

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

**Summer Institute
on the
Teaching of Reading**



**Grade 3
Reading Curriculum
Selections
Summer 2016**

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Reading User's Guide, Third Grade, 2016-2017
Building a Reading Life

A User's Guide for *Building a Reading Life*

September/October
Benchmark Reading Level: M

Introduction

Building a Reading Life is a unit devoted to helping your third graders develop lifelong habits of strong readers, including choosing books wisely and getting a lot of reading done, keeping track of how reading is going and addressing problems along the way, learning to talk about books with others, and applying on-the-run comprehension strategies to hold onto and synthesize all the parts of the text. The comprehension skills that are highlighted in the unit include the foundational skills of envisioning, predicting and retelling, as well as strategies for tackling difficulties in texts.

The biggest challenge with this unit is that you are teaching it at the start of third grade, and the start of any grade is a challenge because of the management work and the relationship work you and the kids need to do. Third grade represents a special challenge because literacy instruction in this grade represents a big step up for kids. So although the unit is clear and trustworthy, yes, you have other work to do at the same time. This write up will attempt to help with integrating that other work, and will also address ways that reading and writing units can support each other.

At the same time that you are launching your reading workshop you will be launching your writing workshop with *Crafting True Stories*. You will want to look for ways that you can establish routines and habits across both of your workshops so that you are not only teaching the reading and writing skills highlighted in these units, but you'll also be teaching your students how to function independently within an upper grade workshop.

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

There are no prerequisites for this unit. Your kids can be totally new to the reading workshop and the unit will still work well. This is a unit that has been a pillar of workshop instruction in thousands of schools, and in an enormous range of schools. You can enter it with confidence that it will apply to your students.

Your students will come to you in third grade with a knowledge base about what it means be a reader, with ideas about productive reading habits, and with skills and strategies that have (and have not) worked for them in the past and you will embark on the unit knowing that you will build on this knowledge and propel them forward as readers in just a few short weeks, setting them up for the exciting and challenging reading work ahead this year.

In addition to writing assessments you are collecting in writing workshop, you'll also assess students' reading work in a variety of ways. To begin, you'll likely get benchmark assessment data in order to match students to book levels in order to guarantee they are reading 'just right' books. The TCRWP suggests that students who are reading on grade level at the beginning of the year in

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third grade are reading on Level M, so once you have information about your students' reading levels, you'll want to consider the particular instructional needs of students who are reading below or above this benchmark and the books you will need to sustain these readers. In order to match students with these partners, you'll need to have completed your initial running records by the end of Session 5 so that partners will be in similar levels and will be able to recommend and swap books with one another. Up until that point, you'll want to channel students to sit near to and to share books with kids who you think are roughly similar to them as readers based on the end-of-year reading levels from last year.

Although the running records are essential, they are not your only source of reading data. Once kids begin keeping logs of how many minutes and pages they read, that will be crucial data.

We also recommend you conduct a performance assessment that will help you understand your students' higher level comprehension skills. This assessment is available in the digital resources connected to *Building a Reading Life*. Even if you question whether you'll have time to score kids' work and to use these assessments, you will probably want to get kids to do that assessment so that you have baseline data—something you can never again get—which you can compare against their later work to show progress.

For more information about reading assessments, please refer to the assessment chapter in *A Guide to the Reading Workshop: Intermediate Grades* and especially to *Reading Pathways*. Both of these resources provide a wealth of information about the TCRWPs best thinking about reading assessments.

Materials/Getting Ready

The most important thing you can do to prepare for this unit is to assess your classroom library against the projected reading levels of your students. An established classroom library collection is essential to the success of reading workshop. You will find helpful information in chapter four beginning on page 30. If you don't have the books you need for the readers in your classroom, this will be one of the first challenges you'll need to tackle and is part of the reason we emphasize the collection of reading level assessment data. You need to be sure that you have enough books on your students' reading levels to sustain reading volume in this and future units,

You'll also want to look ahead to the units you will teach across the year and consider the books your students will need to engage in various genre studies and club configurations. The TCRWP's Classroom Library Collection may also be a support for you—either by accessing an entire library collection or particular shelves that will supplement your existing classroom library.

Many teachers organize early sections of their libraries in order to ensure that students will have access to many titles on their 'just right' levels at the beginning of the year and keep other sections of the library closed until they have had a chance to assess students and determine additional levels needed. Similarly, many teachers choose to hold back books they know they will use later in the year in genre studies or clubs, so you'll want to look ahead with future units and students' reading growth across the year in mind.

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This User's Guide assumes that you have your own set of the third grade Units of Study books and makes references to *Building a Reading Life* throughout. 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. You will need your own copy of *Stone Fox* by John Reynolds Gardiner, which is available in paperback. You will also want students to have some basic supplies for reading: a notebook, a folder and access to post-it notes of various sizes.

You'll also want to make copies of key strands of the progression that you will use across this unit—the Word Work, Fluency, Envisioning/Predicting, Retell/Summary/Synthesis, Inferring about Characters and Other Story Elements and Analyzing Author's Craft strands of the learning progression are particularly relevant within the unit. If you have given the pre-assessment, you'll want to study your students' work and determine which skills you feel they need to strengthen most during this unit. As with any unit, you can plan to do more small groups and conferences to target these skills, and may also highlight these skills in your read aloud time, too.

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

Before you go any further, you need to think about pacing for this reading unit and the writing unit. We have too often seen teachers taking two months with these two units—and that will log jam the rest of the year, prevent your kids from having the time they need in nonfiction, etc. Don't do that!

We think part of the reason this unit can stretch longer than five weeks is that the beginning of the year set-up can take up too much time. While we recognize that setting up routines and management structures is important and that assessment is time-consuming, we strongly suggest you limit this unit (and the parallel writing unit) to five weeks only.

Similarly, know that the minilessons in all the unit of study books are written to be ten minutes in length, and each session is 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. Sometimes you may need to revise the Active Engagement and to move the link up so kids practice by getting started doing what you have taught, only in their own books. The mid-workshop teaching points are sometimes unnecessary—you'll sometimes see that this teaching provides opportunities to repeat and extend work from the minilesson. If you can't always tuck them into the workshop, you'll probably want to skip them rather than breaking the sessions into two days.

Do keep in mind that just as you need to consider the pace of the sessions in your reading workshop, you'll also need to keep in mind the pace you set for your whole class read aloud. You will find a detailed pacing guide at the end of the 'Orientation to the Unit.' We suggest using *Stone Fox*, which is a particular favorite and has been a part of our community for a long time. You'll notice that the work with *Stone Fox* doesn't begin until session 7 in Bend II. You'll see that the amount you read during your read aloud and minilesson varies from day to day and you'll need to clearly plan the reading you will do in your read aloud vs. the reading you will do during your reading workshop minilessons.

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In this document we map out the work that kids will be doing in this unit (not your teaching.) Having said this, we do suggest that you add perhaps two days into the unit, sprinkled according to your need, which you think of as catch up or 'repertoire' days. We recommend that instead of teaching a single session and then reteaching that session on a subsequent day in order to give students time to master content, you teach a few sessions and then take a day of the workshop to teach a repertoire session. In large part this type of session is about helping students to reflect on their work, to recall what they have learned and then to use this learning to set goals and move their own work forward.

Finally, just a word about the links between your writing and your reading units. The two units are both aiming to do similar work. They are both aiming to invite kids to take on the roles of living like richly literature (or 'real') writers and readers. In that work, you must assume the job of being an inspirational mentor. As you teach specific strategies for reading (or writing), keep your larger goals in mind—you are teaching students to live lives as readers in your classroom and at home. This means that as tempting as it may be to skip over whole class teaching devoted to book recommendations (as in the mid-workshop teaching and share in session 5), because you want to move the unit along, you need to recognize that if you skip this teaching, you might gain an extra ten minutes in the day, but you are losing key content in terms of teaching students that readers are, above all, members of a larger community.

Similarly, when you launch reading logs, try to spin these not as requirements with an emphasis on page expectations and so forth, but instead, spin this tool as something that researchers in all fields use in order to collect data and inform decisions. Aim to add purpose and authenticity to your teaching, which will make it all the more meaningful and engaging to your students.

Bend I

The unit starts with lessons devoted to helping students build powerful reading lives through attention to the power of reading, the importance of reading volume, self-assessment and goal setting. Student agency, community, and problem-solving is highlighted in this first bend of the unit. Across this first week of the unit, students will start reading, reading, reading. They will begin to track their reading volume through the use of logs, to work with partners to share favorite passages and to engage in conversations about their books—making recommendations to one another and learning to listen to one another as they read sections of text aloud, practicing their fluency. Students will also engage in self-assessment and goal setting to track their progress.

Volume matters. You'll want to see kids reading up a storm, and you'll want that reading work to be intense and alert, you can model this clearly during your read aloud time. Because volume is so critical, we've suggested that students do not write about their reading until session 8 and even then it is minimal. Up to this point students simply put post its on parts they want to share. We recommend regularly scanning students' reading logs to see that volume is high. Plan to meet with any students who are not reading at a high volume, about $\frac{3}{4}$ -page per minute, or whose volume is varying from day to day so that you can make volume one of their goals.

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Bend II

Once you've established some foundational habits related to reading attitudes, volume, and partnership work in bend one, you'll turn your attention in this bend to the equally important habits of reading to understand the story. In the six sessions in this bend, readers will learn to monitor their comprehension with a variety of strategies, especially through envisioning the story as it unfolds. Then, they'll practice using their envisioning skills to do the important work of predicting and retelling.

If you notice that children aren't able to give themselves a comprehension check or retell the timeline of their story then you may want to check to make sure that students are matched to books. Sometimes, kids are holding a text that is too-hard, which makes comprehension more difficult. You may actually want to do more small groups as the unit continues with those children who are struggling with literal comprehension, drawing from sessions 7 and 11 from this unit but also from session 2 and 5 from the second grade unit *Second-Grade Reading Growth Spurt*. You can also consult the Retell/Summary strand of the Learning Progressions to identify where breakdown are occurring for specific students.

The goal for Bend II is for students to understand their stories. You'll notice that the majority of the strategies introduced in the bend help kids work toward literal comprehension. Keep in mind that the goal is not for students to master each of these strategies, nor is the goal for students to perfect these strategies within a single workshop period. Rather, the goal is that students be able to understand their stories by the end of the bend. You'll want to keep a laser focus on that goal as you're conferring with students and supporting them in small groups. Therefore, when you teach Session 8 which is tricky for some of our children because some are still grappling with envisioning their texts and now they are being asked to shift between envisioning and assembling facts. Expect that if your students aren't grasping this particular strategy it is okay.

If you have many disengaged readers then talk up prediction. Many teachers have found that prediction work had a huge impact on student engagement. Reading forward trying to figure out what will happen next before the book tells them helps students become more active as readers.

The entire bend is chock-full of key strategies that you will want to be sure your students are taking up in their reading lives as regular habits. Each session may feel incredibly important to you, and you'll be right, but you'll also want to be careful not to slow down and repeat sessions in this bend because these sessions build upon one another. That is, when students envision the story and talk about what they are picturing in their mind's eye, they will move next to using these mental movies to predict what will happen next and to compare and revise their predictions as they accumulate more information as readers.

Students will continue to engage in self-assessment and goal setting by making use of the reading learning progressions found in *Reading Pathways* and in your digital resources.

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Bend III

In this last bend of the unit you will support your students with strategies for tackling challenges in their reading lives. The bend begins with session 13 called *Tackling Complex Texts Takes Grit*. This session was a favorite of teachers and students. Teachers who wove this sentence through the whole bend found it became a mantra for the rest of the school year. Kids were heard telling each other that all they needed was a bit more grit and they could figure out a hard word or a confusing part or figure out the lesson. Teaching kids to have grit invites children into the process of self-improvement and rising to reading challenges. These challenges might come from pushing themselves to read more, or from tackling difficulty with word work as readers. While initially students will focus on decoding any unknown words they encounter in their texts, they'll also be asked to think about the meaning of words, parts of words, and about the decisions authors make when 'playing' with language—the charts on page 153 and 162 are helpful for this work. The strands of the Narrative Learning Progression addressing foundational skills—Word Solving, Fluency, and so on—will help lead students to raise questions and think more about author's purpose in larger, interpretive ways.

If your students need more support with foundational skills, such as determining the meaning of unfamiliar words and fix-up strategies then you might also want to consult the chart on page 71 first grade unit *Readers Have Big jobs to Do*. Sessions 7 through 11 as well as the chart on page 72 in the second grade unit *Second-Grade Reading Growth Spurt* will be great resources, too.

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Mystery: Foundational Skills in Disguise

A User's Guide for *Mystery: Foundational Skills in Disguise*

October/November

Benchmark Reading Level: M/N

Introduction

You will see that this newest version of an all-time favorite unit keeps the work that has made kids and teachers love the unit (Step into the detective's shoes! Track clues! Look out for red herrings!) and also especially ramps up and emphasizes the foundational skills that lie at the heart of engaged reading.

Reading mysteries is the perfect vehicle to teach foundational skills. Students are so excited to read mysteries, they'll leap at the chance to do the work required to really "get" the mystery. And, of course, mysteries also naturally push kids to infer—to notice clues and to wonder more about them; to consider how part of chapter 7 relates back to what was learned in Chapter 4; to wonder if a character is really telling the truth. Work such as thinking about what kind of characters the detectives and co-detectives are can serve as foundational skills for character development work that sets students up for subsequent units. All told, then, this is perfect second unit for your third graders—a chance to get them to continue reading fiction and move up levels of text complexity as well as an opportunity to reinforce your teaching of critical foundational skills you began in unit 1; and a way to prepare students for the work of future units—all contained within a unit on reading a highly engaging genre—mystery.

As you teach this unit, you will simultaneously be teaching *The Art of Information Writing* in writing workshop. We know many teachers would ideally like to teach a nonfiction reading unit parallel to this nonfiction writing unit, and will question the decision to place Mystery parallel to information writing. We have made the choice to place this fiction reading unit second in the year for a few reasons. One reason is so that your students have a second chance to read fiction and move up levels of text complexity. A second reason is so that your fourth and fifth grade colleagues might borrow your *Reading to Learn* book at this time in order to support their students who need help with foundational skills in nonfiction reading. Of course, you could make the choice to teach Mystery later in the year.

This User's Guide assumes that you have the new book, *Mystery: Foundational Skills in Disguise* (Heinemann, 2016). 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. Know that there will be a calendar day in the fall of 2016 to further support your work with this new unit.

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Mystery: Foundational Skills in Disguise

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

This unit is intended to support foundational reading skills (as well as higher level comprehension). It is written in such a way that it could follow *Building a Reading Life*, giving your third graders a second fiction reading unit at the start of the year. Alternatively, it could come a bit later in the year.

If you have many students working far below grade level and you don't have enough mysteries that are at levels your students can read, you could opt to re-teach the second grade unit, *Series Book Clubs*, postponing this unit until the New Year. On the other hand, the sessions in this book will help you support students who need to work on monitoring for meaning and reading with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. The sessions will also help you lead small group work to address prediction, fluency, word solving, summarizing. In general, the unit helps you to push each of your readers to work at the upper edges of their comprehension.

Materials/Getting Ready

For this unit, you will need to do some prep work. Of course, since this is a unit on reading mysteries, you'll need to gather mystery books. Your students need to read mystery books at their own levels. You'll want to make sure that you gather enough mysteries to keep all of your readers reading at high volume. The great news is that part of the appeal of doing a unit on mysteries is that there are so many great mysteries written for third graders who are reading on or below grade level. And, the second piece of related, great news is that so many of the mysteries for this age group are created as series. This means that if you hook a reader on the first book in the series, that reader can read through the whole series, reading with high volume, and as he/she comes to know the characters, the kinds of plots in that series, the reader will get stronger at predicting, envisioning, and so on. Series are a great opportunity to get readers into books that will move them up reading levels so be prepared to introduce your readers to some great series. If you purchased the TCRWP Library, you'll have many titles to support this unit.

Most teachers organize their mysteries by putting them in baskets—some teachers organize these baskets by level and group a bunch of mysteries at around the same level together. Other teachers make separate baskets for different series. Whatever you do, the point will be that you organize your mysteries in such a way that students know how to choose mysteries that are just right for them.

This unit is intended as partnership unit. That means that before the unit starts, you'll want to have formed partnerships of two students who are reading at approximately the same reading level (or a trio, if need be). Ideally, you would have multiple copies of mystery books so that these partnerships could read the same book and discuss it. This would help them to dig deeper into the story, hold each other accountable for giving text evidence that matches their ideas, and support them in dealing with parts that are confusing. Some teachers even chose to form reading clubs for part of the unit and have two partnerships work together, with all students reading the same book. We know that having students read the same book is not usually possible, due to resources. Know

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that this unit was written to work whether your students are in same-book partnerships or different-book partnerships.

You will also want to gather your read alouds. The unit suggests that in the first bend you could read aloud *The Absent Author* by Ron Roy. This is a clever, fast-paced mystery with all the qualities of a great third-grade level mystery—short but packed with lots of hidden clues, red herrings, and so on—so it will support your students in practicing the kind of work that they will need to do when they read their independent mysteries. Because you want to model for your students that they should be reading through multiple mysteries, that means you cannot read just one read aloud across the entire unit. Therefore, in Bend II, you’ll want to begin a new mystery read aloud. We suggest *The Diamond Mystery* (part of the Whodunit Detective Agency series). In Bend III, you’ll have some options for read aloud. Because the goal of the third bend is to practice applying the work of reading mysteries to any fiction, during read aloud time you can grab any picture book or short fiction chapter book you love and read it, showing students how you are alert to text details, constantly make and revise predictions, monitor for meaning, and so on.

A few other tips for prep:

- If you teach this unit as Unit 2, you will want it to build on the work your students do during Unit 1, so continue to use charts, learning progression strands, and tools from the first unit.
- You will need to do a bit of extra prep work before the start of Bend II (Session 8). Because this session asks students to develop a theory about mysteries (e.g. in mysteries, the detective always guesses wrong first!) and then “test” that theory by seeing if it holds true across mysteries, students will need to read through a bunch of mysteries on that day (in addition to rereading mysteries or parts of mysteries they have already read). Ideally, every student would have a bunch of shorter, easier mysteries so that he/she could read through multiple mysteries on that day. You could talk to your lower grade colleagues and borrow some of their books. Piloting teachers felt that provisioning students so they could read lots of short easy mysteries on this day was important and that the work went very well. If, on the other hand, you feel you can’t organize this due to your resources, then you can channel students to reread parts of previously read mysteries, using those books as a place for testing their theories.
- At the start of Bend III, students will begin reading fiction that is not just mysteries. To make sure that students can go off to begin reading at the start of Bend III, you’ll want to pre-select a fiction book for each student to read at his/her just right level.

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

Moving Up Levels of Text Complexity

If you teach this unit after *Building a Reading Life*, then this is your students’ second fiction reading unit. They should be poised to move up levels. Expect to see movement. You may decide you want to do some quick informal assessments to check if readers have moved up levels. The small group work and conferring section of Session 5 will offer tips for how to conduct an in-book assessment. If students are ready to move up levels, you want to support them in that transition—put them in transitional book baggies, give book introductions that help them get ready to meet the challenges

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of the next level, and so on. If there are readers who are not moving, that is cause for concern. You may want to talk to your grade-team, literacy coach or administration to study your assessments of these students and get some help problem-solving.

Volume

Volume is essential in any unit and that continues to be true here. Keep a careful eye on how much students are reading. You should expect to see students reading multiple books across the bend. Remember that students who read below-benchmark levels should be reading multiple books in a day. Keep a careful eye on reading volume and check reading logs to ensure that volume is high throughout the unit. You will see that mid-workshops and other parts of the unit address volume and offer suggestions for keeping the volume of reading high and also set expectations for how much students should be expected to read.

Related to this focus on reading volume, it is important to note that writing about reading should never take away from students' reading. The writing about reading in this unit should be quick and short. Students are mainly writing down suspects, major clues, their ideas for who committed the crime, and so on. These notes should be quick jots, not page long entries. You will want to study demonstration writing about reading in Session 5 to get an idea for what students are expected to do. It will be also be important to study student work samples throughout the unit. You will see that the unit makes many suggestions for how to ensure that students continue to read with high volume even when they are asked to write about their reading.

Bend I

In Bend I, your students will be reading mystery books. They will either be working in same-book partnerships or different-book partnerships. Students will read their mysteries, keeping track of clues, wondering about suspects, noting points of confusion and discussing their thinking with their partners. As they do this, you will be especially focused on supporting their literal comprehension of these mysteries and you will support students in working on fluency, monitoring for meaning, retelling, envisioning, predicting, and so on. Teachers who piloted this unit said they saw high energy from their students and found Bend I very straight-forward and doable. You should be able to teach it just as it is.

In every unit, we try to increase the engagement of students by bringing in some drama and fun, and that is definitely true in this unit! There are some key places we want to point out in this unit so you can maximize working to support the engagement of your students. The launch, for example, is particularly exciting, as we suggest you can create a small real-life mystery in your classroom for kids to solve. A big tip is to not skip this part of the unit as it rallies kids from the start for the work of being mystery solvers. In a similar way, Session 2 suggests that you can dress up like a detective at the start of the lesson to help students to grasp the important idea of thinking like a detective as you read. Again, teachers who piloted found this dressing up to be a way to get students excited and engaged in this critical work. Teachers reported that throughout the unit, students and teachers alike had fun and quite a few laughs.

The small group work addresses problems many third graders encounter. Anybody who has worked with third graders has likely encountered a slew of kids who still need some help shoring

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up foundational skills. For example, these kids tend to talk about their books by talking about specific parts in isolation. If you ask about the book, these students tend to talk about one part and not discuss how that part connects to the rest of the story. If you ask about a character, these students tend to talk about what the character does in one part, not who the character is across the book. These students also still likely need help in other areas—fluency, figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words, and so on. You will see that the small group work and conferring sessions help you to think about how to plan small group instruction to address these predictable concerns.

In Session 5, the unit suggests that you might have others on your grade team read the read aloud and make notes that you can then show your students as an example of different sorts of note taking off the same text. If you don't have time to get others to read your read aloud and make notes, know that we have provided different samples of writing about reading off the class read aloud on the Digital Resources that you can use during the minilesson.

Bend II

In Bend II, students will continue to work with their same partnerships and continue to read mystery books. You will raise the level of their work by getting them to use all they know about reading mysteries to read forward in a stronger way in their new mysteries. So, for example, once students learn about red herrings, they should read forward in new mysteries being more alert and more cautious about getting tricked.

One thing to note is that Session 8 is a bit tricky. It is not tricky to teach, but the materials needed for this session can be a bit tricky to gather. Students should be developing different theories about mystery books and then reading through a bunch of mysteries to test their theories. Therefore, this session suggests that students all read books that are slightly lower than their reading levels in order for to be able to each read A LOT of mysteries during the workshop time. So (as mentioned in the getting ready section), before you teach this session, you will want to round up some lower level books from your lower grade colleagues to help this session go as well as possible.

At this point in the unit, you may see the energy level of some students flagging. If that is the case, some teachers found it very helpful to get students re-excited about the unit and reading mysteries by giving students small notebooks that they could use to keep track of clues. These were intended to resemble the kinds of small notebooks that real detectives carry around—detective notebooks! Students became excited to gather clues in these notebooks and dove back into reading mysteries with renewed excitement.

Bend III

In Bend III, your students will begin to read other types of fiction books. This may seem very surprising to you—after all, isn't this a unit on reading mysteries? Well, the truth is that really every reading unit is not just about the reading work students are doing in the unit but about getting students to be stronger as *readers*, in general. That is, you want your students to see how reading mysteries has made them a stronger reader of fiction, in general. If this unit ends and students only think they have gotten stronger at reading mysteries, they may not apply what they have learned in

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ways that help them read ANY fiction. So, we highly encourage you not to be worried about teaching a bend that doesn't involve students reading mysteries and instead trust that students are learning about how the reading they do in one genre can help them to read any fiction. The ultimate goal is for them to see themselves getting stronger as readers.

In Bend III, you will explain to kids that really all books have mysteries to solve, except the new mysteries they have to solve in fiction are mysteries like: "what is the problem?"; "This part feels tricky—what's going on here?"; "Who is this character *really*?" Those are the kinds of mysteries that you encounter when you read fiction. You gather clues to learn about characters in fiction just the way you gathered clues about suspects in mysteries. In addition, mysteries is a genre that gets kids to read at the edge of their seats, make and revise predictions, and pay attention to small details, and in this part of the unit, the goal is for students to see how the work they have done in reading mysteries can really pay off when it is done in any fiction book.

One important tip for this bend is that you'll need to do some prep before the bend starts. Because you'll want kids to leave the first minilesson of Bend III and head straight to reading, not losing a moment of precious reading time, you'll need to have books ready for them to read as they leave the lesson. We suggest that you pre-select a book for each reader. This can be seen as a GREAT opportunity to help introduce readers to new series you want them to encounter. This is your chance to decide that Tanya would love to read Captain Underpants; that the Pinky and Rex series is perfect for Alan. You'll pick a book for each reader and give it out before the start of the lesson in Session 15. The small group work and conferring section will be very helpful to study. You'll especially want to have some book introductions (and series introductions) ready so that as your students head off to reading, you can do some book buzzes and talk up some of the books you have chosen for them. Be excited to share why you have chosen a particular series/book for a reader (group of readers), but also be sure to be brief so they can get a lot of reading done. Time to read is the sun, the moon, and the stars. Of course, if students really don't like the book you have chosen, you can invite them to select a new one, but at this point in the year, you know your students and you know your library, and you can likely make some beautiful matches.

Across the rest of this bend, students will book shop and choose their own fiction books to read so you'll want to be sure that students get time to book shop outside of reading workshop.

The celebration for the unit invites you to have second graders come and watch a video clip of a fiction story (the unit makes specific suggestions) with your third graders, while third graders teach second graders all they have learned about reading fiction. Expect to hear, for example, one of your third graders saying, "Wait, let's pause here a minute. We just met a new character. Let's think about what kind of person he is. Let's gather some clues." Of course, you could also make the choice to have second graders and third graders buddy up to watch a clip of a mystery. Whatever you decide, the final celebration is sure to be a big hit with second and third graders alike!

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Reading User's Guide, Third Grade, 2016-2017
Reading to Learn: Grasping Main Ideas and Text Structures

A User's Guide for *Reading to Learn: Grasping Main Ideas and Text Structures*

November/December
Benchmark Reading Level: N

Introduction

This User's Guide assumes that you have your own set of the third grade Units of Study books and makes references to *Reading to Learn: Grasping Main Ideas and Text Structures* throughout. 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.

This year, we recommend *Reading to Learn* as the third unit for third grade. *Reading to Learn* is a foundational unit for nonfiction reading. This unit is intended to teach students to read long stretches of nonfiction with fluency, in such a way that they can determine importance and ascertain main ideas. This unit will help strengthen students' skills as nonfiction readers and also build their nonfiction reading identities.

We have made this decision to place this unit third in the sequence for specific reasons, but you could also certainly have made the choice to teach this unit earlier in the year. The reason this unit is placed as third in the sequence is because many teachers like to begin the year with a solid two-unit block of fiction reading in order to support their students in moving up levels of text complexity in fiction. We support this focus. If you have chosen to teach this two-unit block of fiction reading, hopefully, you have also seen many of your students move up levels. (If, on the other hand, you have not seen movement, this is cause for concern.)

In addition, another reason we suggest teaching this unit at this point in the year, is so that your fourth grade colleagues could borrow this book from you when they taught their nonfiction unit in October. Many upper grade teachers find it helpful to use this unit to shore up foundational skills.

If you teach this unit in late November, then you will simultaneously be teaching the writing unit *Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials* in writing workshop—a foundational opinion writing unit. In the final bend of that writing unit, students will read text-based sources to gather information for their final opinion piece. As they do so, you will want to push them to draw on all they have learned about reading informational texts to help them to do this work.

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

The work your students will have done in nonfiction reading in earlier grades will have taught your children to study text features to orient themselves to texts, determine the topic of nonfiction texts, and consider how information is connected across texts. Although that background will be helpful, this unit is welcoming and straightforward enough that you can teach it even if your students still

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have trouble doing that work. It is essential work for your third graders to be able to determine main idea and key supporting details in nonfiction texts and that work is at the heart of this unit.

If your students enter this unit and are still reading at levels (below J) where the books tend to not forward main ideas but are mainly organized around big topics (e.g. “Kinds of Jungle Cats”), you may want to do more small group work with those students around determining the topic of their texts. You may find sessions 2, 3, 7, 13, 14, and 16 from the *Becoming Experts* unit from second grade especially helpful in supporting foundational nonfiction reading skills.

You can also do small group work with these students where you read aloud some of the clearly structured expository articles we included on the Digital Resources and push students to determine the main idea and key supporting details of those texts. In this way you will be supporting both their reading work at their own reading level and their higher-level comprehension work. If the majority of your class is reading below level J, you might consider teaching the *Becoming Experts* unit now and then teach this unit later in your year.

If your students need more support with foundational skills, such as determining the meaning of unfamiliar words, then you might also want to revisit and continue relevant work from your *Building a Reading Life* unit—you can draw from Session 14: Figuring out Hard Words, in particular—in small groups. The charts on page 153 and 162 will be very helpful to you. Know that Session 13 in this unit is also dedicated to tackling hard words. The strands of the Learning Progression addressing foundational skills—Word Solving, Fluency, and so on—will also be helpful to you.

Materials/Getting Ready

The most important prep work you'll need to do to prepare for this unit is to organize your nonfiction library. Because of the focus on paying attention to structure to help determine importance, we suggest that you divide up your nonfiction library. During the first two bends of the unit, the unit suggests that students read expository nonfiction (books that have tables of contents, headings, subheadings, etc.) and that in the third bend, they read narrative nonfiction (starting with biography). If you have purchased shelves from the TCRWP Library Project, you will find lots of nonfiction books to support your teaching of this unit.

To teach kids text structure, you will somewhat oversimplify the choices that nonfiction writers make. You will tell students that some nonfiction books are table-of-contents-heading-subheading-teaching books while others are organized by story structure (a character or subjects that have wants, encounter troubles, learn lessons). In your library, you'll find many books shaped in each of these ways. There are however, also going to be expository nonfiction books that are not straight boxes and bullets structure but also incorporate stories. The flip side is that there will also be narratives that are not organized with such crystal clear story structure.

When you first make your teaching point that you can look at a book and see table of contents, headings, you'll want students to read texts in which they can see this, so you'll want to put forward those texts in your library which actually follow those structures. To support you, we have also included articles in Digital Resources with clear expository text structures. You'll want to make

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copies of these articles and place them in a bin or folder in the middle of the tables, along with books with clear expository text structures, and have students read from these bins. After those first few days, you can open up your nonfiction library and have students choose from among texts that do not always follow such clear structures.

Later in the unit, when you teach students that you can see story structure in narrative nonfiction, you'll want to look through your biographies to see which actually do follow that and put forward those first.

In addition to readying your library, there are a few other key ways to prep for this unit:

- Match your readers to texts. In general, you'll start your readers off reading nonfiction at the same levels at which they read fiction—but be prepared to move them to slightly lower/higher levels of nonfiction, if needed. Some students are stronger readers of nonfiction than fiction—or vice versa. The point is to make sure that (as during any unit), your students are matched to texts.
- You'll want to prepare your read alouds for the unit. Many teachers find it helpful to color code their read alouds. They use one color post-it note to jot the think alouds, turn and talk prompts they'll say during read aloud, and a different color post it to flag the pages they'll incorporate into minilessons. (Suggestions for specific parts of the text to use are included in the unit.) There is no pacing guide for the read alouds for this unit so you and your colleagues will want to decide how much you will read each day.
- You'll also want to make copies of key strands of the progression that you will use across this unit—Main Ideas and Supporting Details/Summary strand, Orienting, Cross-Text(s) Synthesis, Growing Ideas—of the learning progression. If you have given the pre-assessment, you'll want to study your students' work and determine which skills you feel they need to strengthen most during this unit. As with any unit, you can plan to do more small groups and conferences to target these skills, and also address this work with these skills during your read aloud and content area times.
- To continue to support your students' progress in fiction reading, you may decide during this nonfiction reading unit to have kids reading fiction at home.

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

A significant number of teachers found their students moved up reading levels during this unit. This was especially true of kids who favor nonfiction reading. Keep an eye on students' comprehension and be prepared to do some quick, in-book assessments to check if students are ready to move up a level.

Teachers have told us that they love how this unit returned to and reinforced some of the key learning around foundational skills from the first reading unit. Both reading units invite kids to build a reading life, to be active readers, to read with volume, to choose high interest texts that can be read fluently with comprehension. Key charts are also revisited from the first unit (“Signs to Watch for When Choosing a Book”—p. 23; “Readers Climb the Hurdle of Hard Words”—page 108). Your readers will benefit if you make the connections between units clear to them. Those teachers

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who taught this unit before character studies also let us know that there was strong transference from this book to the character unit as this book ends with children growing ideas in narrative nonfiction which sets them up to do powerful thinking about the characters in their books. If you choose to teach the character unit first, you could make those connections for students in the opposite direction.

Many teachers find it enormously helpful to bring the work of this unit into content area work as a way to increase teaching opportunities and give children more opportunities to practice and master these foundational nonfiction skills. In addition, when you get to the last bend of the *Changing the World* unit and students are writing from text-based sources, they can draw on all of their learning related to ascertaining the main ideas and information from nonfiction texts and note taking. You will likely want to bring some of your charts from your nonfiction reading work into your writing/content area workshop.

Volume

Teachers have to keep an eye out for kids who are jotting too much and those not writing any post it notes at all. Ensure first and foremost that students are getting a lot of reading done each day. That said, you do also want to make sure to make time for partner talk and for students to write about reading. You do want them to try out the new work you are teaching. Jotting and partners talking with each other or teaching each other is vital. You may want to do some mid workshops to remind students to read more and to only jot notes when they are brimful of information.

It will be extremely important to keep checking students' logs across this unit. You want to keep a constant eye on their volume of reading—both of nonfiction and of fiction texts. You should expect students will move up levels of reading in this unit but in order to be ready to move, they need to be reading a high volume of texts.

Keeping a Fiction Reading Life Going

Teachers found they had to remind students to keep their fiction reading going at home. The homework helps to remind students and often the student is asked to choose between dividing their time reading fiction and nonfiction or just one or the other. It will be important to support students in making these key decisions, if they need help to do so. Also, you will want to make sure you make time for students to study their logs and talk together about their fiction reading lives. Remember that your previous fiction units pushed your students to be able to read for long stretches of time in books they can read fluently. You should hold them accountable for continuing to do this and you should see them talking about their books in ways that show they are holding onto the story as well as drawing upon strategies when they encounter difficulty.

Difficulty Determining Main Idea

Ascertaining the main idea is not an easy skill. You will likely find that as this unit progresses, you will need to keep pulling small groups on this skill. Too often teachers will get stuck on session 2 and 3 and create more and more lessons on this skill. Moving forward in the unit and filling our kids up with work they can be doing is so important and may help them unlock main idea. All the while you will continue to pull small groups on main idea. Using the Main Ideas and Supporting Details/Summary strand of the Learning Progressions and drawing upon session 2 -4 will help.

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Bend I

The goal for Bend I is for students to determine importance as they read nonfiction. Students will be reading texts with clear text structures (headings, subheadings) so they can use those structures to help them to glean importance.

You'll notice that the majority of the strategies introduced in the bend help kids work toward this goal. Keep in mind that the goal is NOT for students to master each of these strategies within a single workshop period. Rather, the goal is for students be able to determine importance by the end of the bend. You'll want to keep a laser focus on that larger goal as you confer with students and gather small groups. Expect that the bulk of jotting that students do within this bend will be geared toward main idea and supports. Great examples of boxes and bullets note taking that you may want to carry around with you as you confer can be found on page 20 and 31.

The first session of the bend—orienting to texts—is critically important. Previewing texts before you read helps a reader to have expectations about what the book will teach and how it will go, and get ready to take in the information. A good preview can also, in fact, help children ascertain the main idea. Orienting and previewing is work that you should see students doing every time they pick a new book to read or *turn the page to a new section*. The Session 1 minilesson, mid workshop and share as well as the conferring and small group from Sessions 1 and 2 will be ones you will want to return to with students in small groups or conferring across the first two bends. If most of your students need a second day on previewing then you might want to re-teach using a different text in the minilesson or write your own minilesson based on the mid workshop.

A note about re-teaching work: Sessions 1-4 (previewing before reading; looking for structure within a nonfiction text; using structure to determine main ideas and key supporting details; teaching others what you have read) are particularly important ones—especially foundational to being a strong nonfiction reader.

If you felt strongly that your students needed to be re-taught any of the lessons from the first four sessions, you could conceivably teach a second day addressing that work. However, if you make this choice, you will have to skip another session from the unit so that your unit does not become overly long. Our advice: if worst comes to worst, you might decide to not teach Session 5 as a minilesson but instead bring the work of that session into small group work. Do not skip Session 6 as it provides students with time to reflect and set goals they will work on in Bend II and also tackles one of the skills that many students struggle with—Cross-Text(s) Synthesis.

It is important to also note that because the work of these sessions is so crucial, you will see that the second nonfiction unit for third grade—*Research Clubs: Elephants, Penguins, and Frogs, Oh My!* (Book 4)—returns to this work. That unit re-teaches these key skills and raises the stakes by having children do this work in Bends II and III with more independence. So you can rest assured that your students will get more practice with this work across their third grade year.

A few other key tips for this bend:

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- A session that is a favorite of many teachers in this bend is *Session 4: Becoming Experts and Teaching Others from Nonfiction Texts*. When we invite our students to teach others engagement and learning increases.
- Shares of sessions are always important but they especially critical in the first bend of this unit. A good deal partner work is included in these shares. If you skip the shares, your students will miss out on some of the opportunities they need to practice the important work of this bend and to talk about what they are learning. Students will read differently if they know they will meet with their partner to teach each other and share their post its. You will want to make a point to get to the shares whenever you can.

Bend II

The goal of Bend I was for students to ascertain main idea and key details from the text. They focused on figuring out what the text was teaching. Bend II aims to raise the level of that work by inviting students to not just determine what the text is teaching but to have their own thoughts about those ideas and information. Students are invited to think in response to their reading. They will continue to read expository nonfiction but these texts do not have to be so clearly structured as the ones students read at the start of the unit.

A few other key tips for this bend:

- During Bend II, you should expect to see your students writing different kinds of post-its: boxes and bullets (main idea and supporting key details), questions, notes about surprising parts, a key fact jotted from the text followed by the student writing “this makes me think...” or “this is important...” and then jotting her own response to the information, and so on. Great student examples of student note taking can be found on pages 67, 69, 74 and 75.
- The chart on page 73—prompts students can use in conversations to help them respond to texts—is one you will want to carry around with you and perhaps even make a copy of and give to your students to bring to their conversations as well as their jots.
- If your students aren't responding to their reading (asking questions, noting surprises), you will want to use Session 7 to plan how you can model more of this work in your read aloud.
- Session 9 is a challenging session. Distinguishing your own opinion from that of the author is not easy work and you may chose to weave some of this work into your read aloud before teaching this session. This would give your students some immersion into the work of figuring out an author's opinion and how the author lets the reader know that opinion in a highly supportive setting. A key tip to give your students is to pay attention to descriptive language to help identify the author's perspective. The chart on page 84 might help you as well as the mid workshop on page 82.

Bend III

Bend III gets kids back to narrative reading and you should see reading volume pick up. You will want to look at students' logs, either when you walk around the room, at the beginning of a conference or during a prep period, to check that reading volume is increasing. Students will begin

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this bend by reading biographies and you will want to make sure the texts they start with are clear narratives.

Kids should be able to draw upon what they know about reading fiction and apply it to reading narrative nonfiction. You may want to make copies of the chart on page 97 for students..

Sessions 14 and 17 are especially tricky and important. Session 14 supports students in seeing how to take a section of narrative nonfiction and to read it through different lenses. Students learn to read the text like a story and pull out the subject's traits, motivations and struggles and also to read the section as informational text and to apply their *informational* reading skills to pull out information. Session 17 builds on this work and pushes students to recognize cues a text is sending and shift their reading in response. Readers have to recognize when a text is hybrid (narrative and expository) and shift their reading—recognizing when to read a section of text using narrative reading skills and when to read a section of text using informational reading skills. Again, since the work of these sessions is difficult, you will likely want to prepare small groups ahead of time to work on these skills. In addition, you may want to bring this work into your read aloud and your content area time.

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Character Studies

A User's Guide for *Character Studies*

January/February
Benchmark Reading Level: 0

Introduction

This User's Guide assumes that you have your own set of the third grade Units of Study books and makes references to *Character Studies* throughout. 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.

Whether you teach this unit in October or February, your students will be excited to move into *Character Studies*, which builds off of both the character and series club work they did in 2nd Grade. In this unit, children move from a close study of character, to a study of the predictable journeys that all characters take, to a cross book comparison study of characters who have something important (similar traits, problems, lessons learned) in common. The unit builds in sophistication from literal comprehension work to interpretive/analytic work and directly supports the work of the *Baby Literary Essay* unit. Although *Baby Literary Essay* is a writing unit, it requires students to read closely, studying character traits, change, and lessons learned.

One of the first goals of the unit is that students learn to make careful, close observations of characters, and then draw on their insights to craft theories and predictions. A second goal of the unit is that children gain an understanding of the ways in which all stories are structured: a character faces trouble that grows bigger and reacts to it, eventually finding a way to resolve the trouble and learn lessons. Once children have a sense of how all stories go, they can tackle a third goal: to think comparatively about characters in different books, noticing similarities and differences between these characters' struggles, motivations, reactions, and the lessons they learn.

Teachers who have taught this unit have reported that one of its impacts is that children read on the alert right from the start; as soon as they meet a character, they are quick to observe, infer, predict, and interpret—all skills that rely on close reading and generate deep thinking. Teachers have also raved about children's recognition, during Bend II, that the work they have learned to do in writing around story mountain is also applicable to reading—there's excitement in the discovery of this reciprocity between reading and writing. Finally, though this isn't a focus of the unit, itself, teachers have said that the lessons of *Character Studies* position children well for the work they must do on all the major high stakes tests they will encounter, such as SBAC, the New York ELA, Air Exam, PARCC, and others.

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

The work of this unit directly builds upon the character work students have done in earlier grades such as studying feelings, traits, and relationships while supporting their ideas with text evidence. Also, the unit supports students' understanding of story structure and directly supports the story

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mountain work they have used when planning their narrative writing in the *Crafting True Stories* unit.

Some fifth grade teachers who have students reading significantly below benchmark have elected to teach this unit prior to the *Interpretation Book Club: Analyzing Themes* unit. The work of *Character Studies* moves slowly in the beginning with an eye towards studying patterns in a character's behavior and then uncovering a character's traits. The unit deepens in Bends II and III to include knowledge of story structure and comparative work. The structure of the unit should feel exciting and supportive for students who require foundational character work.

It will help your students if they have experienced the second grade unit, *Series Book Clubs*. If your students are experiencing trouble with the work in *Character Studies*, you can revisit some of the lessons in *Series Book Clubs*, particularly the work of Bend III.

Book club work begins during Bend 2 of *Character Studies* unit. In order to maximize book club work, students should be in groups with readers who are on the same reading level or, at the very least, reading in the same text band. Teachers have found it useful to administer formal running records prior to this unit to make more informed decisions about which groups will function best.

Materials/Getting Ready

There are a couple of key things you can do ahead of time to ensure that the unit gets off on the best foot possible.

Consider your read aloud selection. If you opt for a read aloud other than *Because of Winn-Dixie* and *Diamond Daniel*, be sure to choose ones that have strong character development and can easily be paired for the work of Bend III. The books should have main characters who share similar traits, problems, or life lessons. We recommend previewing the lessons taught across the unit to ensure your read alouds will work.

After you determine which book you will read aloud, you will want to pull titles from your classroom library to support book club work. Again, you will want to be sure that titles you select offer students the ability to study characters in complex ways. And, of course, you will want to make sure that the books you put into your library are appropriate for the range of readers that populate your classroom. If you have purchased shelves from the TCRWP Library Project, you will find many books to support your teaching of this unit.

We recommend organizing your library in two ways. In Bend 1, students are independently reading their character books. You might find all of the books that you have single copies of and display them accordingly during Bend 1. In Bend II and III, you will want to showcase books you have multiple copies of to support the work of book clubs.

In addition to readying your library, there are a few other key ways to prep for this unit:

- Make sure that your readers are matched to books. If you have recently administered running records, be sure to consider students' reading levels when supporting them with book selection.

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- We suggest pre-planning your read alouds to support the key reading skills of the unit. You'll want to prepare prompts and questions that support students in thinking about character traits, character change, determining themes, and comparing and contrasting themes and story elements. Often, teachers find it helpful to color-code the skills to be sure that all skills are equally represented in their read aloud work. The Pacing Guide for *Because of Winn Dixie* and *Dyamonde Daniel* on page xv and xvi of "An Orientation to the Unit" can help you with this preparation.
- You will also want to make copies of key strands of the progression that you will use across this unit--Inferring about Characters and Other Story Elements: Character Traits, Character Response/Change, Analyzing Parts of a Story in Relation to the Whole, and Determining Themes/Cohesion of the learning progression. If you have given the performance assessment (see the digital resources that accompany this unit and the Assessment section of "An Orientation to the Unit"), you'll want to study your students' work and determine which skills you feel they need to strengthen most. As with any unit, you can plan to do more small groups and conferences to target these skills, and also give students additional practice during your read aloud.

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

Volume

Teachers need to keep an eye out for kids who are writing too much or those not stopping at all. The major goal is for students to read with volume so that means students have to read. If you see your kids stopping too often to jot, you might intervene by teaching them that readers save writing about reading for their smartest, best thinking. You might also teach students to write 'on the run' while reading, quickly jotting a word or two on a post-it, and later returning to one or two post-its they'd like to write (or talk) long about.

Reading Levels

You'll want to keep an eye on your reading data, especially related to students' independent reading levels. Students that are reading significantly below grade level or those that have stayed at the same level for an extended period of time may need a nudge. Book club units offer the perfect opportunity to do this. First off, students have the benefit of reading a book in the company of others, sharing ideas and lifting the level of the work they'd be able to do independently. Then too, because book clubs are homogeneous groupings of students reading at the same level, it is relatively easy to do guided reading or book introductions with clubs. Chapter 8 of *A Guide to the Reading Workshop* will help you imagine the various kinds of small group work you have at your disposal, including possible progressions for guided reading.

Bend I

The unit starts with the students' journey alongside their characters. You'll want students to get to know their characters as they would a new friend, empathizing with and relating to them along the

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way. They will begin to keep a close eye on what the character says and does, noticing patterns, determining traits, and using their understanding of a character to make informed predictions.

As Bend I progresses, children will turn a closer eye towards characters' words, actions, thoughts and desires, and use what they notice to develop theories. In order to support them with this work, you will teach students to ask themselves questions like, "What do I see the character doing over and over again? How can I use this information to come up with a bigger idea?" Noticing patterns of behavior will help children to develop, revise and strengthen their theories about characters. Theories, you will explain, are based on patterns; theories come out of things that readers see characters doing again and again. From here, you'll teach that readers challenge themselves to push past initial "tip of the iceberg" theories to come up with more meaningful ones. Students will also learn strategies that help them develop their skills in prediction, synthesis, and relating part to whole. For instance, they will practice studying one part of their novels and thinking about how the character's actions or feelings are related to other events in the story.

You will also find many opportunities to shore up essential skills in the first part of this unit. For instance, the Share in Session I reminds students that they have two roles in a conversation--the role of speaker and the role of listener. Later, in Session 3, children will practice reading fluently by reading aloud. If you find your lessons running long and want to preserve independent reading time, these Shares can become small group teaching for students that need the work most.

Bend II

Bend II introduces students to a new structure--book clubs--which will support children's work for the remainder of the unit. Throughout the bend, you'll teach into the habits and work of clubs. Students will come to see their book clubs as a source of added support--developing and refining ideas in the company of others. For help supporting clubs, see the Conferring and Small Group Work sections of Session 7, 8, 9, and 11.

You'll want to make purposeful decisions about the books each club reads. That is, it will become increasingly important (especially in Bend III), that students are able to make connections, compare, and contrast across the novels they read. Students might study similarities and differences in character traits, problems, ways that characters deal with those problems, and lessons learned. The digital resources that accompany this book will give you ideas for books that 'go together.'

This bend also sheds a spotlight on story structure. Students will come to see that while characters themselves are unique, the way in which they move through stories is predictably the same. On the first day of this bend, you'll introduce students to the shape that stories take--the story mountain--and will then recruit them to help you outline the big events that happen for the main character in a simple, familiar story. We've chosen *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats to demonstrate the role of story structure because of its simple plot-line and accessibility.

Expect book clubs to be studying key parts of their stories and using what they notice to launch conversations about the characters they are studying. For example, you'll explain that during the first part of a story (on the ascent up the mountain), the main character faces a series of hurdles

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that pile up and grow bigger until the climax of the story (the top of the mountain) when the character often faces a test.

At the end of Bend II, you'll shift students' attention to studying author's craft. Clubs will look back at parts of their stories, rereading to understand how authors set up different parts of a story to do particular jobs (to introduce tension, to show that the problem has gotten worse, to show something being resolved). This is difficult work, but you won't want to skip it. The ability to analyze the choices an author has made is especially important on state tests, and will set the stage for reading and writing work students will be asked to do in fourth and fifth grade.

In order to protect students' reading time and volume, teachers should make a decision about how many times a week clubs will meet and talk. Typically, teachers choose to have clubs meet two or three days a week. If you are pressed for time, students can meet with their book clubs in lieu of that day's Share. You'll also want to provision clubs with charts and other tools to help their conversations go well. For instance, the chart in Session 11 on page 102 is particularly helpful for readers. As they cycle through books at their own rate (depending on how fast they read and the level of the book they are reading), children can use this chart to determine the work they should be doing at the beginning of a story, in the middle, and in the end. Many teachers choose to print these charts and give mini-versions to students so that they can reference them through the workshop.

Bend III

In this final bend of the unit, students will learn to think comparatively across books, drawing on the work they've done throughout the unit. Children will continue to work in their book clubs, with each club continuing to read from a text set. You will reveal to students that the books they read in Bend II were purposefully chosen based on some shared similarities, and you'll challenge clubs to consider the ways the characters of these books and their journeys are alike--and different. In particular, students will look closely at character traits, problems, and lessons learned. As mentioned above, you'll find suggested titles for text sets on the digital resources that accompany this unit.

To model this compare and contrast work, you'll introduce a new demonstration text in Bend III, *Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel* by Nikki Grimes, which you will compare, throughout the bend, with Kate DiCamillo's *Because of Winn Dixie*. Both books feature spunky main characters with some similar traits, who are dealing with issues related to being new to a neighborhood and wanting friends.

Many teachers find it helpful to give kids copies of the "Comparing and Contrasting Story Elements and Themes" strand of the Narrative Reading Learning Progression. The Conferring and Small Group Work section of Session 18 will help you imagine ways to introduce this progression. You will also want to consider other ways to support students with the work of comparing and contrasting. Pages 133, 137, and 143 offer samples of writing about reading that demonstrate this work. Printing a sample out and giving it to students can help them develop a vision for the sort of work they might be doing in their independent reading books. Then too, the chart on page 134 and the sentence stems on page 138 will go a long way towards supporting students' early comparison work. You will also want to keep in mind that the work of this bend extends work done earlier in

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the unit--particularly, Sessions 2, 8, and 13. If you feel students need additional support with this work, consider reteaching some of the same strategies in small groups and/or conferences.

To celebrate the work of this unit, students make their own text sets to display in the larger school community. Both teachers and students love this! The teachers watch the students work together within their book clubs to draw comparisons across texts that they have read. Some may say that this is the most important assessment work. As book clubs work together to compile book lists and recommendations, you will want to pay attention to their rationale. Particularly, you might coach into their talk around character traits, relationships, motivations, and other story elements.

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A User's Guide for *Research Clubs: Elephants, Penguins, and Frogs, Oh My!*

April/May

Reading Benchmark: 0

Introduction

This User's Guide assumes that you have your own set of the third grade Units of Study books and makes references to *Research Clubs: Elephants, Penguins, and Frogs, Oh My!* throughout. 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.

This year, we recommend *Research Clubs* be taught in April of third grade. (Some fourth grade teachers also make the decision to teach this unit, if their kids never experienced it, as a precursor to *Reading the Weather, Reading the World*.) We think it is a perfect unit to dive into after the high stakes tests are over as it supports youngsters' curiosity and engagement in the world, while also supporting their skills as readers of nonfiction. It's a perfect way to rally energy and excitement around learning. This is a favorite unit of children (and teachers!), and the unit gets kids to read up a storm in nonfiction books. Students work in small groups or clubs to first read and research about one animal, then another animal. In the last part of the unit they compare and contrast what they have learned about the animals they studied and also apply their newfound animal knowledge to solve real world problems. Teachers who taught this unit were flat-out astonished at the level of energy from their kids, and the consequent growth the children made. "I've never seen anything like it," they reported. Somewhere along the way in the unit, one of the minilessons preaches the importance of approaching a topic with zeal, and that rallying cry became a mantra for many of the classes that have experienced this unit. So ready yourself for this to be a really important study.

This unit is another foundational nonfiction unit. It will help strengthen students' skills as nonfiction readers as well as build their research and collaboration skills. At its heart, this is a unit on research and on learning *how* to learn from reading. This unit has the power to change your students' lives, not because they will learn about dolphins or turtles, but because they will learn *how to learn*—perhaps the single most important academic skill that we can offer our students as we set them out into the world.

At the same time as you teach this unit, your students will be simultaneously engaged in the *Writing About Research* unit in writing workshop. In that unit, students will write about the animals they are studying in reading workshop and make club books. Each member will take responsibility for making multiple chapters for each of the books the club creates. Throughout your reading unit, you'll want to push students to think about what they have learned so far and use that learning to help them to make their chapters for the club's information book in writing workshop.

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

The unit will go best if you have taught *Reading to Learn* before it, as *Research Clubs* builds off of some of the work of that previous unit. If you find that your students are still having trouble with some of the concepts taught in that previous nonfiction unit (determining the main idea, etc.), you may decide to bring some of the work from the previous unit into your small group instruction. However, this unit does revisit and build upon some of the some of the important teaching from *Reading to Learn* such as previewing; grasping text structures and ascertaining the main idea; note taking; cross text(s) synthesis; considering the author's perspective, so you can rest assured your students will receive more practice with doing that work across this unit. Also the fourth grade units return to these skills and develop them more.

You will see that this unit continues to address and shore up foundational skills—fluency, determining the meaning of unfamiliar words. If your students continue to have trouble with this work, you may want to use Session 8 in your small group work on fluency, and return to Session 13 from *Reading to Learn* to support tackling hard words. The charts (“Signs to Watch for When Choosing a Book” —p. 23; “Readers Climb the Hurdle of Hard Words”—page 108) from the earlier units will also be very helpful to you. For readers having the most difficulty, you may want to consult the second grade unit *Becoming Experts*, especially sessions 8, 9, 10.

To work with those students who need more help with building their vocabularies, you might draw on Session 3 in your small group work. You might also want to consult the second grade unit *Becoming Experts*—sessions 6, 7, 8. You will find student work samples on pages 25, 27 helpful to study.

If you have students who grasp this work easily, you might look to the fourth grade expectations on the *Informational Reading Learning Progression* to help you to continue to challenge these students and to support their progress.

Materials/Getting Ready

The most important prep work to do for this unit is to create small collections of accessible, high-interest books on a handful of animals—a bin on sharks, a bin on wolves, and so forth. Students will be studying one animal for the first bend, a different animal for the second—so you will need enough books on each animal to keep students reading about that animal for a few days. After the first bend, you can switch the bins and each club can read a new text set on a different animal. In the last bend of the unit, students can return to books from the first two bends, in addition to articles on general information about animals (adaptations, and so on).

If possible, we suggest you create mixed-level bins on each animal, being sure that each bin spans a few levels. Ideally, you would create mixed-level bins on each animal, being sure that each bin-spans three levels—say, 5-6 Level L books, 5-6 Level N books, and 5-6 Level O books (although teachers have made do with less). This allows your lower-level readers to move up to higher-level books as they learn information about the topic. If you are able to create mixed-level bins with a few texts at

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each level, you can also allow for heterogeneous clubs by pairing together two partners—one at a lower and one at a higher reading level. The fairly rare opportunity for readers at different levels to work closely together during workshop is especially invaluable for students who, despite reading lower-level texts, are higher-level thinkers. Heterogeneous clubs also allow those who read at lower levels to, with the help of their peers, access information in more sophisticated texts. It is important that some bins are filled with books that readers who aren't yet reading grade-level texts can read with fluency, accuracy and comprehension. Each collection needs to contain at least one very easy J/K/L level book that offers an overview of the topic.

If your resources are low, magazines can help as well and some teachers have found great success in putting all of the grade's animal books on a cart and sharing the books across classrooms. You can also make the topic broader—if you don't have enough books on sharks or dolphins, you could combine them along with some other books on Marine Animals, for example, and make that a category for students to study. If you don't have enough animal books to keep students reading at high volume, then you could split the class and have some clubs reading out of the animal bins while the rest of the class reads just right nonfiction and then have the class switch halfway through.

If you have purchased shelves from the TCRWP library project, you'll find the collection of books contains many books that address a particular animal (say, sharks) in ways that will help kids to synthesize information across those texts. The collection of books on a particular animal have been assembled with attention to levels of text complexity, with many books written at similar levels of text complexity, and some at higher levels.

In addition to readying your library, there are a few other key ways to prep for this unit:

- You'll want to organize your research clubs. Clubs usually involve 3-5 students who will study books on the same type of animal (you can decide if you want this club to be created of readers who are reading at similar reading levels or heterogeneous clubs composed of one higher level partnership and one lower level partnership). Each club will need a bin of books to study as well as a club folder. This folder should contain blank paper and a packet of texts that clubs will use through the unit. (The content for this packet can be found in the Digital Resources.)
- You'll want to make decisions about how your students take notes. Most teachers who taught this unit found that it was much easier for children to work outside of their notebooks in little booklets that were lined or white paper folded over and stapled. Kids could easily add pages and take away pages in booklets. Kids could lay the books next to each other in the third bend which made it easier to compare and contrast. (Of course, you could also make the choice to have students tab their notebooks into sections, Growing up, Habitat, etc., with 5 or 6 blank pages so they could put all their notes on different animals in these sections.)
- You'll want to gather some read alouds. To mirror the work your students are doing, you'll want to engage your students in a class demonstration study. You'll want to read a few texts aloud about an animal to show your students how to read across sub-topics, take notes, etc. In the first part of the unit, we suggest you read aloud about penguins, and we make specific suggestions for texts to read in the unit. In the second part of the unit, you'll want to study a new animal as a class in the same way your students are studying a new animal in their clubs. We suggest you study frogs and you will find specific suggestions for texts to read

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aloud in the unit. The unit will be easier for you to teach if you read aloud the books we choose, although in a second year, once you know the unit, you could alter our choices.

- You'll also want to make copies of key strands of the progression that you will use across this unit—Orienting, Main Idea(s) and Supporting Details/Summary, Cross Text(s) Synthesis, Comparing and Contrasting, Analyzing Perspective, and Analyzing Parts of a Text in Relation to the Whole. If you have given the pre-assessment, you'll want to study your students' work and determine which skills you feel they need to strengthen most during this unit. As with any unit, you can plan to do more small groups and conferences to target these skills, and also address this work with these skills during your read aloud and content area time
- To maintain reading volume, kids are asked to continue to read at home on their research topic but also to keep reading their fiction books. They are encouraged to keep working on their reading goals in fiction as well as nonfiction.

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

Moving Up Levels of Text Complexity

Teachers who taught this unit found it very helpful to administer running records towards the end of the unit because many of their students moved levels during this unit. Remember for some students, a steady diet of nonfiction reading can move them up levels, especially if they tend to favor nonfiction reading. For others, growth in reading may be due to the opportunity to read in mixed level bins that span three levels and allow lower level readers to move up to higher-level books as they learn information about the topic.

Reading Volume

It is important for you and the clubs to have been monitoring reading volume. If our kids are stopping too much to take notes or they are not pushing themselves to read across books on each sub-topic then they will not have read enough to compare and contrast nor apply overarching concepts.

Note Taking Concerns

Students who needed more support with Note-taking (not main ideas, kids copying too much or stopping to take notes too often) consult *Reading to Learn Sessions 2 and 3* and *Research Clubs Sessions 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 16*. Great examples of students' notes can be found on pages 43, 48, 66, 83,

Compare and Contrast Work

Bends II and III offer the opportunity for deep, rich compare and contrast work but some students can tend to compare and contrast in superficial ways. That is, a student would say something like: "Both of these animals take care of their young." The student does not go into specifics about *how* each animal does this. Ideally, you'd instead hope to hear something like: "This one is a mammal. It takes care of its young by feeding its young milk from its body. But this animal doesn't do that. It's a penguin and it chews its food and regurgitates it into its baby's mouth." If you do not hear specifics like this mentioned, ask students to go back and find the parts that show *how* each animal takes

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care of its young, lay the pages next to each other, and then talk between the specific text evidence. Coach them to put their fingers on specific lines. You might plan to meet with a small group on compare contrast work 3 to 5 times across Bend II and III. You will find Sessions 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 especially helpful to you as you plan this small group instruction. Many teachers find it very effective to quickly re-teach the demonstration portion of the minilessons using a different text with these small groups of students and then push students to try the work in their own texts.

Managing Clubs

Kids will already have experienced book clubs in the *Character Studies* unit so they should be able to bring their knowledge of how clubs work, but sessions 4, 7, 8, 13 and 18 provide clubs with more support on effective ways they can work together. You might video tape or fishbowl a club working well together and show the rest of the class.

Bend I

In Bend I, children are in clubs based on an animal they would like to study. This is an especially clear and straight-forward bend, and you should have no trouble keeping pace as you teach the 6 sessions. The bend begins exactly how the *Reading to Learn* unit started. Students orient themselves to what they will read before diving into reading nonfiction books about an animal. But this time they are taught to preview a text set and not an individual book. Students will notice topics that thread through many books: animal habitats, enemies, life cycles. Noticing these patterns of repeating sub-topics across books on a topic is critical work.

Previewing is foundational to nonfiction reading and to researching a topic, yet so many readers aren't spending their time to orient themselves. Remember orienting and previewing is work that you should see students doing every time they pick a new book to read or turn the page to a new section.

Because they are aiming to learn about a sub-topic across texts, students should not set off and read a book cover to cover but instead they should read a similar type of section in multiple books (say, on habitats). They should look for the section on animal habitats in each book they have on snakes, and read those sections. When they do this, students should start by reading the easiest and broadest texts in order to get a broad strokes understanding of the sub-topic and then read across the texts in order of increasing difficulty.

In this unit (as in all units), it's important to keep a close eye on reading volume. You'll want to see your children reading tons and tons in school and at home. This means that kids shouldn't just be picking one sub-topic to read across each day. Instead, you should see your students reading across two or three sub-topics in a workshop (which means reading through multiple books). So, you would want to see a student first read sections from each book on habitats, then sections on food, sections on body features, etc. If you have fewer resources, you may decide to have students read across more sub-topics.

Each club will make a list of the shared sub-topics they will research. It is important to note that each member is **not** choosing a different sub-topic to study. Rather, together the club is reading the same sub-topics and discussing the information so club members are clarifying, adding on to each

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other's information and perhaps even noticing differences in the information and how it is presented. It will be important for you to help your students see that sub-topics are often not identified clearly. A sub-topic labeled "Chomp!" might really be about the hunting habits and diet of an animal. You'll need to help students to preview and skim to check that a section really does address the sub-topic they are studying.

Session 2 which addresses cross-text(s) synthesis is an especially critical session and is one that you will want to return to with students during your small group work or conferring across the unit. Many teachers repeated this minilesson with small groups of students using different excerpts because it made concrete the concept of synthesis. The gesture in the connection of the session (interlacing fingers) became one that really resonated for students. When students were teaching their club they often used this gesture to signal to their club when they were putting two bits of information together from different texts.

As students learn about the animal they are studying, they will also be writing about that animal during writing workshop. You will want to encourage them to take the information they are learning about the animal during reading workshop and apply it during writing workshop to help generate chapters for their club book. You will want to encourage students to bring their booklets of research notes to writing workshop, as well.

Bend II

In Bend II, clubs study a second animal, this time with more independence. The group that was studying snakes is now studying horses, for example. This bend raises the bar for the work and asks each club member to push the others in the club to do more. Clubs take more responsibility for holding each other accountable for the work they are doing.

The second bend also reinforces and raises the level of previous learning about text structures and how they can be used to organize learning. You will see that this work on text structure starts by orienting students to the big picture of text structures by giving them a fast introduction to multiple text structures. That is, rather than first taking students through learning about each text structure in isolation, Session 9 immerses students in the idea that there are organizational plans that underlie sections and helps students consider how to take notes that follow the structure of a text. You should see students' notes begin to be more structured and start to notice more of a variety in the structures in which they choose to take notes as they begin to notice more structures such as compare/contrast; sequential order; cause and effect. Helpful samples of student note taking can be found on pages 82, 83, 91, and 94.

At times, because this work can be tricky, teachers can tend to slow down and dole out teaching in a bit by bit way. Teachers tend to spend a few days on teaching first about one text structure, then a few days on another. We strongly caution you against doing this as it will make your unit longer and you'll lose rigor and kids' energy and momentum. Don't over scaffold. Push students into trying work and watch to see what they can do. Students have already heard about these text structures in earlier grades and in the earlier writing unit *The Art of Information Writing* and they are also writing using different text structures in their writing workshop time. They are getting lots of opportunities to work with and think about text structures. You might be surprised to see how

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much students can do after learning about the big picture of text structures. Doling out your teaching in smaller doses can actually be harder for many learners.

A few other tips to help with the work on text structure:

- You will find the small group work and conferring sessions in Sessions 9-12 very helpful to you. Particularly key work is to help students to identify a particular text structure by laying two sections of differing text structures side by side. Seeing one text structure in contrast to others was especially helpful for students who had trouble with this work, many teachers found.
- The chart “Common Nonfiction Text Structures to Look Out For” which can be found on the Digital Resources for the first and second grade *If...Then...* unit *Reading Nonfiction Cover to Cover* was helpful for teachers to give to their third grade students. You might want to draw upon it and add to it. The pictures really help kids read and then identify the text structure.
- Figuring out the difference between cause/effect and problem/solution can be especially tricky. You'll find the prelude of Session 11 addresses this work. Many teachers also found the mid workshop in Session 11 to be helpful in addressing this work and turned it into small group work for students still having trouble with these concepts.
- It is often helpful to teach students to look for and use keywords to determine the structure of a section. Many teachers find the chart on page 76 very helpful. Some teachers made copies of the charts for individual students or posted a chart on each table. It will also be important to get students to practice using these sorts of keywords to see if they can teach the information in a section. If they cannot use words and phrases such as “Because of...”; “As a result,” then there is a good chance that this section is not organized using a cause and effect text structure, for example..
- If you taught *The Art of Information Writing* in writing, students had the chance to practice writing in different structures. You might gather a small group and have them bring their published pieces or writing notebooks to do a quick study of the text structures they used as writers and then push them to consider how they organized their writing in this way before returning to their independent reading and trying to identify the way sections/texts are organized.

Other work in this bend that students often find challenging is to consider the author's intent. The first nonfiction unit began the work of getting students to think about the author's perspective and to be able to distinguish their own opinion from that of the author's. In this unit, readers are taught questions that can nudge them to think beyond their own point of view as they consider “why might the author have...?” You'll want to continue to nudge your students to ask these questions of their texts and of their club members as they research.

Doing more of this work of determining text structures and considering the author's intent during your read aloud time and content area will benefit your students.

Just as students are studying a second animal in reading, they are also now writing about that second animal in writing workshop. You will want to see them taking the information they are learning about the second animal and using it to help them to write chapters in a new club informational book in writing workshop.

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Bend III

In Bend III, clubs will compare and contrast the animals they have studied and will even consider how the animals the whole class has studied are like/unlike each of these animals. This part of the unit also introduces overarching concepts like adaptation or survival and students now read about these concepts, considering how they apply to the animals they have studied. This is high level work being done on animals the kids have grown to love and care about and that they have read tons and tons on and have gathered so much information about. Expect to hear your students talking with strong content knowledge about the animals studied and deep thinking as they consider these larger concepts.

Key lessons in this bend are session 13, 16 and 17. Session 16 – Developing Evidence-Based Theories will draw from some of the writing units your students have experienced—*Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials* and *Baby Literary Essays* and the reading unit called *Character Studies*.

Finally, the unit culminates with a two day project where students are tackling a real world problem. The opportunity you are giving your students to apply their learning will bring them one step closer to doing this work on their own in the future. These two days will allow you to assess their skill at applying all they have learned during this unit. As students work, your role is to rally them to keep working and to lightly coach them to raise the level of what they are doing. Session 19 has great suggestions on the predictable ways your students will need your support.

Don't skip these last few days in the unit as it tends to be an especially exciting part. Some teachers said that students who had tended to be reluctant for all other work in school up to that point were extremely engaged during this work. Know that the point of the projects is not to have each student produce a fancy, beautiful product. The goal is that these projects help to show your students' ideas and learning during this unit. You'll want to study the student work in session 19 to get an idea of expectations. Don't let this work continue on past just two days.

In writing workshop, students will be writing books that advance ideas. That is they will be writing books about big ideas such as animal adaptations, differences in animal habitats, and drawing on information they have learned about multiple animals as they do so. You will also encourage students to add sections that compare and contrast the animals they have studied. Channel students to draw on all they have learned during reading workshop to make their informational books in writing workshop.