

Unit 1: Narrative Writing - Realistic Fiction

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

Unit Overview

The first unit of the year will focus on the narrative style of writing, focusing in fourth grade on Realistic Fiction. The unit begins by asking student to do an on-demand writing piece which will allow teachers to assess what students can do prior to teaching the unit. Using the assessments, the teacher will be able to tailor their plans to the specific needs of their class, thus bringing the whole class on the journey of work that is essential for meeting the goals of the unit. Within the unit, there are both goals related to writing process as well as story development. Students will work toward writing with greater volume throughout the writing process, and using mentor texts to help them meet their writing goals. Students will be taught how to generate ideas, using such methods as thinking about their every day experiences, and then rehearse their stories before they write to develop character and plot. Small group work will be integral to the unit, and center around the teachings of character and story development and conferring strategies. Students will draft both handwritten pieces as well as pieces using appropriate technology.

Standards

LA.4.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.4.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
LA.4.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6	Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.
LA.4.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
LA.4.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10	Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
LA.4.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.a	Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.b	Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.d	Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9.a	Apply grade 4 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “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].”).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2	Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

Essential Questions

- What makes a realistic fiction story?
- Where do writers get their ideas?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- writers explore ideas that will become fiction stories
- writers explore techniques for story telling
- writers have many ways to develop and revise stories they create
- writers have routines and procedures to follow in a workshop setting.
- writers include basic skills such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation apply to all writing.
- writers need to revise and edit their written pieces
- writers plan/rehearse their stories multiple times before putting pen to paper
- writers use and understand the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing
- writers use correct grammar and punctuation in their published work
- writers write a short fiction story with two or three characters and two or three scenes

- writers write entries in Writer's Notebook
- writing partners support each others' efforts during the writing process.

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

- choose realistic fiction topics that are rooted in everyday experiences.
- 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
- orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
- use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
- use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing
- write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- write with volume throughout the writing process.

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

The following teaching points and activities are adapted from *Units of Study, Narrative 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 fiction writers get ideas for stories from small moments in their lives. Teach
- teach students that writers get ideas for stories by imagining the books they wish existed in the world and by thinking about issues in their lives.
- teach students that, like all writers, fiction writers need to choose a seed idea (a story idea) and then begin to develop characters by creating their external and internal traits.
- teach children that writers can develop characters by telling about their characters' motivations and struggles and also by creating scenes that show these things.
- teach children that writers sketch out possible plot lines for stories, often in story arcs, that represent traditional story structure.
- teach children that writing scenes is, in a sense, the same as writing Small Moment stories. Writers often begin by putting the character into action or by laying out the character's exact words and then unfolding the moment step by step.
- teach children that fiction writers create their best drafts when they experience the world through their

character's skin, letting the story unfold as it happens to them.

- remind writers of various strategies for writing effective leads. Also remind children that writers reread literature, letting it teach techniques for writing.
- remind students that writers "stay in scene," making sure the action and dialog are grounded in the setting.
- teach children that writers of fiction do their best to craft the endings that their stories deserve. In particular, they make sure their endings mesh with and serve the purposes of their stories.
- teach children that when revising, writers don't simply reread; they reread with a lens. Writers vary their lenses according to what they value for their work.
- remind students that writers study mentor authors to notice what other writers do that really works. One thing writers do is use actions and revealing details to show rather than tell about or explain the character.
- teach students that just as fiction writers revise with "lenses," they edit with them as well, rereading their writing several times for several reasons, making edits as they go.
- teach students how to use quotations marks correctly when adding dialogue to their stories
- remind students the difference between a simple, compound, and complex sentence
- teach students how to show possession by using apostrophes
- 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

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: Narrative Writing (E.g. "I'm really eager to understand what you can do as writers of narratives, of stories, so today, will you please write the best personal narrative, the best Small Moment story, that you can write? Make this be the story of one time in your life. You might focus on just a scene or two. You'll have only forty-five minutes to write this true story, so you'll need to plan, draft, revise, and edit in one sitting. Write in a way that allows you to show off all you know about narrative writing. In your writing, make sure you:

- Write a beginning for your story.
- Use transition words to tell what happened in order.
- Elaborate to help readers picture your story.
- Show what your story is really about.
- Write an ending for your story." - 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

Note: these strategies can be adapted to scaffold for students needing more support or extending the learning for higher level students.

- provide support as needed during individual teaching sessions
- provide feedback in small group setting
- provide personal copies of teaching charts
- provide modified and/or alternate grade level checklists and rubrics
- provide modified writing paper
- provide appropriate writer partners

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

- writer tells a story of an important moment; it read like a story, even though it might be a true account.
- writers shows why characters did what they did by including their thinking and their responses to what happened.
- writer slows down the heart of the story and made less important parts shorter and less detailed and blended storytelling and summary as needed.
- writer includes precise details and uses figurative language so that readers can picture the setting, characters, and events. Writers use objects or actions as symbols to bring forth his/her meaning.
- writer varies sentences to create the pace and tone of his/her narrative.

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

The Arts

- turn narrative pieces into skits and plays
- add illustrations to further convey meaning
- create narratives from pictures and photographs
- create comic books or graphic novels

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 3 (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:

The Boy Who Loved Words, Schotter, Roni

Come On Rain! Hesse, Karen

Fireflies! Brinckloe, Julie

Hurricane! London, Jonathan

Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale, Willems, Mo

A Letter to Amy, Keats, Ezra Jack

The Listening Walk, Showers, Paul

Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street, Schotter, Roni

Owl Moon, Yolen, Jane

Peter's Chair, Keats, Ezra Jack

Roller Coaster, Frazee, Marla

Shortcut, Crews, Donald

Those Shoes, Boelts, Maribeth

When I was Little, Curtis Jamie Lee