Unit 3: Nonfiction -- A Study of Genre, Craft, and Complexity

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Week 17**
Length: **8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

Nonfiction--A Study of Genre, Craft, and Complexity focuses on further exposing students to the genre of nonfiction. During the first bend of the unit, students will work to distinguish the distinctive purpose, features, and structures of nonfiction texts that make this genre different from fiction. Having identified the critical attributes of nonfiction, students will dive into informational texts, alert to how the text features and structures present help readers to organize information and create meaning before, during, and after their reading. Students will sharpen their ability to read complex nonfiction with a focus on their fluency with summarizing texts, citing texts accurately and with information that is relevant to central ideas, and reading to discern more than one central idea in the text. To support the construction of their learning, readers will practice note-taking in a variety of ways: to gather and sort information, to process information collected, to develop ideas based within the text, and to prepare for talking and writing. In the final learning bend, students will deepen their comparing and contrasting skills through their analysis of authors' patterns and choices in style and structure to convey central ideas about a topic to an intended audience.

Standards

LA.RI.6.1	Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LA.RI.6.2	Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
LA.RI.6.3	Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).
LA.RI.6.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
LA.RI.6.5	Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.
LA.RI.6.6	Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
LA.RI.6.7	Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
LA.RI.6.9	Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).
LA.RI.6.10	By the end of the year read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above, with scaffolding as needed.
LA.SL.6.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and

	teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.SL.6.2	Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
LA.SL.6.5	Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.
LA.L.6.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
LA.L.6.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
LA.L.6.4.A	Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
LA.L.6.4.B	Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., audience, auditory, audible).
LA.L.6.4.C	Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.
LA.L.6.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Essential Questions

- How is fiction different from nonfiction?
- How does *what* I'm reading impact *how* I'm reading?
- How can I read to learn intentionally and effectively?
- How do I synthesize ideas and details while increasing my knowledge and broadening my interests?
- How can I use text structure and features as a way to navigate the ideas and information in a text?
- How can I determine a central idea within a text? More than one?
- How can I read in a way that demonstrates with explicit textual evidence the central ideas of texts and how they are supported by significant details?
- How can I use writing and talking to think through and question what I'm learning?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- Main idea and supporting details work together in order to build understanding of a text.
- Nonfiction is distinctive from fiction.
- Nonfiction is presented in several structures; each with its own way of conveying information.
- Nonfiction texts are about real people, real events, real ideas, and real beliefs.
- Nonfiction texts help to shape our knowledge of the world by confirming, challenging, and changing what we know.
- Nonfiction texts require readers to take an active, questioning stance.
- Readers apply a variety of strategies before, during, and after reading to make meaning of

informational texts.

- The features and structures of nonfiction help readers to navigate, understand, and apply information.

Application of Skills: Students will be able to...

- Analyze the structure, features, and craft of nonfiction authors in developing overall ideas.
- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of literal and inferential claims.
- Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another.
- Compose open-ended responses with clear claim, relevant evidence, and logical reasoning.
- Construct a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- Describe the purpose of text features in developing meaning and navigating a nonfiction text.
- Determine one or more central ideas presented within a text.
- Determine the genre of a text based on observations of purpose, content, structure, and features.
- Distinguish the text structure of a nonfiction text: descriptive, compare-contrast, sequential/chronological, cause-effect, and problem-solution.
- Identify relevant supporting details.
- Recall the distinctive genre characteristics of fiction and nonfiction.
- Synthesize details across text to distinguish central ideas about a topic.

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

Suggested Teaching Points

The following teaching points and activities are adapted from the TCRWP curricular calendars and texts and serve as a loose framework for teachers, who will add and or emphasize based on their students' needs.

Bend I: Investigating Nonfiction--Characteristics, Features, and Structure

- Readers rely on all they know about fiction and nonfiction to orient themselves to a text.
- Readers take note of everything on the page to focus, navigate, and understand a nonfiction text.
- Readers are aware of the structure of a nonfiction text, knowing that how an author organizes their information can help readers make meaning.

Bend II: Acquiring an Active Reading Stance

- Readers take a questioning stance when reading nonfiction, looking to confirm, challenge, and change their original ideas about a topic.
- Before reading nonfiction, readers establish their focus/intent by previewing the text and text features to ask, "What might this text be about?"
- Readers are careful to think before taking notes--stopping to ask: "What's really important?"
- Readers record a few big ideas and supporting details as they read, instead of trying to memorize all of the information.
- Readers assemble relevant details from the text to support and confirm the main idea.
- Readers notice when words or certain phrases are repeated throughout the text and ask, "Why might the author repeat this?"
- Readers notice the structure of a text or part of a text and use that to help them read for big concepts like: problem-solutions; similarities and differences; and changes over time.
- Sometimes, while reading, readers need to read between the lines of complex nonfiction to pull out big ideas or concepts that aren't easy to spot.
- Readers interact with new vocabulary by actively trying to figure out what new words mean--through studying text features, reading across the text, and asking: "How does this word fit with what I'm learning about this?"
- Readers write summaries that clearly record the ideas an author advances in a text, as well as include the evidence and specific details an author uses.
- When readers read nonfiction books and article on a topic, they become experts and teach others what they know.
- Readers write to think more about a topic.

Bend III: Investigating Author's Nonfiction Styles and Techniques

- When readers analyze a nonfiction text, they use an expert vocabulary to describe the techniques authors use.
- Readers compare and contrast authors' style and techniques by asking: "What do I notice about *how* these authors teach us about this topic?"
- Readers examine an author's intent by analyzing the inclusion of text features to determine how these features impact readers and asking, "What are these designed to show?"
- When examining nonfiction, readers think about *when* and *how* authors use techniques to make new information interesting and understandable.
- Readers notice the words an author uses to help determine how the author might feel about the topic, and then use that feeling to determine a possible point of view.

- Readers often compare and contrast books by different authors to analyze an author's point of view and "teaching" style.

Suggested Activities

- Mini-lesson to include connection, teaching point, modeling, active engagement, and link to independence.
- Develop and use reader's notebook for modeling, exemplar entries, and a time line of teaching points
- Create authentic artifacts (logs, jots, etc.) for examination and inquiry
- Think aloud during process to model strategies, sentence stems, and problem-solving techniques
- Model creation of artifacts during read aloud
- Examine mentor and student exemplars
- Read aloud a mentor text or whole class text with strategic stopping points for teacher think aloud, turn and talk, and stop and jot opportunities
- Construct authentic anchor charts (specific teaching points + student observations + student friendly terms/examples)
- Create process checklists to guide reading work into independence
- Incorporate multimedia and visual texts as a means for active engagement and practice
- Small group strategy lessons
- Individual conference with students

Assessments

Assessment within this unit of study arrives in three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. The development and use of assessment will happen strategically throughout the unit as a means of maintaining a "pulse of learning" to ensure that students are grasping and mastering the skills and strategies intertwined within the teaching points prior to advancing on in the unit. Assessment will be formal and informal, as well as teacher-driven and student-driven. Students will be given the opportunity to self-assess their work to identify areas of weakness and development in order to develop ambitious, feasible goals. Students will also be asked to collaborate with peers in their assessment practices in order to support learning across zones of proximal development. On-going teacher assessment will take place in the context of the conference. Conferences, both small group and one-on-one conferring, are used to reinforce expectations, provide advice/or assistance, and to support growth.

Diagnostic Assessments:

- TC Running Record (http://readingandwritingproject.org/resources/assessments/running-records)

The running record forms provide a book introduction, the typed text, a sidebar of reading characteristics, a scoring guide, comprehension questions with sample responses, and space to take notes and to jot student responses. A Teacher Guidebook for Levels A-K and one for Levels L-Z+ is available in the Supporting Documents and explains in detail the assessments and includes suggestions for how to use the assessments to

plan differentiated, explicit instruction for each student assessed.

Formative Assessments:

- *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6-8* pre assessment (On-Demand performance task)
- Examination of student reading logs
- Examination of student developed jots and notebook entries (Reader's and Writer's notebook)
- Informal conferring and observation of independent reading habits and accountable talk
- Collection of anecdotes from teacher-student conferences: individual, small group, strategy, and guided
- Collection of observations from active engagement within mini-lesson
- Closure tasks: quick jot, exit ticket, etc.
- Student performance checklists
- Student self-reflection

Summative Assessments:

- End of unit post assessment (On-demand performance task)
- Research logs, notebook entries, and other evidence of students improving skills
- Published writing composition (essay, book, and digital publication)

Possible Informational Reading Performance Assessment:

Recommended texts are from online news subscription site Newsela.com (requires free registration for access). Follow the URL for the lexile level of text most appropriate for students, or for specific groups of your students. This site is a great resource, as it allows you to present students with articles on the same subject at five different reading levels. For this assessment, students will be presented with some challenges, but not with a so many that they cannot demonstrate what they can do to make sense of a text. Note that the CCSS grade-level lexile for 6th grade is somewhere at the beginning of the grades 6-8 recommended range of 925-1185L. Teachers may opt to use their own scoring system for this, or to treat each question as a short response question using the TC performance task continuums.

URLs for the article “Cats Hear You, They Just Don’t Listen” (note: slight title shifts occur at different Lexile levels):

- https://newsela.com/articles/cat-apathy/id/3610/ 1110L
- https://newsela.com/articles/cat-apathy/id/3613/ 1030L
- https://newsela.com/articles/cat-apathy/id/3623/ 810L
- https://newsela.com/articles/cat-apathy/id/3625/ 680L

Assessment Questions:

1) What sentence from this article best summarizes the author’s central idea about cats? Support your answer

by explaining how this sentence connects to most of the article.

2) Which two details from this article best connect to the title? Explain your answer by writing about how these details connect to the title.

3) How does the photograph support or not support the ideas presented in this article? What would be a better image that would more directly connect to the important points in this article?

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

Differentiated instruction is accomplished through pre-assessment and ongoing formative assessments that inform independent work, small group strategy lessons, and individual conferences. Differentiation in content, product and/or process addresses the needs of exceptionally able students, and scaffolding of varying degree is provided to support less ready students in meeting worthy and appropriately rigorous learning outcomes. Instructional objectives, strategies and materials emphasize relevance, authenticity, and student-centered learning.

In compliance with 504 plans and IEP's, teachers will review applicable documents, consult appropriate personnel connected with special-needs students' cases, work closely with inclusion teachers and classroom aides, and communicate with parents in an effort to see to the specific needs of all students. Due to varying dispositions and learning styles, teachers promote various strategies during all phases of the reading process. Students will have opportunities to work alone, in pairs, and in groups. The reading workshop incorporates a variety of instructional techniques to meet the continuum of learners' interests, learning profiles, and readiness levels.

Differentiating through Independent Reading: After using the TCRWP benchmark assessments to determine corresponding Fountas and Pinnell text gradient levels A-Z+, students choose appropriate "just right" books that match them as readers based on interest/readiness. The strategy or skill being taught might be the same, but the book choice, or content, is differentiated.

Differentiating though Reading Response Methods: One option to differentiate product is to allow students to use different methods to track their thinking. For example, if students are working on inferring and using their notebooks, students can choose how to record their thought process (Venn Diagram, T-Chart, etc.) to use evidence and explanation to support their decision. The teacher can assign how students respond to literature based on their reading goal or need, or the student can decide.

Differentiating through Conferences and Small Groups: Teachers should listen to students as they read and take notes during one-on-one conferences. Reading conferences can be used to encourage students' reading interests, help students find appropriate leveled books to read, and to monitor student progress. The teacher can also pull small groups for extra practice at this time. These small groups can be used to challenge higher-

level students, give additional practice to all students in small groups, or to meet with lower readers to focus on areas of weakness. Small groups are meant to be flexible and change to fit the needs of students. During this time students can share their thinking with partners and with the small group, and then receive feedback from the teacher.

Individual conferencing and small group instruction allows for instruction at various levels, remediation or enrichment of specific skills, as well as the differentiation of the method of instruction and the presentation of information. In addition to these forms of differentiation other modifications can be made. They can include, but are not limited to those suggested below.

Differentiating for special education:

- *Learning Environment*: Allow space for students to choose; Use preferential seating; Provide opportunities for movement; Vary activities both in and out of desk/table
- *Curriculum:*Adapt amount of work required; Use different forms of assessments that demonstrate different learning styles; Allow different visual aids, concrete examples, hands-on activities, and cooperative groups to learn new concepts; Allow work to be completed in various formats
- *Teaching and Learning Styles:*Adapt the way instruction is delivered to the learner- use multiple teaching styles to teach a new concept; Use concrete examples and move towards the abstract; Provide an overview of lesson at beginning; Monitor the rate and manner in which the material is being presented
- *Time Demands*: Allow extra time to complete tests; Give different versions of tests; Follow a routine; Set specific time limits for test
- *Cooperative Learning:* Use flexible grouping; Use student choice in grouping; Assign peer helpers to check in on one another
- *Behavior Concerns:* Give clear expectations of goals for the class period; Be consistent in follow through with both positive and negative consequences; Use of cues; Give immediate positive reinforcement and feedback; Avoid power struggle
- *Attention/Focus Concerns:* Give notification of transitions; Use of cues to refocus; Seat near teacher or in area of less distraction; Introduce assignments in sequential steps; Make sure books/materials are on the correct pages
- *Organization:* Give copy of notes; Allow student to leave unnecessary materials in a nearby area; Color-coded materials; Use of binder system; Use a checklist for work in smaller units
- *Written Expression:* Allow use of manuscript, cursive, or typing for assignments; Leniency in spelling and neatness (to an agreed upon level); Provide a copy of notes; Avoid pressures for speed or accuracy
- *Visual Processing:* Give highlighted/color coded copy of notes; Avoid copying notes from the board; Check in with student to be sure that visuals are comprehended from the beginning of lesson; Avoided cluttered worksheets keeping them clear and well defined
- *Language Processing:* Give both written and verbal directions; Slow the rate of presentation and paraphrase information; Keep statements short and to the point Allow for extra wait time; Use student‘s name before asking a question; Use of visuals and hands-on materials; Familiarize students with new vocabulary before lesson
- *Audio Processing:* Provide a copy of notes; Use of a checklist; Keep statements short and to the point; Use of eye contact; Have student sit closer to instruction; Use of student buddy to check in with sitting nearby; Use of visuals; Stop and check in for understanding

- **Content specific modifications may include:**
    - Instruction aligned to student's performance level according to Teacher's College Reading Continuum

- Personal student goals designed to move student along Teacher's College Reading Continuum

Differentiating to extend learning for gifted students:

Reading programs for the gifted should take into account the individual characteristics of the children, capitalize on the gifts they possess, and expand and challenge their abilities. Tasks should be commensurate with ability and achievement. Accommodations may include:

- Compacting the regular curriculum; acceleration of content and/or text at a pace and depth appropriate to the capacity of able learners
- Inquiry reading and independent study opportunities; use of more advanced books
- Focus on developing higher-level comprehension skills, along with higher level questioning
- Exploration of literary tropes and elements (i.e. craft, irony, symbolism, foils, unreliable narrators, and multiple perspectives) on a highly abstract level and with highly nuanced applications
- Special emphasis to the critical-thinking components of the standard scoring rubrics
- A wider and more in-depth array of related topics and cross-curricular connections
- Opportunities for students to engage in peer instruction
- Requiring more initiative and independence from students, emphasizing metacognitive skills that foster self-directed learning
- Encouraging students to apply insights revealed in group discussions to their own analysis of literature

Differentiating for ELL's:

General modifications may include:

- Strategy groups
- Teacher conferences
- Graphic organizers
- Modification plan
- Collaboration with ELL Teacher

Content specific vocabulary important for ELL students to understand include:

- Central Idea, Relevant, Text Features, Point of View, Perspective, Analyze, Synthesize, Critique, Interpret, Theory, Text Structure, Evidence, Evaluate

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Consistent with the concept of differentiated instruction, students should learn the knowledge and skills of this unit in conjunction with concepts from various content areas. While some teachers will provide instruction that includes specific concepts from various content areas, all should direct students to specific text and online resources pertinent to various content areas. Also, teachers will consult grade-level content area teachers on concepts covered in their classes, allowing subjects, lessons, and experiences to reinforce each other.

The diverse topics of informational reading make this highly feasible, and mini-lessons can apply to concepts from multiple subjects including science, social studies, and the arts. The topics and research questions for informative writing span far beyond the middle school curriculum. Issues for inquiry can span an array of high-interest topics such as:

- Politics (social studies)
- Sports (physical education)
- School lunches (health)
- Technology (science)

Writing Workshop

- apply language and ideas from read alouds and independent reading
- utilize read alouds and independent reading as mentor texts
- expand written vocabulary from read alouds and independent reading
- apply sentence, paragraph, and text structure from mentor texts
- utilize other elements of author's craft seen in mentor texts and independent reading books

Content Areas: Science, Social Studies, Health

- use mentor texts to deliver Social Studies, Science, and Health content
- apply reading skills and strategies to the reading done in the content areas

Study Skills

- use graphic organizers to support reading
- use checklists and rubrics to monitor progress
- use Venn diagrams and t-charts to gather, compare, and contrast events
- use highlighters, note cards, post-its, and other tools to keep track of events, details, and ideas
- keep a log and notebook

The Arts

- analyze illustrations, diagrams, maps, photographs in books
- illustrate a text to show details and ideas
- create multimedia presentations based on reading
- act out a sequence from a text to better visualize a process

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

Teaching Resources:

- Beers, Kylene and Robert E. Probst. *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2013. Print.
- Beers, Kylene and Robert E. Probst. *Reading Nonfiction: Notice and Note Stances, Signposts, and Strategies*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2016. Print.
- Calkins, Lucy McCormick. *The Art of Teaching Reading*. Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 2001. Print.
- Ehrenworth, Mary, Hareem Atif Khan, and Julia Mooney. *Constructing Curriculum: Alternate Units of Study*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2010. Print.
- Serravallo, Jennifer. *The Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2015. Print.
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Reading Curricular Calendar, Sixth Grade 2013-2014: "Unit Seven--Nonfiction Book Clubs: Authors, Series, and News Journals."
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Reading Curricular Calendar, Sixth Grade 2015-2016: "Unit Three--Reading to Learn: Synthesizing Nonfiction."
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Reading Curricular Calendar, Sixth Grade 2016-2017: "Nonfiction: A Study of Text Complexity."

Suggested Anchor Texts:

- *Oh Rats! The Story of Rats and People* by Albert Marrin & C.B. Bordan
- *Who Was Julius Caesar? Julius Caesar: Dictator for Life* (Wicked History)
- "Cats Hear Your, They Just Don't Listen" (NEWSELA)
- "The Volcano that Changed the World" by Lauren Tarshis (*Scope*, Sept. 2014)
- "Chapter 10: Conquering Gaul" (http://connect.readingandwritingproject.org/file/download?google_drive_document_id=0B7BccMltK6LqZ1dqYkpaLUstNnc)

Suggested Text Sets:

- Outlined in Reading Curricular Calendar, Sixth Grade 2016-2017: "Nonfiction: A Study of Text Complexity." (TCRWP)
- Selected narrative nonfiction and informational texts from Scholastic *Scope* and *Storyworks* magazine
- Leveled articles selected from: Newsela.com, Thinkcerca.com, Dogonews.com

21st Century Skills

CRP.K-12.CRP1.1	Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.

CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.
CRP.K-12.CRP6.1	Career-ready individuals regularly think of ideas that solve problems in new and different ways, and they contribute those ideas in a useful and productive manner to improve their organization. They can consider unconventional ideas and suggestions as solutions to issues, tasks or problems, and they discern which ideas and suggestions will add greatest value. They seek new methods, practices, and ideas from a variety of sources and seek to apply those ideas to their own workplace. They take action on their ideas and understand how to bring innovation to an organization.
CRP.K-12.CRP7.1	Career-ready individuals are discerning in accepting and using new information to make decisions, change practices or inform strategies. They use reliable research process to search for new information. They evaluate the validity of sources when considering the use and adoption of external information or practices in their workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP11.1	Career-ready individuals find and maximize the productive value of existing and new technology to accomplish workplace tasks and solve workplace problems. They are flexible and adaptive in acquiring new technology. They are proficient with ubiquitous technology applications. They understand the inherent risks-personal and organizational-of technology applications, and they take actions to prevent or mitigate these risks.