Unit 3 Writing: Discipline-Based Writing

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 3**
Length: **6-8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

In this Grade 4 information writing unit, students conduct research and collaborate in teams to draft, revise, and publish nonfiction chapter books on scientific and historical topics. During the first half of the unit, they focus on authoring engaging science books by researching narrow subtopics within larger systems, incorporating mathematics, and designing interactive features like lift-the-flaps. They then transition to historical writing, where they examine story elements of true events, organize events on a timeline, and learn to incorporate geographic context and multiple perspectives. Throughout these projects, students hone essential skills in note-taking, synthesizing information across texts, varying sentence structures, and editing. Ultimately, teams assemble their chapters to publish cohesive books for an authentic audience.

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 Writing Workshop pacing guide for grade 4 in the curriculum folder. Sentence Study is paced and aligned within the Syntax, Style, Grammar and Conventions section. Please refer tothis folder for the scope and sequence as well as specific lessons and materials.

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

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.

This 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 standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below:

Reading Informational (RI)

- RI.CR.4.1: Refer to details and examples as textual evidence when explaining what an informational text says explicitly and make relevant connections when drawing inferences from the text.
- RI.CI.4.2: Summarize an informational text and interpret the author's purpose or main idea citing key details from the text.

Writing (W)

- W.IW.4.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- W.IW.4.2.A (corresponds to W.IW.4.2.1): Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), text features (e.g., illustrations, diagrams, captions) and multimedia when useful to aid in comprehension.
- W.WP.4.4: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- W.WR.4.5: Conduct short research projects that use multiple reference sources (print and non-print) and build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- W.SE.4.6: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; take notes, prioritize and categorize information; provide a list of sources.

Speaking & Listening (SL)

- SL.PE.4.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Language (L)

- L.KL.4.1: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or

listening.

- L.WF.4.2.C (corresponds to L.WF.4.2.3): Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.
- L.WF.4.3: Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing, including those listed under grade three foundational skills.

9.2.5.CAP.1	Evaluate personal likes and dislikes and identify careers that might be suited to personal likes.
9.4.5.CI.1	Use appropriate communication technologies to collaborate with individuals with diverse perspectives about a local and/or global climate change issue and deliberate about possible solutions (e.g., W.4.6, 3.MD.B.3,7.1.NM.IPERS.6).
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).
P.8	Use technology to enhance productivity increase collaboration and communicate effectively.
	The ability to solve problems effectively begins with gathering data, seeking resources, and applying critical thinking skills.
9.4.5.DC.4	Model safe, legal, and ethical behavior when using online or offline technology (e.g., 8.1.5.NI.2).
	Culture and geography can shape an individual's experiences and perspectives.
	Digital tools and media resources provide access to vast stores of information, but the information can be biased or inaccurate.
	Accurate and comprehensive information comes in a variety of platforms and formats and is the basis for effective decision-making.
	Different digital tools have different purposes.

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.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.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.

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

- Bend 1: How can I write a science book?
- Bend 2: How can I make science writing engaging?
- Bend 3: How can I write about history?
- Bend 4: How can I revise history writing?

Students Will Know/ Students will be Skilled at

By the end of this unit:

- Conduct meaningful research by asking questions, taking purposeful notes, and identifying gaps in their understanding
- Collaborate with peers to plan, organize, and draft nonfiction books on scientific and historical topics
- Develop clear and engaging informational writing using appropriate structures (e.g., chapters, tables of contents)
- Incorporate text features such as diagrams, charts, timelines, and interactive elements to enhance reader understanding
- Explain complex ideas using evidence, including integrating math, examples, and scientific or historical details
- Revise writing by adding details, multiple perspectives, and varied ways of presenting information (e.g., quotes, statistics, lists)
- Edit and publish polished writing pieces, preparing them for an authentic audience (e.g., younger students or families

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:

- Answer essential questions
- Teacher observations/conferring notes
- Turn and talks
- Partnerships rehearsing their writing
- Peer Conferences
- Writer's Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites)
- Teacher checklists using mini-lessons for measurable skills
- Writing Conferences: Individual and small group
- Writing Partnership work and discussions
- Writing folders with student work
- Writing pieces to note the growth need of the writer
- Observations
- Listening in on partnership discussion of writing piece
- Drafts online (Google Docs)
- Writing Club work and discussions

Summative:

- Students should have 2-3 final pieces to score not including the post assessment.
- Published pieces
- Score grammar and spelling in final drafts only
- Student portfolios
- During publishing students read their piece to assess oral speaking and reading skills
- Rubrics: created for the standards-based report card as well as teacher-created.
- Standards should be addressed as reported on the Standards-Based Report Card and should reflect this work:

  *Orients the reader by establishing a situation (introduction)

  *Organize your writing into a sequence that unfolds naturally and uses a variety of transitional words

*Provides an appropriate end to their writing piece

*Elaborates by using precise details and descriptions

Benchmark:

- Benchmark writing assessments: opinion, narrative, and informational, scored using rubrics, district-created and provided.
- Located in the shared Grades K-5 Language Arts folder on the Google Drive, reported three times per year

Learning Plan

Our upper elementary writing instruction follows a balanced literacy approach including a number of strategies and techniques in Writing Workshop. These include mini-lessons, shared writing, independent writing, small group strategy instruction, one-to-one conferencing, partnerships and/or writing clubs. Writing Workshop emphasizes immersion, independence, and choice. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer. Each unit ends with a celebration of learning where children share their writing with others in the school community.

To assist students in reaching the goals for this unit, teachers will guide them through the following steps:

- Immersing students to study the purpose, structure, and characteristics of writing while generating possible writing ideas
- Choosing topics by considering focused areas of expertise
- Organizing information and writing pieces
- Elaborating to increase writing volume and to add a variety of detail
- Revising and editing to prepare for publishing

Through mentor text, students will be immersed in text type in order to recognize text features and structures of the particular type of writing. It is suggested that students form writing partnerships with the goal of collaborating and supporting each other throughout the writing process. Grammar and conventions mini lessons will be taught throughout this unit during Sentence Study.

Lessons 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 Writing/Student Conferences: Provides time for students to do independent writing while teacher confers with individual students, works with small groups, or writing clubs.
- Closure/Sharing: Pull students back together and recognize the work they have done relating to the

teaching point.

The architecture of a writing conference includes:

- Research
- Decide
- Teach and Coach with guided practice
- Link

A writing club is like a book club. It is a group of students that meet to discuss one student in the group's piece at a time. The students listen to the piece read aloud. If on Google Docs, it can be shared with the group and they can follow along. (This takes a lot coaching in the beginning.) Students provide feedback to the writer, first what they did really well, and provide evidence from the piece that supports it. Then they provide something that they can use to enhance their piece and evidence as to why it can be changed. The writer that shared can use the advice. Developing trust in the group and valuable advice takes time. Over time groups can run on their own.

*This unit of writing fits with the nonfiction unit of reading. Students can gather evidence to support their opinion during reading workshop. It will be helpful to have some quick writes or flash drafts to help students think of ideas for opinion writing.

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

Before Beginning This Unit . . .

Before beginning this unit:

- Decide whether students will choose their own research topics or if topics will be teacher-directed.
- If offering choice, plan how to group students (e.g., groups of 4–6) while still maintaining manageable topic options.
- Align topics to prior or current curriculum units (science or social studies) when possible.
- Ensure each topic has a sufficient set of accessible research materials (text sets).
- Collaborate with the school librarian/media specialist and colleagues to gather and share resources.
- Prepare a range of materials at varying levels (shorter, accessible texts as well as more complex sources).
- Gather multimedia resources (videos, visuals, audio, digital tools like text-to-speech) to support understanding.
- Create digital resource hubs (e.g., Padlet or shared folders) for each research group.
- Plan opportunities for students to collect observational or experimental data (if applicable to science topics).
- Review and adjust early minilessons in Bends I and III based on chosen topics and available resources.

Detailed Curriculum Map

Teaching Points and lessons are located in the K-5 folder under Grade 4 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 allow for integration of a variety of 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.

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 4.

The core materials for this unit include the Units of Study in Writing for grade 4, The Reading and Writing Project at Mossflower, 2026. Here is a link to the instructional materials for this unit.

Please refer to curriculum folder under grade 4 for specific materials for Sentence Study.

Teacher Resources

- Heinemann Online Flight Resources
- *The Writing Strategies Book*, Jennifer Serravallo
- *Feedback that Moves Writers Forward,* Patty McGee
- *Patterns of Power*, Jeff Anderson
- *Mechanically Inclined*, Jeff Anderson
- *The Story of My Thinking*, Gretchen Bernabei
- Trail of Breadcrumbs Website

- Two Writing Teachers Blog
- *Assessing Writers*, Carl Anderson
- Cranford Public School Grades K-5 Google Folder for instructional materials

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 plans.

The structure of writing 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 have individualized choice of topics within each unit.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer.

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

- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts, word walls.
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing.
- 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 or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; eliminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines
- Access speech to text function on computer

For possible modifications to content during writing workshop, please . . .

- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plans.
- Refer to Strategies for striving students
- Refer to the Pathways to Intervention documents in the K-5 folder for specific appropriate

interventions.

- Consult with Cranford Problem Solving Team (CPST), as needed.

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 Writing Units of Study will continue to serve as the primary writing 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 adapt any writing unit for an alternative school serving students with school avoidance, anxiety, behavior challenges, and social constraints, teachers should employ flexible, supportive modifications while aligning with grade-level writing standards (focusing on organization, elaboration, and mechanics) and speaking/listening standards (focusing on collaborative discussions).

- Timing Adjustments: Extend the pacing of instructional blocks or bends (e.g., extending a typical 2-week drafting phase to 3 weeks) with shorter daily writing sessions (20–30 minutes). Incorporate calming transitions or choice-based entry activities to ease transition anxiety.
- Activity Modifications: During the initial brainstorming and topic-generation phase, use sensory-friendly methods like drawing, sketching, or voice recording instead of demanding whole-group sharing. During structural planning, provide pre-made graphic organizers tailored to the specific genre's layout (e.g., chronological, narrative plot maps, or thesis-and-reason structures) and allow low-stakes, paired verbal rehearsals to build confidence. For the revision phase, incorporate supportive one-on-one teacher conferring for feedback, replacing peer review sessions with optional self-reflection journals. Simplify checklists and rubrics with visual icons, and offer flexible writing alternatives like dictated drafts or digital speech-to-text tools for students with severe writing aversion.
- Intervention Programs: Integrate comprehension-focused frameworks (such as Visualizing and Verbalizing) to unpack exemplar texts, structured foundations programs (like UFLI) for keyword jotting and sentence-level drafting, and systematic phonics/morphology programs (like Sonday System) during conventions exploration (e.g., mechanics, grammar, and parts of speech).
- NJTSS Framework: Implement Tier 1 universal supports, such as explicit modeling of introductions, transitions, and conclusions with visual aids; Tier 2 targeted small-group interventions for elaboration and planning, tracked via regular anecdotal notes; and Tier 3 intensive individualized sessions for goal-setting and revision, prioritizing emotional safety and student agency.
- Data Analysis: Leverage formative assessments (e.g., conferring notes, on-demand writing samples) and summative pre/post benchmarks to personalize pacing, ensuring students produce structured, cohesive compositions in a nurturing environment that celebrates writing progress through low-pressure, voluntary sharing.