Unit 2 Reading: Reading Nonfiction Text Sets: Plants and Their Adaptations

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 1**
Length: **8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

In this unit, students strengthen their nonfiction reading and research skills by studying plants and their adaptations before applying those skills to other science topics of interest. They read across multimodal text sets to identify main ideas and supporting details, analyze text structures and features, and synthesize information from multiple sources. Students also develop academic vocabulary, use context clues and morphology to determine word meanings, take organized notes, and improve their reading fluency. The unit culminates with students sharing their expertise through evidence-based writing, presentations, and fluent reading.

This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. During this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers.

Revision Date: June 2026

Pacing Guide

Please refer to the Language Arts Reading Workshop pacing guide for grade 3 in the curriculum folder.

Please refer to this scope and sequence for Word Study.

A sample K-5 Literacy Schedule Across a Week is accessible in instructional materials section of the Grades K-5 folder.

Instructional Reading Level Benchmark: N

Trimester	1	2	3	4

1st	• Student is reading at an instructional level K or below.	• Student is reading at an instructional level L/M.	• Student is reading at an instructional level N.	• Student is reading at an instructional level O or above.

Key Features Found within Level N

- Begin to notice new and interesting words, record them, and actively add them to speaking or writing vocabulary
- Self-correct when errors detract from the meaning of the text
- Connect words that mean the same or almost the same to help understand the text and acquire new vocabulary
- When reading aloud, self-correct intonation when it does not reflect the meaning
- Demonstrate flexible ways to solve words – word parts, endings, prefixes
- Consistently check on understanding and search for information when meaning breaks down
- Solve content-specific words, using graphics and definitions embedded in the text
- Summarizing- Follow and remember a series of events over a longer text in order to understand the ending
- Use the context of a sentence, paragraph, or whole text to determine the meaning of a word
- Summarize a longer narrative text with multiple episodes, reporting events in the order they happened
- Understand longer descriptive words Identify important ideas in a text and report them in an organized way,
  either orally or in writing
- Demonstrate competent, active word solving while reading at a good pace
- Understand the problem and solution of a story
- Read dialogue with phrasing and expression that reflects an understanding of characters and events
- Search for information in illustrations to support text interpretation
- Use chapter titles and section headings to foreshadow the context
- Read silently and orally at an appropriate rate
- Justify predictions using evidence
- Predict what characters will do based on the traits revealed by the writer
- Describe the problem of a story
- Notice the way a writer assigns dialogue
- Bring background content knowledge to the understanding of a text before, during, and after reading
- Notice aspects of a writer's style after reading several texts by the same author
- Make connections between the text and other texts that have been read or heard
- Notice specific writing techniques
- Understand the relationship between the setting and the plot of a story
- Expresses changes in ideas after reading a text
- Identify a point in the story when the problem is resolved state opinions about a text and provide evidence to support
- Infer cause and effect in influencing characters' feelings or underlying motives
- Discuss the quality of illustrations or graphics
- Infer the big ideas or message (theme) of a text
- Infer causes of problems or of outcomes in fiction and nonfiction texts
- Judge the text as to whether it is interesting, humorous, or exciting, and specify why
- Infer setting, character's traits and feelings, and plot from illustrations in graphic texts
- Identify significant events and tell how they are related to the problem of the story or the solution

- Support all thinking with evidence from the text
- Demonstrate different ways of reading fiction

Standards

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/ levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship.

These mandates may be hit through the selection of choice literature:

Information Literacy:

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

The technology and career readiness standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below:

Grade 3 Content Area Standards:

	Collaboration with individuals with diverse perspectives can result in new ways of thinking and/or innovative solutions.
9.2.5.CAP.1	Evaluate personal likes and dislikes and identify careers that might be suited to personal likes.
9.4.5.CI.3	Participate in a brainstorming session with individuals with diverse perspectives to expand one's thinking about a topic of curiosity (e.g., 8.2.5.ED.2, 1.5.5.CR1a).
9.2.5.CAP.6	Compare the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur with the traits of successful employees.
9.4.5.CT.2	Identify a problem and list the types of individuals and resources (e.g., school, community agencies, governmental, online) that can aid in solving the problem (e.g., 2.1.5.CHSS.1, 4-ESS3-1).
9.2.5.CAP.8	Identify risks that individuals and households face.

9.4.5.TL.3	Format a document using a word processing application to enhance text, change page formatting, and include appropriate images graphics, or symbols.

Performing Arts

1.4.5.Cn11: (a). Identify, respond to, and investigate connections to global issues including climate change, and other content areas in a dramatic/theatrical work. (b). Compare the drama/theatre conventions of a given time period with those of the present.

Essential Questions

1. How do plants' adaptations help them survive and thrive in their habitats?
2. How can we build knowledge by reading across nonfiction texts in a text set?

Students Will Know/ Will Be Skilled At

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- deepen their nonfiction research skills.
- expand their content knowledge of plants and their adaptations.
- Improve their ability to read with fluency.
- orient to a text-set about a particular non-fiction topic.
- anticipate both the content and structure of a text.
- determine main ideas and key details the author teaches.
- activate prior knowledge before reading.
- monitor for comprehension.
- ask and answer questions.
- use textual clues to read with expression and fluency.
- summarize sections of a text.
- synthesize, compare, and contrast information from across several texts on a topic.
- increase their word consciousness as they collect topic words.
- use a variety of strategies, including context clues and morphology to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- gather information about a topic from multimodal texts.
- take notes through sketches, boxes and bullets, and one-sentence summaries.
- use text features to deepen comprehension of a text.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Students demonstrate differentiated proficiency through both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Based on individual student readiness and performance, assessments can be implemented as

formative and/or summative.

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

Formative Assessments

- Unit Formative Assessments for this specific unit are linked on the detailed curriculum map in the learning plan.
- Concept Map Revisions: These are used throughout the unit for students to record prior knowledge and then regularly update or revise those thoughts as they learn new information and address misconceptions.
- Content Word Collections: Students collect "special words" or bolded keywords from their text sets to build topic expertise and word consciousness.
- Written Summaries: This includes writing one-sentence summaries for specific chapters or summarized responses for complex text sections to track ongoing comprehension.
- Written Responses to Focus Questions: Teachers may collect written responses to "big questions" or focus prompts, such as those comparing a poem and an article, to gauge student understanding.
- "How Does My Reading Sound?" Rubric: This specific tool is used for peer-to-peer feedback during fluency celebrations to help students monitor their own phrasing and expression.
- Responses to Essential Questions
- One-to-one reading conferences and accompanying conferring notes
- Peer conferences
- Turn and talks
- Read Aloud Reading responses, written and oral
- Exit tickets or do nows
- Engagement Observations
- Accountable Talk
- Post-it Board
- Monitor Stamina, Volume, and Fluency through rubrics
- Read increasingly complex text by monitoring student self-selection of leveled text
- Guiding Reading Group work
- Stop and Jot
- Stop and Sketch of thinking throughout unit
- Small Group Strategy Reading group work
- Reading Responses on Post-its and in Notebooks
- Answer assigned journal questions

Summative, including Alternative Assessments:

- Rubric for Plant Adaptation Culminating Task: This is the primary evaluative tool for the final project where students invent a new plant species, create a visual, and deliver a speech about its adaptations.
- Reading Conferences
- Running Records
- Reading Logs
- Reading Responses
- "Stop and Jot" Reading Assessments
- Reading Comprehension Assessments
- Word Study Assessments
- Performance- and project-based learning
- Personalized, student-designed assessments
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project: Reading learning progressions
- Use teacher/student-created rubrics
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project: rubrics with student samples
- Standards-based reporting system and report card

Benchmark Asessments

- Complete pre- and post-assessments for this specific unit linked on the detailed curriculum map in the learning plan.
- Complete Comprehension, Independent Reading Assessment, nonfiction, Jennifer Serravallo, Heinemann
- Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment, recorded three times per year
- Screener: Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
- Diagnostic: Phonological Assessment Profile by Linguisystems (PAPL) Diagnostic Assessment, as needed
- iReady Screener and Diagnostic Assessment

Learning Plan

Upper elementary reading instruction for the Cranford Public Schools embraces a centrist approach, employing both balanced and structured literacy practices to both comprehend, analyze, and decode texts.

Balanced Literacy

To teach comprehension and analysis, reading instruction is literature and informational text-based and follows a balanced literacy approach through a number of strategies and techniques in Reading Workshop These include interactive read-alouds/alongs, mini lessons, independent reading, small group strategy instruction or guided reading, one-to-one conferencing, and book club discussions. Students will select from authentic literature at their independent reading levels from a rich classroom library. Teachers will focus on the needed skills and behaviors identified on the F&P Continuum at each student's instructional reading level. Grade level indicators are outlined above. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the reader.

Teachers should follow the mini-lesson format:

- Teaching point(s) for each lesson
- Connection: Connects new learning to previous learning/lessons
- Teach/Modeling: Uses 'think alouds' when modeling what you expect students to do
- Guided Practice/Active Engagement: Guides students through practice of the teaching point
- Link to Independent Practice: Helps writers understand the purpose for the writing they are about to do and the skills/craft they will be practicing/applying independently as good writers
- Independent Reading/Student Conferences: Provides time for students to do independent reading while teacher confers with individual students, works with small groups, or reading clubs*.
- Closure/Sharing: Pull students back together and recognize the work they have done relating to the teaching point. (See end of section for closure ideas.)

For teaching purposes, see attached template for structure of a Reading Workshop lesson. (Change the red font to match your teaching point). Click here.)

Guided Reading can provide small group instruction for **Level N language and literary features**:

- Memorable characters who change and develop over time
- Factors related to character change explicit and obvious
- Figurative Language important to understanding plot
- Setting important to understanding plot
- Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing
- Building suspense through events of the plot
- Multiple points of view revealed through characters' behaviors
- Multi-syllable words with more than three syllables that are challenging to decode
- Hyphenated words across lines

For students reading below or above grade level expectations, please reference The Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Continuum: A Tool for Assessment, Planning and Teaching to target skills for additional reading levels.

Structured Literacy

To teach decoding, reading instruction follows a structured literacy approach through an number of multi sensory strategies and research-based techniques. Daily word work emphasizing prefixes, suffixes, and root words enhancing vocabulary word power is embedded within the reading block. Third grade focuses on the study of phonics and morphology, and teachers use a multisensory approach to instruction. For Word Study, please refer to the Cranford Scope and Sequence.

Decodable and controlled texts are used as needed and primary work study lessons may be referenced. Additionally, see the Cranford Public School Grades K-5 Google Folder for instructional materials to identify teaching points and design strategy lessons for those above or below grade level

reading. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the reader.

Please see the Cranford Public School Grades K-5 Google Folder for instructional materials to identify teaching points and design strategy lessons for those above or below grade level reading. The sections/bends below provide detailed teaching points and lesson ideas for on-level reading.

Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

Detailed Curriculum Map

Teaching Points and lessons are located in the K-5 folder under Grade 3 Curriculum for Language Arts. These curriculum unit guides include not only aligned teaching points to standards, but also specific lessons and appropriate resources. Guidelines for preparing to teach the unit as well as goals for the end of the unit are outlined. Academic vocabulary and prerequisite skills are identified. Essential questions and possible assessments are detailed as well.

Materials

The materials used in this course integrate varied, leveled instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

The core materials for this unit include the Units of Study in Reading for grade 3, The Reading and Writing Project at Mossflower, 2025-2026.

Materials used in all classrooms include the following: Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment System, 2nd Edition, System 2; Fountas and Pinnell Classroom System, Guided Reading; Fountas and Pinnell Classroom System, Mini Lessons; Fountas and Pinnell Classroom System, Readaloud; Jennifer Serravallo Complete Comprehension; Intervention materials include, but are not limited to, Leveled Literacy Intervention kits.

Teachers must refer to the district-approved Core Book List while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources.

Instructional Materials

The instructional materials which correspond with this unit are linked in the detailed curriculum map under resources and housed in the Grades K-5 folder under grade 3.

Fountas and Pinnell Classroom Interactive Read Aloud

Word Study Scope and Sequence using multisensory approach to word work Third Grade Word Work. This approach was recognized and audited by NJDOE and Rutgers University through New Jersey Tiered System of Supports-Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) and Data-Driven Instructional Coaching Model (DDICM) grants

Teacher Resources

- Units of Study for Reading, Mossflower, Grade 3 Heinemann, 2026.
- Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Kit
- The Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Continuum: A Tool for Assessment, Planning and Teaching
- The Reading Strategies Book, Jennifer Serravallo
- The Literacy Teacher's Playbook, 3-5, Jennifer Serravallo
- Reading Projects Reimagined: Student Driven Conferences to Deepen Critical Thinking, Dan Feigelson
- Conferring wth Readers, Jennifer Serravallo and Gravity Goldberg
- Teaching Reading in Small Groups, Jennifer Serravallo
- Independent Reading Assessment, Jennifer Serravallo, Fiction and Non Fiction, Scholastic.

Suggested Strategies for Modifications and Accommodations

Content specific accommodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

The structure of reading workshop is designed to differentiate and address specific goals and learning for each reader:

- The unit includes presentation of material through multiple modalities such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic to address the unique learning styles of all students.

- The teacher will assign, assess and modify if necessary to address the specific needs of the learner.
- Students will select from authentic literature at their independent and instructional reading levels.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the reader.

Possible accommodations during reading workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts, word walls.
- Have a designated reader for difficult content
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Mark text with a highlighter
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide a distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Provide a to-do list
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines
- Use digital ebooks, technology, audio and video version of printed text
- Differentiate roles in discussion groups
- Access speech to text function on computer
- Offer oral assessments

Possible modifications to content during reading workshop include, but are not limited to:

- The teacher will refer to the Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Continuum: A Tool for Assessment, Planning and Teaching to target speciifc strategies to teach students below benchmark levels.
- Refer to the Strategies for Striving Students in the K-8 folder for specific appropriate interventions.
- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plans.

Framework for Alternative Setting (LEAP Program at Lincoln School)

In our K–5 alternative school setting, each class consists of students who require a highly personalized approach to reading instruction. The district's core Reading Units of Study will continue to serve as the primary reading curriculum framework; however, lessons will be further adapted to ensure accessibility and engagement for all learners. Teachers will use a combination of pacing adjustments, flexible timing, and individualized goal setting to meet students at their current skill levels. Instruction will be delivered through a blend of whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one settings, with intentional scaffolds in place to build confidence and reduce frustration.

To support targeted skill development, teachers will integrate intervention programs such as Visualizing and Verbalizing and Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) for comprehension, and UFLI and the Sonday System for phonics and morphology. The New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) will be used to guide data-

driven decision-making, ensuring that students receive tiered interventions based on ongoing progress monitoring. Modifications may include breaking lessons into smaller, manageable segments; providing alternative activities that align with learning objectives but reflect student interests; using multi-sensory strategies; and allowing for extended time and flexible scheduling. In addition, teachers will incorporate regular movement breaks, personalized reading materials, and opportunities for student choice to maintain engagement and support emotional regulation. This approach ensures that each student receives a structured yet responsive reading experience that addresses both academic and social-emotional needs.