Unit 4 Reading: Animal Research Groups

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 3**
Length: **8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

In this unit, students work in research groups to develop expertise about animals by reading and analyzing multiple nonfiction texts. They organize notes by subtopic, determine main ideas and key details, compare information across sources, and use text structures to deepen comprehension and summarize their learning. Students examine how animals' physical traits and behaviors help them survive in different environments while using evidence and domain-specific vocabulary to develop questions and big ideas. The unit culminates in a collaboratively written informational book and an Animal Book Festival where students share their research with others.

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: P

Trimester	1- needs support	2- approaching standard	3-meeting standard	4- exceeding standard
3rd	• Student is reading at an	• Student is reading at an	• Student is reading at an	• Student is reading at an

instructional level M or below.	instructional level N/O.	instructional level P.	instructional level Q or above.

Reading Behaviors within level P

- Understand words when used figuratively
- Process texts that have many lines of print on a page
- Notice new and interesting words, and add them to speaking and writing vocabulary
- Form implicit questions and search for answers while reading
- Solve content-specific words, using graphics and definitions embedded in the text
- Respond to plot tension or suspense by reading on to seek resolutions to problems
- Solve words with 2 or 3 syllables, many words with inflectional endings and complex letter-sound relationships
- Sustain attention to a text read over several days, remembering details and revising interpretations as new events are encountered
- Use the context of a sentence, paragraph, or whole text to determine the meaning of a word
- Follow and remember a series of events and the story problem and solution over a longer text in order to understand the ending
- Identify words with multiple meanings, discuss alternative meanings, and select the precise meaning within a text
- Read dialogue with phrasing and expression that reflects understanding of characters and events
- Notice unusual use of words in the graphic text (onomatopoetic words)
- Demonstrate different ways of reading related to genre
- Understand words that stand for abstract ideas
- Continue to monitor accuracy and understanding
- Slow down or reread to solve words or think about ideas
- Follow multiple characters in different episodes, inferring their feelings about each other
- Predicting Make a wide range of predictions based on personal experiences, content knowledge, and knowledge of similar texts
- Demonstrate understanding of characters (their traits, how and why they change) using evidence to support statements
- Predict what characters will do based on the traits revealed by the writer as well as inferred characteristics
- Infer characters' feelings and motivations through reading their dialogue and what other characters say
- Identify significant events and tell how they are related to the problem of the story or the solution
- Relate background knowledge to the understanding of a text before, during, and after reading
  Notice combined genres in hybrid texts
- Identify elements such as setting, problem, resolution, and conflict
- Mentally form categories of related information and revise them as new information is acquired across the text
  Express changes in ideas or knowledge after reading a text and saying why
- Demonstrate changing perspective as events in a story unfold particularly applied to people and cultures' difference from the reader's own notice how the setting is important in the story
- Understand how the writer built interest and suspense across a story

- Notice elements of fantasy (motifs, symbolism, magic
- Compare and contrast the points of view from which different stories are narrated including the difference between first and third-person narration
- Hypothesize how characters could have behaved differently
- Evaluate aspects of a text that add enjoyment (for example, a humorous character) or interest (plot or information)
- Assess whether a text is authentic and consistent with life

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:

Reading Informational Text (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.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.

Writing (W)

- 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.

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.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.

	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.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.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 animals' traits and behaviors help them survive in different environments?
2. How can we develop expertise about animals by reading across nonfiction texts and comparing and contrasting?

Students Will Know/ Will Be Skilled At

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

- Launch and conduct focused research by activating prior knowledge, generating questions, and using text features and search tools to locate relevant information.
- Take organized notes by subtopic and synthesize information across multiple texts.
- Determine main ideas and key details and write concise summaries.
- Identify and apply common nonfiction text structures (description, sequence, cause and effect, problem/solution, compare and contrast) to strengthen comprehension and note-taking.
- Analyze similarities and differences across texts and across animals, explaining why sources may present information differently.
- Explain how physical and behavioral adaptations support survival in specific habitats, using accurate domain-specific vocabulary.
- Collaboratively plan, draft, revise, and publish an organized informational chapter that synthesizes research and teaches others clearly.

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.
- Informational Summaries: During Bend 2, teachers are directed to collect student-written summaries that specifically match the text structure being studied (e.g., cause/effect or problem/solution) as a formative check.
- Responses to Author's Claims: In Bend 2, students provide written or oral responses regarding whether they agree with an author's claim, such as whether a sea turtle deserves to be called a "genius." These responses are collected as formative data.
- Note-taking Booklets/Reader's Notebooks: The map emphasizes using these to monitor how students organize information by subtopic and synthesize across texts
- Information Writing Checklist: In Bend 3, students use a specific checklist to self-evaluate their drafts and "lift the level" of their writing before publishing.
- 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:

- Zoology Symposium: This is a performance task at the end of Bend 1 where research groups present

their initial findings to their peers.
- Adaptations Poster: This is a culminating activity in Bend 3 where students identify an animal's most important adaptation, illustrate it, and write a persuasive argument explaining why it is vital for survival.
- Collaborative Informational Chapter: The primary summative product of this unit is a published chapter within a group book that synthesizes research to teach others about a specific animal.
- Animal Book Festival: The final celebration and publishing task where students present their completed research books to an audience, serving as the unit's summative conclusion.
- Unit Post-assessment: A required final assessment to track overall student growth and progress by the end of the unit
- 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
- Use teacher/student-created rubrics
- 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 P 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-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.