Unit 4 Reading: Investigative Journalism: Reading Feature Articles

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

Brief Summary of Unit

Students will explore the concept of investigative journalism by reading and discussing a variety of journalistic pieces. They will compare and contrast these with the more-familiar “news report” and discover the purpose and implications of investigative journalism. They will also analyze the craft used in creating powerful pieces of investigative journalism in order to prepare them to ultimately write their own investigative pieces in the paired writing unit.

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.

July 2022

Pacing Guide

Please refer tothis Language Arts Reading and Writing Workshop Pacing Guide for grade 8 Advanced.

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

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.

LA.RI.8.1	Cite the textual evidence and make relevant connections that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LA.RI.8.2	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RI.8.3	Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).
LA.RI.8.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
LA.RI.8.5	Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences, to develop and to refine a key concept.
LA.RI.8.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
LA.RI.8.7	Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.
LA.RI.8.8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
LA.RI.8.9	Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) two or more texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.
LA.RI.8.10	By the end of the year read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above, with scaffolding as needed.
LA.L.8.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
LA.L.8.4.A	Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
LA.L.8.4.B	Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., precede, recede, secede).
LA.L.8.4.C	Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.
LA.L.8.4.D	Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
LA.L.8.5.B	Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.
LA.L.8.5.C	Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute).

Essential Questions

- How can we notice an author's bias? Why should consider bias when reading?
- How might a piece seemingly focused on one issue indicate other issues as well? Why might this happen?
- What makes an idea or event "newsworthy"?
- Why is there a need for investigative journalism?
- Why might nonfiction contain elements normally associated with fiction?

Enduring Understandings

- A writer's claim is not always expressed explicitly
- Authors can indicate their bias(es) in a variety of ways
- Investigative journalism differs from "news reporting" in form, content, and purpose
- Investigative journalism has the potential to bring about change in society
- Readers need to consider an author's bias when reading nonfiction
- Some pieces of nonfiction may contain elements normally associated with fiction (i.e., narration)
- Sometimes a piece that appears to be about one idea or issue may also be about several others

Students Will Know

- Journalism-specific language and text features: headline, lead, pull quote, caption, source, sidebar story, deck, etc.
- Narrative elements often found in investigative journalistic pieces: anecdotes, voice, figurative language, etc.
- The "inverted triangle" structure used in news reporting
- The difference between a news article and a piece of investigative journalism
- The general structure and characteristics of a piece of investigative journalism
- The meaning of the term "bias" and the impact of bias
- Various ways in which authors show bias: choice of sources included or excluded, rhetorical devices such as rhetorical questioning, word choice/connotation, etc.
- Vocabulary associated with investigations: whistleblower, cover-up, ethics, etc.

Students Will Be Skilled At

- Analyzing an investigative piece for author bias
- Analyzing the structure of news articles and pieces of investigative journalism
- Annotating text in order to show their thinking
- Applying the appropriate technical vocabulary when discussing journalistic pieces
- Comparing and contrasting texts
- Conducting research online using a variety of sources

- Determining the main idea or the author's "claim" (when stated either explicitly or implicitly)
- Discussing texts with teachers and peers
- Identifying narrative elements used in a piece of investigative journalism
- Identifying various text features associated with news articles
- Reading nonfiction texts fluently and with comprehension
- Using a variety of reading strategies when encountering challenging texts

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 benchmark assessments. Follow up diagnostic assessments may be used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

In addition to the "possible assessments" provided in the Learning Plan section, teachers may consider the performance tasks listed below:

Formative Assessments

- Responses to Essential Questions
- Viewing students' Biblionasium accounts
- Self-Assessment (Reading Inventory)
- Model "Ways to Write About Reading"
- Teacher-generated "writing about reading" options
- Peer conferences/Partner Reading Time
- Large and Small-Group Discussion
- Whole group mini-lessons (model reading strategies)
- Accountable Talk
- Turn and talks
- Reading Responses on Post-its/Stop and Jots
- Reading Responses in Journals/Notebooks
- Quick-Writes about Reading
- Interactive Read Aloud Reading responses, written and oral (Thinkaloud and Close Reading)
- Exit tickets or Do Nows
- Engagement Observations
- Reading Logs and Reading Surveys
- Envision and prediction post-it notes/Board
- Monitor Stamina, Volume, and Fluency through rubrics

- Text and Video analysis
- Read increasingly complex text by monitoring student self-selection of leveled text
- Small Group Strategy Reading group work
- Knowledge of domain-specific vocabulary
- Grade-Level Engagement Rubric for Verbal and Non-Verbal Participation

Summative Assessments including Alternative Assessments:

- Reading Notebooks using grade-level text questions
- Book Talk (written script and oral presentation)
- Timeline containing "impactful texts"
- Running Records
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project: Reading learning progressions
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project: rubrics with student samples
- Vocabulary/Word Study Assessments
- Presentations
- Performance- and project-based learning
- Personalized, student-designed assessments
- LIteracy Centers

- Students select their own piece of "investigative journalism" (or provide new examples); students conduct an analysis of the piece by identifying and explaining the following elements:

    - The author's claim or claims (and whether it/they is/are stated explicitly, implicitly or both)
    - The author's craft; providing examples of narrative elements included
    - The author's bias
    - Their personal response to the topic

  Students will create a presentation in some format (poster, Prezi, etc.) to showcase all of the above and will deliver presentation to their peers

Benchmark Asessments

- Complete Comprehension, Independent Reading Assessment, fiction, Jennifer Serravallo, Heinemann
- iReady Screener and Diagnostic Assessment
- Benchmark Grade-Level Reading and Writing Assessments align with New Jersey Student Learning Standards and NJSLA

Learning Plan

The Middle School Language Arts/Literacy program encompasses reading literature and informational text, speaking and listening and enhancing language skills (spelling, grammar, and vocabulary). The understandings and skills of each strand of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards are not isolated, but integrated,

interactive, and embedded in all subject areas across the curriculum. Teachers may engage in two whole-class, closely-studied community readings per year, not to exceed four weeks each.

Reading instruction is literature-based and follows a balanced literacy approach through a number of strategies and techniques in Reading Workshop. These include read-alouds/alongs, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, small group strategy instruction, one-to-one conferencing, and partnership or book club discussions. Reading Workshop provides students with the necessary tools to communicate orally, read and comprehend print, and write with clarity and purpose for a variety of audiences. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the reader. Students will select from authentic literature at their independent and instructional reading levels.

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. (See end of section for closure ideas.)

This class establishes a "staircase" of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of high school-level reading. Additionally this unit requires the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing are able to gain more from whatever they read. Students will read a diverse array of classic and contemporary literature and gain a greater appreciation of the various literary genres through a careful study of plot, character, setting, point of view, and theme. Genres may include but not limited to the following; novels, short stories, print and electronic articles, picture books, songs/lyrics, media clips, drama, poetry, folk tales, and fables.

Throughout this class, students will read challenging informational texts in a range of subjects. Informational text can be seen as a type of nonfiction. Informational text conveys facts about the natural or social world; crafted by an expert in the field to an audience of lay people; includes specialized features such as headings and technical jargon. Students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspective while acquiring needed skills and strategies.

Please refer to the Middle School ELA, Grade 8 Folder for specific lessons and materials for Word Study.

Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests,

aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

Bend 1: What is “newsworthy” and how is news presented to the audience?

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Teaching Point: Some things are considered “newsworthy” while others are not

Activity: Brainstorm session: What kinds of things are usually reported on the nightly news and in daily newspapers? Follow with class discussion and possible anchor chart

Teaching Point: News articles often follow a distinct structure and contain certain “text features” related to the main idea

Activity 1: Students examine a short news article and observe any “text features” present; (supply the necessary technical vocabulary); based on the features included and noted, students predict what the article might be about

Activity 2: Students read the same short news article (see Activity 1) and determine the main idea; analyze how the text features from Activity 1 play a role in this

Possible Assessment: Provide a new article; students do a “cold read”; identify the text features included and explain how they help convey the main idea

Activity 3: Students analyze the “craft” and structure of a news article; introduce “inverted triangle” structure; discuss the writing style; students “discover” that news reporting is done in a concise manner and is meant for quick consumption of facts

Bend 2: What is "investigative journalism" and how might it play a significant role in society?

Teaching Point: Investigative journalism is not the same as simply "reporting the news"

Activity 1: Students read and examine an investigative journalism piece and note text features present

Activity 2: Students compare and contrast investigative article with news stories read in previous lessons and discuss with partners, small groups, or whole class; anchor chart can be created

Teaching Point: Often, investigative journalism stems from simple fact-gathering; journalists don't always "set out" to uncover something major, but as they are gathering information for a news article they might stumble upon a "story"

Activity: Students read news report "Lawmakers pressure Port Authority to cut back on pollution" from NY Pix 11 News, then listen to and/or read transcript of Reveal's podcast episode "School haze" and discuss how the article may have led to the investigative piece

Teaching Point: Investigative journalism has the power to uncover major issues in society and bring about change

Activity 1: Students read online article written by high school journalism students in Pennsylvania about their new principal; discuss the "investigative" component present

Activity 2: As follow-up, student read article from the New York Times about principal's resignation following student article; discuss the "power of the investigative piece"

(note the difference between "fact presenters" and "detectives/change agents")

Researched-Performance Assessment: Students will research a current or historical investigation of interest to them (such as Watergate, NFL concussions, the tobacco industry, etc.); they will conduct research online by finding at least three different articles to read and determining the following aspects of the investigative process: the issue at hand, other related or underlying issues, the whistleblower, how the investigation came to

light, any cover-ups that were attempted, any outcomes of having the issue revealed to the public; students will organize this research into a Google Slide presentation including the narrative opening of an article and realistic mock interview and share with their classmates when complete to highlight real-life past and current investigations involving the use of the media

Bend 3: How are pieces of investigative journalism written?

Bend 3: How are pieces of investigative journalism written? How does the structure and style differ from those of news articles? In what ways does the author's craft impact the reader and indicate the author's bias?

Teaching Point: A piece of investigative journalism will look very different from a news article

Activity 1: Examine paired pieces (a news article and an investigative piece on the same topic, i.e. "Poison in the Water" and "Emergency Declaration Ends in Flint Water Crisis"); review structure of a news article (covered in Bend 1); students read the article and find its main idea; preview the investigative piece by looking at the text features

Activity 2: Students read the investigative piece and note the main idea; discuss its location (in contrast to news article); discuss other contrasts students notice

Teaching Point: An investigative piece is often quite complex; it can contain multiple "main ideas" and may branch out into interrelated topics

Activity: Reread piece in order to identify other main ideas and interrelated topics; discuss

Teaching Point: A piece of investigative journalism often contains many "narrative elements" (introduce or review "anecdote", "figurative language", etc.)

Activity: Students analyze the "writer's craft"; annotate article to indicate strong examples of the writer's style; discuss

Teaching Point: Often pieces like this “say more” than just what the author states explicitly; the writers have strong opinions on their topic and convey these biases through a variety of techniques

Teaching Point: Readers need to be aware of bias in order to determine the author’s purpose

Activity 1: Discuss notion of “bias”; provide overview of “rhetorical techniques” often employed by writers (rhetorical questions, word choice, sources included versus those not represented, pull-out quotes, etc.)

Model finding some of these using the first page of the text

Activity 2: Students reread the remainder of the article and annotate it (using a different color from previous annotations) for further evidence of author bias; discuss how the author feels about the topic and how we know this;

address the idea of “implicit claims”; discuss what the author is really trying to say through this piece

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.

Instructional Materials

- “Emergency Declaration Ends in Flint Water Crisis” (article by Associated Press)
- “High School Journalists Land a Scoop, and the Principal Resigns” (article from the New York Times, April 5, 2017)
- “Poison in the Water” (article by Bryan Brown from Upfront Magazine)

- http://pix11.com/2016/05/16/lawmakers-pressure-port-authority-to-cut-back-on-pollution/ (link to online article “Lawmakers Pressure Port Authority to Cut Back on Pollution” from May 16, 2016)
- https://issuu.com/emilysmith41/docs/march_17 (link to online article “District Hires New Principal”)
- Possible Anchor Charts: News Reporting vs. Investigative Journalism, Journalistic Text Features, Narrative Elements)
- Reveal Podcast’s “School haze” episode (https://www.revealnews.org/episodes Feb 18, 2017) *use search bar to find “School haze” episode

Teacher Resources

- http://projects.propublica.org/muckreads/
- http://www.brandeis.edu/investigate/
- https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/
- Newsela: http://www.newsela.com
- Reading Nonfiction, Beers and Probst
- Reveal Podcast: https://www.revealnews.org
- Scope Magazine
- ThinkCerca: http://www.thinkcerca.com
- Thinking Through Genre, Lattimer

Suggested Strategies for Accommodations and Modifications

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 format (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Take frequent breaks

- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual student's abilities and needs.
- Supply study guide questions, graphic organizers, and access to class notes.
- Individualize reading choices based on ability (reading level), readiness, and choice through extensive classroom library
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide discreet steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- 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

Adhere to all modifications and accomodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plans.

Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the reader.