Unit 3: Reading Nonfiction: Strategies, Features, and Structures

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Week 17**
Length: **6-8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

In this unit, readers shift their focus to nonfiction and delve into the world of informational reading. The tools, tasks, and suggested teaching points in this unit encourage the development of a student's ability to navigate informational text of all kinds (expository, literary, narrative, etc.). They explore a variety of informational text structures that challenge their ability to analyze, cite evidence, and draw inferences from text. Besides developing an identity as a nonfiction reader, students will also deepen their skills at comparing and contrasting, analyzing authors' patterns and choices in style and structure, and deepening their familiarity with the literary techniques that are used in high-quality nonfiction. They'll become more alert to how nonfiction text structures--such as cause and effect, problem and solution, and compare/contrast--help readers organize information and create meaning. Students will learn to apply their knowledge to texts by particular mentor authors and self-selected nonfiction texts. Additionally, the unit provides opportunities for students to use the nonfiction texts as mentors for craft and structure in conjunction with writing workshop research.

Standards

LA.RI.7.1	Cite several pieces of 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.7.2	Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RI.7.3	Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).
LA.RI.7.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
LA.RI.7.5	Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.
LA.RI.7.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.
LA.RI.7.9	Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.
LA.RI.7.10	By the end of the year read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above, with scaffolding as needed.
LA.W.7.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice and

	style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.W.7.5	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
LA.W.7.7	Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
LA.W.7.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
LA.W.7.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.W.7.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.L.7.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
LA.L.7.4.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.7.4.B	Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., belligerent, bellicose, rebel).
LA.L.7.4.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.7.4.D	Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
LA.L.7.6	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 can I build a nonfiction reading life that allows me to become increasingly adept and expert at this genre, including committing to nonfiction authors, series, and news journals, in order to develop a nonfiction reading identity and read harder texts?

- How can informational text features be applied to other subject content areas?
- How do you use informational text features to help you locate and find information for analysis?
- What importance does informational text play in everyday life?
- How does learning about new and real things help us to become better readers of informational text? What strategies and/or tools do we use to understand this new information? What kinds of text features advance the information that is being given?
- How do good readers make personal connections to informational text? What strategies can good readers employ to help make such personal connections?
- How do you decode tough words you don't understand? What types of strategies are helpful during decoding?
- Why is organization and strategy use such an important tool in navigating and analyzing informational text?

- Why is being able to determine relevance of details in informational text so important to the comprehension of informational reading?
- Why are central themes, main ideas and relevant details so important when writing a summary of informational text?
- How do authors use informational text features to advance their claim? Why is it important to compare different authors' key points on the same subject?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- Informational readers read purposely to explore new and unfamiliar concepts.
- Informational readers understand that authors present information in a variety of ways.
- Informational text gives readers a chance to build background knowledge about new topics.
- Informational text readers read to find specific information.
- Readers build theories about what the text is telling and suggesting.
- Readers know that context can be used to help a reader figure out unfamiliar words.
- Readers read from various non-fiction text formats paying attention to the text structure.
- Readers synthesize information and determine important as they read.
- Readers understand that text features help figure out tricky words.

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

- Determine how two different authors advance their evidence to support the central idea in informational text.
- Evaluate details and assess if they are relevant and support the central idea.
- Examine one or more central ideas and are able to provide a summary of the text using an author's presented evidence.
- Identify and analyze text features and structures associated with types of nonfiction.
- Make connections to what they know and to new information.
- Prepare to read a nonfiction article by building background knowledge and learning key vocabulary.
- Reflect on their experience with nonfiction texts and identify what they already know about this genre.
- Use strategies to decode the context of words they don't understand, using clues in text.
- Utilize effective strategies to navigate different structures of informational text.

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

Possible Sequence of 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: Crafting Nonfiction Reading Identities

- Readers often pause and take stock of their reading lives. One way to do this is to investigate what they've been doing as readers. To do this, they often turn to tools like reading records or book baskets to recall what they've read, and remember how they liked it.
- Readers often think about what they really like about certain books, so they can find other books like those, and then do more and more reading, and become more and more powerful as readers. One way readers begin this work is to sort books and articles into the kinds of nonfiction they love.
- Readers work a little bit at ways to ratchet up their reading life, and they meanwhile read a lot, hoping to read more purposefully because of new thinking work, but knowing they can carry along with the strategies they already know as well.
- When nonfiction readers set out to study their nonfiction reading lives, they actively try to improve it while studying it. One way to do this is to get a lot of reading done. Another way to do this is to really synthesize a large amount of information and teach others.

Bend II: Investigating Author's Nonfiction Styles and Techniques

- Readers often compare and contrast books by different authors, as looking at two books that are quite different helps us to how authors make different moves.
- Reading has its own words, its expert vocabulary, so that when you describe a book, you can use this vocabulary to describe the techniques authors use.
- Readers not only use expert vocabulary to describe what nonfiction writers do, they also think about when and how authors use these – how they make new information really interesting and understandable.
- It's not just nonfiction authors who explain information using effective techniques. Talk partners and clubs use these same techniques when they teach each other about what they've learned.
- A reader should want to ask themselves: What writerly moves did they see in poetry and fiction turn out to be important to nonfiction writers as well?
- Readers often lay books by an author/in a series alongside each other and study patterns to see if they are particularly drawn to certain kinds of writing.

Bend III: Enriching Our Nonfiction Identities by Broadening Our Experiences

- As readers come to know more about the books they are drawn to, they also know more about themselves as readers, which helps them outgrow themselves, helps them set new goals.
- One way readers grow and expand their reading is by swapping favorite books or by introducing books for each other.
- Readers investigate new kinds of nonfiction to expand their reading experiences. Readers turn to new nonfiction options/ spend some time investigating other kinds of nonfiction that make up reading identities, including websites, videos, and magazines.

Suggested Activities:

Students will engage in a variety of activities before, during, and after reading. Typical daily activities reflect the routines of the workshop model, including but not limited to:

- Minilesson (connection, teaching point, modeling, active engagement, independent practice, sharing)
- Interactive Read Aloud/Along (with strategically planned stopping points to model strategies and assess partner talk)
- Independent reading (consistent time devoted to stamina/fluency)
- Writing about reading (notebooks, jots, long/short writes, etc.)
- Small group lessons (based on strengths/weaknesses)
- Centers (providing independent exploration and reinforcement of concepts)
- Conferences (frequent "check-ins" to compliment, research, teach and track goals)

Other possible activities could focus on close reading "signposts" from *Notice and Note* to supplement all bends. This refers to a reading routine which provides students with “look fors” as they are reading and encourages them to reread a portion of a text to answer a question about the meaning of the text. As students read a text for class or for independent reading, these strategies promote student engagement in a text and helps students determine importance in nonfiction. It is recommended to begin with the three anchor questions: What surprised me? What does the author think I already know? What challenged, changed, or confirmed what I already know? Additionally, lessons and activities can be used to analyze the following signposts:

- Contrasts and Contradictions – when the author presents something that contrasts or contradicts what the reader is likely to know, think or have experienced, or shows a difference between two or more situations, events or perspectives.
- Extreme or Absolute Language – author uses language that leaves no doubt about a situation or event that exaggerates or overstates a case.
- Numbers and Stats – author uses number or words that show amounts or statistical information to show comparisons in order to prove a point or help create an image.
- Quoted Words – author quotes others, directly, with a "voice of authority or personal perspective," or citing others’ words.

- Word Gaps – author uses words or phrases students recognize they don't know.

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:

- Unit pre-assessment (On-demand performance task)
- Examination of student reading logs
- Examination of student developed jots and notebook entries
- 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
- Quick jots
- Exit tickets
- Student reflection

Summative Assessments:

- End of unit post assessment (On-demand performance task)
- Reading logs, jots, notebook entries, and other evidence of student growth
- Published writing composition

Possible Pre- and Post- Performance Assessment: At the beginning and end of the unit, give an on-demand task to assess students' higher-level comprehension, looking specifically at all the skills comprising interpretive, analytic reading: Main Ideas and Supporting Details(s); Summary/Cohesion; Comparing and Contrasting; Analyzing Author's Craft; Inferring Within Texts.

Select two texts on a topic; plan stopping places to the pre-determined spots, asking children to stop and jot in ways that show what they have gleaned from the text. For example:

- Read a bit then stop and ask children to name some main ideas the text is forwarding or to determine the point of view of the author so far.
- Continue reading, pausing to ask at an important part: What does it mean when the book says...?
- At the end of the book, check children's interpretation skills by asking: What do you think the author wants us to know and feel about this topic? How did the authors approach the topic differently?

Teachers can also choose to show students two sections of a book by an author and ask them some questions about the similarities and differences between the two texts:

- For what purposes has the author developed the different texts? How are the purposes similar/different?
- What structures has the author chosen to use in each of the texts? How are they similar or different? How do the structures help to show the purposes?
- What are some ways that the author has used language which seem similar across the texts?
- If you were going to say one thing about this writer as an author, what would it be?

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

Differentiation for special education:

- General modifications may include:
    - Modifications & accommodations as listed in the student's IEP
    - Assign a peer to help keep student on task
    - Modified or reduced assignments
    - Reduce length of assignment for different mode of delivery
    - Increase one-to-one time
    - Working contract between you and student at risk
    - Prioritize tasks
    - Think in concrete terms and provide hands-on-tasks
    - Position student near helping peer or have quick access to teacher
    - Anticipate where needs will be
    - Break tests down in smaller increments

- Strategy groups

- 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

Differentiation 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

Differentiation to extend learning for gifted students may include:

- special emphasis to the critical-thinking components of the standard scoring rubrics
- a wider array of related topics and cross-curricular connections
- opportunities for students to engage in peer instruction
- requiring more initiative and independence from students
- application of critical thinking skills to more sophisticated elements of author's craft including use of conflict, irony, symbolism, and metaphor appearing in non-fiction texts
- evaluation of the informational authority of a text

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

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

Suggested Professional Texts:

Beers, G K, and Robert E. Probst. *Reading Nonfiction: Notice & Note Stances, Signposts, and Strategies*, 2015. Print.

Calkins, Lucy. *A Curricular Plan for the Reading Workshop Grade 7*. 2011–2012 Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.

"Nonfiction Book Clubs: Authors, Series, and News Journals Unit." Curricular Calendars from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Seventh Grade, 2016-2017.

Serravallo, Jennifer. *The Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers*., 2015. Print.

Possible Anchor Texts:

Use of subscriptions to Scholastic Scope and Action Magazines for a variety of high-interest nonfiction.

A collection of text excerpts, such as:

- *Oh Rats!* and *Dr. Jenner and the Speckled Monster: The Discovery of the Smallpox Vaccine* by Albert Marrin
- *Earth* by Seymour Simon and *Earth* by Gail Gibbons
- “Have Superheroes Replaced Athletes As the Childhood Heroes of Choice?” by Steve Rushin, Sports Illustrated (available online)

- "The Matthew Effect," Chapter One of Malcolm Gladwell's *Outsiders*

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.CRP8.1	Career-ready individuals readily recognize problems in the workplace, understand the nature of the problem, and devise effective plans to solve the problem. They are aware of problems when they occur and take action quickly to address the problem; they thoughtfully investigate the root cause of the problem prior to introducing solutions. They carefully consider the options to solve the problem. Once a solution is agreed upon, they follow through to ensure the problem is solved, whether through their own actions or the actions of others.
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.
CRP.K-12.CRP12.1	Career-ready individuals positively contribute to every team, whether formal or informal. They apply an awareness of cultural difference to avoid barriers to productive and positive

interaction. They find ways to increase the engagement and contribution of all team members. They plan and facilitate effective team meetings.