# Unit 2: Writing to Inform and Explain

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **4-5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

## Brief Summary of Unit

**Focus:** "Writing is an art. But when it is writing to inform, it comes close to being a science." - Robert Gunning

**Summary:** Students will understand the value of writing to inform and explain in clear, accurate language that highlights real-world insights. Informing and explaining reinforces how something works, develops, or occurs. Clarity of word choice as well as the use of transitional words and phrases will be paramount in this unit. As such, students will engage in reading about writing techniques in addition to reading mentor texts from a variety of sources in order to gain a thorough understanding of audience, purpose, and tone. Students will closely analyze the use and structure of language to determine what constitutes effective writing while demonstrating command of standard English grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation in composing a variety of responses to both creative and practical, real-world writing prompts. In order to share critical interpretations of strong writing and to offer feedback to their peers, students will actively engage in whole class discussions, small group conversations, as well as teacher-student conferences as they allow for an enhanced understanding of different perspectives on writing.

**Interdisciplinary Connections and Career Readiness:** 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. When completing this course, students can make informed choices and pursue electives that further their study and contribute toward the formation of career interest.

**Revised:** July 2024

## Standards

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| L.SS.11–12.1 | Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking. |
| L.KL.11–12.2 | Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, |

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| | to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. |
| L.VI.11–12.4 | Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings, including connotative meanings. |
| RI.TS.11–12.4 | Evaluate the author's choices concerning structure and the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. |
| W.IW.11–12.2 | Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.A | Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.B | Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.C | Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.D | Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.E | Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g., formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.F | Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic). |
| W.WP.11–12.4 | Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach; sustaining effort to complete complex writing tasks; tracking and reflecting on personal writing progress (e.g., using portfolios, journals, conferencing); or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. |
| W.SE.11–12.6 | Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (MLA or APA Style Manuals). |
| W.RW.11–12.7 | Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes. |
| SL.PE.11–12.1 | Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. |
| SL.PI.11–12.4 | Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. The content, organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. |

## Essential Questions

- What real world purposes does informative and explanatory writing serve?
- How does explanatory writing serve different purposes?

- How does mentor text study enhance understanding of informative and explanatory writing?
- How does one properly convey connections and cause-effect relationships in writing?
- How does one properly structure a step-by-step, how-to or process explanation?
- How do transitional statements and details enhance an essay of explanation?
- What is the value of revising and editing in enhancing informative and explanatory writing?
- How does informative and explanatory writing examine and convey complex ideas or concepts clearly and accurately through effective organization and analysis?

## Students Will Know & Be Skilled At

- How to produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- How to develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- How to draw evidence from other informational texts to support one's explanations.
- How to select a topic of interest, develop details to explain a concept or observation, and enhance one's writing with research, as needed.
- Progressing through all of the stages of the writing process to ensure proper development and explanation of ideas.
- The value of free-writing and idea invention as it aids in the stages of the writing process.
- Scrutinizing mentor texts for strategies that enhance clarity of writing.
- Developing a process essay that explains a topic of the student's choice.
- Participating in discussion groups and editing sessions with their peers.
- Using technology to develop, share, and publish real-world writing samples.

## Evidence/Performance Tasks

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered two 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.

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.

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:**

- Teacher Observations
- Accountable Talk, Socratic Seminars, Fish Bowls
- Analysis of multimodal text sets
- Writers Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites), emphasizing author's craft
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes
- Reflective exercises and assessments
- Oral Reading and Interpretation
- Peer and self-evaluations of learning
- Entrance and Exit Tickets
- Open-Ended Responses in Journal
- Textual Analysis Reading Responses

**Summative, including Alternative Assessments:**

- On-demand Writing Assessments, timed and untimed
- Researched Presentations
- Performance Assessments
- Project-based Learning
- Problem-based Learning
- Personalized Learning
- Visual Literacy Prompts
- Digital Portfolios
- Online Discussion Forums
- Expository Essay

**Benchmark:**

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Engage in text set analysis using visual literacy and close reading analysis strategies to compose a

claim and use evidence as support

- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics
- SAT (grades 11-12)
- Final Exam
- IXL

## Learning Plan

English IV Writing is designed to refine and elevate writing skills as students prepare for life beyond high school. This course focuses on various forms of writing while engaging in rigorous analysis of texts, exploration diverse writing styles, and development a strong command of grammar and syntax.

This second unit focuses on writing that informs and explains. Students will learn to construct clear, concise, and well-organized expository essays and instructional texts. Through workshops, peer reviews, and individual feedback, students will hone their ability to convey complex information in an accessible and engaging manner. By mastering these skills, they will be equipped to communicate effectively in academic, professional, and everyday contexts. This unit of study also has opportunity to model coursework offered at various colleges and universities, preparing students for the demands of higher education coursework by engaging with college-level writing expectations and standards.

Taught using a Writing Workshop approach, this unit of study will move through the development and publication of a work or multiple works of writing (while studying mentor texts relevant to a specific genre of study or rhetorical mode). Strategies and techniques in Writing Workshop 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.Various forms of writing including digital writing are emphasized as well. Grammar instruction is embedded in writing instruction through mini-lessons, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modeling is done through mentor texts, both published and student-crafted. Teachers focus on process in addition to product with an emphasis on synthesizing texts with nuanced understanding; teacher-created multimodal text sets may be used as materials. High-and low-stakes, timed and untimed pieces are all important. Each unit ends with a celebration of learning where writers share their work with others in the school community.

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

**Sample Writers' Workshop Approach: Daily Mini-Lesson**

- Establish teaching point(s) for lesson
- Make a connection
    - Connect new learning to previous learning/lessons
- Teach and model
    - Use 'think alouds' when modeling what you expect students to do
- Facilitate guided practice and 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
- Facilitate independent writing and student conferences
    - Provides time for students to do independent writing while teacher confers with individual students, works with small groups, or writing clubs.
- Close the lesson
    - Pull students back together and recognize the work they have done relating to the teaching point

**Sample Coursework Connection: University of Rhode Island**

**Profile Project:**

This project will seek to broaden the idea of community. You will reach out to someone who is from a different community than you and interview them to learn about them and their community. Based on your conversation with them, you will write a profile that brings them to life to your readers. Along with your profile, you will also be submitting notes and reflections on the interview and experience.

**Sample Unit Planning**

**Whole Class Texts:**

- Excerpts from The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian by Sherman Alexie
    - Explores personal, free choice, concise, and specific expository writing throug the study of"The Unofficial and Unwritten Rules..." that define/explain one's experience as a part of a group in a particular setting
- Expository Mentor Texts (such as, but not limited to: "I Want a Wife" by J. Brady, "Show Me the Money" by W. Mosley, "Dumpster Diving" by L. Eighner, "Disability" by N. Mairs, "Mind Over

Mass Media" by S. Pinker)

- Focuses on rhetorical strategies that authors employ to enhance the information they empart through expository writing

**Informative and Explanatory Writing:**

- Writing samples based on real world informative and explanatory writing
    - Discusses purpose (focus on organization and clarity of expression), methods (vehicle to convey information), and audience (degree of knowledge about topic being explained) of writing
    - Identifies various methods used to inform and explain including (but not limited to): definition, classification, process (directive process/explanatory process), comparison and contrast, and cause and effect
    - Analyzes organizational formats and delineates the difference between the subject-by-subject and point-by-point comparison formats as well as the importance of sequencing and chronology in cause and effect writing
- Student essays
    - Utilizes expository writing techniques and strategies to develop an essay of definition/classification, process, comparison and contrast, or cause and effect
        - Examples of sample essay prompts are as follows:

1. Define what self-confidence means to you.
2. Define the importance or value of something you own in relation to other valuables
3. Select an area of expertise and explain how to do something is depth-comment on how knowing this skill may teach you an important lesson or serve an important purpose in life
4. Compare the impact two forms of music, two artists/bands, or songs have on you emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually.
5. What has caused a certain concern to evolve in your community? Explain the causes as well as the effects.

- Practices rhetorical strategies found in mentor texts to strengthen student writing.

**Research:**

- Searching for contemporary articles to support the ideas and themes surrouding individual topics
    - Focuses on finding credible sources, mastering MLA format, organizing information, bias, author's tone/voice, etc.
    - ex. Researching two artists in order to compare the impact of their music on society today.

**Speaking:**

- Present final drafts to the class community
    - Focuses on posture, eye contact, volume, and presenting
- Peer editing throughout writing process
    - Focuses on how to participate in a conversation by asking questions, setting revision goals, and navigating feedback

**Listening:**

- Small group discussions during class
    - Focuses on how to participate in a conversation by asking questions, actively listening, and extending upon peers
- Collective sharing of final drafts

## Materials

The materials used in this course integrate a variety of 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.

Teachers must refer to the district-approved Core Book List while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources.

## Suggested Strategies for Accommodation and Modification

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.

Possible accommodations include:

- Accessing speech-to-text function on computer.
- Using visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts.
- Allowing students to set individual goals for writing/reading.
- Offering graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques.

- Offering oral assessments.
- Supplying study guide questions and access to class notes.
- Working in partnerships.
- Giving responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student.
- Using additional time to compete a task or project.
- Scaffolding by chunking material and texts.
- Individualizingreading choices based on ability and level .
- Providing frequent breaks.
- Using an alarm to help with time management.
- Assessing individually or in small groups.
- Marking text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it.
- Receiving help coordinating assignments.
- Modifying the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual.
- Differentiating roles in discussion groups.
- Using digital technology, eBooks, audio version of printed text.
- Creating alternate assignments or homework.
- Providing distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Using art, music, and film to convey alternate interpretation of literature and assessment.
- Managing executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines.
- Clarifying key terms and definitions at the beginning of the unit to create a shared vocabulary for analysis and evaluation.
- Encouraging students to self-advocate and use alternate methods of presenting information.
- Encouraging the use of asynchronous learning to promote student autonomy and flexibility throughout the analysis and writing process.

**Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan.**