying how the thinking work developed through reading fantasy novels will pay off in other genres. Expect students to read hundreds of pages, to think and talk like young literary theorists, and to fall ever more in love with reading.

An Orientation to the Unit

BEND I ♦ Constructing and Navigating Other Worlds

Start with Assessment

1. Researching the Setting
2. Learning alongside the Main Character

A Day for Assessment

3. Keeping Track of Problems that Multiply
4. Suspending Judgment: Characters (and Places) Are Not Always What They Seem
5. Reflecting on Learning and Raising the Level of Book Clubs

BEND II ♦ More than Dwarves: Metaphors, Life Lessons, Quests, and Thematic Patterns

6. Here Be Dragons: Thinking Metaphorically
7. Readers Learn Real-Life Lessons from Fantastical Characters
8. Quests Can Be Internal as Well as External
9. Comparing Themes in Fantasy and History
10. Self-Assessing Using Learning Progressions

BEND III ♦ When Fact and Fantasy Collide

11. Using Information to Better Understand Fantasy Stories
12. Using Vocabulary Strategies to Figure Out Unfamiliar Words

13. Fantasy Characters Are Complex

14. Investigating Symbolism

15. Interpreting Allegories in Fantasy Stories

BEND IV ♦ Literary Traditions: Connecting Fantasy to Other Genres

16. Paying Attention to How Cultures Are Portrayed in Stories

17. Identifying Archetypes

18. Reading Across Texts with Critical Lenses

19. The Lessons We Learn from Reading Fantasy Can Lift Our Reading of Everything

20. Happily Ever After: Celebrating Fantasy and Our Quest to Be Ever Stronger





Session 9

Characters—and Readers—Find Meaning in the Midst of Struggle



TODAY YOU WILL TEACH YOUR STUDENTS to pay close attention to one element of a story—characters—in a way that ripples into larger ideas about the book as a whole. In the last session you asked them to begin reading their new books closely and interpretively, and you probably found them paying close attention to character. You can embrace that focus today, even though the real goal is interpretation, which requires a focus on many elements of a story.

Most students are starting fantastic new books. Could you imagine reading *Wrinker* and *not* thinking about Beans and Mutto? Reading *Bridge to Terabithia* and *not* thinking about Jess and Leslie? These books are written in such a way that alert readers are bound to connect with the characters who are brought to life in them. Your teaching will be powerful when you are in sync with your students' thinking and can guide them to new pathways. Your students are bound to be thinking about *who* is in the story, what those characters want most, what frightens or excites them, how they interact with other characters. So yes, this session embraces the natural focus on character.

This session also uses work with characters as a stepping-stone toward a more in-depth study of interpretation. In the days ahead, you'll want to carry strands of the Narrative Reading Learning Progression with you in your conferring and small-group work, to help you envision the trajectory students can take as their thinking about characters becomes more complicated and eventually yields ideas that bridge character issues, relationships, and theme.

In today's minilesson, when you ask students to think about Kek, you'll use what your students notice to nudge them toward more sophisticated theories about the story as a whole. You'll ask them to think more universally about their ideas of Kek and to consider the author's possible larger messages about the main character and his challenges, uncovering larger truths and lessons—meanings—that are tucked into this one boy's story. The challenge for today will be to help readers transfer that learning to their own books, doing similar work as they read, talk, and write about their reading.

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that to think thematically, readers sometimes name the problem that a character faces, and then think about the lessons the character may learn or what the author may want readers to know.

GETTING READY

- ✓ If using *Home of the Brave* as your demonstration text, read aloud the rest of "Paperwork," "Information," "School Clothes," "Once There Was . . .," "New Desk," "Ready," "Cattle," "Lunch," and "Fries," pages 54–80, before today's session.
- ✓ Use students' ideas to write a chart in class, "When We Study Character, We Can Think About . . ." (see Connection and Conferring and Small-Group Work).
- ✓ Prepare to read aloud an excerpt from "Night," pages 43–46, *Home of the Brave* (see Active Engagement).
- ✓ Use students' possible themes to write a chart in class, "Possible Themes in *Home of the Brave*" (see Active Engagement).
- ✓ Display and add to Bend II anchor chart, "Drawing on All You Know to Read Well and Interpret Texts" (see Share). 🌟



MINILESSON

Characters—and Readers—Find Meaning in the Midst of Struggle

CONNECTION

Explain to students that they can focus on one element of a story, like character, and use that to see more in a story as a whole.

"Yesterday, and throughout this unit, many of you probably found yourselves focusing on the characters. Year after year you have learned more complex ways of studying character. This work has yielded complex theories, reams of writing about reading, and rich partner and club conversations. Today we will return to all that you have learned about character, adding one more strategy to your repertoire.

"Will you take a moment and tell your partner what you *already know* about studying characters?" I gave the students a moment to talk, jotting the strategies I heard on a chart. I called the students back together and asked them to turn their attention to the chart.

When We Study Character, We Can Think About . . .

- Their feelings and traits
- How they change
- What they want (what motivates them)
- How they respond to difficulty
- The ways they are complicated
- The ways they act with different people
- The ways they act in different contexts or situations
- How they are on the inside versus the outside

Call students back together, congratulating them on their depth of knowledge.

"Whoa, you know quite a bit about studying characters. The poet Maya Angelou once said, 'I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights.'" I let the quote sit in the air for a moment and then went on. "What Maya Angelou seems to be saying is that you can learn the most about a person in times of trouble. When a person has a problem, the way in which they deal with it can speak volumes about the person. I'd also add that in those moments when a character deals with trouble,

◆ COACHING

In fourth grade, students went on a similar journey, from studying character to making interpretations. They learned how characters can be complicated, acting differently in different contexts and relationships. This work led to determining patterns in a character's feelings and actions, especially her desires and obstacles and how she achieves or overcomes them. Then students were asked to connect this to life lessons: what was the author trying to teach about life?

Students should have an armload of strategies for studying character. By asking them to turn and talk, you help them to conjure up memories of those strategies, as well as to benefit from the recollections of their peers. You chart the strategies so that students can feel the weight of their past learning, and can use the chart when they need reminders on what to focus on. You will be gleaning knowledge from your own students. It's fine if your chart looks slightly different from this one.

you also learn about the big messages a book is trying to teach. Those moments are not only windows into the character as a person but also into the larger meanings of the story.”

❖ Name the teaching point.

“Today I want to teach you that sometimes readers think thematically by first naming the problem that a character faces, then asking, ‘What lessons does the character learn from (that problem)?’ or ‘What might the author want me to know about that problem/issue?’”

TEACHING

Ask students to think with you about the character in the class read-aloud, thinking about the problems the character faces, the lessons learned from that problem.

“Let’s try that work by thinking about Kek. In *Home of the Brave*. Hmm.” I looked at the book, flipping through pages, as if just then beginning to think about Kek. I knew that in the silence, students were turning their minds to him as well. “Doesn’t it seem like Kek faces a ton of problems?” I asked. “List some of them with each other.”

As the kids talked, I listened for just a bit and then stepped forward. Nodding, I said, “I agree with what you were saying. He is in a strange, new place—the language is different, the snow is cold. He’s lost his family and he worries about them.”

I turned through the chapters we had read, visibly mulling over ideas, clearly inviting children to think along with me. “I know some of you were saying that Kek is not just an immigrant, feeling misplaced, he is also a survivor of war. He is all alone, without his parents. He is homesick. I know that by the way he stares longingly at the cow.”

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Ask students to help as you consider the ways in which Kek deals with his problems and the larger themes or messages his reactions convey.

“I’m afraid I did the easy part. I listed the problems Kek is facing, but the real challenge is asking, ‘What lessons does the character learn about (the problem)?’ In other words, are there larger lessons or messages or themes that Katherine Applegate is trying to teach us through Kek? *That’s* hard!

“Let’s reread a part of ‘Night,’ and as I read, will you think about what the author might want us to think or learn through Kek. If ideas pop as I’m reading, jot them in your notebook. Later, you’ll talk to your club.” I began reading.

“Turn and talk to your club. What might Katherine Applegate want us to know or think about the issues in this book based on the way Kek deals with them?”

*Are you glad that you’re here, Ganwar?
I ask.*

He breathes in and out, in and out.

*This is a good land, he says.
There’s great freedom here.
But even when you travel far,
the ghosts don’t stay behind.
They follow you.
You come here to make a new life,
but the old life is still haunting you.*

*We don’t say anything for a few minutes.
Finally Ganwar speaks.
They’re all gone, Kek.
They’re dead.*

*I want to hate Ganwar for his words.
But I am too weary for anger.
Already there are so many people to hate,
too many.*

*Not all, I finally whisper.
Not Mama.*

*He sighs. It isn’t good to fool yourself.
I’ve learned that much.*

*Hope isn’t foolish, I say.
If I can make it all the way here,
then anything can happen.
He shakes his head.
Crazy boy, Ganwar says.
Hoping doesn’t make a thing come true.*

[. . .]

A man does not give up, I say.

*A man knows when he’s defeated, Ganwar
replies.*

*I wipe away a tear
with the soft cloth in my hand.*

*I don’t answer.
I am afraid of what the answer might be.*

Immediately the room was abuzz as students shared their thoughts about Kek and Ganwar. “It’s like Kek won’t even think about negative things,” said Katie. “He just *has* to have hope.”

“I think Katie’s right,” added Tobie. “It’s like he just can’t let his mom be dead. He has to hope. Otherwise, he’d be all alone.”

I called for students’ attention. “Readers, listen carefully because I’m about to ask you to do some hard work. When thinking and talking interpretively, readers don’t just talk about one character. Instead, they apply what they notice about one person to the world, to all people. To do this, it may help to start your sentence with ‘Sometimes people . . .’ or ‘Sometimes in life . . .’

“Katie, can you get your club started in taking what you notice about Kek and making it about *all* people? Try using the prompts ‘Sometimes people . . .’ or ‘Sometimes in life . . .’” Then, I asked each club to resume talking, this time using the language of interpretation. As I circled among the clubs, I heard the beginnings of themes and jotted them on this chart.

Possible Themes in *Home of the Brave*

- Sometimes people need to hold onto hope.
- Sometimes other people want to take your hope away, but you don’t have to let them.
- Sometimes, even when things are bad, you need to believe they will get better.

LINK

Remind students that they can take on the lens of character to develop interpretations.

“Readers, I can’t wait to see what you come up with in your reading and conversations today. Two things. First, before you read on today, will you reread what you wrote last night? Keep that writing out and as you read, see if you can add onto or extend any of those ideas.

“And secondly, remember that one way to develop interpretations is to name the problem a character is facing, then ask: ‘What lessons does the character learn from (the problem)?’ ‘What might the author want me to know about this issue?’ You might use sentence starters such as, ‘Sometimes in life . . .’”

I sent students off to read.

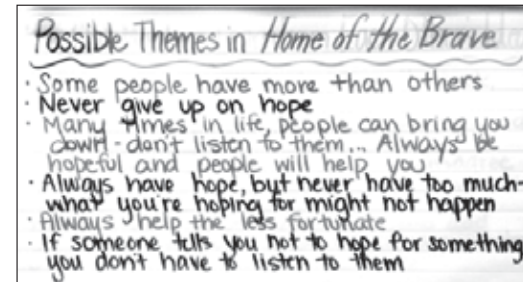


FIG. 9-1 This is one class’s theme chart for *Home of the Brave*.

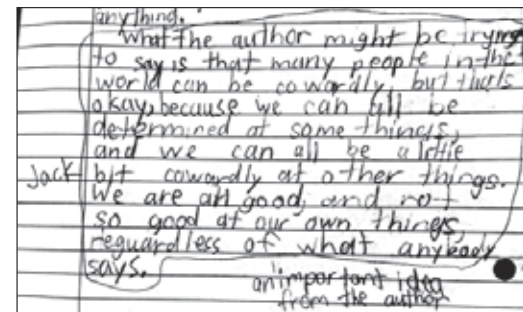
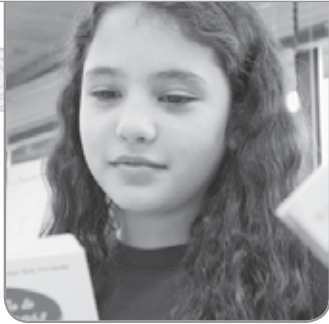


FIG. 9-2 Jack thinks about larger life lessons in his book club book.



CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

The Close Link between Assessment and Teaching

AS STUDENTS READ, you'll want to check in on what they are doing so as to do your usual routine of assessment-based instruction. You'll want to make a habit of checking the writing about reading students do each night, as this will provide valuable information about the progress they are making in the unit. When students are writing about characters, it will help you to keep the learning progression for character theory work in mind, noting where a student is on that progression and nudging them toward the next steps. For example, if students are noting a single character trait, you can applaud that the student has inferred that trait (presumably the author didn't come right out and label the character) and has found places in the text that provide evidence of the trait, and then you can build on that by suggesting the student might take the next step and realize that characters are complicated, they

are multidimensional, and look for other traits. (See the Literature Reading Continuum in the online resources to help inform your understanding of the trajectory of skill growth students are undertaking in this unit.) Because your ultimate goal is to support interpretive reading, no matter what the student notices about a character, you may want to help the student mull over why the author made the character be that way. "You are right that both the son and the father are wearing blue in this story—what do you think led the author to make that decision? What connotations does that color have for you? Why not red? Purple?"

If appropriate, consider going back to the chart you created with students in today's connection, using it to ground the work you help these students do around character.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING Looking for Places Where Characters Seem to Realize Something or Change

"Readers, today you practiced thinking about how a character faces problems, asking, 'What lessons does the character learn from the problem?' or 'What might the author want me to know about this issue?' By now, you and your club mates should have a starting sense of the problem(s) the characters are facing in your club's book. Quickly, turn and tell someone in your club what you've found."

After kids talked for just a minute, I stepped in. "Readers, some members of the *Esperanza Rising* club were just saying that their character, Esperanza, is unhappy, struggling with loneliness. They know the problems, but can't see a life lesson. Are any of you in the same boat—you can name a problem your character encounters, but you haven't seen the character learning a lesson about it?" Many kids agreed that they were stuck on the same challenge.

"I gave the *Esperanza Rising* club a tip that might be helpful: when you are looking for lessons, after you name a big problem, then find a place where the character

realizes something related to that problem, or where something related to that problem shifts. Reread that part closely. There are usually lessons to be harvested from that part.

"Remember that conversation between Kek and Ganwar when Ganwar keeps trying to convince Kek to give up. At the end of that passage, Kek begins to cry a bit. That's a shift because it is the first crack in Kek's determined hopefulness. From that one place in the story where things shift, we learn some big truths about Kek and his need to hold onto hope.

"So return to reading now, but as you read, watch for the shifts that suggest a character is changing in relation to a big problem."

When We Study Character, We Can Think About . . .

- *Their feelings and traits*
- *How they change*
- *What they want (what motivates them)*
- *How they respond to difficulty*
- *The ways they are complicated*
- *The ways they act with different people*
- *The ways they act in different contexts or situations*
- *How they are on the inside versus the outside*

You will probably also see readers who are thinking about the life lessons that can be learned from ways characters handle their problems. These students might well talk about somewhat clichéd ideas like “Friends help you” or “Anything is possible if you just keep trying.” Celebrate that effort, as long as those ideas do seem to match the text. Again, you may use the Narrative Reading Learning Progression, noting first where a student falls along the progression of “Determining Themes” and then deciding on appropriate (and attainable) next steps for that student. For instance, if a student tends to simply name a topic (this book teaches friendship) rather than a lesson or theme, you may teach him or her to ask, “What lesson does the character learn about (the

topic)?” If a student is beginning to identify a more complex lesson in a story, you may teach him or her to keep an eye out for multiple lessons or themes. And, of course, as students determine themes, you’ll likely need to remind them to ground their thinking in text evidence, especially quotes directly from the text. You may need to help students see that some details (those that relate to the central problem, for example) are often most important in determining the theme.

Here are some questions that you can teach students to ask themselves and others:

- What is the character’s central problem in this scene? How does that relate to the theme of this story?
- Which of the details about _____ seems most important to the reader’s understanding of him or her? How do those details help convey a theme?
- Which detail in this scene best helps to show a theme in this story?
- What moments seem most important to this story? Do they reveal something about what this story is really about?





SHARE

Writing and Talking about Texts to Uncover Life Lessons, Challenges, Important Shifts

Channel kids to decide whether they will talk or write today, and then help them get started talking if they chose that route.

"Readers, I'm going to ask you to get together with your club and decide whether you want to talk today or to continue reading and writing about your reading. If you haven't read at least twenty pages today, you probably should continue reading because you definitely don't want a day to go by without reading at least that much!"

"If you do meet with your club, will you take a moment at the start to talk about how your talk should go? Please remember that what you don't want to do is to hop from one person to the next without taking time to develop and learn from each other's thinking. So you probably will choose a way to start—maybe someone has ideas he or she thinks could spark a good conversation—and then stay with those ideas. But you could also begin by laying out some of your writing about reading—Post-its and entries and so on. Then read silently for a bit, before saying to yourselves, 'Okay, what should we talk about?'"

Spend time conferring with clubs, especially with clubs that include kids who could use a boost.

I meanwhile pulled in to work with a group of readers who are working below benchmark, reading *The Hundred Penny Box*. I asked them how they wanted to spend their club time, and they decided to first recall and organize their Post-its. While doing this work, they invented a chart that used plus signs and equal signs to show how one idea plus another idea led them to a new idea. Although I was glad they'd made a tool that encouraged them to accumulate their ideas, closer inspection suggested that despite the plus signs, the students hadn't actually synthesized their ideas. Instead, they had restated the text.

Taking hold of the page on which they'd used an addition sign to link their Post-it notes, I read the sequence of work as I might read a sentence.

"Readers, what I am noticing is that your first idea—'Aunt Dew is annoyed . . . '—pretty much restates your original thinking. Reread what you have written and see if you can spot how you repeat yourself." The boys read their work over. They then added to their big idea verbally: Aunt Dew doesn't want to throw away her stuff, including the Hundred Penny Box, because those things are important to her.

It was a start! I said, "You are on to something! And this is important to the whole of the story, isn't it? We know the author wanted the reader to think about the importance of that box because she chose it as the title for her book. So you are the kinds of readers who know how to determine what's worth growing a theory about. This is huge!"

I then suggested that the club might discuss the idea among themselves briefly. "Sometimes when people talk about an idea—like when we talk about an idea we discover in *Home of the Brave*—the idea grows," I pointed out. I knew the chances were greater that the idea would grow if I endorsed it. To get them started, I repeated what they'd said and added 'because . . .'

"Aunt Dew is annoyed that Ruth is throwing stuff away because that stuff matters to her. *This is important because . . .*" I gestured for the kids to continue and they did. Marcus continued, "Because the pennies mean a lot to her."

"And . . ." I coached.

Spencer added, "The pennies represent her whole life." The boys exchanged glances, and laughed.

Again I said, "And . . ."

Soon the club members had added, "And Ruth didn't realize they were important, and throwing them away was kind of like wiping her out." "Aunt Dew would have nothing if she didn't have her box full of memories."

That was a beautiful, sophisticated idea and metaphorical, as well. I repeated Marcus's words and then restated the teaching point of the conference.

"Well done, readers! I want you to take away some key learning from today," I said, gesturing to the new bullets on the anchor chart.

ANCHOR CHART

Drawing on All You Know to Read Well and Interpret Texts

- Read alertly to notice what stands out and find the meaning in specific details.
- To uncover a life lesson or message from a story, name a big problem or challenge faced by the main character.
- Look for a moment when something related to that problem shifts—a realization, feeling, or relationship.

Uncover life lessons or messages:

Name a big problem or challenge faced by the main character.

Look for a moment when something related to that problem shifts.



FIG. 9-3



FIG. 9-4

SESSION 9 HOMEWORK



TAKING THE LEAP: FROM A CHARACTER'S BIG PROBLEM TO A BIGGER TRUTH ABOUT LIFE

Readers, tonight's homework is due not tomorrow, but the day after that. For tonight and tomorrow, continue reading your book club novel. As you read, jot to answer the questions you learned to ask today. What are the challenges, the problems, that the main character is facing? Where in the story is the main character facing that problem or challenges? What life lessons can be learned from the way the character responds to those difficulties?

After you have found a few passages where the main character is facing a big problem, will you reread those passages three or four times, thinking about the decisions the author made. Ask, "Why does the author have the character doing . . . ?" "What do I notice about this passage . . . what stands out?" "How does this connect with earlier parts of the text?" "What message might the author be trying to communicate?" "What lesson about life is the author trying to teach?"

Write a two-page entry about what you notice and think. What might the author be saying about not only that character, but about people, in life?



Session 1

The More You Know, the More You See

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that readers approach nonfiction texts with their knowledge of genre in mind, knowing the things that are apt to be important.

GETTING READY

- ✓ Before this minilesson begins, ask students to select and bring a high-interest nonfiction book to read to the meeting area. Also remind students to bring their reading folders (containing reading logs and pens) to the meeting area for every session.
- ✓ Have a fiction chapter book ready to reference to review what is worth attending to in fiction texts (see Connection).
- ✓ Prepare a chart titled "Nonfiction Readers Know it Pays Off to Think About . . ." and be ready to add students' ideas to the chart (see Teaching and Mid-Workshop Teaching). ✨
- ✓ Have copies of the level 5 "Lessons from the Deep" article ready to distribute to students and prepare sections to reference. Enlarge the fourth paragraph on chart paper for students to mark up with a marker or project it using a document camera (see Teaching and Active Engagement). ✨
- ✓ Leave flag notes at tables for students to mark up pages they want to share (see Link).
- ✓ Print a copy of the Informational Reading Learning Progression to carry with you across the unit (see Conferring and Small-Group Work and Share). ✨
- ✓ Make sure students have new reading logs in their reading folders and that they are continuing to log their reading (see Link and Share). ✨

THIS SESSION OPENS YOUR UNIT on reading high-interest nonfiction texts with increasing complexity. Like most sessions that open a unit, it is broad, encompassing, invitational. You attempt to give students the big picture of what they'll be learning over the next stretch of time. You say to your students, "Note how you approach fiction texts, already knowing so much about what is worth seeing, noticing, in those texts." Then you add, "Skilled readers of nonfiction approach their texts similarly, equally aware of what merits attention." Then you proceed to remind students of all they have learned in previous years about reading with an awareness of text structure and of main idea. Quickly, you turn the reins over to the students and ask them to practice approaching nonfiction texts in the same way, drawing on all that knowledge to form expectations for those texts. Coming to texts with a nuanced understanding of genre moves students toward fifth-grade expectations for "Orienting" on the Informational Reading Learning Progression.

This instruction, then, is what one could call "high up the food chain." You aren't teaching them to eat protein—you are teaching them to maintain a balanced diet. That is, your instruction organizes and overviews a lot of more specific tips. Assuming that your students have received that prior instruction, given that this is fifth grade, the level of your teaching is apt to work. You'll be teaching students to transfer. If, however, your students have not been taught to read with an awareness of text structure or to read for the main idea, we suggest you support this lesson by borrowing a few lessons from previous grades.

The minilesson ends with those all-important words: *off you go*. The work that follows is the truly important part of today, and you will need to do some preparation for that work. Read the Welcome to the Unit to learn about the ways in which you can provision students' reading during this unit.



MINILESSON

The More You Know, the More You See

CONNECTION

Launch this unit by suggesting it extends the previous one. Skilled readers see more in a text because they know what is worth noting, and that is true for nonfiction as well as fiction texts.

"Readers, gather close," I said. "Earlier this year, I told you the story about my friend Mary who knows nothing about baseball, and she went to her first pro baseball game ever—you remember . . ."

The students chimed in. "She thought it was boring. She thought, 'Nothing happens' 'cause no one was scoring!"

I nodded. "And you remember that part way into the game, her son Jack turned to her and said, 'This is so exciting I can't stand it!' and Mary looked at him with that 'Huh?' look on her face. Then he jabbered on about all that he was noticing: the pitcher's fastball and the heads-up plays by the shortstop and ways players were stealing bases. Listening to him, Mary realized that Jack was noticing so much more than she was about the game, and he was doing that because he knows more about it. To an expert, things others might take as inconsequential all of a sudden become important.

"Listening to Jack, Mary realized that for a baseball expert, everything matters.

"We talked about Mary and Jack's experience at the baseball game way back at the start of this year when you were getting ready to begin your year of reading fiction. Since then, you all worked hard at becoming more expert as readers of fiction. As a result, I bet I could pick up any chapter book in our library, and if I asked, before I started to read it aloud, 'What should we be looking for?' you'd already have a fistful of ideas that you knew would pay off to study."

Accentuate your claim that your students know what is worth attending to in fiction by creating a miniature exercise in which they can display their prowess with this.

"Let's try and see if that's true." I reached for a fiction book—any book—and held it up. The kids and I read the title. Then I said, "You know this is a fiction chapter book. Quick, with your partner, list five things you would be attending to if we were to start reading this book. Go!" I silently modeled counting out ideas on my hand to signal to students that they should collect their information in that same way.

◆ COACHING

Notice that I recall earlier teaching, using the same terminology used in Unit 1. You'll want to be consistent and repetitive in the terms you use, so that the language and the ideas they represent become a common vocabulary in your classroom.

Once children read your signals and start talking with each other, you'll probably want to shift into listening more so as to hear students as they talk. It's likely your students will suggest that they know it pays off to get to know characters, to notice the problems characters face, and to remain alert to how those problems are resolved and to how characters change.

I signaled for students to turn back around, and launched immediately into connecting the work students do with fiction texts to the work I wanted them to do with nonfiction texts. “Readers, you already approach fiction texts as experts, carrying with you tons of ideas for the kind of thinking work that will pay off. That’s a big deal because as Mary found out, the more you know, the more you will see.

“Here’s the thing.” I paused dramatically and leaned in close. “It’s no different for nonfiction.”

✿ Name the teaching point.

“Today I want to teach you that readers don’t see with their eyes alone, but with their minds. Reading *any* text well requires you to approach that text, knowing things that are apt to be important. That knowledge comes from knowing about the genre (in this case, nonfiction).”

TEACHING

Use an article to demonstrate that readers approach nonfiction with a short list of things that are apt to be important, reading with extra alertness because of that short list.

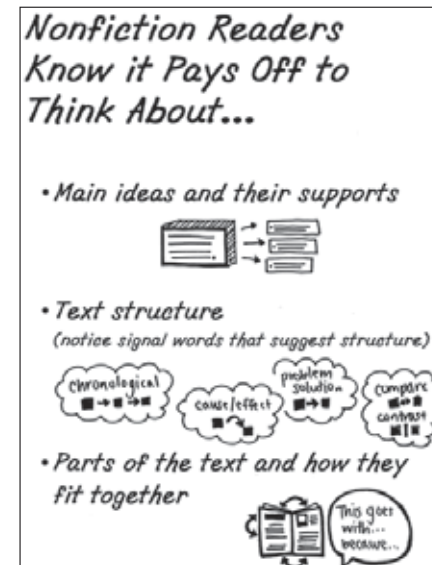
“When I asked you to brainstorm what matters in a fiction text, you rattled off an armload of things. I’m expecting you can do the same for nonfiction; let’s try.” I held up the article, “An Animal Like No Other,” and said, “This will be one of our read-aloud texts for this unit. Let’s get ready to read it. What kinds of things will we pay attention to in this text? And what *won’t* we focus on? Turn and talk.”

After just a moment, I continued, “So let’s practice. Before we begin reading, let’s brainstorm the kinds of things that you’ll be looking for. Mary’s son, Jack, knew things that happen in a baseball game that are worth paying attention to because they matter—what would you think might be worth paying attention to in this article?”

I asked the kids to brainstorm and I listened in. Then I convened the class. “I agree with you. We definitely want to notice the main ideas that the author seems to be putting forward. The author might well come straight out and say those ideas, and might even repeat them. What else will you want to notice?”

Children pitched out some more ideas and soon we had a short list.

It is unlikely that your students will quickly produce a tidy list containing all of the items on this list. As your students offer suggestions, be prepared to listen for the salient points, and if students do not offer those up themselves, you may wish to offer your own suggestions to round out this chart.



"Let's read the first part of 'Lessons from the Deep' together." I quickly distributed copies to students. "And as we do, be on the lookout for these things that we know it pays off to think about. When we come across one, and we probably will quickly, pop one finger up, signaling a piece of information you want to talk about."

I read aloud just the title and the first paragraph:

"'Lessons of the Deep'

"Of all the strange and wonderful creatures that live in the ocean, one unique creature stands out above the rest. It is the amazing octopus. There are over 300 different types of octopus, and they can be found in every ocean in the world."

I popped a finger up in the air and noticed a few students did the same.

After pausing, draw students' attention to cues you noted that helped you notice main ideas and their supports.

"Well, I haven't heard any clues about text structure yet, have you? I'm wondering about the main idea, though. I don't know about you, but I'm thinking the main idea of this chunk might be about the octopus. Wait, wait, wait . . . I can't just say *the octopus*; I have to say what it's teaching about the octopus here." I looked carefully at the text.

"So, I'm thinking a main idea here is that the octopus is an unusual creature, because the author says the octopus is a 'unique creature' right at the start of the paragraph, in a pop-out sentence. And the author uses other specific words that support the idea that the octopus is truly unique: *strange*, *amazing*, and *found in every ocean*." I underlined each word or phrase.

"I know there are lots of things that are important for nonfiction readers to think about," I said, and I glanced back up at our chart. "Let me think, too, about the parts of the text and how they fit together. If the title is one part, I have to look at whether this first paragraph—and part—fits with it. The title is 'Lessons from the Deep,' and then most everything in that first paragraph supports the fact that the octopus is unique, like no other. I'm not seeing a connection now. Let's see what we notice as we keep reading."

Step back to recall what you've done in ways that are transferrable to another text and another day.

"Readers, did you notice that as we started reading, we kept in mind the things that we know are important to think about when reading nonfiction? This helped us to see more in the text and to make sure things didn't pass by us."

The work you are doing here is supporting students in moving from fourth- to fifth-grade work on the "Orienting" strand of the Informational Reading Learning Progression. You are teaching students that readers carry their knowledge of genre with them to each new text they read, and they allow that knowledge of genre to shape their expectations for how the text will go and what they will learn.

Your think-aloud here supports students in differentiating between main topics and main ideas in a text. A student who describes the main topic of this part might say "the octopus," using a word or short phrase to describe what the selection is about. The main idea of this section could be "The octopus is a unique creature," capturing the point the writer is making about the topic.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Channel students to listen alertly as you continue reading the text, then to engage in partner conversation about the things it pays off for nonfiction readers to think about.

"Let's read on this way, keeping in mind the things that pay off to think about when reading nonfiction." I tapped the list of things nonfiction readers know to attend to, and asked students to signal if something else came up in the text that merited attention. To make best use of the limited time in a minilesson, I jumped ahead to the fourth paragraph and began reading.

One of the most striking characteristics of the octopus is the wide array of techniques it uses to avoid or thwart its attackers. When an octopus wants to move quickly to escape a predator, it can expel water from its siphon and push itself backwards. This is called jet propulsion. Using this technique, octopuses can travel many miles. An octopus can also protect itself by squirting ink at a predator, obscuring its view and causing it to lose its sense of smell temporarily. This makes the fleeing octopus difficult to track for the predator. Using a network of pigment cells and specialized muscles in its skin, the octopus can also instantaneously match the colors, patterns, and even textures of its surroundings.

"I see fingers popping up everywhere. Tell each other what you are noticing."

Listening to the students, I noted that nearly all had noticed a main idea being taught, while far fewer noticed that the section was written to show cause and effect. Picking up my marker, I said, "I heard a number of you wondering if this showed causes and effects. The octopus was being attacked, which caused lots of other things to happen. Remember that a cause is *why* something happens and an effect is *what* happens as a result."

"Will all of you look at this chunk again, and this time, see if you agree with the kids who suggested this is a cause-and-effect text? On your own copies of this article, mark the parts that tell about a cause, if there is one, and that tell about how that cause initiates a lot of effects, a lot of things that happen as a result."

As partners jumped into action, I passed my marker to two nearby readers, and soon they were marking up the enlarged paragraph on my chart paper. A moment later, it looked like this:

One of the most striking characteristics of the octopus is the wide array of techniques it uses to (avoid or thwart) its attackers. (When an octopus wants to move quickly to escape) a predator, it can expel water from its siphon and push itself backwards. This is called jet propulsion. Using this technique, octopuses can travel many miles. An octopus (can also protect itself) by squirting ink at a predator, (obscuring) its view and causing it to lose its sense of smell temporarily. (This makes the fleeing octopus difficult to track) for the predator. Using a network of pigment cells and specialized muscles in its skin, the octopus (can also instantaneously match) the colors, patterns, and even textures of its surroundings.

Notice that the section of text chosen for this active engagement is very short, yet presents a variety of possible challenges—a main idea that is taught explicitly using difficult language; unfamiliar, domain-specific vocabulary; a text structure signaled with less familiar transitions. I deliberately kept the chunk of text short and to the point to provide students with plenty of practice time during their independent reading.

Be sure you listen in as your readers talk. If they neglect to discuss text structure, as the students here did, then continuing on to discuss cause-and-effect text structures will make sense. However, you might find that students need support considering how parts of texts function together, in which case you might coach them to think about how the chunk of text they just read fits with the title and first paragraph.

LINK

Name what you've taught as a transferrable skill. Send students off to read, reminding them that great writers merit this kind of expert reading. Stir them up!

"Readers, you're ready to dive into your nonfiction books today, approaching them like the experts you are, carrying all the thinking work you already know how to do with you. Pull out the book you're starting with today." Students pulled out the high-interest nonfiction books they had selected just before the minilesson began.

"Right now, will you look over our 'Nonfiction Readers Know It Pays Off to Think About . . .' chart, and, with your partner, will you make a plan for your work today? What will you think about when you read nonfiction?" Quickly, students talked and generated plans with their partners.

"You'll notice there are no Post-it notes at your tables today—just some flags. For today, note things and plan to talk about them, but channel your time toward reading. Writing about reading can come later. You will, however, want to log the amount of reading you do today. Off you go!"

You'll notice we are recommending that for the first several days of the unit students do not pause to write about their reading during their independent reading time. Instead, we suggest you provision students with flags they can use to mark key parts in their texts. While lifting the level of students' writing about nonfiction reading will be a thread across this unit, it's likely many of your students read nonfiction with a pencil constantly in hand, stopping to jot down every single fact they read. Your directions here help to break this habit, getting students used to reading large chunks of text before they stop and jot.



CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Launching the Unit

YOU'LL BE BUSY TODAY! You'll likely divide your time between helping students select books and helping them transfer everything they know about reading nonfiction from previous years over to this new unit of study.

Support readers in selecting texts within reach.

Presumably you will have already leveled the nonfiction texts in your classroom library. You may have done this using Fountas and Pinnell's leveling system for nonfiction texts, which is as good a system as any, or you may have relied on published Lexile levels. Know that most teachers find nonfiction more difficult to pin down by level than fiction, in part because prior knowledge plays such a big role in comprehension of a nonfiction text.

This doesn't mean that levels of nonfiction texts are inconsequential—they are not. If you encounter a child who is struggling with a too-hard text you will certainly need to channel that child to an easier text. As mentioned earlier, the child's comfort level with a text will vary depending on prior knowledge. A nonfiction book on excavating dinosaur fossils will be accessible to a reader steeped in that topic but not to a similar reader whose knowledge on the topic is thin. Then, too, the photographs and other text features can make the text look more accessible than it is. Because of this, matching readers to nonfiction books is often more complicated than matching readers to fiction books.

Today your students will choose texts that are within reach for them, and the way in which you have organized the classroom library will help. For example, you may decide to cluster information books that address the same topics. You can remind students that it pays off to read the easiest book on a topic first to build background knowledge before tackling trickier books on the same subject. These easier texts tend to more explicitly teach the concepts and vocabulary students need to know to access more complex texts.

Text and topic introductions will also channel students toward texts. Your crafty salesmanship as you describe the complexities of desert life and the staggering number of weeks cacti can go without water can convince any reader to give a set of texts on life in the desert a try. Carefully designed text introductions can also signal readers to pay attention to major concepts that will stretch across a set of texts.

Same-book partnerships will be incredibly supportive for your less experienced readers, and they simply require you to group paired copies of texts together in the library. Then, two readers can move through the same book in sync with each other. These readers can be encouraged to pause along the way and discuss their thinking, just as you paused and prompted students to think and talk while reading "Lessons from the Deep."

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Reminding Readers to See More

Standing in the middle of the room, I said, "Readers, can I have your eyes and ears? Will you take a minute to look over the chart we created during our minilesson and, with your partner, name out the kinds of thinking work you're already doing as you read? Talk a bit about how that thinking work is helping you."

"Remember that readers are constantly working to outgrow themselves. That means they not only do the thinking work that's easy for them, they *also* push themselves to do work that's not as automatic. Look back at the chart, and set a quick goal for what you'll pay particular attention to as you keep reading. Then, get right back into your books!"

Rally students to the work of this new unit.

During your minilesson, you reminded students of previous learning you expected them to transfer over, and now is your chance to get this new unit off the ground. Like a hummingbird, you'll flutter from table to table, rallying everyone to the work of this new unit. As you did in the first unit of study, use table compliments, quick small groups, and voiceovers to highlight behaviors you hope all readers will emulate. For example, in the next session you'll teach more about how to preview complex nonfiction texts, but today you could be on the lookout for children who linger on the front or back covers of a book or on the table of contents. Name what the child is doing and compliment the behavior loudly enough for students nearby to hear. "I love how you're setting up expectations for how this text will go by looking closely at the table of contents. That gives you a sense of what the book will teach and how the book might teach it. Keep it up!"

Draw on the Informational Reading Learning Progression.

Throughout this unit, and all of your units that support nonfiction reading, you'll want to keep a copy of the Informational Reading Learning Progression on hand as you observe readers and begin making plans for them.

Today, at the start of your nonfiction work, you'll probably be most interested in students' literal comprehension. As you move around the room conferring, ask children to read bits of texts aloud to you. Listen with the "Fluency" strand of the progression in hand, noting whether their fluency fits the descriptions for fifth-grade work. For example, are students already using their voice to add meaning to the texts they are reading? Since the progression details end-of-grade goals, and since this is likely your first nonfiction reading unit of the year, expect to see students demonstrate the fourth-grade expectations. If not, give students a quick tip and coach them to improve their fluency right then and there.

Or, you might use the progression to study students' work monitoring for sense. Pull up next to a student reading a particularly dense page, and ask the student to talk a bit about what he is reading. Listen, learning progression in hand, to see if the reader talks about different parts of the page or anticipates that unexplained parts will be elaborated on later. If you notice a reader talking about parts of the text in isolation, use the fourth-grade expectations for "Monitoring for Sense" on the learning progression to suggest a next step. You might say, "When you read a new part, you have to ask, 'How does that part fit with my overall picture of the topic?'"





SHARE

Rallying Students to Increase Their Reading Volume

Convene students in the meeting area, rallying partners to summarize the information they read today.

"Readers, we don't usually gather for share sessions at the end of our reading workshop, but we're starting a new unit, so let's come together today." Once students had gathered on the rug, I said, "Before we talk about anything else, will you get ready to summarize for your partner what the text you read today taught you, to teach your partner just the important points of what you read?"

"Count out your main ideas on your fingers. Think, 'First the text taught . . . and then it taught . . .' Look back in the book to help you. Turn and teach." I listened in to students' summaries, noting where students' responses fell on the "Main Idea(s) and Supporting Details/Summary" strand of the Informational Reading Learning Progression. I wanted to determine to what extent they recalled teaching from fourth grade.

Coach readers to study, then to increase their volume of reading.

"Readers, remember that in your first unit, you paid attention to your volume, your sheer amount of reading, and you set goals to increase your volume? I told you about the research that shows that in forty minutes of nose-to-book reading time, kids should be reading about thirty pages. Take a minute to study your log from today. Did you read close to thirty pages in your forty minutes of reading?" I paused for a moment as students studied their data. "Tell your partner what your research revealed."

Scores of "Eek! I was nowhere close to that!" rang out across the meeting area. I glanced quickly at pages logged: 8, 25, 12, 14, 23, 7.

"Sometimes when we read nonfiction, our pace slows, and it feels like we're inching our way through a book. That is not okay. You might not make it to three quarters of a page per minute, but you can certainly make it to half a page per minute. You'll have to push yourself to keep reading down the page, not pausing after every tiny fact, so you can hold onto the important ideas you're reading about. Try this as you're reading tonight and whenever you read nonfiction from now on."

SESSION 1 HOMEWORK



INCREASING YOUR READING VOLUME

Readers, today in school you reflected on the volume of reading you could do in 40 minutes. Researchers suggest you should read three quarters of a page a minute. Many of you realized that you weren't close to reading at that rate.

For tonight, you have a choice. You could take home your nonfiction book to read. Or you could do some reading about one of your favorite nonfiction topics. You might read sports scores in the newspaper or online or do some research for a fantasy football team. Maybe you want to research a special product you want to buy on the Consumer Reports website. Try to read a variety of nonfiction texts on that topic—some longer, some shorter, some in one format, some in another.

Try to increase your reading pace without decreasing your comprehension too much. Aim to read three quarters of a page a minute. Notice how it feels to push yourself a bit. Are you still able to attend to the content?

Keep track of your reading, and devote at least 40 minutes (and probably much more) time to it.



Session 5

Using Context to Determine the Meaning of Vocabulary in Complex Texts







TODAY'S SESSION BEGINS a two-day exploration on vocabulary. As students read increasingly complex texts, it is vital that you support students' progress toward the fifth-grade expectations on the learning progression for "Word Work," a key skill for this unit and for life. Your students will encounter challenging academic vocabulary that is often essential to a passage's meaning, and the miscues students make can completely alter the meaning of a passage. Even when students can sound out a word, that word may not be familiar to them, so sounding it out won't trigger recognition and lead the reader to ascertain the word's meaning. More complex texts also tend to provide less vocabulary support. Even if there is a glossary or a text box that includes the definition of key words, authors often use tricky academic vocabulary in those definitions. Chances are great that your students will need support navigating these complexities.

In this session, you'll help your students determine the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context in the passage. In *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do* (Heinemann, 2002), Kyleene Beers points out that although teachers often talk up the importance of context clues, "we must recognize that using context as a clue is something that requires lots of practice, something that separates dependent from independent readers, something that is much harder than we may have realized" (186).

To do this, you'll remind students that in fourth grade they learned to *look around* words, reading beyond the sentence that contains the word, so as to take into account several sentences before and after the tricky vocabulary word. You'll also encourage students to think about the type of word that's being used, to note whether the word is positive or negative, and to envision what's happening in the text based on the clues the author provides. Students will try this work with an accessible word—*predator*—noticing how the word is taught across several levels of "The Amazing Octopus" texts. Students will see that as texts become more complex, the vocabulary help embedded into easier versions of a text is peeled away, leaving readers to make more textual inferences. You'll help your students learn how to make those inferences, supporting students in meeting fifth-grade expectations for word solving on the learning progression.

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that readers rely on a host of strategies to help them make sense of the increasingly complex vocabulary used by authors of nonfiction texts.

GETTING READY

- ✓ Before this session, use read-aloud time to preview with your students several levels of "The Amazing Octopus," a nonfiction article that we have rewritten "up the ladder" as a series of progressively challenging texts (see Teaching and Active Engagement). 
- ✓ Display the "Ways Complex Nonfiction Gets Hard" anchor chart (see Teaching and Active Engagement). 
- ✓ Prepare to display the fourth paragraph of "The Amazing Octopus" at levels 2, 4, and 6, and provide students with copies to mark up (see Teaching and Active Engagement). 
- ✓ Create a chart titled "Figuring Out the Meaning of Unknown Words" from Grade 4 Unit 2 *Reading the Weather, Reading the World*. Today you'll display the "Look around" section (see Teaching and Active Engagement). 



Later, in the mid-workshop teaching and share, you'll work toward developing readers who are word conscious and willing to use the new words they're learning. Just as you delight in watching toddlers take risks with their vocabulary, trying out the new words they've heard grown-ups use, you'll want to encourage your students to be risk takers as well. Too often, fifth-graders are worried about making mistakes and don't attempt to use words they've just encountered in texts. Today's lesson confronts this head on, addressing the "Building Vocabulary" thread on the learning progression.

"Too often, fifth-graders are worried about making mistakes, and don't attempt to use words they've just encountered in texts."

Be sure to continue to support an interest in vocabulary as you read aloud sections of *When Lunch Fights Back*. Model your own word consciousness. You might slow down around unfamiliar words, model your own confusion, and then project a section of the text, inviting students to study the passage closely to determine all the clues the author gives that help them know what the unfamiliar words mean. Then, too, you might keep a running list of words the class is learning from the read-aloud, posting the words prominently during whole-class conversations and when students are writing in response to the read aloud. You'll model looking at the chart and using the new words, showing students how they can do the same.



MINILESSON

Using Context to Determine the Meaning of Vocabulary in Complex Texts

CONNECTION

Connect students' experiences dealing with complexity in their lives to their experiences with text complexity in their nonfiction reading.

"Have you ever noticed that when you're playing video games, or any game really, that as you go up the levels, things just get tougher? It got me thinking about those kids who get to the Little League World Series. I was watching it on TV a few months ago. I bet when they're in their hometown, playing against other kids their age, things feel pretty manageable. But, as they climb up the levels, moving from playing teams in their town to teams in their state to teams from all different states, things probably get a ton more challenging.

"Right now, can you think about a situation like that you've encountered, a time where things started out easy and got more and more complex as you went along? Thumb up when you've got a story."

I waited until many students had a thumb up. "Tell your partner the story of that time!"

Kids broke into stories about battling opponents in chess tournaments, beating bosses in Super Smash Brothers, even climbing to the top of a mountain on a hike with the family. "It's like swim school," Nina said. "At first the levels were super simple but then moving up the levels got way harder, and I got stuck at dolphin for a while."

"Readers, this is just like the nonfiction texts we're reading. They started out much easier, and now they're getting harder. And, what's tricky is that they're not just getting harder in one way, but in a lot of ways. Today let's study a new way texts get tricky: through their vocabulary."

✿ Name the teaching point.

"Readers, today I want to teach you that as nonfiction texts become more complex, the vocabulary the author uses becomes hard and technical, and the clues that help readers figure out what the words mean are often hidden. When this happens, you have to search for clues all *around* the word to determine what it might mean."

◆ COACHING

In his book Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives, Peter Johnston discusses the need, in order for students to have agency, to believe that things are changeable, both "aspects of the world outside them, but also aspects of themselves—their learning, their identities, their intellect, their personal attributes, and their ways of relating to others" (2012, 27). The examples you give here support students in developing this disposition.

This turn-and-talk is meant to give students a sense of voice by asking them to recall times they faced difficulties, similar to the difficulties they now face with their nonfiction texts, and then share those stories with a partner. That said, because it does not actually teach anything, you won't want to drag it on by allowing students to share their stories one by one. Instead, give them a quick minute to share with their partners and then call them back together.

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Explain to students how the day's work will go, setting them up to read a text across several levels.

"Here's how our work will go. Let's look at a section of 'The Amazing Octopus' text at a bunch of different levels—levels 2, 4, and 6. I thought we could zoom in on just a small part, studying how the author teaches us what a *predator* is."

Engage students in studying an excerpt of a text written at a level 2, noticing how the text teaches the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words and what strategies are helpful.

I displayed a paragraph from the level 2 text, "The Amazing Octopus," on the document camera. "Let's dive into the level 2 text first. How does this author teach you what a *predator* is? Look carefully, and mark up what you find." Partnerships quickly noted the definition tucked in after the word *predator*.

The amazing octopus has many ways to defend itself. When an octopus wants to move fast, it can shoot out water to push itself backwards. An octopus can travel many miles that way. An octopus can also protect itself by squirting ink. The ink makes the predator, or animal hunting the octopus, become blind and lose its sense of smell for a little while. That gives the octopus a chance to escape!

I listened and then said, "Readers, many of you said the author teaches you what a predator is by coming right out and saying it. You noticed the phrase 'or animal hunting the octopus.' So sometimes, the definition will be right there, and we can look *around* the word, maybe right before or right after, to figure it out."

Have students read a level 4 version of the same text, and ask them to study how vocabulary demands become increasingly complex.

Now I displayed the same paragraph from the level 4 text, "An Animal Like No Other," for comparison. "That's how vocabulary used to work in our texts. Now, look up two levels to the level 4 text. How does the author teach you what a *predator* is in this text?"

The octopus has many amazing ways to defend itself from predators. When an octopus wants to move quickly to escape a predator, it can shoot out water out of its siphon and push itself backwards. This is called jet propulsion. Using this technique, octopuses can travel many miles. An octopus can also protect itself by squirting ink at a predator, causing it to become blind and lose its sense of smell temporarily. This makes it difficult for the predator to track the octopus once it has darted away. The octopus can also escape predators by changing its colors like a chameleon to blend into its surroundings. But, if a predator does manage to grab an octopus by the arm, the octopus has one more trick up its sleeve. It can break off its arm, swim away, and then grow a new one later!

You might be thinking that predator is not the most challenging word to choose, and you're certainly correct. However, I chose predator because I wanted to emphasize that authors draw on a variety of clues to make sense of unfamiliar words, and I know students will be more successful at this work on their first try if they work with a somewhat familiar word. There will be time to tackle totally new words later.

Vocabulary becomes increasingly complex in the level 4 text, "The Amazing Octopus." Look for students to notice that the definition of the term predator is absent and the reader has to rely on context as a clue to determine the word's meaning. Then, too, you'll want students to notice that the density of academic vocabulary is increasing. That is, the author is using harder, more technical terms to discuss the octopus. See Chapter 5 in Reading Pathways for more information about how vocabulary demands increase and suggestions of how to support students with tackling these demands.

Kids dove back in. Some circled the word *predator* every time it came up.

Remind students of previous learning by revisiting a familiar chart. Ask them to use these strategies to notice an author's embedded clues.

"Remember from fourth grade, how sometimes the author didn't come right out and tell the meaning of the word, but instead tucked in all these clues? You learned that if you looked *around* a word, you could often figure out what the word meant, just by noticing the clues the author included. Here's a chart you may remember from fourth grade." I made sure only the "Look around . . ." section of the chart was showing.

"Look back at the text, and this time, push yourself to look *around* the word. Can you use some of these strategies you know from last year to help you?" Students glanced up at the chart, chose a strategy, and got started trying it while I coached and listened.

"Wow! The clues are just flying in. Some of you studied whether *predator* was positive or negative. I heard you saying the word *predator* seemed really negative, because the author wrote you have to *defend* yourself from it, and you only have to defend yourself from something bad, not your best friend! So thinking about whether the word is positive or negative could help us get the gist of the word.


"And picturing the word helped a few of you. You saw this amazing, gentle octopus with this big creature, the predator, maybe a shark, chasing after it with this open mouth filled with sharp teeth."

Ask students to transfer the strategies they just practiced to a new section of a text, written at a level 6.

I posted the same paragraph from the level 6 text, "Lessons from the Deep," on the document camera. "Carry those strategies with you to this new text," I said, "and see if there are any you need to add. How does this author teach you what a *predator* is?"

Figuring Out the Meaning of Unknown Words

Look around...

• What do you picture? 

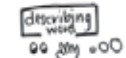
• What's happening? 

• Is it positive or negative? 

• What type of word is it?

 object

 action

 describing word

One of the most striking characteristics of the octopus is the wide array of techniques it uses to avoid or thwart its attackers. When an octopus wants to move quickly to escape a predator, it can expel water from its siphon and push itself backwards, a process called jet propulsion. Using this technique, octopuses can travel many miles. An octopus can also protect itself by squirting ink at a predator, obscuring its view and causing it to lose its sense of smell temporarily. This makes the fleeing octopus difficult to track. And if a predator manages to grab an octopus by the arm, the octopus has one more trick up its sleeve. This escape artist can break off its arm, swim away, and then grow a new one later with no permanent damage.

Partners worked together, while I coached in. Adjua decided that the level 6 text supported the word *predator* in exactly the same way as the level 4 version of the text. "Really?" Dimitri asked. "I'm not sure, 'cause it seems like the author uses different words. Like here, in the level 4 text, she said it *defends itself from predators* and now she's saying the *wide array of techniques it uses to avoid or thwart its attackers*."

"I think I see what you're saying," Adjua replied. "It felt like the same thing was happening that happened before, but the author just used much fancier words to describe it."

I called students back together and I added to our anchor chart:

ANCHOR CHART

Ways Complex Nonfiction Gets Hard

- The headings and subheadings don't help or are misleading.
- There are several main ideas.
- The central ideas and main ideas are implicit (hidden).
- **The vocabulary is hard and technical.**

LINK

Connect the work students did today determining the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words with the work they should do when they read, today and every day.

"Readers, you're really noticing and taking on the challenges of your texts! Today, we noticed that as vocabulary gets more complex, there's often more work determining the meaning of those tricky words. Sometimes, the author might just come out and tell you the definition, but, more often, you'll have to do some real work to determine the meaning, looking all around the word to get a sense of what it might mean.

As I listened to partners, I noticed a few either seemed to have no strategies or listed "sounding it out" as the main strategy for determining the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. I made plans to work with these children in a small group.

Ways Complex Nonfiction Gets Hard

The headings and subheadings don't help or are misleading.

There are several main ideas

The central ideas and main ideas are implicit (hidden)

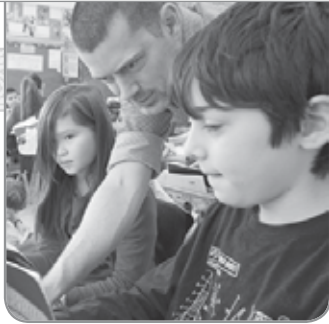
The vocabulary is hard and technical

"As you read today, I'm sure you'll encounter unfamiliar vocabulary words in your text. If the author doesn't tell you what the word means, you'll need to do some work to figure it out. Use the strategies you know from fourth grade, and new strategies you develop, to help you.

"But here's the thing. As you read today, you can't just think about *unfamiliar vocabulary*. Instead, you have to read, thinking about *all* the ways texts are complex, using your strategies to help you when you hit those complex parts. Look over our charts and make a plan for your work today. Share your plan with your partner and then get started reading."

As students shared their work plans, I circulated, encouraging them to remember that they should be reading at a good pace (something close to three quarters of a page a minute) and that they should pause at intervals to take notes. Those two instructions can contradict each other unless note-taking is quick—which it should be.





CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Keeping the Work of the Unit Going, While Also Supporting Vocabulary Development

YOU'LL WANT TO CONFER and lead small groups to support your students in doing all that they know how to do as nonfiction readers. High on your list will be making sure that students are monitoring for meaning, noticing when texts are *too* complex for them—too hard—and putting those texts aside until they are able to read them. You might encourage those readers to read texts on the same topic that are considerably easier and, in that way, to develop their prior knowledge of the topic in the hopes that once they are more knowledgeable of the topic, they might have more success with those texts.

You'll also want to remind readers to keep track of the pace at which they are reading, aiming to read at something like three quarters a page a minute. Their note-taking will slow them down a bit, but if you see that note-taking consumes too much time, you may need to encourage students to write briefer notes and to pause less often to take notes.

You'll also help students with the topic of today—tackling challenging vocabulary words. Students need to be able to read the sentence that contains an unfamiliar word and to substitute a word that is the same part of speech as the tricky word. You probably don't want to teach this strategy by talking about parts of speech, as that is an elusive concept for children even if they have been taught it repeatedly, but you can help them think about the "kind of word" they are replacing with a synonym.

If, during the minilesson, you noticed readers listing "sounding it out" as their main strategy for determining the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words, you may want to lead a small group to support students in noticing clues in the text and using those clues to determine the meaning of tricky words. You may find it useful to carry the "Word Solving" thread of the Informational Reading Learning Progression with you as you support this group, noting where each individual's work falls on the progression and varying coaching in response.

When I did this, I began by saying, "Readers, we know that as texts get more complex, authors use more and more tricky words. Luckily, authors often include clues along the way to help us determine what a tricky word means. Sometimes the clues will be obvious—the author might come out and tell a definition—and other times, the clues will be more subtle. We put these clues together to come up with a definition.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Celebrating Risk Taking and Creating Readers Who Are Word Conscious**

"Readers, can I stop you? I want to congratulate you. It takes a lot of bravery to admit that there are words you don't know, words you really need to figure out. Congratulations!

"Right now, let's fill the room with the sounds of these new words you're learning. I'm going to be the conductor, and when I signal to you, say one of the new words you've encountered loud and proud, so the sound travels across the world."

I pointed my imaginary baton toward individual students, and the sound of the new words we were learning filled the room.

"Precipitate."

"Indivisible."

"Phalanges."

"Wow, readers. I'm blown away. Keep up this brave work, honestly admitting when you find words you don't know and working hard to figure out what they might mean."

"Let's read through this text on the lookout for unfamiliar words. When you find a word that's unfamiliar to you, or a word you think would be tricky for other kids, will you make a stop sign?" I started reading from the level 5 text, 'Lessons from the Deep,' jumping right down to the fourth paragraph because there were several tricky words we could study. I was planning to use this same chunk of text with students in tomorrow's minilesson, studying it with a different lens, and I knew these students would benefit from first working with the text in a small group. By the time I hit *jet propulsion*, hands were flying up!

"That's definitely a tricky phrase, right? *Jet propulsion*? We know authors often give us clues about what the word means. I'll reread and read on a bit, and, as I do, will you and your partner hunt for clues?" I reread and read on, and then asked students to turn and talk, naming out all the clues they found.

"I see you all circling that phrase *this is called*. Why did that phrase seem important? What did it help you know?" Students talked with partners about how that phrase was signaling that the name for something was coming, and they said usually that meant a definition had come before.

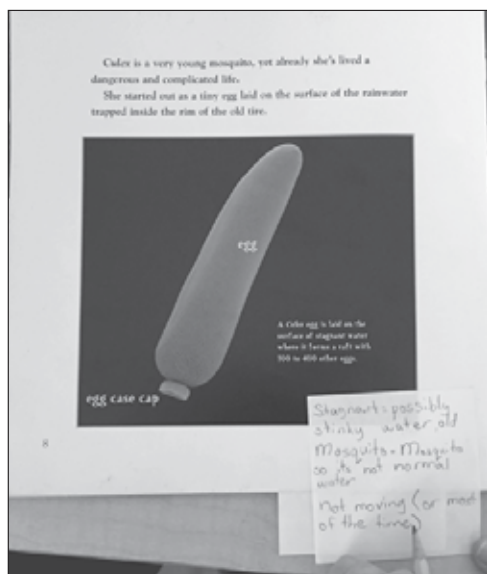


FIG. 5-1 Omala marks unfamiliar words and works to figure out the meaning of one.

I nudged them to read on past the phrase, and they did, deciding *this technique* referred to jet propulsion and that jet propulsion must have to do with moving many miles.

"Readers, did you see how once you noticed a tricky word, you relied on the clues the author gave you to determine what the word might mean? You noticed the author gave us a *ton* of clues. You had to look all around the page to really figure out its meaning.

"Return to your book and give this a try. Read, on the lookout for tricky words. When you find one, make a stop sign and start searching for clues to the meaning of the word. When you've found all the clues that are there, see if you can make use of them." Students worked for several minutes in their texts, while I coached in with quick questions and prompts.

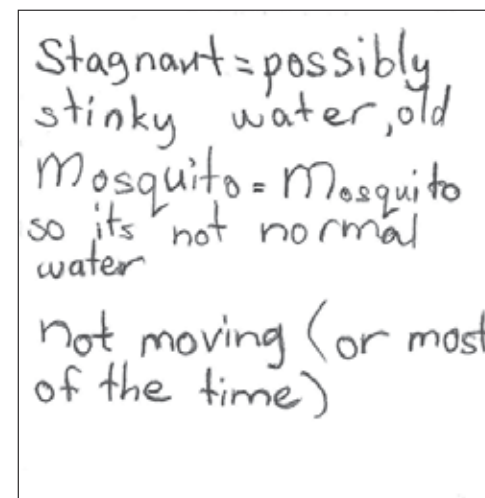
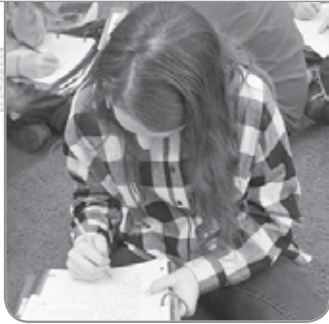


FIG. 5-2 Omala's Post-it note captures how she used context as a clue to determine the meaning of *stagnant*.



SHARE

Using the Lingo of Experts (as You Take Notes, as You Talk)

Introduce students to the fifth-grade expectations for Building Vocabulary. Rally students to incorporate vocabulary into their notes and talk.

"Readers, noticing these snazzy new vocabulary words will only take you so far if you just notice them and then read on, flipping the page and forgetting your new learning. Reading researchers say it's really important for kids to *build* their vocabulary. To do fifth-grade work building vocabulary, you have to not just accumulate, or collect, vocabulary, you also have to use it. The only way to really learn these new words in your books is to use them!

"One place where you can use the language of experts is in your note-taking, incorporating the expert words you're learning across your notes. Right now, scan the notes you took today. Are the expert words you learned today included in your notes? In a flash, revise your notes to include more of the expert words you've learned." Students quickly revised.

"A second place where you can use your new vocabulary is in your talk. As you prepare to teach your partner today, pay special attention to the vocabulary you'll teach. What new words will you use? How will you help your partner know what exactly those words mean? Will you come right out and define them? Use gestures? Point to pictures to help you define the words?

"When you're ready, start teaching!"

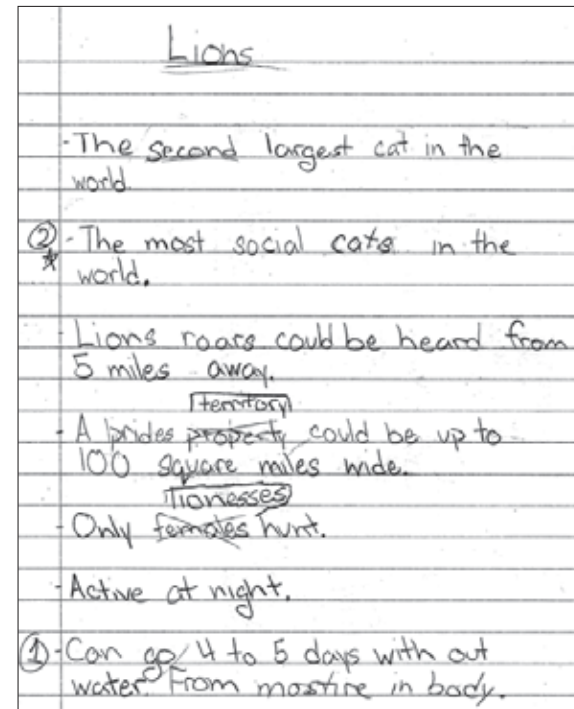


FIG. 5-3 Marcus revised his earlier note-taking on lions to include additional expert words.

SESSION 5 HOMEWORK



LEARNING AND USING NEW WORDS

Readers, continue reading across texts tonight. Jot down notes in ways that help you capture what you're learning. While you read, pay special attention to the new words you're encountering in your reading. When you come across an unknown word, try different strategies to determine its meaning. When is it helpful to look around the word? Be sure you use the new words you're learning in your writing and in your talk. I'm including a copy of our chart from earlier for your reference.

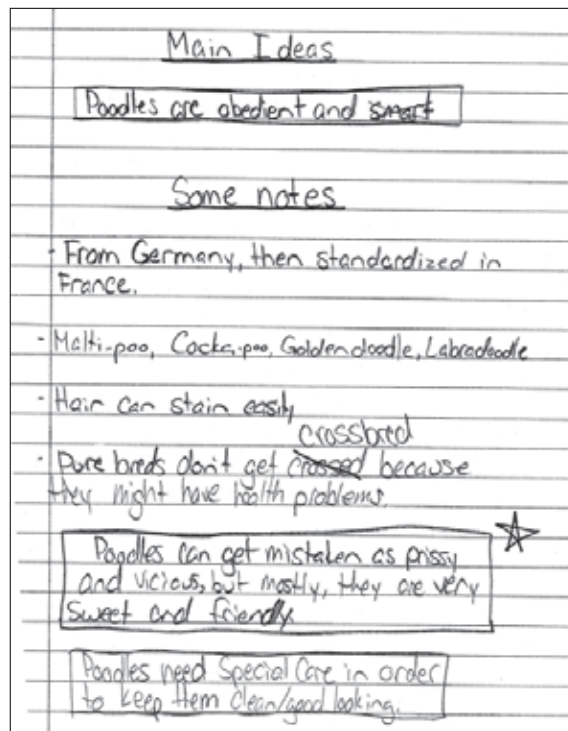


FIG. 5-4 Adjua used the new words she learned while jotting notes on poodles.

Figuring Out the Meaning of Unknown Words

Look around...

- What do you picture?
- What's happening?
- Is it positive or negative?
- What type of word is it?





Session 6

Readers Think and Wonder as They Read

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach children that readers shift from taking in information to reflecting on that information to grow new ideas.

GETTING READY

- ✓ An excerpt from a text to demonstrate how to shift from taking in information to thinking more about that information. We use "A School Fight over Chocolate Milk" by Kim Severson from the *New York Times* (see Teaching and Active Engagement). ✨
- ✓ Provide students with a list of thinking prompts in the "Thinking and Wondering in Response to Reading" chart (see Link). ✨
- ✓ Show the "Asking Questions of Your Nonfiction Text" chart (see Mid-Workshop Teaching, Share, and Homework). ✨
- ✓ Make copies of the "Critical Reading: Growing Ideas" thread of the Informational Reading Learning Progression for grades 4, 5, and 6 for each student (see Homework). ✨

IN THIS SESSION, you will show students that research involves a cycle that includes reading, researching, wondering and questioning, then reading more, questioning more, connecting more. Research is like breathing: in . . . and out, breathing in . . . and out. This is not a new lesson. Since kindergarten, really, when kids put "Whoa!" Post-its on pages that made them stop in their tracks, students have learned that reading requires response. Reading is thinking. The "Growing Ideas" thread of the strand "Critical Reading" will be helpful to you today during Small-Group work and Conferring.

The thinking that students do today will be all the more urgent because they'll be planning for a debate that they'll participate in very soon. Because they need to prepare for that debate, now is a good time for students to recollect what they know, scanning their notes, putting information and ideas from one source in with those from another source. You will want to see students going back to old notes, spending some time almost writing little sections of arguments out as they work across these next two days to get ready for these debates.

This effort to revisit material is critical because when the time for debates arrives, it is all-important that students are able to reference sources. When students do debate, you want their positions to be informed. You'll expect that during their second debate students sound much more grounded in the issue.

The work you want students to do today stands firmly on the shoulders of work they have been doing in writing workshop. If you are using *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* in your writing workshop, you will have taught students how to write about information, to organize their knowledge, to grow thinking as they write in the unit *The Lens of History*.



MINILESSON

Readers Think and Wonder as They Read

CONNECTION

Emphasize a particularly powerful kind of reading work by telling readers the story of a time someone you know read nonfiction and thought in response to it in a way that you admired.

"Readers, I want to tell you a quick story. A few weeks ago, I was reading this un-be-lievably crazy article about these mushrooms—fungi—that can take over ants' brains. The fungi infect the ants and basically turn them into zombies, so the ants do anything the fungi want. Like a fungus can make an ant climb up a tree, and then it kills the ant and uses the ant's bodies to send out its own fungal spores, so it can make more mushrooms that can turn *more* ants into zombies. Crazy, right?

"So here's what I really want to tell you about that article. I read it and got so excited that I ran to tell a good friend about it—someone who also happens to be a person I really admire as a nonfiction reader. 'You have to read this!' I said and handed her the article. Readers, she was not even one paragraph in before she did something that amazed me. She put the article down and looked at me and said, 'Huh. I wonder why the fungi don't do this to humans. Maybe it's because our body temperatures are too high.'

"I was flabbergasted, shocked. When I read the beginning of that article, that question had never even occurred to me! But my friend had asked a powerful question. She had thought in response to what she read *right from the start*, and it turned out that later in the article, there was information about body temperatures and why fungi don't attack humans. And I thought her reading experience was so much more powerful, because she had paused in her reading right away to think, to wonder, to question."

Remind readers of how they learned to shift from note-taking to reflection earlier in the year.

"Readers, earlier this year, you learned that when you were researching, you needed to shift from note-taking to writing to reflect. Remember when you wrote your research-based information writing reports, you learned that you needed to collect and record some information and then pause to think, and jot and talk about surprises, patterns, points of comparison or contrast, and that you also needed to entertain questions? That way you weren't just taking in information, but you were also growing ideas."

◆ COACHING

It is pretty crazy. They might need a minute to take that in. Talking about a different kind of nonfiction text varies things a bit and keeps engagement through a bit of the shock factor. This highlights how fascinating reading nonfiction can be—which is reiterating a major goal of the unit. You'll see that this story turns into a story about a strategy directly relevant to today's teaching point. When you tell this story (or another one about a different nonfiction text), keep it very short and get right to the point of why you are really telling it.

True story. And true article. "Attack of the Zombie Ants" by Lori Wollerman Nelson from ASK Magazine (October 2011). Even better if a student asks you to read the article. At the end of workshop today, you can show that student where the magazine is and remind him or her to pass it on to someone else after he or she finishes. There's more than one way to do a book buzz. ✨

Teachers, this is a teaching point from The Lens of History, the research-based information writing unit for fifth grade by Lucy Calkins and Emily Butler Smith. I'm referencing it here because today's work is similar, and it will help students to draw on that previous learning.

"A few days ago, after your debate, I asked you to raise some questions and then read on to answer them. And once you answer those questions, new ones will surface. The cycle continues: you read more, you connect more, you question more."

✿ Name the teaching point.

"And so, today I want to teach you that researching is a continual cycle of reading more, raising new questions, and having new ideas . . . then reading more, this time with those new ideas in mind. You always want to shift from taking in information to reflecting on information."

TEACHING

Ask readers to think along with you as you read a bit of text and shift from taking in information to thinking more about that information.

"Let's practice a little of this work together. I'm going to put up a section of an article we have read aloud before—an article from the *New York Times* by Kim Severson—and we'll practice reading, then thinking and wondering, reading, then thinking and wondering. Let's try to be like my friend, who thinks and questions the whole time she is reading. Let me read a bit of it to you first. As you listen, try to push yourself to have some thoughts. I'll do the same."

Milk processors began a \$500,000 campaign a year ago to defend chocolate milk from what they called "food activists" who believe it delivers too much added sugar.

I stopped. "Hmm, . . . I'm already having a thought in response to this. Are you? See what you think of this and if it matches what you were thinking. So I'm thinking about all of those other texts in our chocolate milk text set that are supporting chocolate milk—texts that seem to be put out by the *dairy industry*—and that this statement I just read might explain them. Now I'm thinking that the texts were probably created in direct response to people—these 'food activists'—wanting to get chocolate milk out of schools. I'm also wondering a little bit about who is defending chocolate milk. Seems like the people who are defending chocolate milk are really the ones who earn money off the milk. Are there any defenders who aren't directly involved with marketing chocolate milk?

"Readers, see how I'm reading a bit, then shifting to think and wonder? Let me read a bit more and all of us think as I do." I continued:

There is a lot at stake. The milk sold in schools accounts for 7 percent of all milk sales in the country.

I looked up. "I'm wondering . . . is 7 percent a lot? Seems like the author of this article thinks so—she says there is a lot at stake. Seven percent of what amount, though? I need to figure out how much milk sales are a year, I think. But this could explain why the dairy industry is so determined to keep chocolate milk in schools, right?" I read a bit more.

The campaign has picked up in time for this school year. Posters featuring professional athletes promoting milk and chocolate milk for student athletes are ready for shipping to schools, and on Wednesday, the School Nutrition Association is offering its members a "Webinar" entitled "Keep flavored milk from dropping out of school."

"Huh. Professional athletes promoting chocolate milk . . . interesting . . . seems like there are some powerful people who want to keep chocolate milk in schools. I wonder why those professional athletes care about this cause so much."

"Readers, do you see how as we read, we can shift from reading to thinking and wondering? Some of these thoughts and questions we might jot down or even do more research on, and others we might just keep in our minds as we read. But whatever we do with them, these thoughts and questions that we are having as we read are making the reading more powerful. They are helping us see new layers to the information."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Involve readers in thinking in response to another section of text. Help them to do this by pushing them to use some common thought prompts that can support writing to think.

"So now I'm going to give you a chance to practice this work of reading and thinking and wondering, on your own. I'm going to read a different section of this text to you and ask you and your partner to talk about your thoughts and musings about it."

The government started providing subsidized milk to schools in the 1940s to help nourish needy children. The dairy industry helped finance this and other school nutrition efforts. Recently, it helped pay to promote school breakfast and summer food programs.

"Okay, readers, turn and talk about your thoughts and musings about this."

I listened in for a bit, then voiced over, "I hear many of you starting by saying things like 'Maybe this could explain . . .,' 'This makes me wonder . . .,' 'Perhaps . . .,' 'I'm realizing . . .'. These are exactly the right kinds of things to say to help you think and wonder in response to a text. Keep talking."

After another minute or so, I called students back together. "I'm hearing many of you saying things like 'This explains how the dairy industry got so involved in schools in the first place.' And others of you are wondering if the dairy industry is the only industry that has had this problem. Like, for example, did people try to take French fries out of school lunches, and did the potato industry get upset? I'm hoping you'll take a little time at some point today to jot some of these thoughts and musings down because they are interesting."

There's another really interesting thought you could have around this section. The title of the webinar, "Keep flavored milk from dropping out of school," is playing on the idea of students dropping out of school, which is widely recognized as a problem, perhaps in an effort to get people to associate keeping chocolate milk in schools with something as universally valued as keeping kids in school.

Again this will also help to support your students writing about the topic, if you are following The Research-Based Argument Essay unit. You will see that this section of text has been purposefully chosen to get students to consider the role of the dairy industry in the issue of chocolate milk in schools. In similar fashion, when students go off to read on their own research topics, you will want them to raise questions and thoughts about major players and organizations involved with their issues. You could also, of course, choose a different part of the article as your Active Engagement, if you prefer.

LINK

Remind readers that it always pays off to think and wonder in response as you read. Put up a chart of prompts that can help students do this work, and then send them off to continue reading.

"You'll head off to read in a sec, and I know you'll raise your own questions about your own topics. Remember that once you raise ideas like these, you keep your ideas in mind as you read, looking for information that confirms or conflicts with your new ideas. And you may decide to change your reading plans because you want to pursue one of the questions you are raising.

"Remember that so much of researching is this constant cycle of reading more, wondering more, and growing more ideas. I have a chart of prompts that you have seen before, prompts that will help you to think and wonder in response to what you read.

"I'm expecting that at the end of workshop today, some of your notes will look like boxes and bullets, and some of your notes will look like questions and paragraphs of writing to think. Both kinds of notes help you to learn and think more about your issue.

"What I want to tell you now is that in two days you will redebate the question you debated at the start of the unit. I am expecting these debates to sound much different—to hear you talking in ways that are more informed and more grounded in a deep understanding of the issues. You've got a lot to do—get started."



Thinking and wondering in Response to Reading

- "I wonder if..."
- "Could it be that...?"
- "This makes me think..."
- "I'm realizing..."
- "This might be important because..."
- "Probably they..."
- "It must have been..."
- "For example..."
- "Probably after awhile..."





CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Supporting Word Solving and Vocabulary Acquisition

TODAY YOU WILL CONTINUE to lead small groups and one-to-one conferences that support your students' nonfiction reading and their preparation for the upcoming debate. While continuing that teaching, today might give you a chance to take stock of the support you have given students in vocabulary acquisition. How are you supporting your students' abilities to solve words, for example? Obviously this won't become the paramount concern in all you do today, but you do want to always be conscious that some of your students need instruction that won't tend to be unit-related, and yet is of paramount importance.

If you have students who could use an intensive in vocabulary development, you'll want to consider how to make learning about words be as engaging as possible. You might choose to make word games available during choice time or indoor recess, and to offer some word study small-group work, even during the reading workshop, to support students' engagement in playing with and learning language. In their article "Vocabulary: Five Common Misconceptions" (*Educational Leadership Online*, June 2012), Nancy Padak, Karen Bromley, Tim Rasinski, and Evangeline Newton discuss the importance of making word study fun, and they offer many wonderful suggestions for word games both digital and other. Boggle, Scrabble, Scattergories, Balderdash, Crossword Puzzles, and Word Jumbles—in addition to sites such as Vocabulary.co.il, which offers a variety of fun word games (such as matching English and Latin phrases)—are great choices to help build vocabulary and make playing with language engaging. The authors also suggest Gamequarium, where students can play word games in Spanish.

If you support word study outside the reading workshop, then within the workshop it will be especially important for you to help students transfer that word study into their reading. You'll also want to offer other strategies for word solving and vocabulary building, as well as offer time to practice these while reading. You may decide to create series of small groups devoted to particular aspects of work in these areas and meet

with these groups across the unit. You might want to form a small group of students who need to get stronger at using context clues, for example, or students who need to work on learning about parts of words to be stronger at word solving. (For students who need to work more on noticing and using context clues, you might even use the section of text used in today's active engagement and push a group of students to determine the meaning of *subsidized*.)

For some students, you may decide to do some explicit teaching of word morphology, such as common Latin roots. In "Vocabulary: Five Common Misconceptions," as well as in their chapter "Getting to the Root of Word Study: Teaching Latin and Greek Word Roots in Elementary and Middle Grades" in *What Research Has to Say about Reading Instruction* (2008), Padak, Newton, Rasinski, and Newton suggest that teaching students Latin roots, even in the primary grades, can support their ability to break words down into meaning units and use conceptual vocabulary to figure out other concepts. They provide lists of prefixes, bases, and suffixes for different levels of learning.

Students should have learned about Latin suffixes in third grade, but you may find they still need work on this. You might decide to take some of the prefixes, bases, and suffixes they suggest and choose two or three (perhaps *un-*, *-able*, *-ible*), introducing them to a small group of students and showing them the term on chart paper while explaining the meanings. You might brainstorm some words that contain that prefix, base, or suffix, and then provide an example of how you figure out an unknown word by breaking it down into meaning units: *unknowable*, for example. Then you can send them off to read, reminding them to be on the lookout for words that contain these roots. You might give them time at the end of this day or the next to add to the chart of words that contain these roots. In a week or so, you can introduce two or three new roots.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING Questions that Are Always Worth Asking When Reading Nonfiction

"Readers, can I have your eyes and attention for just a minute? As you think and wonder in response to your reading, I want to tell you a few of the questions that I find pay off for me.

"Let's think about the first of these: 'Could this explain . . . ?' It's always powerful to think about what has caused something or led to something. So, if you were studying the issue of whether there should be killer whale shows at aquariums, for example, you might read a section on this history of aquariums and ask 'Could this explain why killer whales first came to be exhibited at aquariums?' or 'Could this explain why animals rights groups are so upset about the killer whale?'

"I also love to ask, 'Why (this) and not (that)?' So, why are there killer whale shows and not shows with other whales at aquariums? Why is everyone fighting to get killer whale shows stopped and not dolphin shows? Or take our class topic: why is there so much controversy over chocolate milk in schools, and yet we don't hear much about other kinds of foods or drinks?

"The other three questions, as I said, you have heard and used before: 'So what?,' 'What are the surprising things about this?,' and 'How does this connect to what I already know?' Carrying these questions with you will make your thinking more powerful.

"Get back to your research. Today, be sure you do some writing to think on paper about your issue."

Asking Questions of your Nonfiction Text

- "Could this explain . . . ?" 
- "Why (this) and not (that) . . . ?" 
- "So what?" 
- "What are the surprising things about this?" 
- "How does this connect to what I already know?" 

You will also especially want to support your English language learners in continuing to build vocabulary, not just today but across the entire unit, day, and year. One of the four major recommendations in the report "Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School" (available online at the What Works Clearinghouse) is for educators to "teach a set of academic vocabulary words

intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities" (6). The panel noted that many researchers hold the view that students should be exposed to large numbers of words through "wide reading and language-rich environments; however, such wide exposure by itself is not sufficient to address English learners' vocabulary

needs” (16). At the start of this unit, you introduced your ELLs at different levels to issues using visuals and glossaries.

If your students are studying the issue of zoos, for example, you can continue to teach into that small group of words that you provided: *endangered*, *conservation*, *captivity*, *environment*, *breed*. You may have already supported students in beginning to learn these words by providing student-friendly definitions, examples, and nonexamples. Now, you might continue supporting their understanding of these terms by gathering a group of children at around the same level in their English language development, and engaging them in talking about their issue so far, using those words. You might

have the words on index cards (with visual support, if needed) so students can hold them. You can coach into students’ conversations and even insert some terms, such as *captive* or *endanger*, at times, showing students that there are different words that can be made from these. Later, or another day, you might involve students in a shared reading of a text related to this issue that includes some of these words, such as the *National Geographic Kids* article, “Giant Panda Cubs Give Hope to an Endangered Species” by David George Gordon. You will want to continue to provide opportunities for your students to engage with these words, sketching them, acting them out, mapping out antonyms, synonyms, examples, nonexamples, and using them in their writing and talking.





SHARE

Using Research Groups to Develop New Thinking

Gather students at the meeting area in their research groups. Launch them into conversations about their issues, reminding them to draw on the thinking they have been doing today.

"Readers, in a minute, I'll give you time to talk in your groups. One of the big reasons to have a research group is to be able to come to new thinking and new ideas. When you read a book with someone else, and each of you thinks something slightly different about it, the thinking you do together will be more interesting because of those different thoughts. So, a research group is not just a group that just shares what you learned. No, your group should think about the information and evidence—wonder about it, question it. Your conversation should lead your group to new thoughts by the end. I'm going to put up those helpful questions I showed you in the mid-workshop and tell you that using some of these in your discussion can really push it to the next level.

"You're going to be ready to debate with your group in two days, so make good use of your time! Okay, meet with your research groups!"

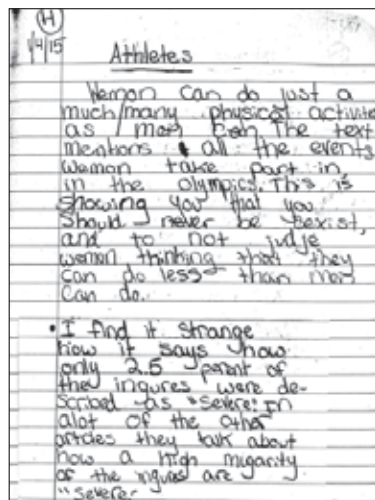
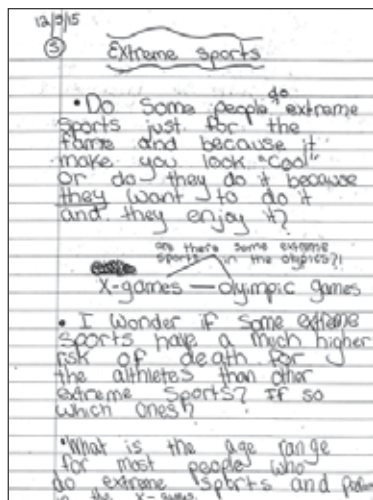


FIG. 6-1 Rebecca grows new thinking by raising questions and writing about new insights.

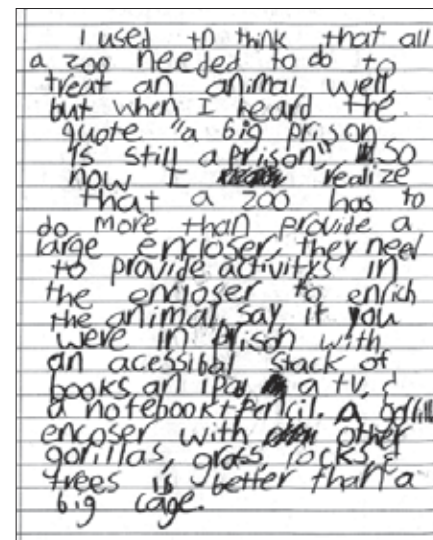




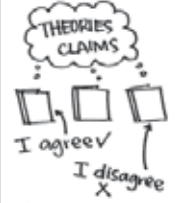
FIG. 6-2 Jeremy writes about the new thinking he is coming to through his research.

SESSION 6 HOMEWORK



PUSHING YOURSELF TO HAVE DEEPER IDEAS

Readers, tonight I want you to read nonfiction. Take home a few of your group's articles or books. I am giving you a copy of the "Growing Ideas" thread in the "Critical Reading" strand of the Informational Reading Learning Progression. You will see that you have already done a lot of this learning. Use this checklist to push you to have deeper ideas about your nonfiction. I have also copied the questions that are worth asking so you can use those as well to grow ideas.

Informational Reading Learning Progression			
	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
ANALYTIC READING			
Critical Reading <i>Growing Ideas</i>	<p>I develop my own ideas about what I have read. Those ideas might be about values, the world, or the book. My ideas are grounded in text-based information and ideas, and I draw on several parts of the text(s). I raise questions and larger theories about the topic or the world. I read and reread with those questions in mind, and this leads to new insights.</p> <p>My reading helps me to develop my ideas. I think and sometimes write things like "Is this always the case?" or "Could it be . . . ?" I am not afraid to think in new ways.</p> 	<p>I can synthesize several texts in ways that support an idea of my own. I select the points that do the best job of supporting my idea(s). For example, "How will this author add to or challenge my argument?"</p> <p>I think and sometimes write things like "Is this always the case?" or "Could it be . . . ?"</p> <p>I can apply what I have learned and my own ideas to solve a problem, make an argument, or design an application.</p> 	<p>I can synthesize several texts in ways that support ideas of my own. I select the points from different texts that do the best job of supporting my points.</p> <p>I develop my own theories and claims as I research. Some of these may be debatable questions. I sometimes agree or disagree with authors completely or partially. I don't reject a text because an author disagrees with my ideas, but instead let it affect my thinking.</p> <p>I can apply what I have learned and my own ideas to solve a problem, make an argument, or design an application.</p> 
Questioning the Text	<p>I think about what implications my theories and what I have learned might have for real-world situations. I can apply what I have learned.</p> <p>I'm aware that texts can be written to get readers to think and feel something about an issue or topic, and I can say, "I see what you want me to think/feel, but I disagree."</p>	<p>I consider what a text is saying about an issue, idea, or argument and whether I agree or disagree. I weigh and evaluate a text for how convincing and reliable it is.</p> <p>I consider who wrote the text and what the author might gain from the text. I can talk back to texts.</p>	<p>I question nonfiction I read, thinking especially about other texts on the topic. I weigh and evaluate how logical, convincing, and reliable a text is. I take into account who wrote the text as part of this judgment, thinking about how reliable and unbiased this author might be. I consider how this relates to issues of power.</p>



Session 14

Investigating Symbolism



RECENTLY a niece who is in high school sent along a text with her English class assignment. She needed to annotate several pieces of literature with a variety of things. Most of it she was able to do with little struggle. However, when her teacher asked her to find symbols and explain what they meant, she was stumped, “My teacher has never taught me how to find symbols! She just told me what they were and what they meant.” When she said this, we realized that this was the same for many adults we knew. Many of us tell stories of sitting in English class being told that the green light in *The Great Gatsby* means something. But we didn’t always know why the green light mattered and not the candles or the picnic basket.

“We need to ensure that our students have the interpretation skills they will need for a lifetime of reading rich, complex texts.”

Of course, this is not always the case, and we don’t mean to suggest that it is. If your students were in a writing workshop last year that studied writing realistic fiction, they might very well have done work from the writer’s stance of creating their own symbols. However, no matter what your students’ past experiences with symbolism, it does underscore the fact that as students move on in school, they will face more and more challenging literature and be asked for higher and higher demands in their comprehension. We need to ensure that our students have the interpretation skills they will need for a lifetime of reading rich, complex texts.

The nice thing about symbolism, and one of the reasons it is taught in this bend dedicated to the intersection between fantasy and reality, is that symbolism is one of those

IN THIS SESSION, you’ll teach students that fantasy readers try to figure out if repeated or highlighted images, objects, characters, or settings are a symbol of something else, and how this symbol might connect to a possible theme for the story.

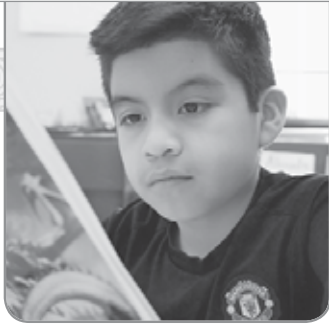
GETTING READY

- ✓ Prior to this minilesson, read aloud Chapter 25 in *The Thief of Always*.
- ✓ A white board, chart paper, or something else to record student responses (see Connection).
- ✓ Find and prepare an enlarged or projected image of one or two artworks filled with symbolism. Two suggested images are *St. George Slays the Dragon* by Altichiero and *The Maiden and the Unicorn* by Domenichino. You may wish to use the Web Gallery of Art or a similar online art resource (see Teaching and Active Engagement). ✨
- ✓ Be ready to display a chart, “Fantasy Readers Can Use Symbols as a Way to Interpret Themes” (see Teaching). ✨
- ✓ Display and add to Bend III anchor chart, “How Fantasy Readers Use Elements from the Real World to Understand Fantasy (and sometimes vice versa)” (see Link). ✨



fantasy elements that show up in students' daily lives. Knowing about symbols, such as the national flag, a peace sign, a particular color, also give them insights into their world and the culture they are living in.

In today's session, you will give students some background information about symbolism. You will then have them practice identifying symbols and interpreting their meanings by looking at a piece of art. You could just as easily choose to revisit the class read-aloud, a video clip of a fantasy movie trailer, or something else packed with symbolism. You might also decide to follow up today's session with one of those activities. If there's a rainy day and your school is showing a movie, you might suggest they show something from the fantasy genre. Then send the students to the movie armed with notebooks so they can jot possible symbols and their interpretations of them.



MINILESSON

Investigating Symbolism

CONNECTION

Ask the students to consider what first comes to mind when they think of fantasy.

"Readers, I know we have spent a couple of weeks now eating, breathing, and dreaming fantasy. I just want to get a quick snapshot sense of what you think of when you hear the word *fantasy*. What is the first word (or words) that come to mind?" I gave the students a beat to think. "Now, call out what you were thinking. I'll record them on the board."

As students called out I wrote their responses on the white board.

Dragons

Unicorns

Magic wands

Castles

Wizards

Fairies

Dark forests

Point out that most of what they called out were objects, characters, or settings that could also be seen as symbols.

"Wow, that is a lot of words!" I said, interrupting the melee. I capped my marker and looked over the list. "Hmm . . . I'm noticing something interesting here. That most of what you said are things that are objects, characters, or settings. Did you notice that, too?" Some students nodded.

"You know, what I find fascinating about that, but not surprising, is that so much of what sticks out for fantasy readers are these characters, objects, and settings that can often be interpreted as symbols. Symbols are perhaps one of the most memorable aspect of fantasy, as well as one of the tools fantasy readers use to get a stronger understanding of the stories they are reading."

◆ COACHING

Throughout this unit you will have likely notice that I warn against allowing students to look at any one element of fantasy as a scavenger hunt. This is something I learned firsthand, through trial and error, and teaching about symbolism is no different. It is great fun for students to spot symbols, we need to be consistent about making sure that they don't stop there.

**Name the teaching point.**

"Today I want to teach you that fantasy readers keep an eye out for repeated or highlighted images, objects, characters, or settings. When fantasy readers see these things, they pause and ask themselves, 'Could this be a symbol of something else?' and 'How does this symbol connect to a possible theme for this story?'"

TEACHING**Demonstrate how to find symbols, interpret meanings, and consider how symbols might fit with a bigger theme.**

"Let's start first by saying that, like many cool things about fantasy, there are certain elements that go from story to story. Symbols are one of those things. So, often, we will see symbols, almost the exact same thing, meaning a very similar thing, in two completely different stories. For example, when a reader sees a crown, we know that it very likely is a symbol of power or royalty.

"Certain things you already expect to be a symbol because you've seen them before being used that way. For instance, a dove often symbolizes peace. Or a dark forest can represent the unknown. Unicorns are usually a symbol of innocence and goodness. Castles are usually a symbol of power (good or bad). In fantasy there are a lot of examples like this."

"Dragons are usually bad," Gabe interjected.

"That's not always true," Rosie responded. "It depends on the culture."

"You two raise a good point. Sometimes symbols can change depending on the context. Like in one story, rain could represent sadness. In another story, where there might be a drought going on, rain could represent hope or new life. The bigger point I'm trying to make is that the symbols in and of themselves are not what we're after. It's how they fit within the context of the story, and if there are other symbols in the story, how they fit together.

"Another great thing about symbols is that we can find them *everywhere*—not just in literature. Today I want us to practice finding symbols, interpreting what they could mean, and then thinking how they might fit into a bigger theme. I'm going to try this with a very old piece of artwork called *St. George Slays the Dragon*." I projected the painting onto the screen.

"So, as I look at this painting, a few symbols jump right out. I notice the castle almost immediately, which I think usually symbolizes power. And I notice that there is a man in fancy clothes on a white horse. He seems like he is the hero, maybe a knight. And I know white horses are a symbol of good. And look, just over his shoulder is a woman wearing a crown. I know the crown symbolizes power." I scan the image for a beat longer.



While this lesson employs demonstration at the teaching method, you could just as easily substitute that with guided practice or even inquiry. If your students need more scaffolding, you might opt for guided practice. If your students are old hands at art interpretation, you might opt for inquiry.

"And here, I see, I almost missed it, in this dark corner, the dragon. It's so small! I can tell that it symbolizes danger or something bad. And actually, now that I mention the light and darkness, I'm thinking that those could be symbols too . . .

"Looking across all these symbols, I see the hero who is slaying a dragon. The hero is in the light and is good, the dragon is in the darkness and represents evil. Somehow the hero is protecting not only the woman, but also the power she holds. And I think the castle sort of backs up that idea. Like the hero is protecting his whole nation in a way. I'm wondering, since the dragon is here, and it feels, sort of like the woman and the castle are representing power or the government . . ." I stop to scratch my head to make a real show of how hard I'm working. "Maybe the dragon is another country, or possibly another threat to the government. And maybe one of the themes that could be going through this painting is that governments can be threatened by outside things, but that they can win, as long as those threats stay outside."

I stopped staring at the painting and turned back to the students. "Readers, did you see how I first identified the objects, setting, and characters that seem like they could be symbolic? And then, I considered what those symbols could mean individually and then together. Then finally, I thought of how all of that could connect to theme." I quickly jotted down what I did on a chart.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Ask students to try analyzing symbols in a different painting or text.

"Fifth-graders, I am sure you are eager to try this as well. Shall we pull up a new painting to study?" They agreed. I projected a new painting.

"I'd like you to study this painting with a partner. It is called *The Maiden and the Unicorn*. You can use the chart to help you think through what it could mean." I barely said the title of the painting and the students were off and talking.

"She is a completely different person than the woman in the other painting. She's not wearing a crown," Julia said. "She doesn't even have shoes!" Sam added. I leaned in to that partnership, "Your move of using another text, in this case the other painting, to help you consider this one, is a great strategy."

"She's in the country. And I don't even see a castle."

"I think she's a peasant," another student added.

I stopped analyzing the painting here. I am well aware that there are many other pieces that could be construed as symbols, such as the people looking down from the castle. However, the point of my teaching here is not to interpret every little thing, but rather to model a piece of the process—just enough so that students have enough of a sense of how they could do it on their own.



I chose a simpler painting for the active engagement so that the work students do is more accessible and more likely to give them a successful experience. Also, even though the painting is simple, it has many possible layers of meaning, so students who are ready for higher-level interpretations can reach for that.

"Well, we know unicorns represent goodness and innocence. And the unicorn seems to really like the lady. So I think that she must be good and innocent too."

"Exactly! And if you connect it to the country, and the fact that she's a peasant, I think this whole painting is saying something about how the countryside is good and innocent. That maybe simple people are good."

LINK

Explain to students that the work they were able to do with the painting or text the class studied is the same type of work they can do with their fantasy books.

"There was a lot of great thinking going on today around the paintings that we looked at. But, clearly, we're not going off to read and talk about paintings. We are going to read and talk about books. Readers, whenever you are reading any text, whether it's a painting, a poem, a movie, or a book, you can look for symbolism and consider its multiple meanings.

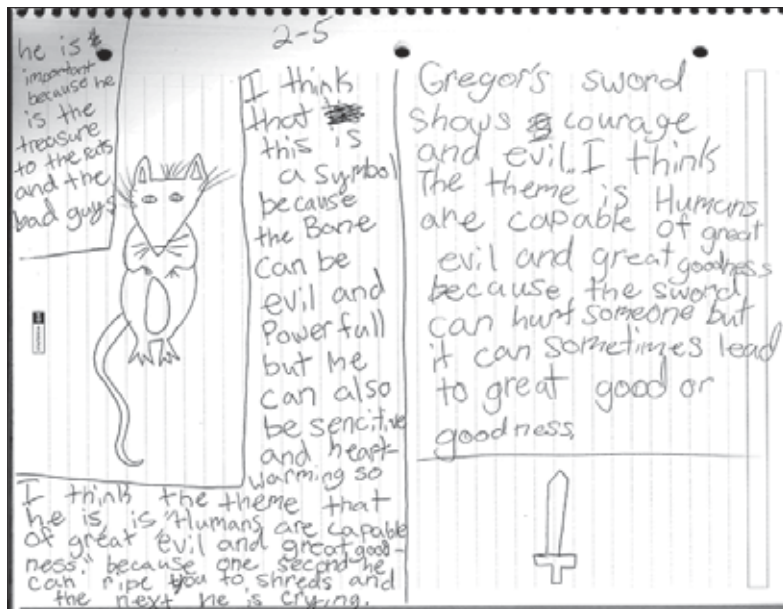


FIG. 14-1 Julia reflects on symbolism in *Gregor the Overlander*.

Fantasy Readers Can Use Symbols as a Way to Interpret Themes

1. While reading, be prepared to find symbols.

a. Symbols might be images, objects, characters, or settings



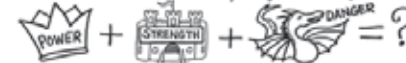
b. They are repeatedly mentioned or highlighted



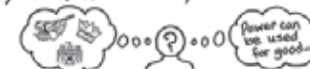
2. Consider what each symbol might represent or mean.



3. Lay those symbols and their meanings side by side and consider how they might fit together.



4. While pondering the relationship between the symbols, think about possible themes.




"Before you begin your work, let's add a couple of points to our Bend III anchor chart. One is from the previous session on fantasy characters, and the second bullet summarizes what we just discussed about symbols."

ANCHOR
CHART

*How Fantasy Readers Use Elements
from the Real World to Understand
Fantasy (and sometimes vice versa)*

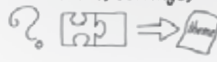
- Use information from nonfiction texts to better understand fantasy stories.
- Use vocabulary strategies to figure out unfamiliar words.
- **Understand that, similar to real people, fantasy characters are complex.**
- Find possible symbols (images, objects, characters, settings).
 - Consider what each symbol might mean.
 - Think about how the symbols in a story might fit together.
 - Think about how the symbol(s) might connect to a possible theme.

*Understand that,
similar to real
people, fantasy
characters are
complex.*



*Find possible
symbols*

*(images, objects,
characters, settings)*





CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Settings Can Play a Special, Symbolic Role in Fantasy Stories

I GATHERED A CLUB that was reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. I had noticed the last time I had heard these club members talk that they were not really discussing the role of setting very much in their stories. They were much more

plot-driven. They talked about Sirius Black escaping and Scabbers going missing. Like many students reading sophisticated fantasy books, they seemed to be enjoying the setting, but not doing much work to interpret it.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Special Objects in Fantasy Deserve Special Attention

"Fantasy readers, I know one of our favorite things about fantasy is the *stuff*. You know, the magic wands, time turners, magic books, and Turkish delight. These are the sorts of tangible things in the books that we read. I want to just remind you that these objects that writers have so carefully crafted to stand out to us readers are designed to be delightful and memorable for a reason. The writer wants us to stop and realize that these too could be symbols, worthy of stopping to interpret their meanings.

"When you come across an object that is mentioned a lot, or described in fine detail, you will want to stop and take note. You will want to ask yourself, 'Could this be a symbol? What could it be a symbol for? And how does it fit with the rest of the story?' For example, most of us noticed that in *The Thief of Always*, the presents the children receive every night at the holiday house are significant. It's mentioned that Lulu has so many, in part because she's been there so many years. What could these presents represent? How do they fit with the rest of the story's possible themes? Or do they suggest a new theme?"

"Hey friends, I've been impressed by so much of what this club has discussed about the events that happened in your book. I've wondered if perhaps you might be interested in switching gears a bit to talk about the various settings in the book and the possibility that some of the settings might be symbolic."

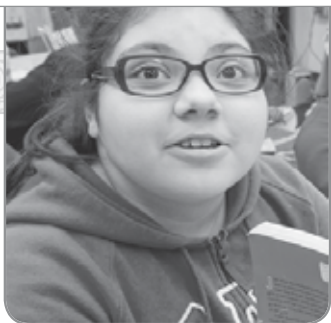
Maria jumped in right away, "Well, there's a whole bunch of settings in the book. There's the Dursley's house, Diagon Alley, Azkaban Prison, and Hogwarts. I think the Dursley's is sort of funny because it's safe for Harry, but he hates it. And the Prison is awful. It seems to represent evil."

"But more than evil," Paul interrupted, "because it's run by the Ministry of Magic. So it's sort of good, but it also does terrible things. I mean, clearly, the Dementors are terrible."

"And when they come to Hogwarts, Harry's other safe place, but one that he loves, it's like they represent bringing that evil with them," another student added.

"You guys are on a roll here," I said. "What do you think these settings are saying, so far, if you think of them as symbols and then consider the relationships among the symbols?"

Maria got a bright look in her eyes, "I think it's telling us another theme. That there are places where people are safer than others, but there is no truly safe place."



SHARE

Toggling Between the Small and the Large

Small Details and Big Ideas

Invite students to think about small, symbolic details—and then connect them to big ideas or themes.

"A few years ago I saw a famous writer, Junot Diaz, speak about writing. He said that even though he doesn't write fantasy books, he still loves to read them. He mentioned that one of the things he admired about fantasy books is their ability to toggle from one thing to another. He talked in particular about toggling back and forth between the macro and the micro—or the big and the small—the universal and the personal.

"As we work as readers of fantasy to pay attention to symbols, we are in many ways starting with the micro, or the small. And it is so fun and exciting to stay in those tiny details and ideas. However, we need to make an effort as readers to make a move to toggle back to the macro, or big ideas, and then, perhaps more importantly still, toggle back to the micro.

"So, as readers, we could try this right now with *The Thief of Always*. Let's think some more about the role of some small symbolic details in the book. Let's consider for the moment the role of the pond and the fish in the pond. And in the chapter we just finished where the pond has disappeared. Can you right now, turn and talk to the people near you about that pond and those fish? What do they symbolize? How does that fit into what we think is one of the bigger themes in the text? And then how does that theme give you more thinking about the pond and the fish?"

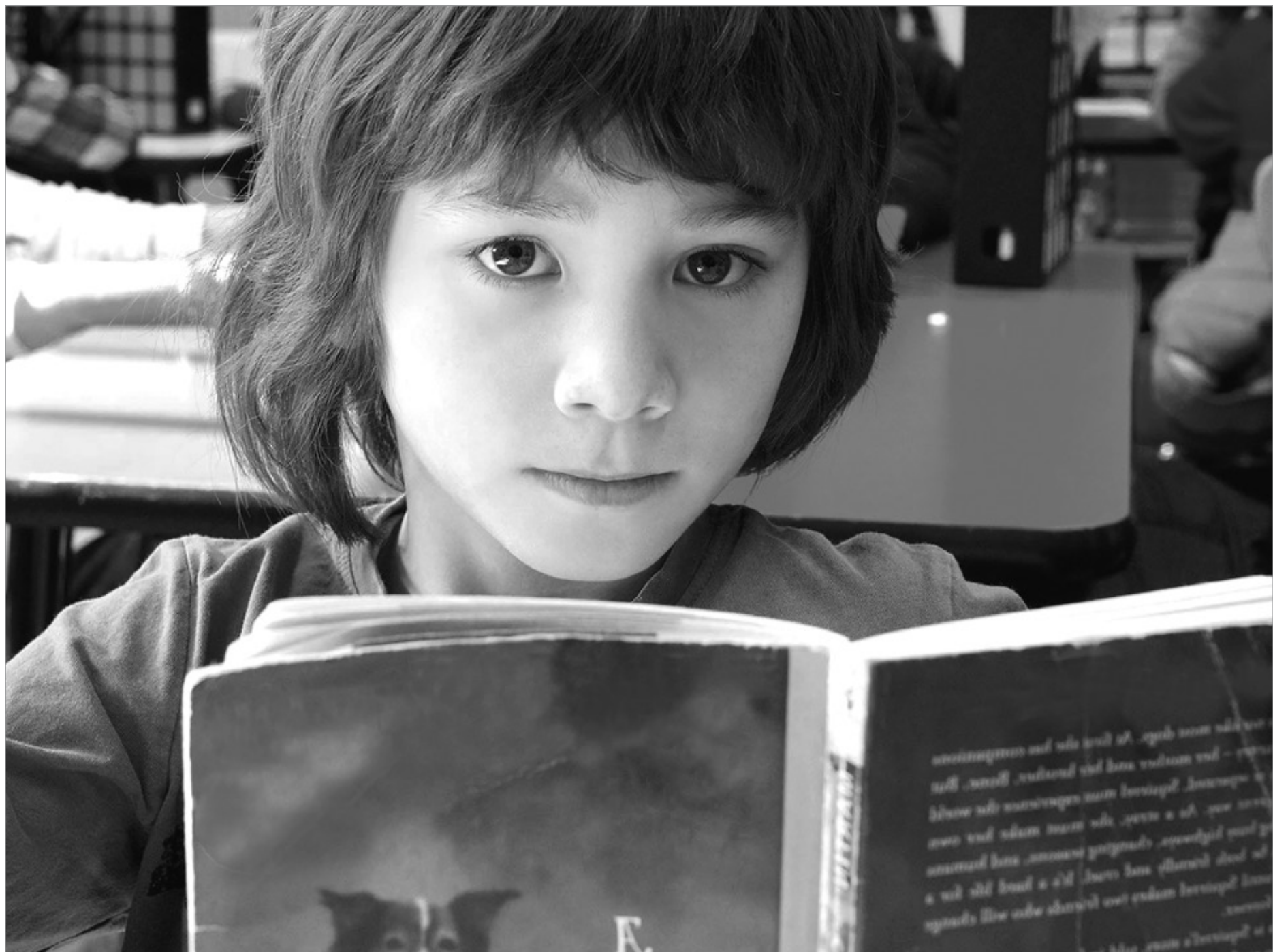
I gave the students some time to talk this out.

SESSION 14 HOMEWORK



FINDING SYMBOLS IN YOUR OWN, EVERYDAY LIFE

Readers, on your way home today, or on your errands out and about, I would like you to keep an eye out for symbols. Where in the world that you live in, do you see symbols? What do they represent? Do any of them remind you of any of the symbols you have explored in fantasy? Why do you think that is? Feel free to sketch the symbols alongside your jottings. If you notice any connections between the symbols you see in your real life and the fantasy book you are reading, make sure to take note of that as well.



Notes

This image shows a full page of blank, white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. In the bottom right corner, there is a small, circular inset photograph of a young boy with dark skin and short hair, smiling broadly at the camera. He appears to be resting his chin on his hands.



PROFESSIONAL Development

Implementation and Professional Development Options

The *Units of Study* books are a curriculum—and more. Lucy Calkins has embedded professional development into the curriculum, teaching teachers the “why” and “how” of effective reading instruction. Through regular coaching tips and detailed descriptions of teaching moves, essential aspects of reading instruction are underscored and explained at every turn. The professional development embedded in this series can be further enhanced through the following opportunities.

IN YOUR SCHOOL OR DISTRICT

Units of Study Days

Through a one-day intensive session, teachers can get started unpacking the series’ components, grasping the big picture of effective workshop teaching, and gaining an understanding of how to integrate assessment into the curriculum.

Contact Judith Chin, Coordinator of Strategic Development
judith.chin@readingandwritingproject.org
Phone: 212-678-3104

Multi-Day Institute for 40–300 educators

Invite a Reading and Writing Project Staff Developer to work in your school or district, helping a cohort of educators to teach reading and/or writing well. Host a “Homegrown Institute” for writing instruction, reading instruction, or content literacy. Tailored to your district’s needs, the instruction and materials are specialized for K–2, 3–5 or 6–8 sections.

Contact Kathy Neville, Executive Administrator
kathy@readingandwritingproject.org
Phone: 917-484-1482

Leadership Support

Topics include planning for large-scale implementation, establishing assessments across the school or district, learning from walk-throughs, designing in-house staff development, and instituting cross-grade alignment.

ONLINE FROM TCRWP

Classroom Videos

Dozens of live-from-the classroom videos let you eavesdrop on Lucy and her colleagues’ instruction in literacy workshop classrooms. These clips model the minilessons, conferences, and shares you will engage in as you teach the units of study.

View these videos at:
readingandwritingproject.org/resources/units-of-study

Resources

The Project posts important and useful resources throughout the year, including examples of student work.

Visit readingandwritingproject.org/resources

Twitter Chats

On Wednesdays from 7:30–8:30 P.M. EST join TCRWP and our colleagues for live chat sessions on topics supporting literacy instruction. Follow them at @TCRWP or search #TCRWP.

[Twitter.com/tcrwp](https://twitter.com/tcrwp)

Distance Learning Teacher-Leader Groups in Reading and Writing

TCRWP’s online Teacher-Leader Groups bring together potential teacher-leaders from schools across the nation. Led by Senior Staff Developers, each grade-specific group convenes for five two-hour sessions at crucial times throughout the year. These sessions enable teacher-leaders to think across the units of study and to explore methods of facilitating student transfer of skills from one unit to the next.

Visit readingandwritingproject.org for full support.

AT TEACHERS COLLEGE

Multi-Day Institutes at Teachers College

Teachers College offers eight institutes each year. Each of these is led by teacher-educators from the project, with other world-renowned experts joining as well. Institutes include keynotes, small- and large-group sections, and sometimes work in exemplar schools.

- Summer Institutes on the Teaching of Reading and Writing
- Literacy Coaching Institutes on the Teaching of Reading and Writing
- Content Area Institute
- Argumentation Institute

For registration and application information go to:
readingandwritingproject.org/services/institutes

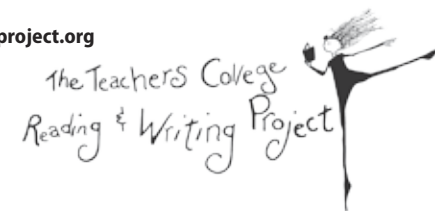
ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Each year, the Reading and Writing Project and Heinemann offer several one-day workshops for teachers and administrators. These off-site seminars are held in selected locations across the country and focus on units of study for teaching reading and writing. The workshops are delivered by TCRWP leaders and are open enrollment events.

For dates, locations, and registration information go to:
readingandwritingproject.org/services/one-day-events/conferences
and heinemann.com/PD/workshops

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Following on the success of the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing, K-5*, the new grade-by-grade *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, K-5*:

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- ▶ include the resources to help teachers build and evolve anchor charts across each unit
- ▶ help teachers use learning progressions to assess students' reading work, develop their use of self-monitoring strategies, and set students on trajectories of growth
- ▶ give teachers opportunities to teach and to learn teaching while receiving strong scaffolding and on-the-job guidance



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unitsofstudy.com/teachingreading

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Lucy Calkins is the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, a New York City-based organization that has influenced literacy instruction around the globe. In that role, Lucy's greatest accomplishment has been to develop a learning community of teacher educators whose brilliance and dedication shines through in the Units of Study books, which are quickly becoming an essential

part of classroom life in tens of thousands of schools around the world. The power of the Units of Study and TCRWP can be felt, too, in the schools that bear their distinctive mark: a combination of joy and rigor in the classrooms, and entire school communities—teachers, principals, parents, kids—who wear a love of reading and writing on their sleeves.

Lucy is the Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College, Columbia University where she co-directs the Literacy Specialist Program—a masters and doctoral program that brings brilliant teachers and coaches to TCRWP schools everywhere and to the Project itself. She is the author or coauthor of several score of books, including *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (Heinemann 2012), which was on the New York Times education bestseller list, and a sister series, *Units of Study in Opinion/Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grades K–8* (Heinemann 2013–14).



Kelly Boland Hohne is a Writer-in-Residence and Research Associate at TCRWP. She also completed her doctorate at Teachers College, where she has served as an adjunct instructor. Kelly is part of the leadership team for a think tank, sponsored by the Council of Chief School Officers, in which researchers from both CBAL (the research arm of Educational Testing Service) and TCRWP studied learning progressions in argument writing. In all

of her work, she draws on her experience as a classroom teacher at PS 6, one of TCRWP's mentor schools. Kelly is the coauthor of three books in the Writing Units of Study series—*Changing the World* (Grade 3), *Boxes and Bullets* (Grade 4), and *The Art of Argument* (Grade 7).



As a staff developer at TCRWP, **Katie Clements** supports teachers, coaches, and administrators in many New York City schools and across the nation. She leads advanced sections at the Project's renowned summer institutes, and year-long study groups for lead teachers. Katie has been an adjunct instructor at Teachers College, teaching graduate courses in literacy education. She has a deep interest in building student agency and fostering independent thinkers and problem-solvers. In all her work, Katie draws on her experience as an upper-grade teacher at PS 321 in Brooklyn.



In addition to being a coauthor in this series, **M. Colleen Cruz** is the author of several other titles for teachers, including *The Unstoppable Writing Teacher* (Heinemann 2015), *Independent Writing* (Heinemann 2004), and *A Quick Guide to Reaching Struggling Writers, K–5* (Heinemann 2008), as well as three books in the Writing Units of Study series—*The Art of Information Writing* (Grade 3), *The Arc of Story* (Grade 4), and *Writing Realistic Fiction* (Grade 7). She is also the author of the young adult novel *Border Crossing*, a Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award Finalist. Colleen was a classroom teacher in general education and inclusive settings before joining TCRWP, where she is a Senior Lead Staff Developer. She presently supports schools, teachers, and their students nationally and internationally.



Mary Ehrenworth (EdD) is Deputy Director for Middle Schools at TCRWP. Through that role, she supports literacy-based school reform in schools across New York City and the nation, and in a handful of other countries. As one of the coauthors of a book that has taken the nation by storm, *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (Heinemann 2012), Mary is in demand as a speaker on the CCSS and on secondary-school standards-based reform. Mary majored in art history and worked for a time as a museum educator—passions that shine through her first book, *Looking to Write: Students Writing through the Visual Arts* (Heinemann 2003).

Mary is the coauthor of two books in this series—*Historical Fiction Clubs* (Grade 4) and *Fantasy Book Clubs* (Grade 5)—and four books in the Writing Units of Study series—*From Scenes to Series* (Grade 1), *The Research-Based Argument Essay* (Grade 5), *Investigative Journalism* (Grade 8), and *Position Papers* (Grade 8). Her interest in critical literacy, interpretation, and close reading informed all the books she has coauthored with Lucy Calkins, including those in the *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades 3–5* series (Heinemann 2010).



Alexandra Marron is a Staff Developer, Researcher, and Writer-in-Residence at TCRWP. Her responsibilities include leading a yearlong study group for master teachers, presenting at conferences, teaching at summer institutes, and above all helping teachers and principals in dozens of schools lead state-of-the-art reading and writing workshops. Ali is the coauthor of five books in the Writing Units of Study series—*Writing About Reading* (Grade 2), *The Literary Essay* (Grade 4), *Narrative Craft and Shaping Texts* (Grade 5), and *Personal Narrative* (Grade 6). Ali has played a leadership role in developing learning progressions in argument writing, and participates in a study group on the subject, sponsored by the Council of Chief School Officers, involving Educational Testing Service and TCRWP. Prior to this work, she taught at PS 6, and while there contributed to the book *Practical Punctuation: Lessons on Rule Making and Rule Breaking in Elementary Writing* (Heinemann 2008).

For more than thirty years the **Teachers College Reading and Writing Project** (readingandwritingproject.org) has been both a provider of professional development to hundreds of thousands of educators and a think tank, developing state-of-the-art teaching methods and working closely with policy makers, school principals, and teachers to initiate and support school-wide and system-wide reform in the teaching of reading and writing.

