Unit 2 Writing: Literary Essay: Opening Texts and Seeing More

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 1**
Length: **5-6 weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of the Unit

The Grade 5 Unit 2 writing curriculum, titled "Literary Essay Opening Texts and Seeing More," is scheduled from December to January. This unit's central focus is on teaching students how to write literary essays, thereby developing their analytical and argumentative skills when examining shared texts and understanding authors' intentions.

The unit is structured into three distinct bends:

Bend 1: Crafting a Literary Essay Around a Shared Text

- This initial phase introduces students to the literary essay, emphasizing how to formulate a claim about a text and substantiate it with evidence.
- Students learn to generate ideas for their essays, delve into character analysis, and begin drafting.
- A significant focus is placed on structuring claims with supporting reasons and evidence, organizing collected evidence, and using transitional phrases to connect ideas smoothly.
- Students also work on language conventions, specifically verb tense, within their essays.

Bend 2: Writing an Interpretive Essay from Start to Finish

- This bend guides students through the process of writing an interpretive essay by identifying potential themes or problems within a text.
- Students learn to utilize a "boxes and bullets" structure to organize their arguments effectively.
- They practice using angled scenes and specific textual evidence to support their interpretations.
- This phase also covers the correct use of quotations and punctuation, crafting strong endings and introductions, and self-reflection. This bend often concludes with a celebration of student work.

Bend 3: Crafting an Analytic Essay About an Author's Goal

- The final bend challenges students to write an analytic essay that focuses on an author's goal or purpose in creating a text.
- Students analyze the author's craft and techniques to understand the underlying message.
- They continue to develop and support their thesis statements within paragraphs.
- This part of the unit stresses fully explaining evidence and using powerful language and conventions, including varied internal punctuation.
- The unit concludes with students preparing to be "literary essay ambassadors," sharing their developed expertise.

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 3 in the curriculum folder. Sentence Study is paced and aligned within the Syntax, Style, Grammar and Conventions section. Please refer to this folder for the scope and sequence for Sentence Study.

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.

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.

Commission on Holocaust Education

This unit further reflects the goals of the Holocaust Education mandate where students are able to identify and a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a pı and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resou difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resourc

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

	Collaboration with individuals with diverse perspectives can result in new ways of thinking and/or innovative solutions.
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).
9.4.5.CT.1	Identify and gather relevant data that will aid in the problem-solving process (e.g., 2.1.5.EH.4, 4-ESS3-1, 6.3.5.CivicsPD.2).
L.WF.5.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing, including those listed under grade four foundational skills.
L.WF.5.2.B	Maintain consistency in verb tense; place phrases and clauses; choose between adjectives and adverbs.
	Intellectual property rights exist to protect the original works of individuals. It is allowable to use other people's ideas in one's own work provided that proper credit is given to the original source.
9.4.5.DC.1	Explain the need for and use of copyrights.
L.KL.5.1	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
L.KL.5.1.B	Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.
RL.CI.5.2	Determine the theme of a literary text (e.g., stories, plays or poetry) and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
RL.IT.5.3	Analyze the impact of two or more individuals and events throughout the course of a text, comparing and contrasting two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific textual evidence (e.g., how characters interact).
9.4.5.IML.7	Evaluate the degree to which information meets a need including social emotional learning, academic, and social (e.g., 2.2.5. PF.5).
	Collaborating digitally as a team can often develop a better artifact than an individual working alone.
9.4.5.TL.4	Compare and contrast artifacts produced individually to those developed collaboratively (e.g., 1.5.5.CR3a).
9.4.5.TL.5	Collaborate digitally to produce an artifact (e.g., 1.2.5CR1d).
W.AW.5.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
W.AW.5.1.B	Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details from text(s), quote directly from text when appropriate.
W.WP.5.4	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
W.SE.5.6	Gather relevant information from multiple valid and reliable print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, making note of any similarities and differences among ideas presented; and provide a list of sources.
SL.PE.5.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas

	and expressing their own clearly.
SL.PE.5.1.B	Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
SL.ES.5.3	Summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.
SL.PI.5.4	Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

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.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.

Essential Questions

- Bend 1: How can you craft a literary essay around a shared text?
- Bend 2: How can you write an interpretive essay from start to finish?

- Bend 3: How can you craft an analytic essay about an author's goal?

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

By the end of this unit, students Will:

- Analyze an author's craft and purpose
- Develop a clear thesis
- Plan and organize an analytic essay
- Use angled scenes effectively
- Explain evidence fully
- Use paragraphing strategically
- Revise writing for clarity and style
- Reflect and set goals as writers

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/Partnership Discussion and Rehearsing
- 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

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

Mentor sentence study will be taught across the week to teach syntax, dictation, grammar, and punctuation. Students will learn how to write like an author by mimicking specific sentence patterns and applying it to their own writing. Please refer to this link in the K-5 folder for specific lessons and materials.

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:

- Familiarize yourself with the Mentor Texts
- Create and prepare anchor charts
- Prepare demonstration texts and writing samples

Detailed Curriculum Map

Teaching Points and lessons are located in the K-5 folder under Grade 5 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.

The core materials for this unit include the Units of Study in Writing for grade 5, The Reading and Writing Project at Mossflower, 2026.

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 5.

Please refer to this folder for specific materials for Sentence Study.

Instructional Materials

Here is a direct link to the instructional materials that accompany this unit

- Fox by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks
- Every Living Thing by Cynthia Rylant
- The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
- Marble Champ by Gary Soto
- Somebody Loves You Mr. Hatch by Eileen Spinelli
- Number the Stars by Lois Lowry
- Behind the Bedroom Wall by Laura Williams
- Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts
- Enemy Pie by Derek Munson

Teacher Resources

- Fountas and Pinnell Classroom Materials: Minilesson book, Guided Reading, Interactive Reading
- Resources for Teaching Writing CD, Grade 3, Heinemann, 2013.
- Online Anchor charts and resources available through Heinemann
- Use resource CD for rubrics, student samples, and charts.
- *The Writing Strategies Book*, Jennifer Serravallo
- *Feedback that Moves Writers Forward,* Patty McGee
- Mentor Sentences Grades 3-5 Volume 2: Unit 1.
- Patterns of Power: Inviting Young Writers Conventions of Language Grades 1-5 by Jeff Anderson

- The Continuum of Literacy Learning by Guy Su Pinnell & Irene C. Fountas
- The Common Core Writing Book by Gretchen Owocki
- Projecting Possibilities for Writers: The How, What & Why of Designing Units of Study by Matt Glover & Mary Alice Berry
- Ruth Culham's The Writing Thief
- Georgia Heard's Finding the Heart of Nonfiction: Teaching 7 Essential Craft Tools with Mentor Texts
- Everyday Editing by Jeff Anderson
- For All Parts of the Writing Process, including tools for intervention and ways to publish, see The Good Writer's Guide by Gretchen Bernabei
- Cranford Public School Grades K-5 Google Folder for instructional materials

Suggested Strategies for Modification/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 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

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

- 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 plan
- Refer to 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.