Unit 3: Informational

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

Unit Overview

Information writing often has topics and sub-topics that include headings and subheadings with accompanying sections for information, including glossaries and text boxes, sidebars, diagrams, charts, graphs, and other visuals. It will be important for students to remember that the writer aims to teach readers about a topic, and that as authors of informational texts, they must help readers become informed on a topic that feels very important to the writer. Writers will start by writing about very broad, generic topics to creating a focused text that zooms in on more specific topics. In addition, writers will then learn that they can focus not just on a smaller topic but on a particular angle (or aspect) of that subject. This typically culminates in a four to five page book complete with a table of contents divided into chapters. Then, the information will be grouped into categories, sub categories, and comparisons. This will allow students to substantiate claims with information and to elaborate and analyze that information. It is important to note, that mentor texts for this unit should contain sections that sound more story like but are still informational. It will be important to include these throughout the unit, in order to build on this work. This unit should start with an on-demand writing assessment, and then students should be allowed to spend a single day rewriting what they have written from top to bottom. In the first bend of the unit writers will try topics, revise their topics and gear towards a greater focus. Students will draft both handwritten pieces as well as pieces using appropriate technology.

Standards

LA.RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text and make relevant connections when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
LA.RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
LA.RL.4.6	Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.
LA.RI.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text and make relevant connections when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
LA.RI.5.1	Quote accurately from a text and make relevant connections when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
LA.RI.4.2	Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
LA.RI.4.3	Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
LA.RI.4.4	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.
LA.RI.4.5	Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.
LA.RI.4.7	Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs,

	diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
LA.RI.4.8	Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.
LA.RI.4.9	Integrate and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
LA.RF.4.4	Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
LA.W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
LA.W.4.2.A	Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
LA.W.5.2.A	Introduce a topic clearly to provide a focus and group related information logically; include text features such as headings, illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
LA.W.4.2.B	Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, text evidence, or other information and examples related to the topic.
LA.W.4.2.C	Link ideas within paragraphs and sections of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).
LA.W.4.2.D	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
LA.W.4.2.E	Provide a conclusion related to the information or explanation presented.
LA.W.4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.W.5.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
LA.W.4.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
LA.W.4.6	With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.
LA.W.4.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
LA.W.4.8	Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.
LA.W.4.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.W.4.10	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.SL.4.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.SL.4.2	Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and orally).
LA.SL.4.3	Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.
LA.SL.4.4	Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner,

	using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
LA.SL.4.5	Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.
LA.SL.4.6	Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion); use formal English when appropriate to task and situation.
LA.L.4.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.4.1.D	Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., a small red bag rather than a red small bag).
LA.L.4.1.E	Form and use prepositional phrases.
LA.L.5.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.4.1.F	Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.
LA.L.4.1.G	Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to, too, two; there, their).
LA.L.4.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.4.2.B	Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.
LA.L.4.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
LA.L.4.3.A	Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.
LA.L.4.3.B	Choose punctuation for effect.
LA.L.4.4.A	Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
LA.L.4.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal preservation).

Essential Questions

- How do informational writers teach readers about a topic?
- How do writers find topics and revise those topics to have a bigger focus?
- How do writers gather a variety of information to support nonfiction books?
- How do writers draft pages of their informational books?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- informational writers teach readers about a topic
- writers draft pages of informational books by starting with sections they are most eager to write and organize the information into chapters

- writers find topics that are meaningful and organize them from general to specific with an important focus
- writers gather a variety of information that comes from more than one source
- writers use and understand the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing
- writers use correct grammar and punctuation in their published work

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

- correctly spell and use commonly confused words
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings
- develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic
- form and use prepositional phrases
- introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension
- link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g. another, for example, also, because)
- order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns
- produce complete sentences by eliminating fragments and run-ons
- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing
- use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic
- write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

The following teaching points and activities are adapted from *Units of Study, Informative Writing, Grade 4* (Calkins et al., 2014) and serve as a loose framework for teachers, who will add and or emphasize based on their students' needs.

Teaching Points

- teach students that writers imagine the text they are going to make. They will think about the parts and the whole and then come up with a plan for their writing project.
- teach students that writers of information texts make a plan for the structure of their writing and then use this structure to organize research and note-taking.
- remind students that writers take strategies they've learned in the past and apply them to new situations, working with more independence and skill each time.
- teach students that when writing to teach, it helps writers to do some actual teaching about their topic.
- teach students that writers improve their writing by adding details. History writers often try to include details that help readers picture what happened long ago.
- teach students that writers who are writing a story about a time in history think about the three most

important elements in any story: character, setting, and conflict.
- teach students that when writers are writing essays about historical topics, they think about all they know about essay writing: the structure, the thesis, and the supports. They also need to do research to find facts to develop and support their idea.
- remind students that when tackling a new piece of informational writing, nonfiction writers come up with a research plan.
- teach students that note-taking is not the easy part of research writing. When writers take notes, they need to understand what they are writing well enough that they are able to explain their notes to someone else.
- remind students that when writing an informational text, writers need to organize information. In an introduction, writers let readers in on their organizational plan.
- teach students that writers think about the most important information and ideas that they're trying to convey in a chapter or a section, and they use text features to highlight that information.
- teach students that history writers add quotations to their writing to accentuate a central idea.
- teach students that history writers need to remember and address more than one side of a story.
- teach students that history writers write and develop their own ideas about the information that they find as they research.
- teach students that history writing is not just made from facts but also from ideas. History writers convey larger ideas about a people, a nation, and a time. As they write they ask themselves, "What life lessons might this be teaching?" and write about them.
- teach students that nonfiction writers don't always start out as experts on the topic they're writing about, but instead work to become short-term experts on their topic. They start with their musings, then turn these into research questions, and then see what they can learn.
- teach students that historians don't always find answers to every question they have. But they can use all of their research and knowledge to create possible answers to questions for which people can't find ready-made answers.
- teach students that writers get their essays ready for the world by carefully checking their spelling, punctuation, and other conventions.
- teach students that writers work on their craft and development by incorporating figurative language, dialogue, and other writing risks
- remind students how to write complete sentences without producing fragments and run-ons
- teach students to order adjectives correctly according to patterns (i.e. a *large purple* chair rather than a *purple large* chair)
- teach students that a prepositional phrase consists of a preposition and its object
- remind students of commonly confused words and how to use them correctly (i.e. their, there, they're)

Activities to Support Teaching Points

- create and refer to anchor charts
- study pages from exemplar writer's notebooks
- provide and present mentor texts as models
- teach children to read like writers using mentor texts
- create an on-going class book for modeling and trying out new skills
- use writer's notebook for daily writing
- tap, sketch, or jot across the pages as a way of planning stories
- explore and try a variety of leads and endings
- practice creating mental movies and acting out a story in order to make writing come alive

- use figurative language and sparkle words to improve descriptions of character and setting
- add dialog to writing to bring characters alive
- set mini-writing goals as you move through the writing process
- provide checklists to assess and develop on-going writing goals
- write long and strong to build stamina
- teach that sentences are used to group one idea and paragraphs are used to group similar ideas
- plan to celebrate the conclusion of classroom writing projects
- use technology to research information about a specific topic
- use technology to publish a piece of writing

Assessments

Assessment in this unit takes three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Assessment rubrics are available in Lucy Calkins' Reading and Writing Project resource kits, but teachers may also develop their own rubrics in order to include more specific elements of knowledge and skills listed in this unit summary.

Student self-assessment and peer assessment should take place whenever possible--again, in all three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Removing the traditional emphasis on teacher assessment enables students to take more initiative and become self-directed.

On-going teacher assessment will take place in the context of a conference. Conferences, both small group and one-to-one conferring, are used to reinforce expectations, provide advice and/or assistance, and ultimately, to support growth.

Diagnostic Assessments

On-Demand Performance Assessment Prompt: Informational Writing (E.g. "Think of a topic that you've studied or that you know a lot about. You will have forty-five minutes to write an informational (or all-about) text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. If you want to find and use information from a book or another outside source to help you with this writing, you may bring that with you. You will have only forty-five minutes to plan, draft, revise, and edit in one sitting. Write in a way that shows all that you know about information writing. In your writing, make sure you:

- Write an introduction.
- Elaborate with a variety of information.
- Organize your writing.
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion." - Taken from *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, K-5*)

Formative Assessments (Informal)

Daily observation of students' participation during the active engagement segment of each mini-lesson.

Students' conversation with partners during Turn and Talk segment of mini-lessons.

Comments, corrections, and records from peer conferences between students.

Observation of daily writing progress in writing notebooks and/or folders.

Formative Assessments (Formal)

Teacher-student conferences

Summative Assessment

Summative writing will take the form of both handwritten pieces and pieces generated using appropriate technology.

Published Narratives

Completed unit writing projects

On-Demand Performance Assessment Prompt (Same prompt as the diagnostic on-demand)

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

The design of Writer's Workshop allows for individualized instruction and independent growth for every child. At the heart of differentiation in Writer's Workshop is data and the analysis of data. Through the usage of monitoring student progress during independent writing, analysis of student writing using the learning progressions and writing checklists, teachers should be able to delineate which students are in need of additional supports, in what areas those supports should be targeted at, and which students are ready to be pushed further in their writing work.

Some methods to use to support struggling writers as well as advanced writers:

- Encourage student choice in topics to ensure that they are writing on topics that are meaningful for them
- Provide support as needed through conferencing
- Provide support as needed through strategy groups
- Provide modified and/or alternate grade level checklists and rubrics to scaffold or stretch learning
- Scaffold or stretch learning through the use of various strategies
- Provide appropriate writing partners
- Utilize charts to provide a visual reminder for students throughout the mini-lesson.
    - Add drawings and visuals to charts
    - Provide individualized copies of teaching charts
    - Depending on the concept, the chart may be most effective to visually break the concept into parts and touch each part during a demonstration
- For students needing more support at the end of the mini-lesson, keep them at the rug for an extra minute after dispersing the rest of the class and clarify the main topic of the mini-lesson or work one-on-one with them to start their writing
- Set writing goals for students and follow-up with the writing goals after an appropriate amount of time.
- Create group and one-on-one conferring calendars to ensure that students are being met with on a regular basis and working toward individualized goals
- As the unit progresses, the teacher, in coordination with the students, will develop a word wall that will highlight vocabulary specific to the topic chosen
- Assign roles to partners (Partner 1/Partner 2) to help scaffold which student should speak first and avoid one partner dominating the

conversation and the other partner becoming a passive listener
    - For ELL students, creating a triad instead of partnership may be beneficial
- Demonstrate for students how to use writing checklists to set goals for their writing and also self-assess

Supports for ELL students:

- Provide consistent teaching structures
- Use consistent teaching language
- Offer plentiful opportunities for reading practice
- Provide access to a broad variety of texts
- Use assessment to provide extra support
- Support students in the preproduction and early production stages of learning English
- Use visual examples in your teaching
- Modify our mini-lessons to be as concise as possible
- Provide extra ?active engagement? time in mini-lessons for extra practice
- Provide readers with topic-based text sets
- Provide opportunities for listening and learning the social language of the reading workshop
- Provide opportunities to read in both their home language and in English
- Plan instruction with the ELL teacher
- Extend the language ELLs are producing through questioning
- Provide explicit instruction in tenses, pronoun references, and connectives
- Support students in building vocabulary using their own reading as the context
- As the unit progresses, the teacher, in coordination with the students, will develop a word wall that will highlight vocabulary specific to the topic chosen

In order to support this differentiation work, teachers may want to consult the following materials:

- Units of Study books at lower or higher levels for teaching strategies that are appropriate to the support needed.
- *The Writing Strategies* Book by Jennifer Serravallo
- If. . . Then. .. Curriculum book for alternate units or teaching points to support the individual reading levels.
- *A Guide to the Writing* Workshop (Primary Grades) chapter 14 for more in-depth information on differentiation

Challenge gifted students to incorporate more complex writing techniques in each writing piece based on the 5th grade Writing Learning Progressions:

- writer explains different aspects of a subject. Writer includes a variety of information such as example, details, dates, and quotes.
- writer uses trusted sources and gave credit when appropriate. Writer makes sure to research any details that would add to his/her writing.
- writer works to make his/her information understandable to readers. To do this, he/she may have referred to earlier parts of the his/her text and summarized background information. The writer let readers know when he/she was discussing facts and when he/she was offering his/her own thinking.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Reading Workshop

- apply language and ideas from read alouds and independent reading

- apply spelling strategies
- identify areas of spelling needs
- apply grammar skills
- identify areas in need of addressing (spelling, grammar, mechanics)
- expand written vocabulary from read alouds and independent reading
- model sentence and paragraph structure after mentor texts

Study Skills

- use graphic organizers to plan writing
- 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 during revision and editing process

Social Studies

- choose a person or event from the American Revolution to write an informational essay
- write an informational essay about a state studied during the U.S. Regions Unit
- use technology, books, and other classroom resources to research information about historical topic

Science

- write an informational essay about a chosen science topic (weather, solar system, land and water, electricity)
- use technology, books, and other classroom resources to research information about topic

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

Professional Resources:

Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing:

- *Crafting True Stories* by Lucy Calkins and Marjorie Martinelli
- *Launching the Writing Workshop*, Grades 3-5; Lucy Calkins and Marjorie Martinelli
- *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop*, Intermediate Grades; Lucy Calkins
- *Writing Pathways, Grades K-5, Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions*; Lucy Calkins
- *If...Then... Curriculum*, Grade 4 (Assessment-Based Instruction); Lucy Calkins; Julia Mooney; and Colleagues From the TCRWP
- *Resources for Teaching Writing* (DVD) Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing; Lucy Calkins

The Art of Teaching Writing; Lucy Calkins

The Writing Thief; Ruth Culham

Creating Classrooms for Authors; Jerome C Harste, Kathy G Short with Carolyn Burke

Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6; Irene C Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

Smarter Charts; Marjorie Martinelli

Launching the Writing Workshop; Denise Leograndis

Mentor Texts:

Apples, Gibbons, Gail

Bug-a-licious, Goldish, Meish

Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!, Dussling Jennifer

Buterflies and Moths, Kalman, Bobbie

Emperor Penguin, Goldish, Meish

Every Living Thing, Rylant, Cynthia

Fireflies!, Brinkloe, Julie

Food for Thought, Robbins, Ken

Hockey in Action, Walker, Niki

Ladybugs, Llewellyn, Claire

21st Century Skills

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.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.