Unit 5 Reading: Mystery Reading

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

Brief Summary of Unit

This Mystery Reading unit, occurring over approximately seven weeks, guides students through three distinct bends to develop critical reading and analytical skills. During the first bend, students act as detectives by identifying mysteries, collecting clues, and tracking suspects to make evidence-based predictions. The second bend challenges students to read across mystery series, where they learn to spot red herrings, analyze character patterns, and uncover hidden life lessons. In the final bend, the focus shifts to fluency and performance, as students use voice acting techniques to record their own mystery podcast episodes. Collectively, these activities help students master summarization, figurative language interpretation, and collaborative discussion while engaging with complex literary texts.

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	• Student is	• Student is	• Student is

reading at an instructional level M or below.	reading at an instructional level N/O.	reading at an instructional level P.	reading at an 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:

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 Domain (R)

- 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).

Writing Domain (W)

- W.IW.3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- W.WP.3.4: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- 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 Domain (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.3.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
    - Sub-standard 1 (A): Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

- Sub-standard 2 (B): Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.
- Sub-standard 3 (C): Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

- 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.Cr3: (a). Collaborate with peers to revise, refine, adapt, and improve ideas to fit the given parameters of an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work through self and collaborative review. (b). Use and adapt sounds and

movements in a guided drama experience. (c). Refine technical choices by creating innovative solutions to design and technical problems that arise in rehearsal for a 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.

Essential Questions

Bend 1: How do readers use clues, questions, and evidence to solve mysteries?

Bend 2: How do readers grow deeper ideas about characters, clues, and life lessons across a mystery series?

Bend 3: How does reading with fluency, expression, and performance help readers bring mysteries to life for an audience?

Students Will Know/ Will Be Skilled At

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

- identify the mystery, clues, suspects, and culprit.
- use evidence from the text o make predictions and solve mysteries.
- track clues, suspects, and theories across mystery texts.
- visualize characters, setting, and events to strengthen comprehension.
- determine the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary and figurative language.
- analyze character traits, motives, and patterns across a mystery series.
- identify hidden life lessons or themes.
- read aloud with fluency, phrasing, expression, and emphasis like a voice actor.

- collaborate with partners or groups and discuss and perform mysteries.

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.
- Class Case File: This is a recurring tool used to jot notes, summarize chapters, and track evidence collectively, serving as a visual record of class comprehension.
- Crime Scene Sketches or Sketchnotes: Students use sketchnotes to capture setting details and create sample crime scene sketches.
- Suspect List: Students are specifically directed to start and maintain a suspect list in their reader's notebooks to track their investigative thinking.
- Mystery-o-pedia Pages: Partners create a page for a class mystery-o-pedia, which includes a sketch of their detective and labeled information about them.
- Director’s Notes: Students jot director’s notes to plan the logistics and performance of their mystery podcasts.
- Book Buzz: While your list mentions a book review, the map specifically focuses on a book buzz, which is a brief written hook designed to build excitement and introduce a story without revealing too much.
- Responses to Essential Questions
- Post-It notes telling each time the text gives them new information about the character
- Read aloud Prediction Assessment: During Bend 1, after reading Chapter 5 of The Case of the Snack Snatcher, teachers are prompted to use student predictions as a formative assessment.
- Read aloud Synthesis/Summarization Assessment: During Bend 2, teachers are prompted to use students' ability to synthesize what they have learned and summarize the book as a formative assessment.
- 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:

- Podcast Recording and Performance: The major performance-based assessment for the end of the unit is the recording and sharing of a mystery podcast episode.
- "How Does My Reading Sound?" Fluency Rubric: This specific rubric is used during the final celebration for students to provide and receive feedback on their reading performances.
- 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 or other, 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.