

Unit 2: Information Writing

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Generic Time Period**
Length: **Mid October - December**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

In this unit, writers will examine a topic closely and convey ideas and information clearly. Writers will engage in research, including keeping track of, and citing relevant sources, convey ideas and information clearly, and make effective choices about structure while writing. In the first half, the draft will focus on organizing information in subsections; whereas the second part will have writers turn their attention to writing a more focused research report on one of those subsections. Students will draft both handwritten pieces as well as pieces using appropriate technology.

Standards

LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.5.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.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 tasks, purposes, and audiences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1.b	Form and use the perfect (e.g., I had walked; I have walked; I will have walked) verb tenses.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1.c	Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1.d	Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.2.e	Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.a	Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.b	Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.c	Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.e	Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.6	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 two pages in a single sitting.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8	Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.10	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.SL.5.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Essential Questions

- How does expository and narrative writing differ? What is the same?
- How can I use all that I know about nonfiction reading and research to learn about a topic?
- How do I lead my readers to learn from me about a topic?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- information writing begins with a clear focus or topic and information is grouped logically
- correct verb tense is necessary to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions
- information writing pieces include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aid comprehension
- researchers organize what they are bringing with them to their writing
- writers must assess the credibility of resources, especially websites when researching information
- writers pay attention to not only the qualities of good writing, but the qualities of good history

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

- use technology to publish writing
- analyze published authors and exemplar texts to emulate in their writing
- apply the basic skills of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation properly to their writing
- develop and strengthen writing with support and guidance from teacher and peers
- develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism
- Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations
- link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses
- produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented
- provide a list of sources
- Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources
- reflect upon writing experiences through rubrics
- summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work
- use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic
- Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions
- with guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by

planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach

- write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly
- write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content
- write with independence

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

The following teaching points are adapted from *Units of Study in Information Writing Grade 5* by Lucy Calkins. Teachers will adjust based on students' needs.

- Today I want to teach you that researchers organize what they are bringing with them to their writing. When things are organized, it is easier to carry and use those things- that is true for information too.
- Today I want to remind you that before a writer writes, the writer often gets full of the kind of writing he or she aims to make. Poets warm themselves up by reading poetry. Speech writers listen to the Gettysburg Address or other great speeches, and information writers, too, profit from filling themselves up with all that they know about how their kind of writing tends to go.
- Today I want to teach you that researchers shift between reading to collect and record information and writing to grow ideas. As note-takers, then, researchers record and also reflect. When reflecting, researchers think, and talk and jot about patterns, surprises, points of comparison or contrast, and they entertain questions.
- Today I want to teach you that when you write and revise as a historian, it is important to keep in mind not only qualities of good writing but also qualities of good history. For example, historians think it is important to include details about the places where things occurred- about the geography of that place- because geography will always have an impact on what occurs. And there's the cool thing: a history writer can think about the places in which a bit of history occurred simply by keeping a map close by as he or she reads, takes notes, and writes.
- Today I want to teach you that when you are researching something, you need to not just move facts from someone else's book to your page. You also need to think, to come up with your own ideas. One of the best ways to do this is to ask questions and then find your own answers to those questions, even if your answers are tentative: 'Maybe it's because...' 'I think it is because...' 'I wonder if perhaps...'
- Today I want to remind you that when you write and revise as a historian, it is important to keep in mind not only qualities of good writing but also qualities of good history. For example, historians write about relationships between events because the past will always have an impact on what unfolds in the future. This is called a cause-effect relationship, and here's another cool thing: a history writer can highlight relationships simply by having a time line close by as he or she writes.
- Today I want to teach you that informational writers take a moment to look back over their research and conjure an image of what they hope to create, sometimes by quickly sketching a new outline, and then writing fast and furious to draft fresh versions of their report.
- Today I want to teach you that to write research that is compelling to readers, your study of your topic needs to be driven not just by a desire to collect facts but also by an urgent need to find the raw

material that you can fashion into something that makes reader say, 'Whoa!'

- Today I want to teach you that the chance to read - to study - primary sources is precious, so take every opportunity. When a source survives across the ages, allowing you to go back to hear the original message, you're being given valuable information, but it takes a special kind of close reading for you to make sense out of a primary source document.
- Today I want to teach you that although there are lots of ways writers organize their thinking or their information before they write, one thing all writers have in common is that they do organize it before they draft!
- Today I want to teach you that writers need to check to see if they have the structures and formats that will let their information and ideas grow. As always, to see possibilities for ways you can structure your writing, you can turn to published authors.
- Today I want to teach you that writers set up their writing almost the way we would set a table- matching up certain elements, patterning everything, and making the whole affair look welcoming and thoughtful. Writers do that by making matches and patterns in words, in structures and meanings.
- Today I want to teach you that writers can turn to published authors to see how they use text features. We are going to investigate mentor texts to search for text features, and as we notice them, we will ask ourselves, 'How do these text features teach the reader? Then we'll figure out how text features might help our own information writing.
- Today I want to teach you that research writers introduce their writing by explaining its structure. Researchers also try to lure readers to read their writing.
- Today I want to teach you that writers have several ways of using punctuation to help load more information into the sentences they have already written.
- Today I want to teach you that correct verb tense is necessary to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions

Suggested Activities

- create and reference anchor charts
- share pages from students' writing journal as a model
- present and study mentor texts
- list events across fingers
- use technology to publish writing
- plan a celebration of student writing
- paraphrasing versus quoting
- shifts in verb tense
- use post-its to take down notes and then organize into categories
- draw on awareness of time lines
- analyze maps of the time period of their topic
- analyze nonfiction mentor texts
- use more primary sources for accurate information
- map out design of their nonfiction piece using text features

- caption text feature

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

Review of student's portfolio from the previous school year, particularly informational projects

On-demand piece:

"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 into class. Please keep in mind that you'll have only forty-five minutes to complete this. You will have only this period, so you'll need 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 and products during the active participation segment of each mini-lesson.

Students' questions, comments, suggestions to teacher

Journaling assignments which are intended to practice teacher-selected skills

Comments, corrections, and records from peer conferences between students

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 informational writing

On-demand information writing (Same prompt as the diagnostic on-demand)

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

- This unit includes presentation of material through multiple modalities such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic to address the unique learning styles of all students.
- Interactive mini-lessons provide instruction to the whole-class
- Small group work will provide small group instruction around specific skills.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer. *The Informational Writing If...Then... charts in the *If...Then...Curriculum* by Lucy Calkins are a helpful resource on conferencing with individual students and providing exactly the guidance that child needs.
- Students have the ability to write using different modes: drawing, listing, creating time lines, drafting pen/paper, typing stories
- Watch various videos to address lower level readers - <http://video.pbs.org>
- Teachers will follow any 504 plans and IEP's accordingly
- Provide modified and/or alternate grade level checklists and rubrics
- See the "Learning Progression for Information Writing" in *Writing Pathways* by Lucy Calkins for ideas on ways to differentiate for advanced learners. For example:
 - incorporating essays, explanations, stories, or procedural passages
 - writing an introduction which interests the reader with a quote or significant fact
 - using subheadings and/or clear introductory transitions to separate sections
 - using text features to help emphasize key points
 - writing multiple sections in some sections
 - giving credit for important excerpts in the text and in a bibliography

- using domain specific vocabulary and explaining these terms to readers

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

- Students can explore topics to write about related to any subject
- Make reference book

Social Studies:

- The students will be learning the history behind what they are writing about in their Our Nation social studies textbook along with Interactive notebook activities

Reading:

- The students will be reading nonfiction books in Reader's worksop

Technology:

- Use Chromebooks to write final copy
- Post writings in a blog, forum, or create a class book on topic for future use.

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

- *The Many Rides of Paul Revere* by James Gross Giblin
- *We the People: THE Great Depression* by Michael Burgan
- *If You Lived at the Time of the Civil War* by Kay Moore

(Websites)

www.timeforkids.com

www.history.com

www.smithsonianmag.com

www.nationalgeographic.com

www.cricnetmag.com/MUS-MUSE-Magazine-for-Kids-ages-9-14

Units of Study in Informational Writing:

- *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop*, Intermediate Grades; Lucy Calkins
- *Writing Pathways, Grades K-8, Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions*; Lucy Calkins
- *If...Then... Curriculum*, Grade 5 (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