Unit 4 Writing: Investigative Journalism: Writing Articles, Feature Stories, News Reporting

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **3-4 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Students will compare and contrast investigative journalism pieces with the more-familiar “news report” and discover the purpose and implications of investigative journalism. They will analyze the craft used in creating powerful pieces of investigative journalism and write their own investigative pieces based on their analyses and observations from the paired reading 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.

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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.

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 belonging in connection with race and ethnicity, and religious tolerance.

Commission on Holocaust Education

This unit further reflects the goals of the Holocaust Education mandate where students are able to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior; understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life; and understand the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

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; 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.W.8.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
LA.W.8.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
LA.W.8.2.A	Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia).
LA.W.8.2.B	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
LA.W.8.2.C	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
LA.W.8.2.D	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
LA.W.8.2.E	Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.
LA.W.8.2.F	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
LA.W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.W.8.5	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
LA.W.8.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the

	relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
LA.W.8.7	Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
LA.W.8.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
LA.W.8.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.W.8.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.L.8.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.8.1.A	Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.
LA.L.8.1.B	Form and use verbs in the active and passive voice.
LA.L.8.1.C	Form and use verbs in the indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, and subjunctive mood.
LA.L.8.1.D	Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.
LA.L.8.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.8.2.A	Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.
LA.L.8.2.C	Spell correctly.

Essential Questions

- From where do writers collect ideas?
- What kinds of stylistic techniques are effective in captivating a reader?
- What makes an idea or event “newsworthy”?
- What skills are needed to write efficiently?
- Why is it important to set goals?
- Why is there a need for investigative journalism?

Enduring Understandings

- A writer’s claim is not always expressed explicitly
- Investigative journalism differs from “news reporting” in form, content, and purpose
- Investigative journalism has the potential to bring about change in society
- 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

- Writers can indicate their bias(es) in a variety of ways
- Writers need to consider their own bias when writing nonfiction

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 writing
- The difference between a news article and a piece of investigative journalism
- The difference between active and passive voice and the appropriate use of both
- The general structure and characteristics of a piece of investigative journalism
- The meaning of the term “bias”
- Various ways in which authors show bias: choice of sources included or excluded, rhetorical devices such as rhetorical questioning, word choice/connotation, 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
- Applying the appropriate technical vocabulary when discussing journalistic pieces
- Building on their passion for an issue to craft well-organized and persuasive editorials
- Calling on previous learning of narrative writing to craft deliberate attention to issues and moments of social significance.
- Honing their nonfiction writing craft to convey meaning in the social issues of school.
- Identifying and including narrative elements used in a piece of investigative journalism
- Identifying and including various text features associated with news articles
- Reporting real stories, writing about social issues, and conducting investigative reporting and research on issues.
- Writing narrative nonfiction with a journalistic flair.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

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.

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:

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

Summative:

- Students should have 1-2 final pieces.
- Published pieces
- Score grammar and spelling in final drafts only
- Student portfolios
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Learning Progressions
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Rubrics and Student Samples
- Rubrics: created for the standards-based report card as well as teacher-created.
- On-demand Writing Assessments
- Standards should be addressed
- Students craft their own piece of "investigative journalism" (or provide new examples)
- Students will create a presentation in some format (poster, Prezi, etc.) to showcase all of the above and will deliver presentation to their peers
- Student will publish articles for the school newspaper

Benchmark:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year

- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics

Learning Plan

Middle School 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 writers share their work with others in the school community.

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

Throughout the year, students write in all modes of rhetoric including narration/description, argument/persuasion, and exposition. A variety of writing forms, including digital writing, are emphasized. Grammar lessons are embedded in writing instruction, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modeling is done through published and student-crafted mentor texts. Teachers focus equally on process and product with an emphasis on synthesizing across texts for nuanced understandings; teacher-created multi-modal text sets will be used as materials. High-and low-stakes writing and timed and untimed assignments will be used throughout the unit. Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

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.

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)
- CNN Student News
- 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")
- Mentor Text: Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul
- Mentor Text: What the Dog Saw by Malcolm Gladwell
- Reveal Podcast's "School haze" episode (https://www.revealnews.org/episodes Feb 18, 2017) *use search bar to find "School haze" episode

Teacher Resources

- *Units of Study in Argument, Informatiion, and Narrative Writing, Grade 8*, Lucy Calkins, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
- Associated Online Resources, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, readingandwritingproject.org
- *Read Write Teach: Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop*, Linda Rief
- *Lessons that Change Writers*, Nancie Atwell
- *In the Middle: New Understandings about Writing, Reading, and Learning*, Nancie Atwell, associated videos
- *Energize Research Reading and Writing,* Chris Lehman, Grades 4-8
- *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action*, Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels
- *Finding the Heart of Nonfiction,* Georgia Heard
- *Patterns of Power: Inviting Young Writers into the Conventions of Language*, Jeff Anderson
- *The Power of Grammar,* Mary Ehrenworth and Vicki Vinton
- *A Writer's Notebook,* Ralph Fletcher
- *Writing a Life,* Katherine Bomer
- *Study Driven*, Katie Wood Ray
- *Thinking Through Genre*, Heather Lattimer

- *Assessing Writers*, Carl Anderson
- *The Journey is Everything*. Katherine Bomer
- *Writing with Mentors*, Allison Marchetti, Rebekah O'Dell
- *Fearless Writing*, Tom Romano
- *Crafting Digital Writing*, Troy Hicks
- *The Digital Writing Workshop*, Troy Hicks

- High Five: The Integrated Language Arts and Journalism Curriculum for Middle School Students, Presented by the Newspaper Association of America.
- http://projects.propublica.org/muckreads/
- http://www.brandeis.edu/investigate/
- http://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-category/206 -- Pulitzer Prize Winning Investigative Reports
- https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/
- Investigative Journalism by Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Cornelius Minor
- Newsela or CommonLit
- Notice and Note: Reading Nonfiction, Beers and Probst
- Reveal Podcast: https://www.revealnews.org
- Scope Magazine
- ThinkCerca: http://www.thinkcerca.com
- Write Like This by Kelly Gallagher
- Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6-8