Unit 3 Reading: The Elements of Story

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 2**
Length: **8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

This Grade 3 reading unit helps students understand story elements like characters, settings, and central problems using a Story Road Map. Students start by analyzing short stories in pairs and move on to reading longer chapter books. In the final phase, students join book clubs to have deep conversations and share theories about their reading. Throughout the unit, readers learn to identify character traits, observe significant changes, and recognize recurring threads within a text. The ultimate goal is for students to use evidence to infer meanings and discover life lessons that they can apply to their own lives.

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: O

Trimester	1-needs support	2-approaching standard	3-meets standard	4-exceeds standard
2nd	• Student is reading at an instructional	• Student is reading at an instructional	• Student is reading at an instructional	• Student is reading at an instructional

level L or below.	level M/N.	level O.	level P or above.

Key Features Found within Level O

- Make predictions based on illustrations in graphic texts
- Understand when a writer has used underlying organizational structures
- Draw conclusions from information Demonstrate the ability to identify how a text is organized (diagram or talk)
- Notice how the author or illustrator has used illustrations and other graphics to convey meaning
- Bring background knowledge to the understanding of a text before, during, and after reading
- Differentiate between what is known and new information
- Mentally form categories of related information and revise them as new information is acquired across the text
- Identify the author's explicitly stated purpose
- Synthesize information across a longer text
- Identify main ideas and supporting details
- Notice how illustrations and text work together in graphic texts
- State opinions about a text and provide evidence to support them
- Infer causes of problems or of outcomes in nonfiction texts
- Make a wide range of predictions based on personal experiences, content knowledge, and knowledge of similar texts
- Search for and use the information to confirm or disconfirm predictions
- Distinguish between fact and opinion

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:

Amistad Commission

This unit also reflects the goals of the Department of Education and the Amistad Commission including the infusion of the history of Africans and African-Americans into the curriculum in order to provide an accurate, complete, and inclusive history regarding the importance of African-Americans to the growth and development of American society in a global context.

Asian American and Pacific Islander History Law

This unit includes instructional materials that highlight the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in accordance with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.

New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law

In accordance with New Jersey's Chapter 32 Diversity and Inclusion Law, this unit includes instructional materials that highlight and promote diversity, including:

economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religious tolerance.

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:

Reading Literature (RL)

- RL.CR.3.1: Ask and answer questions and make relevant connections to demonstrate understanding of a literary text, referring explicitly to textual evidence as the basis for the answers.
- RL.CI.3.2: Recount in oral and written form key details from a text and explain how they support the theme (in literary texts, e.g., fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures).
- RL.IT.3.3: Describe the development of individual character's traits, motivations, or feelings and explain how their actions contribute to the plot within a text.
- RL.TS.3.4: Utilize and reference features of a text when writing or speaking about a text, referring to parts of stories, dramas, and poems, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.
- RL.PP.3.5: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.
- RL.MF.3.6: Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).
- RL.CT.3.8: Compare and contrast the elements (theme, settings, and plots) of literary texts written by the same author about similar characters (e.g., in books from a series).

Reading Informational (RI)

- RI.CR.3.1: Ask and answer questions and make relevant connections to demonstrate understanding of an informational text, referring explicitly to textual evidence as the basis for the answers.
- RI.CI.3.2: Recount in oral and written form the key details from a multi-paragraph informational text and explain how they support the main idea.
- RI.IT.3.3: Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.
- RI.TS.3.4: Utilize and reference features of a text when writing or speaking about a text, using text

features (e.g., graphics, images, captions, headings) and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate and integrate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.
- RI.PP.3.5: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.
- RI.MF.3.6: Use information gained from text features (e.g., illustrations, maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
- RI.AA.3.7: Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence) to support specific points the author makes in a text.
- RI.CT.3.8: Compare and contrast the elements of informational texts regarding the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

Writing (W)

- W.AW.3.1: Write opinion texts to present an idea with reasons and information.
- W.IW.3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- W.NW.3.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events with basic story elements.
- W.WP.3.4: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- W.WR.3.5: Generate questions about a topic and independently locate related information from at least two reference sources (print and non-print) to obtain information on that topic.
- W.SE.3.6: Use discussion, books, or media resources to gather ideas, outline them, and prioritize the information to include while planning to write about a topic.
- W.RW.3.7: Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.

Speaking and Listening (SL)

- SL.PE.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.II.3.2: Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- SL.ES.3.3: Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- SL.PI.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- SL.UM.3.5: Use multimedia to demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.
- SL.AS.3.6: Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

Language Domain (L)

- L.RF.3.3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding and encoding words.
- L.RF.3.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- L.WF.3.2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling.
- L.WF.3.3: Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two

foundational skills.

- L.KL.3.1: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- L.VL.3.2: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning academic and domain-specific words and phrases based on grade 3 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- L.VI.3.3: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

	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 Standards

1.4.5.Cr1: (a). Create roles, imagined worlds, and improvised stories in a drama/theatre work articulating the physical qualities of characters, visual details of imagined worlds, and given circumstances of improvised stories in a drama/theatre work. (b). Imagine, articulate, and design ideas for costumes, props, and sets that support the story, given circumstances, and characters in a drama/theatre work. (c). Imagine how a character's inner thoughts impact their actions and collaborate to determine how characters might move and speak to support the story and given circumstances in drama/theatre work.

1.4.5.Cr2: (a). Devise original ideas for a drama/theatre work that reflect collective inquiry about characters, plots, and their given circumstances. (b). Participate and identify defined responsibilities required to present a drama/theatre work informally to peers/audience and participate in the process.

1.4.5.Pr4: (a). Participate in, propose, and practice a variety of physical, vocal, and cognitive exercises that can be used in a group setting for drama/theatre work. (b). Identify and utilize basic technical/design elements that can be

used in drama/theatre work to demonstrate an understanding of the elements.

1.4.5.Pr5: (a). Describe and apply dramatic elements of dialogue, action, character emotion, and theme in the

performance and/or creation of a drama/theatre work. (b). Physically and intellectually investigate how movement and vocal choices are incorporated and make meaning in drama/theatre work.

1.4.5.Re7: (a). Identify, explain, and demonstrate an understanding of both artistic choices and personal reactions made in a drama/theatre work through participation and observation.

1.4.5.Re8: (a). Develop and implement a plan to evaluate drama/theatre work. (b). Analyze technical elements from

multiple drama/theatre works and assess how the technical elements may support or represent the themes or central ideas of drama/theatre works. (c). Evaluate and analyze how a character's choices and character's circumstances impact an audience's perspective in a drama/theatre work.

1.4.5.Re9: (a). Compare and contrast multiple personal experiences when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work. and justify responses to drama/theatre work based on personal experience. (b). Explain responses to characters based on cultural perspectives when participating in or observing drama/theatre work. (c). Identify and discuss physiological changes connected to emotions on posture, gesture, breathing, and vocal intonation in drama/theatre work.

1.4.5.Cn10: (a). Explain how drama/theatre connects oneself to a community or culture and identify the ways drama/theatre work reflects the perspectives of a community or culture.

Essential Questions

- How can knowledge of how stories tend to be structured help us, as readers, to anticipate the thinking work that will pay off as we read the beginnings of stories, middles, the endings?
- How can books teach us life lessons, such as ways to be less alone?
- How can we read in a community of others, reading so actively, so thoughtfully, that the book ends up being one we remember for life?

Students Will Know/ Will Be Skilled At

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

- Read longer chapter books and understand the overall story, including characters, setting, and main events.
- Identify character traits, notice how characters change, and recognize life lessons or themes.
- Use inferential thinking to understand meanings and connections that aren't directly stated.
- Discuss and write about books clearly, using evidence to support ideas.
- Collaborate in book clubs and participate in meaningful conversations about reading.

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.
- "Perfect Day at a Glance"
- Reading Genre Quiz
- Comprehension Check-ups using a specific sticky note strategy
- Writing About Reading Packets and Booklets
- Responses to Essential Questions
- Post-It notes telling each time the text gives them new information about the character
- 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:

- Character Card Culminating Project: As a final performance task, students create a "character card" that identifies traits and life lessons for a character that stuck with them.
- Gallery Walk: a concluding activity where they evaluate students' character cards and their ability to learn from peer sketches.
- Book review
- "Write Longs" about theme and character traits in *Because of Winn Dixie*
- 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, fiction, 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 O language and literary features. 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-8 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.