

**Teachers College Reading and Writing Project**

**Summer Institute  
on the  
Teaching of Reading**



**Grade 2  
Reading Curriculum  
Selections  
Summer 2016**



Teachers College Reading and Writing Project  
Reading User's Guide, Second Grade, 2016-2017  
Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt

## A User's Guide for *Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt*

September/October  
Level 3 Benchmark J/K/L

### Introduction

*Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt* bridges the gap between the end of first grade and the beginning of second grade for your readers. Much of your students' reading work in first grade was centered around actually learning how to read, whereas now their increasing automaticity with words allows them to move forward to the more grown up work of thinking about their books. It is an exciting time for children as readers as they make this transition, and this unit aims to help them start this work.

Launching the year is always a challenge. You must balance fostering a welcoming classroom community as students get to know one another with establishing important routines and expectations for the start of a new school year. Remember, it may be the start of a new year, but your kids will already know a lot about reading and about reading workshop. Notice, then, that this unit begins by reminding kids of all they know to do as readers and helping them assume responsibility for not only *what* they read but also *how* they read.

### Prerequisites/What to Do If Students Aren't Quite Ready to Start This Unit

Don't worry if you have students who didn't participate in a reading workshop last year. You and your students will have plenty of opportunities to practice both the routines and structures of a reading workshop as well as the behaviors of productive and proactive reading. Especially if most of your students are brand new to reading workshop, however, you will benefit from thinking carefully about the management structures you'll want to establish from day one. For tips on managing the workshop, read chapter 8, pages 89-102 of the Guide book.

For example, at the start of the very first minilesson, you may choose to explain how each day the class will gather in the meeting area for a lesson before moving quickly and quietly to a work spot to read independently. If you send a group of children from the minilesson to reading time and that group moves seamlessly to their table to begin reading, you will probably want to make a big deal of that. If you see a student browse quickly through a shared table basket and then settle down to read a book, you might celebrate that child's efficiency. You may also cheerlead if you notice two tablemates position their chairs back to back so they can stay focused during their independent reading time. You needn't make a drawn-out minilesson out of each of these behaviors but you can, instead, tuck in mention of these points, celebrating approximations and positive behaviors. Kids will take the hint! Meanwhile, your minilessons will steer the bigger work of the unit, giving the whole of your class more ambitious goals to strive toward.

If the majority of your students enter well below grade level, this unit will still be a good launch to your year—but here are some suggestions. For the first bend in this unit, we recommend that you

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follow the lessons with two key alterations. First, for Session 3, on reading with volume, if your students read below H, you will want them to use reading mats as described in Session 3 of the 1st Grade unit, *Building Good Reading Habits*. Second, you may decide to skip Session 6 about Post-its, because this is less important for readers at the lower levels. For Bend II, you may opt to spend longer on foundational skills and reading process. We suggest that before you teach this bend, you borrow Bend Two from the 1st Grade unit, *Readers Have Jobs to Do (Book 3)* and teach that. Then teach Bend 2 in this book (*Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt*) to give this substantially more weight to build your readers. We also suggest skipping Bend 3 of *Growth Spurts* at this point. You may decide, in the new year, to add this third bend to a character unit. Instead of teaching it now, you might do Bend 3 of *Readers Have Jobs to Do*, which focuses on using meaning and retelling to help your readers monitor and think about what is happening in their books.

### Materials/Getting Ready

This User's Guide assumes that you have your own set of the second grade Units of Study books, especially *Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt*. If you don't have this book, the guide will be of little use to you and you'll likely want to refer to the TCRWP's curricular calendars distributed in previous years. The materials that you need for this unit are described in detail in the Getting Ready section of the unit's Orientation at the front of the book.

Using last year's data when possible, you may want to assemble baskets of books at a range of reading levels. You might put together a few baskets of high-interest fiction books at levels G through K with one basket or so for each level. You can position kids around a basket, then, based on the data you have available. You may also find that you need a basket for levels E or F or even one for L or M.

You will also want to ensure that your classroom library is ready for students to start shopping for books by the beginning of Bend II. As you administer running records and get to know students as readers, you can begin to direct them to shop for their own baggies of books from the library.

Within the first few sessions of Bend I, you invite students to create bookmarks, use Post-its, and begin recording their daily reading in a reading log. You will want to have these materials ready so that readers practice using these tools alongside their books. There is a sample of a reading log on page 17 of the unit.

### Insights Gleaned From Other Teachers Who Have Taught This Unit/Special Concerns

Before you go any further, you need to think about pacing for the first reading and writing unit. We have too often seen teachers taking two months (or longer, *EEK!*) with these two units—and that will ignite a chain reaction for the rest of the year.

The beginning of the year often gets bogged down with procedures and establishing systems and routines. Don't put off the launch of this first unit! Get started right away, tucking most of the work

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you do establishing expectations into the actual unit—and you'll find that a lot of it is already there! Turn to Chapter 6 of the Guide book for tips on assessing students so that you can avoid spending weeks doing this or waiting until the whole class has been assessed to launch. There are also some great tips for conducting running records efficiently on pages 16 and 17 of the unit.

Know that the minilessons in all the unit of study books are written to be no more than ten minutes in length, and each session is intended to be one day. If you find that your lessons are lasting longer than ten minutes, you may choose to cut some of the stories or examples in the connections that can take up more time (although are also often engaging to kids). The mid-workshop teaching is sometimes unnecessary—this teaching often provides opportunities to repeat and extend work from the minilesson. If you can't always tuck it into the workshop, you may choose to skip it rather than breaking the sessions into two days.

You might be wondering if you're "allowed" to do guided reading during reading workshop. The answer is a resounding yes! But you probably won't be doing guided reading every day, or with every reader. Instead, you'll use guided reading as one method of small group instruction to help move readers up levels. You might be wondering when to start guided reading. We suggest starting guided reading during independent reading time once you have matched your readers to just-right levels, as early as Bend II! In Session 7, on page 40, you'll find guidance on how to launch your guided reading lessons. Read more about guided reading and other kinds of small group instruction on pages 48, 59, and 89 in *Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt*, as well as in Chapter 9 of the Guide book on pages 103 to 112.

Your second grade readers will use post-its as a tool to hold their thinking and questions. As their books become longer they need a way to hold onto and return to their ideas - especially as they work to grow them across a text. If using Post-its to facilitate and extend thinking about books is new to your students, you will want to note the times in this unit where you invite readers to do so. There is an entire conferring and small group section on page 33 devoted to this subject.

Many teachers have had questions, too, about when to do the shared reading and read aloud sessions. These are meant to be taught alongside the unit, typically inside of the first week, at a separate time of day than your reading workshop. Don't let those plans get lost at the back of the book, and don't wait until the end of the unit to teach them! You will notice that the materials from shared reading and read aloud are also used during minilessons. It is helpful if students are familiar with these texts when you use them during your teaching so be on the lookout for when they pop up across the unit. Note, too, that these sections have been written so that they are replicable; you can use them to plan more shared reading and read alouds with other books.

## Bend I

The goal of this bend is to simultaneously remind children of all they know to do as readers while inviting them to be responsible for their behaviors and habits. You will remind students that previewing not only gives a reader a sneak peek of a book but also sets in motion the important work of *thinking* about the book. You will also remind readers how important it is to scoop words up as they aim to read more fluently and to pause as they read to retell and jot their thinking. In a

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nutshell, you will help children reassume the important reading behaviors they were using by the end of first grade, and learn how to use these with renewed importance in second grade.

Stamina and volume will be goals your readers work towards all year long, but you will shine a particular spotlight on them in this first unit. As children start to tackle longer books across this second grade year, their reading rate becomes increasingly important. You'll want to notice which readers have trouble starting or sticking with books as well as which readers seem to take days to finish a book that should take them one sitting, start to finish. For example, a level J text should typically take a reader 20 minutes to read from beginning to end. You might spend some time watching readers get started during independent reading time and then also look closely at their reading logs as the unit and year unfold.

You will notice that partnerships now meet during the share portion of the reading workshop. This is different from kindergarten and first grades where readers typically transitioned to partnership time directly after independent reading time and then convened as a class for the share. The reason readers meet with their partners during the share in second grade is because older kids need more uninterrupted time reading on their own. Look for your readers to build towards 30 minutes of independent reading during this unit and to take about 5-7 minutes sharing with their partners. You will still want to match kids with similar level partners and they will begin meeting with someone from the very first session of the unit. It often helps if during independent reading children sit somewhere in the vicinity of their partner so as to ease the transition. If your readers are not used to meeting with someone else to discuss their reading and thinking, you can look to the partner chart on page 6 and start with some of the partnership behaviors at the very top. Don't delay beginning partnerships just because these may be new to your readers! The more kids practice working in these formations the better they will become, and talking with others about books is an integral part of becoming a thoughtful and insightful reader.

To teach Bend I of this unit, you will want to rely not just on *Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt* but also on the *Guide to the Reading Workshop*, and especially on Chapter 8, which overviews ways teachers have found to manage workshops. We suggest you think about the management of each part of the workshop: minilessons, independent work time, conferring and small group work, mid-workshop teaching, partner time, and share. It will be important to pay extra attention and time to any management needs at the start of the year, in order to pave the way for a successful entire year.

## Bend II

As you begin Bend II, you will have a growing sense of who your kids are as readers—in particular, their habits and behaviors, and their interests in books. You will have conducted several running records and will continue to do so in this bend while also beginning small group instruction. If your kids are like most second graders, they will have regressed a level or so over the summer and will need your support moving back to their end of year first grade level as well as working towards new instructional levels. While readers will not move as quickly through levels J-M as they did levels A-I, they will continue to need your support as the work they need to do at these later levels becomes more complex. This bend is chock full of possibilities for small group work with your readers.

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The big work of this bend is around word solving. It serves as a transition from the work your readers did around decoding in first grade to the work they will need to do now as they move into more difficult texts. While children who are reading at level J and above should have increasing automaticity with high frequency words and word solving, they will still encounter tricky words. At the beginning of this bend, you may look between the teaching points and your students' running records to note the ways in which this bend supports readers. You will also want to refer to the rally cry of the unit—that readers can take charge of and grow stronger at tackling tricky words. From the first session of the bend to the last, you will remind students that they must be proactive and flexible in their work with words; they can no longer rely on others to help them, and they need to implement new strategies as words become more complex.

The word solving strategies across this bend focus heavily on readers using meaning to solve unfamiliar words. Look for readers to cross check asking, "Does that make sense?" and to re-read when it doesn't. You will also encourage readers to think about what is happening in the text, using the context of the story alongside the syntax of the sentence and the visual aspects of the word. In first grade, readers began to look at parts of words instead of isolated letters and you will expect your second graders to carry that work forward, paying close attention to vowel teams and endings. The reality is that only 45% of the English language is decodable so above all, your readers will need to be flexible and strategic in their work around words, often using more than one strategy at once.

If you have readers who are reluctant when it comes to word solving or who need extra support in this area because they are reading below benchmark, you will want to take particular advantage of your small group time. You might pull together students for some small group shared reading or a small group word study (look to page 59 for help with this).

If you have students who do not need extra support with word solving, as evidenced by their running records, then you will want to be sure that you support them in other areas. You might pull a small group together around vocabulary (see page 65 and Session 11) or you might confer with them around some of the work from Bend I concerning fluency or comprehension. Your focus will depend on your kids' needs.

### Bend III

The final bend focuses on reading and writing connections. If you are implementing a writing workshop alongside your reading workshop, and using the writing Units of Study, then you will recognize similarities between the work kids are doing there and the work they do in this bend. Kids will especially transfer the habit of reading a text like a writer to notice the moves writers make and documenting that work across a "craft chart" where they name out what is powerful, why it's powerful, and how it's done. An example of this work is in the share of Sessions 13 on page 79. You will even go so far as to invite readers to bring their writing to reading workshop in Session 14, so they have opportunities to transfer what they are noticing in their books into their own writing. A reader might notice the strong description of a character in her book and then work to write a strong description of a person in her personal narrative.

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While the reading and writing connection is an important one for your kids to make, this is still a bend in a reading unit of study, so you will want to maintain focus on how studying an author's moves improves a reader's thinking and understanding of any book. You'll rally kids to notice the ways in which authors work behind the scenes to get a reaction from readers. You will want to notice your students laughing, gasping, and perhaps even crying over their books. These reactions reveal a strong understanding while reading. If you see a child passively reading, this should be a red flag that comprehension might be breaking down. If you find that readers need more support understanding their books, you will want to look to the conferring and small group section on pages 89 and 90. Throughout the bend, readers will study word choice, craft and structure with a particular focus on the endings of stories. Often, readers are so quick to finish a book that they don't linger at the end, but you will want your readers to start to practice doing so and thinking about the lessons and messages their books communicate.

The growth and responsibility you've helped establish in this first unit are meant to be carried with readers all year long (and forever!). Don't skimp on the celebration at the end of this unit. Make a big deal about how readers have learned to help themselves so much that they are ready to help others. Readers will enjoy leaving tips and reminders across the books they've read for future readers.

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Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction

## A User's Guide for *Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction*

November/December  
Level 3 Benchmark J/K/L

### Introduction

*Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction* is the first nonfiction reading unit for your second graders and is an accessible one for kids reading at any level. It supports the reading work that is important for nonfiction readers at this time of year—growing ideas about a topic, understanding and using key-words, and connecting information from one text to another. Readers practice and hone their skills across a variety of books and topics for the first two bends of the unit and then again within one topic, specifically, at the end of the unit. This unit not only strengthens your second graders' nonfiction reading skills, it also helps to develop their identities as readers. Kids love nonfiction and this unit provides you with an opportunity to get to know their current passions and as well as their new, developing topics of expertise.

One of the biggest challenges of this unit can be finding the right books and having plenty of them to offer your readers. Many classes are still building a rich and varied library of leveled nonfiction books. You will want to resist the urge to offer up every nonfiction book you have, and instead gather together the books that match the just-right and instructional levels of your students. If you model enthusiasm for the topics you have available to students, these will soon become the topics all kids wish to read about and look for when they're shopping for books.

You'll find that your read aloud and shared reading work are important because they provide students with multiple opportunities to practice the work they are doing in reading workshop alongside one another and with your support.

### Prerequisites/What to Do If Students Aren't Quite Ready to Start This Unit

If your students participated in the first unit, *Reading Growth Spurts*, you helped them develop and practice reading workshop routines—book shopping, working with a partner, and using tools such as Post-its to mark their thinking and a reading log to keep track of their reading. If your students still need to develop these practices, then you will want to be sure to continue to teach into them or issue reminders as needed during this unit.

In the first unit, your students also worked to develop strategies for understanding their books, reading fluently, and word solving. You will help students make connections between the work they did in the first unit and the work they do in this one. For example, in the first unit you taught readers that reading is thinking (Session 5) and in this unit, you come back to that work when you teach students that to understand what a book is teaching, they can combine their learning and their own thoughts (Session 3).

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Of course, you also want to make note of the work each student is doing as a reader. During the first unit you administered running records and held conferences as a way to learn about the reading behaviors and habits of your students. While your data is couched in the work kids did in fiction texts, you can still use this information to inform your small groups and conferences. If you have students who need support retelling in a fiction text, it is probable that those same students need support retelling in a nonfiction text. If you have students reading below benchmark level they will continue to need support in word solving. While this unit focuses more on understanding the vocabulary of a topic you can take many of the word solving strategies you taught in Bend II of *Reading Growth Spurts* and incorporate them into this unit's small groups, conferences, and shared reading sessions.

If the majority of your students are entering this unit at levels F and G, we suggest that before you do this unit, you first teach the first grade nonfiction unit, *Learning About the World*. It will be particularly important to teach Bend I and II, because of the types of books and words that students will be mostly encountering. Most of these books will have a sentence or two on a page and students will need more support in using pictures to help them understand and grow ideas about the information, as well as more support around the foundational skills in reading. Then you may decide to this unit later in school year in lieu of nonfiction book clubs.

A second option is to continue with this unit, and give more time and attention to Bend II. You might, for example, teach the first three sessions in Bend I and then skip to Bend II, and use the extra time in the second bend to give your students more practice using the foundational skills taught in that bend. You might even revisit Bend II in Book 1 of Grade 2, or Books 2 or 3 of Grade 1, and select a handful of word solving lessons to give students more time and practice with this skill. Then we suggest you shorten Bend III of this book. Certainly reading across a topic will be beneficial to your students. Sessions 12, 13, and 15 are key ones to teach. And then end the week with a celebration. Remember, your students will be moving through their books more quickly, so you'll give many of the teaching points with the understanding that your students are *rereading* their texts. Make sure that whatever course you choose, you have somewhere between 18-20 sessions.

## Materials/Getting Ready

To teach this unit you will need your unit of study book as well as the texts you will use for your minilessons, shared reading, and read aloud. The read aloud text for this unit is *Knights in Shining Armor*, by Gail Gibbons, and the shared reading text is *Tigers*, by Laura Marsh. It is important that you begin the shared reading and read aloud plans at the beginning of the unit because the work you do in these balanced literacy components will support students in the work they do during reading workshop. These sections have been written so that they are replicable. You can use them to plan more shared reading and read alouds with other texts. You will also find that you use these texts during different sessions in the first few bends.

During the first two bends in the unit, students will read just-right and instructional level nonfiction books. You will want to spend some time before the beginning of the unit exploring the resources you have available to students. If you have an abundance of just-right nonfiction books, students can continue to shop for books just as they did in the first unit. Typically, students will have 8-10

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books in their baggie as well as their reading log and Post-its. If you find that there are levels in your library that lack enough just-right nonfiction books to support students reading 8-10 books per week, you can make bins with the books you do have for a specific level and invite students reading those levels to sit together during independent reading time and choose from that bin each day.

In the third bend of the unit, students move from reading individual texts around different topics to reading several texts around one topic. You will need to bring in the third text of the unit, *Amazing Animals: Tigers*, by Valerie Bodden, so that you can create your own little topic set about tigers as you teach the sessions of the bend. Again, you may have enough just-right nonfiction books to create 2-4 book topic sets around different topics for your students, but you also may need to be creative. The important thing is that readers continue to read just-right books, which may mean that each topic set is comprised of just two books or that the topic sets are shared by partners or that the topics are broad rather than narrow. For example, you might not have two books on basketball but you may have two books on sports.

Finally, you will want to explore the nonfiction guided reading sets available in your building so that you can gather resources for your guided reading groups or other small groups you conduct across the unit.

### Insights Gleaned From Other Teachers Who Have Taught This Unit/Special Concerns

In any nonfiction reading unit, there's a common misconception that you have to teach every text feature, naming what it's called and what it does. While you will certainly point out and talk about common text features, such as the table of contents or glossary, or captions, your teaching will center around ways readers can learn more and more from their books. In Session 7, you'll teach your kids ways in which text features can help with new vocabulary, and readers will surely use text features as they compare and contrast the information across texts as certain information may be communicated through a diagram in one book but then through photos and text in another. Your main focus of the unit, though, is to help readers learn and think about their texts and topics.

You will continue to offer students the option of using Post-its to mark parts of their texts and to jot thoughts and questions. Of course, many students revert to using Post-its to collect facts, so if you notice this happening in your classroom you will want to teach more specifically into the difference between fact collecting and recording purposeful thinking. There are some specific examples across the unit of readers using Post-its in meaningful ways. You can check out the "shocker" Post-it on page 26 and the ways that kids use Post-its to support their vocabulary work on pages 30, 38 and 39. There is also a mid-workshop on page 65, in which you'll highlight how readers can add their wonderings.

Many teachers also find that their kids benefit from tools or charts to help them practice moving from just regurgitating facts to thinking about their texts. This unit offers a few helpful tools: page 10 has a mini-chart to help kids talk about their thinking, page 67 has a tool to facilitate partner talk, and page 80 has a chart to help readers say more. The key to tools, and charts, is to help

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readers practice using them. Just handing kids a chart or tool is not the same as showing them how to use it and then coaching them as they practice. So if you are going to use some extra talk tools with your students be sure to plan for teaching into these.

The read aloud plans offered at the back of the unit of study book will serve you and your readers well for the first two bends of the unit. By the time you get to Bend III, though, you will want to plan on doing read alouds that move between two or more texts on the same topic. This will allow kids to practice the compare and contrast work you are teaching across that bend. You might decide to find another book about knights to read alongside *Knights in Shining Armor*.

This is not a reading club unit, specifically, even though kids will read in topic-based sets by the end. For the whole of the unit, kids will be reading just-right books on a variety of topics. Use this unit to explore the genre and establish strong partnerships before entering a club-based nonfiction unit. You'll probably choose to do a second nonfiction reading unit later in the year, namely, *Reading Nonfiction Cover to Cover*, found in *If...Then... Curriculum*. In this later unit, kids will read across a topic and work with a club to accumulate information across texts, and talk and grow ideas about their reading.

## Bend I

The first bend emphasizes the thinking work nonfiction readers need to do to understand their books. All too often, readers hone in on the cool and interesting aspects of nonfiction texts or spend all of their reading time making it through the words without pausing to add in their own thinking or to put parts together to determine what the text is actually teaching. To launch this work around thinking, readers not only read traditional forms of nonfiction texts, i.e. books, they also read nontraditional forms, like the globe and pennies. Inviting readers to read “items” helps them practice the important thinking work they will then do in their books.

Readers also bring their practice of previewing to each new text they read so as to get a lay of the land before diving in to learn. You will see readers not only reading their texts, they will also notice details across a page and question what they are learning. Sessions 3 and 4, particularly, highlight that readers ask themselves questions as a way to monitor their learning.

All of this work will, of course, require readers to slow down and spend more time with the chapters or parts of their books. So if you notice some students whipping through the pages of their texts, that is a sign that they need more support slowing down to notice the details, ask questions, and really monitor their learning and understanding.

The partner work in the share of each workshop will especially support the thinking work students are doing as talking with someone else about a topic is a natural way to grow thinking and to ask and answer questions. You will want to be sure to leave time for this work at the end of each workshop and to highlight the ways in which the partnership work mirrors the work taught across the rest of the workshop.

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## Bend II

One of the most important things for you to understand, and also communicate to students, during Bend II is that each day's teaching is not an assignment. A glance across the table of contents for this bend will reveal that each day's work creates a repertoire of strategies readers can use to solve words and use them to better understand their texts and topics. While this is the case for almost all bends in a unit of study, it is particularly important to convey to your readers that the idea is to be flexible when working with new vocabulary and to use everything they've learned strategically.

Across the bend, notice how readers become more aware of the vocabulary in their books. Of course many times authors help readers with this work by identifying an important word by using bold print or giving support through text features, but you will also want to notice how your students identify their own keywords and how they use all parts of the text to better understand them. There is a difference between being able to read someone else's definition and being able to create your own. This bend helps readers strive towards the latter so that they leave a text not just with a bunch of new words and their meanings memorized, but rather with a better understanding of a topic.

You will also want to note the ways in which partnership conversations change across this bend. Look to see that children are incorporating the words they learn into their conversations with one another, making it a goal to notice, figure out and use the vocabulary of a topic. If you find that some readers are reluctant to incorporate keywords into their conversations, look to the share in Session 8 for a fun game partners can play that will support this work.

Bend II is also a time when you can use your small groups to help students move up in reading levels. Be sure to note all of the support this bend gives you for guided reading sessions by studying the conferring and small group work sections. Also, make note of the fluency work of Session 10 as you will not want that work to fall by the wayside as readers focus on vocabulary.

## Bend III

The final bend of the unit sets readers up to learn from multiple texts and to become experts on a topic. While readers will reach for higher level work, such as comparing and contrasting and proving and disproving information, you will want to help them maintain all of the important work they learned to do from the first two bends as well.

To compare and contrast information, your readers will need to see past the isolated facts on each page and notice the larger ideas or subtopics each author is communicating. Your students practiced this work in the first bend when you taught them to ask, "What is this book teaching me?" You will want to remind them that as they read each chapter or section of their text, they need to do that same work so that they come away with larger chunks of information rather than small details. Once readers are able to do this work, they will have a much easier time comparing and contrasting information across texts. Sessions 12-15 teach specifically into this work.

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The final three sessions of the bend invite readers to celebrate their learning by teaching others about their topics. While your students will find it exciting and meaningful to share their new knowledge with others, you, meanwhile, will be able to notice the ways in which this unit helped each reader grow. Their ability to learn from nonfiction texts and communicate new learning should look and sound markedly different from what they were able to do at the beginning of the unit.

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Studying Characters and Their Stories

## A User's Guide for *Studying Characters and Their Stories*

January

Level 3 Reading Benchmark: Levels K/L

### Introduction

*Studying Characters and Their Stories* is like revisiting an old friend for teachers and students alike, because by now, children have had a few chances to study character, both this year and the one prior. On the other hand, this familiarity with characters may make this unit feel a bit like, “Been there, done that.” Fear not. The books your kids are reading now, as transitional readers, demand a new kind of attention. The books are longer, there are more characters, more episodes, more chapters, and more idiomatic phrases to hold onto, synthesize and understand. It is incredibly important work, too, to get kids ready to do this in even longer and more complex texts as they move up the levels of complexity. In this unit, you will teach kids to “read” their characters in order to grow ideas about them. Your main role will be to support your students as they work hard to infer about characters and to dig more deeply into the stories they are reading.

This unit does not have a separate section for read aloud and shared reading, however, it is critical that you continue to plan and implement this important component work. Without daily read alouds and shared reading, this unit will not be able to get any traction. Some suggestions for read aloud titles might include: *I Want my Hat Back*, by Jon Klassen, *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*, by Patty Lovell, and *Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie*, by Laura Rankin. For shared reading titles, you could return to the Katie Woo series and use another of these titles such as *Moving Day*, or use a book like *A Birthday for Bear*, by Bonny Becker. The main thing is that you expose children to a variety of books with interesting, entertaining characters.

### Prerequisites/What to Do If Students Aren't Quite Ready to Start This Unit

Because this unit follows a nonfiction unit, you will want to do some current running records so that you have a good understanding of where your kids are in terms of the reading process, fluency, and comprehension. The *If...Then Curriculum Guide* gives you some concrete things to look for when analyzing these running records. You will also want to think about how your students retell the books they are reading on a daily basis to determine whether or not they are overly dependent on the literal sequential details of the book or if they are moving towards summary and inferential thinking—you'll want to push them towards the latter. You may also want to pay attention to their talk and their stop and jots during an interactive read-aloud as a way to informally assess their comprehension and thinking about characters.

Warning: don't give kids the 3rd grade assessment or rubric in the *Grades 3-5 Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions*. There is useful information to guide you in the Grade 2 progression, but we don't want to highjack the third grade assessments to use at this time of year in second grade.

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If you skipped bend 3 early in the year from Growth spurts... you may add that here. You may decide, in the new year, to add this third bend to a character unit. Instead of teaching it now, you might do Bend 3 of *Readers Have Jobs to Do*, which focuses on using meaning and retelling to help your readers monitor and think about what is happening in their books.

If you find that majority of your students fall in the E-H range rather than J and beyond, then you'll want to fold in some foundational skill lessons to support the work students need to be doing at those levels. We suggest that you look at the first grade unit, *Readers Have Big Jobs to Do* to target specific needs of your class. Bends two and three are particularly potent when it comes to addressing skills like word solving using MSV, rereading for meaning, envisioning and understanding difficult vocabulary. You'll likely find the small group and conferring write ups to be especially helpful as you move your students towards bigger challenges in their books. If you choose this route, the *Dragon* series by Dav Pilkey could serve as your demonstration texts, as it is slightly higher, but still accomplishes the work that you will be teaching, with a strong main character in tow.

### Materials/Getting Ready

As you organize your classroom library for this unit, don't just put books together by Series. Children will dive into series later in the year. For now, make it your priority to spotlight books that feature a variety of strong characters. You might group these books by theme, such as friendship, families, or school.

It is also a good idea, if possible, to invite partners to shop for some of the same books. This is a helpful support system for partners, as well as a great way for them to check in on each other's reading comprehension and to help each other grow ideas about characters using evidence from the text.

The read-alouds and shared-reading texts you select to support this unit should be ones that have clear problem-solution structures and ones whose characters clearly change. Some of the read-alouds you choose will be picture books but you will also want to choose a few chapter books to include as well. Some titles we love for this unit include: *Pinky and Rex* by James Howe, *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Polacco, or *Dancing in the Wings* by Debbie Allen. You might select a couple of chapter books to read such as: *Ivy and Bean* by Annie Barrows.

Dust off your charts from Unit 1, *Second-Grade Reading Growth Spurt*, and use them to review what your kids have already learned about reading fiction books. You can even freshen up these charts by revising some of their titles or bullets. For example, "Reading Partners Work Together" could become "Reading Partners Work Together to Understand Characters." Or add the word "fiction" to this chart so that it reads "Fiction Authors Have Intentions—So Pay Attention!" There are also some useful charts in the *If...Then Curriculum Online Resources* under the *Readers Get to Know Characters by Performing Their Books* unit that can help support your kids with vocabulary and fluency, as well as ones in the first grade unit book, *Meeting Characters and Learning Lessons: A Study of Story Elements*.

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We also suggest creating some new charts in Bend I, so you might get some 6 x 8 inch Post-it notes in different colors to make your own Post-it chart. You can even ask some of your artistic second graders to illustrate these for you. Or take photos of your kids in the act of doing the things you have taught and use those to make a chart that is for your kids, with your kids, and by your kids.

## Insights Gleaned From Other Teachers Who Have Taught This Unit/Special Concerns

Teachers found that using the read aloud Post-its from Book One helped them plan the read alouds for this unit. These read aloud Post-its are particularly relevant to this character unit, as they provide the language you can use before you read as you do a sneak peak, getting your kids thinking about the plot and the characters. As you read, there are prompts that focus on various elements and work: the characters and their actions, monitoring the story, noticing important parts about the plot, and how characters might be changing. After you read, it is important to show kids ways you can figure out the lessons the author might be trying to teach readers, for example, by noticing how the parts fit together and connect to the title of the book. The more kids hear these think alouds, the more likely they are to start using this same language as they read, think, and talk about their own books.

Also, many teachers found that the shared reading plans from Book One provided a useful structure to follow when planning the shared reading for this unit. Important things teachers emphasized to encourage and support transfer to students' independent reading included a thorough book introduction, stopping to retell, making their voices match the mood and tone of the text, and stopping to cross-check their reading. Teachers found it helpful to remember each day's focus for shared reading:

Day One, warm-up, book introduction, and first read  
Day Two: cross-checking (MSV)  
Day Three: word study  
Day Four: fluency  
Day Five: comprehension and orchestration

Some teachers, when working with a group of struggling readers, used a bunch of simpler books like *Elephant and Piggie* by Mo Willems as a way to teach kids to get to know characters well, not only in one book, but across books. It wasn't something that lasted too long—just a few days, perhaps, to teach into the routine of reading with an eye towards getting to know characters. After that, students were able to repeat the process with more independence in other more difficult books.

## Bend I

In this bend, you will invite children to go on an adventure, in which they meet and learn about characters—and develop strong thinking about them. Students will work hard to grow ideas about their characters by considering the work they can do to get to know a character before they read, as

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they read, and after they read. As they collect information, they will put Post-its on important pages where they learn about characters' likes or dislikes, the troubles they are having, behaviors that seem to repeat, or even a change of time or place that impacts the characters. You'll encourage children to prepare for their partner talk time by spending a few minutes jotting what they are learning about their characters. To help monitor for understanding, students might place a Post-it at the beginning, middle and end of their book, or at the end of each chapter, as a reminder to themselves to stop and recall what they have read.

Throughout this bend, students will read a little bit, then stop to retell themselves what they read and gleaned about their characters from that part. Then they will repeat this process again and again across their reading time. You will want your students to pay particular attention to reading the first chapter in a book with a close eye, as this is usually when the main characters and the problem are first introduced. The first chapter is also when children are introduced to the book's setting, and to the language, vocabulary, and the style of the author. In books at levels K/L/M, the plot moves quickly, so by the end of the first chapter readers will be able to confirm what the trouble will be. If you see kids zipping past this first chapter, or any chapter, for that matter, you might have them set up their books prior to reading with a Post-it at the end of each chapter that reminds them to pause and reflect. You may want to teach readers to pause after reading each chapter to retell the story. As part of this, students can identify the characters by name, describe the setting and the important events that have happened so far in the story, and name the problem and how it is being dealt with so far.

It will be helpful to use your Mid-Workshop Teaching to remind kids that once they finish a book they should look back over their Post-its, thinking about how characters have changed from the beginning to the end, and what ideas they want to share with their partners. As you transition kids to partnership time, refer to the "Partners Share Their Reading Adventures" chart (see p. 13) as a reminder of all that they can do to have a fantastic conversation. You might even make small versions of this chart so that each partnership has one as a guide.

## Bend II

Unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases, surprising or confusing behavior, and conflicting points of view in books can make it a challenge to get to know a character. This bend, which starts on page 13, will give you lots of tips for helping students do this work, especially when it comes to understanding unusual words and phrases. You will probably find yourself doing more coaching conferences and small group guided practice work during this bend to get kids to tackle this work with more independence. Some things to coach into might include looking through a whole word or phrase, thinking about what would make sense, reading it a few times, and getting a running start.

Sometimes it's the work of getting to know characters is a challenge for readers. Teaching kids some tips to help them grow this understanding is especially helpful in this bend. You might teach students to reread often to make a picture in their mind or to stop and sketch a picture of what is happening. You might also teach them to Post-it a part in the book where the character is not acting like himself or herself so they can talk to their partner about this later.

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You can also set systems into place that will help children tackle all of the challenges of this unit. For example, “buddy books” can be particularly helpful for kids who need extra support decoding and analyzing words, understanding characters’ actions, and navigating plots. Shared reading with groups of kids will provide the repeated practice necessary for increasing children’s ability to adjust their reading into meaningful chunks and phrases—modulating their reading to match the mood and tone of what they are reading. When children read fluently and expressively, this helps them better understand both the story and the characters.

### Bend III

During this last bend, kids will investigate the ways in which characters change and grow across a book, thinking about the lessons that both their characters and they, themselves, as readers, are learning. Students will compare and contrast across texts, asking “Have other characters learned the same or different things? Have they learned them in the same or different ways?” You can expect kids to make connections between how the characters in books act to how the people in their own lives—or they, themselves—behave when faced with troubles.

Another suggestion is to encourage kids to pay attention to the changes of the characters around the main character(s). Figuring out the cause of this change can be a challenge, but ultimately, it helps readers interpret a bigger meaning from the story. For example, in the book, *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Mellon*, readers can take away the message that being yourself is always the best choice. Paying attention to a key moment or to the consequences of a character’s actions or mistakes can also be key in uncovering what the character is learning. This unit ends with the kids looking for books that have similar lessons and grouping these books together to read and make comparisons.

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Bigger Books Mean Amping Up Reading Power

## A User's Guide for *Bigger Books Mean Amping Up Reading Power*

February/March  
Level 3 Benchmark L/M

### Introduction

*Bigger Books Mean Amping Up Reading Power* is designed to build the foundational reading skills students need to become strong lifelong readers. Of course, you will do running records and watch as your kids move up reading levels, but this unit does more than just that—it helps students become stronger at each level. Students will work to comprehend what they are reading through attention to reading with fluency, understanding literary language, and tracking the events of longer stories.

This unit is especially designed to support a class of students, the majority of whom are reading roughly in the range of levels I through L. That is, it is designed to help the bulk of your class transition into chapter books and through the early stages of chapter book reading. (If the majority of your students are not approaching these levels, we discuss possible solutions in the section below.) You will help your youngsters learn to hold onto longer and longer texts. You'll equip them to monitor for sense and to be active word solvers as they encounter trickier language and storylines. You will want to assess your students' reading levels early in this unit to make sure that many of them are ready to delve into chapter book reading.

### Prerequisites/What to Do If Students Aren't Quite Ready to Start This Unit

This unit is often taught after winter break and begins by returning to many of the foundational skills you taught at the start of the year. In order to ensure its' success and support students' transfer of skills and habits from one unit to the next, you may want to take a few days to shore up their skills. This is especially true if many of your students are reading below benchmark or if they haven't had many reading opportunities over the winter break.

You may want to take a few days to remind students all that they they know about independent reading. You may want to revisit book selection and logs. Let students make their own book-shopping lists, which will give them a chance to review book-shopping routines. Additionally, many teachers find it helpful to pull out some old charts from previous units, especially those displaying foundational reading skills. Kids could read practicing the repertoire of strategies they've already learned, ensuring they start this new unit off with a bang.

Running records will be the primary form you use to assess your students' reading. Be sure to pay special attention to the retelling sections of their running records. This can give you a glimpse into your students' abilities to determine importance and to track a story, both skills that will be a big part of Bend III. You will also want to listen closely to their fluency as you administer running

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records, as this will help you determine who will need more support with Bend I, where the work of fluency plays a vital role.

If you find that the vast majority of your students are not yet ready for chapter books, do not despair. You have a couple of options to support your students. If many of your students are well below benchmark, lingering in low levels like F and G, one option is to continue to provide support in foundational skills, including reading process. Your students need more time and lessons in helping them navigate longer words and using what they learn in phonics to help them be more flexible in the word solving process. You might decide to teach *Readers Have Jobs To Do*, a first grade unit, that your students perhaps didn't have a chance to do last year. This unit will provide great support for those readers.

Another option is to alter this current unit. If many of your readers are not reading chapter books, but are reading levels G, H, and I, you may decide to place greater emphasis on some parts of this unit and leave out other parts (like those about chapter books). For example, Bend I is all about reading fluency, which will greatly benefit readers at these levels. Bend II, on the other hand, is about figurative language, which is not as much of a focus in these lower levels of texts. You may decide, then, to use Bend II to revisit sessions from Books I and II that support tackling longer words and *new* words (vocabulary) as you read. Bend III is about reading longer books—with chapters. These lessons are important and can support your readers. You may need to alter the direction from “retell at the end of a chapter” to “retell at the end of a part” or “after a few pages.” This will help children monitor for meaning and think about what is happening in their books more often, focusing on smaller amounts. You might also select a shorter text to demonstrate your minilessons, such as a Little Critter book or a book like *Danny and the Dinosaur*, which don't have chapters. Bend IV spotlights clubs and goal setting. You may want to add a club goal to the mix, like the Word Solvers, whose job is to focus on figuring out harder, longer and new words as they read.

## Materials/Getting Ready

The essential materials you need for this unit are described in detail at the beginning of the book, in the Getting Ready section of An Orientation to the Unit, (page xii). You will need a copy of the mentor texts, *Houndsley and Catina*, by James Howe; *Happy Like Soccer*, by Maribeth Boelts; and *Minnie and Moo Go Dancing*, by Densy Catz. In addition to these books, you will want to gather books that are full of literary language, such as *Owl Moon*, by Jane Yolen and *Let's Get a Pup! Said Kate*, by Bob Graham. The Getting Ready section at the front of the unit offers additional examples. You'll probably want to put these books in bins on the tables so that students can access them during reading time. In addition to their “just right” books, these texts give students opportunities to practice what is in the minilesson.

While it is not necessary to read all the books students are reading during reading workshop, it will be helpful to read many, perhaps one or two from each popular series in the classroom. This will facilitate your discussions with kids about the characters and the big things that recur in a series. You may not have read every *Pinky and Rex* book in your library, but reading one or two will give you an idea of how to support your students who are reading them; you will be able to know that Pinky is, indeed, the boy, and Rex is the girl, and that Rex often has to help Pinky out because he

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gets upset easily. Knowing details like these gives you a way to talk to your students about their books, without have to read ALL of them.

Students will be jotting on Post-its regularly in their texts. This can be really exciting for them, but a bit overwhelming for you as you consider how to help students be responsible for their own Post-its. Some teachers leave a basket of Post-its on the table, while others have students keep them in their book baggies, along with a pen. Whatever you decide, you will want to set up a system that allows students easy access to Post-its and a pen during reading workshop. In Session 13, students create a reading emergency tool kit. You will want to think about what you will use to make this kit. Some teachers use pencil boxes, while others have used tissue boxes. Students keep Post-its, pencils, and mini versions of the charts in these tool kits.

The biggest challenge in this unit will be getting your library ready to support the volume of reading that students need to do. One of the big transitions in this unit is in Bend III, when students go from reading different books than their partner, to reading the same books, to help each other think deeply about those. The structure of same-book partnerships will give students opportunities to discuss what happened in the books, and to compare and contrast notes. It may take some time to ensure the library is equipped to handle students working in same book partnerships while also reading a huge volume of books. If it is not possible for you to gather enough double copies of the same book from your own library, you may want to pool books with your colleagues, creating same-book bundles that can be shared across classrooms. You may decide to have students choose books in the same series or by the same authors or on the same topics and then swap their books when they are done, so that both partners get a chance to read the same book.

### Insights Gleaned From Other Teachers Who Have Taught This Unit/Special Concerns

This unit has been a popular one, and it will help you to know from the start some of the aspects of the unit that were especially popular. Over and over, teachers have cited the importance of read aloud. They report that the read aloud helped students practice mentally holding onto a longer text, accumulating the text along the way. This is all work that kids need to do on their own with their independent books, but doing the work with the class read aloud served as a intermediary, giving them scaffolded practice at this work. Students were then able to transfer the same strategies to their own books.

If you have a number of students who are still solidifying their skills by reading books at levels G-I, you'll find it helpful to turn to *Reading Growth Spurts*, a unit from earlier in the year, for support working with these readers during conferring and small group work time. That book will remind you of strategies you can teach kids to use for retelling, decoding tricky words, and for learning new vocabulary. Expect that with targeted support, those kids will progress quickly, so be ready to give them running records with texts written at the next-level-up, and then to let them progress. You'll find that readers who are still working with G-I benefit from guided reading groups with texts at their instructional levels and from small group shared reading of those texts, too. After introducing the texts in that way, the kids can keep copies in their baggies and read them without your help.

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Teachers have reported that the unit's attention to figurative language was helpful—and in fact, many third grade teachers have borrowed these sessions from Bend II and taught them to their third graders. Third grade teachers found that borrowing some of Bend II supported many of their students with the literary language they encountered on many state exams.

People have particularly appreciated Bend IV, and many teachers decide to try a version of Bend IV at the end of every unit. You'll note that in this bend, students create goal clubs around all the skills they have learned across the unit. Because the minilessons in Bend IV focus on listening skills, setting goals, self assessing and giving feedback to club members, variations of these sessions can be transferred to other units and taught with new content.

If you have students who read well above benchmark at this time of year, you'll probably find that these students benefit from explicit instruction around reading strategies. You may want to consider borrowing some of the character learning progressions from your third grade colleagues' *Reading Pathways* book as a way to provide these students with more.

## Bend I

The teaching in this bend is self-explanatory and clear. You won't find that the lessons take more than ten minutes to teach—if they do, we encourage you to watch a video of a minilesson from the TCRWP vimeo site <http://readingandwritingproject.org/resources/units-of-study#> and think about ways to speed things up. If necessary, cut out parts of minilessons that seem unnecessary for your kids. For some, you may cut out (or down) the connection, for others, you might consolidate the link and the active engagement, asking kids to practice what you have taught by getting started doing it in their own work. The mid-workshop teaching provides opportunities to repeat and extend work from the minilesson. If you can't tuck this into the workshop, skip it rather than breaking the sessions into two days. You might add two catch up or "repertoire" days into the unit, in which you help students reflect on their work, recall what they have learned and then use this learning to set goals and move their own work forward.

Over the course of this bend, students work on reading their texts more fluently. They try out many different strategies to improve their pace, phrasing and intonation while reading. At the launch of this bend, students work on rereading their texts out loud and in their heads. This thread of rereading weaves throughout the bend, as they learn additional strategies to improve their fluency. One thing the bend spotlights is comprehension, helping students use what they understand about a text to read fluently (see Sessions 3 and 4). This is especially important because fluency is the bridge between decoding and comprehension.

If you are aligning this unit with the poetry unit in writing workshop, it may be helpful to put copies of the poems you are using as mentors into the kids' book baggies, so that they have familiar poems to read. Poems are great for helping kids practice fluency, as they often have a rhythm or beat, line breaks, and lots of mood. Meanwhile, you can carry over these poems to Bend II, where the focus is literary language. As students learn to write comparisons and use words in special ways, they'll be able to spot these elements in the poems they read, too. Teachers across the country who have reported success with this unit have said how well it supports the poetry unit and vice versa.

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A couple of key tips for this bend:

- Emphasize volume during conferences and small group work. Part of fluency is focusing on pace—so that students' reading isn't too fast or too slow—as well as stamina. We hope students leave this bend able to read smoothly, with expression, at a just right pace for longer and longer periods of time.
- Engage partners to not only listen to each other, but, to give each other feedback on ways to reread and improve their work, too.
- Remind students to not only 'read with fluency,' but to also pay attention the clues in the text to think about the sound, tone, and feelings of the characters.

## Bend II

You should reach Bend II a week or a week and a half after you start the unit, and Bend II should take about the same time as Bend I. This second bend focuses on literary language and helping students both monitor and infer meaning from texts. Some students will struggle to find literary language—sometimes, particular elements like comparisons, simply aren't in their books—or when they come across some form of literary language, they skip over it. We have several suggestions to keep in mind as you teach this bend.

Make sure that students are reading poems and short stories that are chock full of literary language. Many teachers place an additional bin of materials on tables that students can read from, in addition to their individual book baggies. You'll find a great list of books and poems in the *Getting Ready* section of the unit that you might use.

You might set up students who do not find literary language to do some rereading with their partners. This can both heighten children's awareness of what is on the page, and give them a chance to work as a team, reading and talking about what the things they encounter—both literary and non-literary parts—mean.

Remind your students that this work is about paying attention to what is on the page and what it means. If they don't see literary language, are they finding precise language? Are they finding new vocabulary words? These things, too, will be helpful for your readers to notice, note, and talk about with a partner.

Lastly, you may want to pull small groups to support particular kids with this work. Choose a text and tag parts where there is literary language. Ask students to pay close attention to these pages, to find the language and to think about what the author is teaching. This will give them scaffolded practice.

## Bend III

One of the biggest teaching challenges in this bend is that readers of these levels need support tracking their stories. Some tips to help with this are:

- Help students put a Post-it at the end of each chapter to keep track.

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- Read aloud lots of chapter books, and model tracking the problem and solution in the story.
- Have students read the same book as their partner so they can work through the story together.
- Introduce students to one book in a series so they can read the rest of the series with support from the first book.

This bend supports children in reading longer books and helps them accumulate and synthesize information across chapters while they read. One thing you will want to make sure of at the launch of this bend is that students hold mostly chapter books. Many classroom libraries have an ample supply of picture books in the I-L bins, which is great, however, chapter book reading will better help students grow their ability to track a story with many characters.

You may find that you want to spend more time in this bend supporting students with some of these strategies across a few books. Since this bend is only four sessions long, you might extend it a couple of sessions or repeat a couple sessions to make it 6 teaching days. If so, we suggest you spend more time on the mid-workshop teaching on pages 67, 74 and 79, using it to extend the work of this bend, if you feel the need to linger in it a bit.

Remember, you can further support all that you teach in this bend during small group work, both in this bend and in the next one, when students are in book clubs.

## Bend IV

The last bend of this unit, in which students study and work on a particular goal in the context of a club, is exciting. Many teachers have really loved how much this bend supports students in self assessing, setting goals and working collaboratively. This bend should last about a week. One challenge teachers have faced is that sometimes many students choose the same goal. When this happens, some clubs can be very large, and some clubs can be very small. Don't be afraid to break clubs into two groups. That is, you may have two smaller sized fluency clubs.

Many teachers have wondered what to do when they feel that students need to focus on a skill other than the one they choose to make their goal. For example, imagine a student chooses to be in the "fluency" club, but you think she should be in the "keeping track of longer books" club. In this case, let the student know your concern. You might say, "Oh, I noticed you have chosen the 'fluency' club. I think that is your strength. Why don't you try reading a chapter or two and as you do, really think about whether fluency is a struggle or if keeping track of the story is a bit harder for you." You can then read a chapter with this student and coach her to assess her strengths and needs.

The unit ends with a fun celebration, in which students release their own news bulletins. When celebrating this unit, be sure that students really reflect on their learning. Yes, the reading skills are an important part of this unit, but so is the ability to reflect on oneself as a reader—which students will do throughout the unit, and should certainly do one last time during the celebration.

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Series Book Clubs

## A User's Guide for *Series Book Clubs*

May/June  
Level 3 Benchmark M

### Introduction

As a majority of texts written at level M tend to be series (*Magic Tree House*, *Reddy Freddy*, *Katie Kazoo*), it is fitting to end the school year teaching students how to fall in love with favorite characters and become obsessed fans prior to summer break! This unit helps students become experts not only on the characters, however, but also on the authors themselves, and it sets them up to develop insights and make comparisons across series.

Throughout this unit, you will be supporting essential comprehension reading skills such as previewing, envisioning, predicting, monitoring for sense, and inferring about characters. Students will be doing this work not just alone, but in partners and clubs, where talk and conversation will help to deepen their understanding of their series books. This unit is perfect for propelling students into slightly more challenging texts and developing a repertoire of skills that have been introduced throughout the year.

### Prerequisites/What to Do If Students Aren't Quite Ready to Start This Unit

Although this unit begins with work around characters, it assumes that students have already been introduced to some type of character work prior to this one, with the goal of deepening those skills now. If you haven't already tried out the "Studying Characters and Their Stories" unit from *If...Then...Curriculum* you may want to make sure you teach that one first. This unit also assumes that students are reading at levels L/M. Many teachers with students reading J/K have found that this unit still works quite well as there are many early chapter book series at these levels. Just know that if you have students reading J/K books, they will be moving through them at a greater speed.

If you have readers far below benchmark, at levels G, H and I, you may take a short detour from this unit. You may want to study the first grade Book 4, *Meeting Characters and Learning Lessons: A Study of Story Elements*, or pull from the "Studying Characters and Their Stories" unit, to give your students a more introductory look at character.

Conversation plays a key role in this unit as students will be reading the same books, recalling plotlines, and talking about thoughts on both characters and author's craft—first in the context of partnerships, and then as part of a reading club. It is important that students have developed strong practices of working in reading partnerships before attempting this work in clubs. If supporting partner reading hasn't been an area of focus throughout the year, you will want to concentrate on it now. You may decide to hold off on clubs until you have worked quite a bit on partnership routines. During partner reading or at the end of workshop share time, we suggest listening in to partnerships and coaching the talk. You may need to coach students on *HOW* to talk to one another (face your partner, book in between you both for reference, etc), but you probably find your

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coaching supports *WHAT* students are talking about (“What are you thinking about the character’s feelings? Why might they be feeling this way? What in the text makes you say that?”). It’s important to listen carefully to these conversations and think about the moves that will promote the level of discussion and discourse we are looking for in this unit.

### Materials/Getting Ready

To prepare for this unit, you will want to begin by developing a library that can sustain series clubs. In other words, you will want to ensure that you have some multiple copies of favorite series books. It may be a challenge for some teachers to support some book clubs with multiple copies of multiple books within a series. Don’t worry—having at least two copies of a few books in a series will suffice. Sharing texts with grade level colleagues and staggering reading periods may also ease the “finding a book” challenge. Take a look at page xii in the front matter of the *Series Book Clubs* unit for recommendations of series titles.

As you are preparing texts, it will be important to highlight a series for your read aloud and shared reading work. We recommend choosing a text just above the benchmark student reading level (level M), *The Stories Julian Tells* (level N), by Ann Cameron. This book contains many short stories in which students can easily compare and contrast. However, depending on your particular class of kids, you may also want to choose another read aloud text that is either more similar to or more complex than students’ reading levels. For students who need greater support in the day to day work, consider using a text that is more similar to the levels your students are currently reading, such as *Pinky and Rex*, by James Howe. For students who could use a bigger challenge, you might want to read aloud from a series that is slightly above their reading levels to scaffold reading and talking about more complex texts. For example, you might pick any of the Ramona or Clementine series books. Whatever you decide, remember that these are very important decisions to make, and should be based on the needs of your particular class.

Besides the read aloud support that can be found in the back of the unit of study book, there is also a supportive 5-day plan for shared reading that you should review before you begin the unit. This section will not just support one 5-day plan for one text, but provide a template that you can use throughout the entire unit. While you will certainly want to support fluency and word solving work, you will also want to support vocabulary acquisition and navigating literary language in texts as those, also, are areas of focus for the unit as a whole.

### Insights Gleaned From Other Teachers Who Have Taught This Unit/Special Concerns

Areas of particular concern to teachers during this unit are supporting students in book clubs and helping students capture their ideas in the writing they do about reading. You’ll want to aim to support students in both endeavors while also building independence in your students. It’s always a fine balance, of course, but the more you can step away from teacher led/driven work, the more effective your students’ learning will be. When students feel as though they are in control of their reading (and writing) lives, they are more motivated and invested in the work at hand.

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Many teachers often recall Bend IV of Book 3, *Bigger Books Mean Amping Up Reading Power*, inviting students to recall what they learned. Doing so ensures that students will draw on what they know about reading clubs to guide their work in this unit. Also, at the start of this unit, students work in partnerships, before they meet in clubs. You may decide to place extra emphasis on partnership work, keeping children talking in twos for a longer period of time before grouping them in clubs, if they need that support.

Remember that your students will need your coaching throughout this unit. You will want to be sure that you are ready to coach them not just in *talking*, but also in *thinking* about texts. Using book club time both to teach students to say more from a Post-it and also to work on what to say (and bring to the club) is key. You could try this by supporting small groups to reread a section of their text and then coaching them to stop, think, and get ready for some book talk. For the next half of the small group work, coach students to talk about what is important in the section they just reread.

Some teachers reported that they worked a great deal on book talk during read aloud. They focused on supporting children's listening skills and their ability to ask one another questions to help clarify and extend responses. Many teachers also set students up to consider and practice the key moves in a conversation off the read aloud, doing so in small group book talks (rather than whole class book talks). Both methods of support helped students to elaborate on their thinking in meaningful, interactive ways.

If you are teaching the writing units of study, then your students will be in the *Writing about Reading* unit. Look to this unit for supports around coaching students in writing work—as, of course, the writing they learn to do can be used to capture thinking, grow thinking, and show thinking about the texts they read. As students read, they'll jot ideas and observations on Post its. Before students meet in book clubs, you may want to ask them to spend a few minutes using thought prompts to grow their thinking, and you may ask students to write about their ideas after the conversation to show how their thinking has grown or changed. Whatever you do with your students, it will also be important to monitor that they do more reading than writing during independent reading time.

## Bend I

Throughout this bend, you will support students in becoming experts on a series. Just like we get to know our favorite television characters, so too, will students get to know the characters in their series books. Students will be studying plot, how characters respond to trouble, and how main characters interact with secondary characters. Using partnerships and clubs to talk across texts and build children's understanding of story and character will be extremely valuable.

As students talk in clubs, they will be talking across texts. It may be problematic at times for students to maintain clear and focused conversations now that they are expected to talk not just about a single text, but about several. Make sure you provide students with clear steps to follow. The charts such as "Book Clubs Talk Together" or "Series Book Clubs Share Discoveries" from Heinemann's online resources will be extremely valuable to you as you set this work in motion.

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In this bend, students will be trying to track everything they can about their characters. Therefore, the thinking work they do will become a focus. Asking students to go beyond simply stating, “The character was mad” by pushing them to ask, “Why?” is an example of the type of thinking you will expect students to do. Writing will be key to supporting this thinking work. Throughout Bend 1, you will want to keep the mid-workshop teaching in mind, especially any that addresses growing ideas from Post-is, as in Sessions 1, 4 and 5. Supporting students to capture strong ideas and say more about them will not only help in *this* unit, it will also support the work they are doing in the *Writing about Stories* unit in writing workshop—assuming your class is doing that.

## Bend II

This bend transitions students from a focus on characters and plot to a study of author’s craft. In this bend, students read texts closely and consider what an author might be trying to show or do through his or her word choice and use of literary language. The anchor charts “Series Readers Become Experts on Author’s Craft” and “Understanding Literary Language,” as well as other unit charts such as “How Do Authors Paint Pictures with Words?” will come in handy. You might imagine partnerships studying the word choices of an author together and using these charts to aid them in conversation. Of course, you will most likely need to coach students in doing this work or even model for students as a way to lift the talk and thinking around craft that students do.

One fun highlight in this bend is the Session 11 share, in which you support student skill work by inviting your students to perform parts of the text like a story teller. This share engages students and celebrates the literary language they have found in texts; it also supports the fluency work students still need at these reading levels.

## Bend III

The final bend of this unit focuses on students sharing their opinions and love of books with others. Inviting students to create ways to do this can be quite fun. In this regard, Session 13 becomes a very important lesson. This session introduces students to the concept of sharing with others and lays the foundation for the rest of this bend. The conferring and small group work on this day challenges students to think about what makes a book *worth* sharing.

By the end of this bend, students swap books and share opinions in the form of a debate. What a way to end the year! It is important to scaffold this debate work, keeping in mind that it is all about presenting an idea and supporting it with text evidence. You will find that Session 16’s teaching and active engagement are combined so as to offer students the support they need in their first attempt at debate. Remember that this work will be slight. You don’t have to spend an entire workshop period in a whole-class debate. The goal is simply to introduce students to the concept of debate and to get them thinking and debating about books and characters.