

Unit Three – Nonfiction Reading: Reading to Get the Text

Mid-November to Mid-December (Level 3 Reading Benchmark: N/O)

Welcome to the Unit

This RWP reading unit marks the time of the year when your students will leave the adventures of their characters, their struggles and changes, and move into the world of the water cycle and whales, spaceships and skateboarding. They'll want to leap at the whole new section of the library you'll open up for them, with a drumroll to announce the start of this new adventure you'll take together as a class. Maybe you'll clear off the chalkboard ledge and fill it with the coolest, most beautiful, most awe-inspiring nonfiction books in your library. Maybe you'll surprise your students with a bulletin board cleared of all their character work, and in its place, a display of maps and newspapers, brochures, blogs, photographs, websites, and magazine clippings. Perhaps you'll start on the first day showing them a short clip from a popular TV show that highlights a child, curious to explore new facts and cool information such as *Bill Nye the Science Guy*. Regardless, you'll help all your readers feel at home in this new genre, and hope to especially entice readers who may feel like stories are not exactly their cup of tea yet.

At the heart of this unit is the notion that teaching kids to notice the underlying structures of texts will help them to hold onto the main ideas and key details of these texts. Much of the unit relies on the book *Navigating Nonfiction* from *Units of Study in Teaching Reading, Grades 3-5* by Lucy Calkins and Kathleen Tolan. You will note that we've added new instruction in specific areas, and refined the unit to make it exactly aligned to grade-level expectations. You will see that we have especially added further lessons to help students build nonfiction reading lives. In this curricular calendar write-up, we outline a unit of study in which you give children stretches of time to read whole texts, reading not to answer a specific question or to mine for an interesting fact, but rather to learn what the book has to teach. The unit spotlights skills and habits essential to a reader of expository nonfiction: determining importance and finding main ideas and supportive details; questioning and talking back to the text; figuring out and using new content-specific vocabulary; and applying analytical thinking skills to compare and contrast, rank or categorize.

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Overview

Essential Question: How can I read expository nonfiction texts in such a way that I can determine what is most important and consolidate information and ideas?

- **Bend I: Building a Nonfiction Reading Life**

How can I organize a rich nonfiction reading life for myself so that I read nonfiction often, and live towards goals that I set for myself as a nonfiction reader? (a shorter bend-approx. 3 or 4 sessions)

- **Bend II: Nonfiction Takes a Special Kind of Reading**

Can I use my nonfiction reading strategies to ‘get’ what expository texts are saying—to grasp the central ideas and the supporting details? Can I use a boxes-and-bullets, expository text structure to help me organize my understanding of the texts I read? (approx. a week)

- **Bend III: Synthesizing Across Parts and Growing Ideas About Nonfiction**

Even though my mind will often be full of all that I have learned while reading, can I leave space in my mind, and time in my reading, to grow ideas about the content? Can I push my thinking so that I elaborate on those ideas? (approx. a week)

In Bend One of the unit, the goal is for children to develop nonfiction reading identities. All children have interests (or obsessions!), hobbies, things they want to know more about and topics on which they feel experts. In Bend One, they will be invited to bring their passions into the classroom and do some high-interest reading in texts that are (perhaps) slightly more complex than what they were reading in fiction. The work of the bend, then, will be to help students tackle these slightly more difficult texts--helping them to read with stamina and fluency, self-monitor their understanding and get the gist of the text, determine the meaning of unfamiliar words, and so on. In Bend Two students will begin to see that nonfiction takes a special kind of reading. They'll begin to consider the ways that they read nonfiction differently from fiction. A large part of this work will be to determine main ideas through grasping the text's infrastructure.

Students will need to be able to recognize that many expository texts follow a “boxes-and-bullets” structure--the “box” is the main idea, and the “bullets” are the details. If readers expect this infrastructure and if they learn to use text features, white space, and transitional phrases to help them discern that infrastructure, they will be able to glean what matters from texts that contain an overwhelming amount of raw information. In their partnerships, readers will learn how to teach each other what they're learning by being engaging teachers—using their whole body and gestures, not just their words and the act of teaching will help your readers to make choices about what is most important to convey to others, thereby determining the most crucial information.

In Bend Three, students will synthesize information across parts and grow ideas. They will begin to ask how parts fit together and to hold questions in mind as they read, looking for answers. This third part of the unit also asks readers to learn to think and talk about the texts they are reading. Though they may begin with reactions like “Weird!” or “Cool!” or “I never knew that _____,” you will want to push kids to notice places in the text that draw them in, and you’ll want to nudge kids to question the information they’re reading. Partners can work together here to talk long about questions, to synthesize key parts of their text, and to develop a knowledge base together.

To guide your planning, keep in mind this unit is expected to extend until (but not past) mid-December. This unit is not intended to be overly lengthy. The second and third bend come almost directly from Volume I of *Navigating Nonfiction* which is seven sessions long. We have added a few extra sessions on Building a Nonfiction Reading Life but these should only add few additional days to your unit.

CCSS/LS Standards Addressed in this Unit

This unit addresses multiple standards but there are a few that we want to especially highlight. One of the major goals of this is to support students in being able to determine a main idea and key details, the work of Standard 3.2. This the first year that students are held accountable for determining a main idea as last year in second grade they were expected to determine the main topic as well as the focus of specific sections. At the same time that students are taught to look at structure to determine a main idea, they are also being taught to look at the structures and relationships of sentences to support that work. Being able to look at the logical connections between sentences is the work of Standard 3.8 and will later lead to students being able to analyze the author’s argument. In addition, this unit supports students in beginning to summarize, work they will be expected to do as fourth graders (4.2). The first part of the unit works to support foundational standards, such as fluency and monitoring for meaning and addresses RF 3.4. The unit also works to support students in determining the meaning of unfamiliar words and in decoding those words, the work of RI 3.4 and RF 3.3. Across the unit, students are supported in grounding their ideas in text evidence. In addition, the unit moves students toward making inferences about texts, work that will be expected of them in fourth grade (4.1).

Getting Ready

Here are a few tips to help you to get ready to teach this unit.

- *Gather high interest expository nonfiction (print/digital)*
- *Choose your read aloud(s)*
- *If possible, print out resources from the DVD to use in your minilesson*

Gather high interest expository nonfiction (print/digital)

For the very start of your unit, you will want to invite readers to bring in their own high interest nonfiction so that you can be sure all students will be reading about topics about which they are passionate. The first part of this unit is all about developing a nonfiction reading identity and learning what kind of nonfiction reader you are so students bringing in their own books will help you make sure all readers are reading about topics of high interest. If you know your students will likely have difficulty bringing in their own books, then we suggest that you do what you can to gather books on topics that are likely to interest your students and keep that first bend very short.

During the rest of the unit, students can continue to read expository nonfiction. You may want to locate the expository texts that have a fairly clear structure of headings and subsections, and if possible, even get two copies of some of these texts; creating same-text partnerships early on in the unit can provide wonderful scaffolds for readers. If same-text partnerships aren't possible with the library you have, you may want to have same-topic partnerships at least. Ideally, informational texts in the classroom library will be:

- Clearly-structured
- At levels where children can currently read with fluency, comprehension, and accuracy *and also* be at levels just above this, as you'll move children into these as the unit progresses
- Highly engaging
- Varied enough to allow children to have some choice over what topics they read about, including topics related to social studies, science, and history.
- Organized into same-topic baskets (not same-level baskets) to allow children to read "up" in level of difficulty on the same topic

What is most important is to ensure that all readers are reading lots and lots of texts which are matched to--and pushing steadily-- their abilities and interests. To help with your ordering and organizing of materials, you can find a leveled bibliography of informational texts on the RWP website, with a section devoted to texts that are expository. Some of these texts are on the list of grade band texts that is offered by the Common Core State Standards.

The books on the list are all available from Booksource—simply ask for the RWP collection. Think of these book lists as a community resource and bear in mind that we rely upon input. Know, too, that any list will evolve. Please contact us with more book suggestions.

You will also want to set up other areas of your classroom to support informational reading, bookmarking sites of interest on your computers and making sure your periodical racks have high interest magazines. You will want to bookmark sites that offer general information (such as *Time for Kids*), but also sites that relate to more specific topics (such as sites that relate to wild animals, space, or sports). If your class is engaged in a study on a country, for example, you can bookmark maps and other websites which provide information about the country's population, tourism, economy, culture, and so on. You might also consider making sure that your listening center includes high level complex informational texts. Setting up a listening center with audio books will support students in continuing to develop their fluency and vocabulary and help them to meet important Foundational Skills Standards in Reading (RF 3.4). At the same time as they are hearing the words, they are seeing them in print in the books in front of them. This will be especially helpful for your ELLs and speech and language students as these recordings provide models for fluent reading of nonfiction texts. Audio books also give students the opportunity to access topics and text levels that they may not have otherwise read on their own.

As the unit progresses, you'll want to continue to assess when a reader might be ready to move up a level and supporting that reader through a variety of methods:

- including a few books of the next level in their baggies
- giving book introductions and then handing over a book of the next level
- reading aloud the beginning of the book of the next level up

Be prepared with some books for each students at levels above where they are today! Instead of closing the rest of your library, we strongly suggest that you reserve time every day (at least fifteen to twenty minutes in school and more time at home) for children to continue reading literature at each student's highest level of comprehension, pushing them to transfer and apply all the skills you've already taught. In this way, you can keep students reading even when materials are low and help them to continue to hold onto the learning they have done in reading fiction. And in any case, be sure readers continue to maintain their reading logs. Monitor that they're reading enough chapter books each week—probably anywhere from one to four, in addition to the informational texts they read.

Choose your read aloud(s)

You'll want your read alouds to mirror the work your students are doing so you'll want to choose books which have clear expository structures, plenty of text features and are

engaging. One that we suggest is *Insect Bodies* by *Bobbie Kalman*. At 700L this text is at a Lexile that will ensure that those who are hypersensitive to Lexile levels are satisfied. In addition, we like this book for its very clear structure. We have found it very useful for helping students to determine main ideas and also for supporting them in synthesizing across different sections. You might also consider reading another book on a similar topic during this unit. We suggest *Insect* (Mondo Animals) by Bettina Bird, John Short and Deborah Savin if you wanted to do some compare and contrast work on the same topic. You can reinforce the lessons on main idea, summary, using key vocabulary, and so on, but you can also begin to help students see how they might compare and contrast authors' most important points and key details on a topic. This will set them up for the next unit when students do more involved compare and contrast work when studying about countries.

In addition to your read aloud books, you might also want to gather a few resources that show kids/characters being curious to support students in continuing to develop nonfiction reading identities. Sid the Science Kid is a show about a boy who is curious about the world and asks a question which leads his class to explore science each episode. While the show is intended for younger children, some of Sid's questions actually lead to complex learning--such as when he wonders why he cannot fly and the class visits the Science Center to learn that early inventors studied birds to find ways to copy their body parts and movements to develop machines that would allow humans to fly. Showing a bit of a clip like this can get students to see the value of being curious and of wanting to research to find answers. You might also read parts of *I Wonder Why Camels Have Humps and Other Questions About Animals* by *Anita Ganeri*, which is set up using a "question/answer" format. Or you might even read parts of a Magic Tree House book where Annie is shown being curious and asking questions or part of a Curious George. You'll be conveying to your students that being curious and wanting to learn is at the heart of nonfiction reading.

If possible, print out resources from the DVD to use in your minilesson

Since this unit is aligned in large-part to the first volume of *Navigating Nonfiction*, this means that the resources on the DVD will be useful in your lessons. Starting in bend two, students will need to be reading expository texts. Calkins and Tolan suggest having students all read the same text for just a bit so that they can practice this work using a text which is sure to support this. That text can be found and printed from the DVD as can the other texts that are used as demonstration pieces throughout the unit.

Assessment

As mentioned in previous units, you will always want to engage in formative assessments, using these to inform your teaching.

You may decide to give the TCRWP's *Performance Assessment in Informational Reading and Opinion Writing* at the start of the unit to gather data on how well your students can write opinion pieces about informational texts after a unit of study in informational reading. This tool is aligned to the Common Core State Standards 1, 2, and 10 in information reading and Standard 1 in writing. The tool was revised with successive rounds of input from New York City's academic evaluation team and accepted as a model performance assessment by NYC's Department of Education. This performance assessment will help you ascertain students' abilities to summarize information texts, determine main ideas and key details as well as how well students refer to the text as evidence.

The RWP's *Performance Assessment in Informational Reading and Opinion Writing* asks students to view a video and read two informational texts regarding safety in contact sports, and then write a persuasive piece. A rubric, grounded in the RWP's larger learning progressions on information reading and opinion writing, is provided to help you quickly assess the level of each student's work. Students whose work is scored at a level 3 on the rubric by the second time this assessment is given, at the end of the year, are considered at grade level.

Once you have conducted a formative assessment, we urge you to sit with your grade team to assess student work together, compiling a set of anchor papers which you all agree are representative of each level. The consistency of the way in which you view and assess student work will increase because of the time spent aligning your judgments and this will allow you to track student growth across the grade. The information from this assessment will be important in helping you to plan for nonfiction reading work in the content areas, as well as test preparation in reading nonfiction and writing using text evidence.

At the same time as students are involved in the nonfiction reading units, they are also writing opinion pieces in *Changing the World*. Thus, after the *Reading To Learn: Countries Around the World* you could give the lengthier performance assessment again, using the rubric to assess your students' work. By then, you should expect to see enormous, visible growth.

Informational Reading Learning Progression

The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project's *Informational Reading Learning Progression* allows you to look at your readers' progress from kindergarten through ninth grade. It describes a progression of skills which are critical to informational reading, and it is available to schools with whom we work. The learning progression is comprised of three strands—"Determining Central Ideas and Key Details," "Analyzing the Relationship Between Authorial Intent and Craft," and "Supporting Thinking With Text Evidence." These strands have been developed to support key Standards. Assessing where students fall along the progression of each of these strands will offer an understanding of how well they can comprehend and analyze informational texts. (You may have seen previous versions of this learning progressions, such as the summary continuum, a draft that was piloted last year.)

Student Self-Assessment

Throughout the unit, you will want to provide opportunities for your students to use the *Informational Reading Learning Progression* to reflect on their own work, self-assess, set goals, and create action plans for how they will reach these goals. The RWP has drafted a version of this, but you will want to develop it in concert with your students and colleagues, making sure the tool you create is written in kid-friendly language. The goal is to pass along to students an understanding of the criteria for their work, and to engage them in setting and working towards goals. Your students should be at home with at least their version of the RWP's *Informational Reading Learning Progression* (or whatever substitute you use) and they should be meeting with you to think about ambitious but accessible goals toward which they can work. As the unit proceeds, you'll ask students to pause from time to time, in order to reflect on their work, revise, and set new goals, if needed. Push students to hold themselves accountable to growth, and to think about growth in reading as the result of effort and resolve. Guide your students to develop their own action plans outlining the steps they will take to reach their goals and reflecting on how they will take ownership of this process and the work they do. When asking students to self-assess, be sure you ask them to reflect on the informational reading they do outside the reading workshop, in all their content disciplines. It is crucially important for students to be engaged in this type of goal-setting work continually as invested partners in order to develop internal accountability and ensure the acceleration of achievement.

Bend I: Building a Nonfiction Reading Life

In this unit, one major goal is to support students in determining main ideas and key details but another major goal is to help them to cultivate relationships with nonfiction. So this bend is about helping students develop nonfiction reading identities. For some sessions in this bend, you will be able to draw on similar work to what you did during the Building a

Reading Life unit in September and thus, can utilize *Building a Reading Life* by Calkins and Tolan. However, you can also use *Navigating Nonfiction* to support your teaching. We will provide information for when each of the texts might be helpful to you.

By now, your students probably think of themselves as having certain reading identities. Can you say the same for your kids as nonfiction readers? When you ask them what kind of reader they are, they might say they are mystery readers, or they love Captain Underpants or Marvin Redpost. They know where to find their favorite authors, and genres, and they are somewhat expert in these. In this unit of study, you'll help your students to develop the same sense of expertise and identity about nonfiction. All children have interests (or obsessions!), hobbies, things they want to know more about and topics on which they feel experts.

To get started, we suggest that you invite students to investigate their nonfiction lives. "All of you," you might say, "know for sure what kind of books you like in fiction. You know the genres you like, and the series and the authors. You are Amber Brown readers and Kevin Henkes readers and Captain Underpants readers. You have fiction *identities* – people know who you are as a fiction reader. It's time for people to know you as a nonfiction reader as well." You might invite them to browse through the nonfiction library, encouraging them to look for books on topics about which they feel expert. Then after students have collected books and texts on topics that matter to them, they might sit together at tables and talk about why they care about these topics. The reason why we're doing this is to be able to teach your readers that often they can pause and take stock of their reading lives.

You can also let students that this will be a unit where they get the chance to learn even more about what they already care about but also have a chance to learn about new topics. So, as they listen to their group members talk about topics about which they want to read, students can be considering what new topics of interest they might now be having.

As your readers research the nonfiction they have brought from home and gathered from the library, next you might invite them to apply the skills they know how to do as fiction readers – have them consider their nonfiction reading lives. Teach them that readers often pose predictable questions to push themselves as readers. Questions nonfiction readers might ask themselves, for instance, include:

- What kind of nonfiction do I like to read?
- When has nonfiction reading gone particularly well for me?
- When and where and with whom do I read nonfiction?
- What could I do to read more or be smarter about my nonfiction reading?

On this same day, you might set students up with reading goals, for how they can improve their nonfiction reading, perhaps by doing more, or making more purposeful choices, or by sharing their passions. You might involve your students in looking over the work they have done at the very start of the unit—looking, for example, at their Post-its and notebook work—in order to self-assess the extent to which they have drawn on all they were taught previously. You might put up a chart of all that your students have already learned from second grade. You might have them set goals and mark these on Personal Goal Charts, creating and revising action plans to reach these goals. Some teachers have their students tape these charts to their desks, others make bulletin boards with them. The important thing is not that the goals are posted but rather that they matter enough to students that students can discuss those goals and talk about ways they intend to work toward them. Remind your students to look back at goals from earlier in the year and reflect on their progress, keeping track of their goals not just for this unit, but across all units.

Once this gets launched, you'll want to make sure that you keep giving students opportunities to reflect on what kinds of nonfiction readers they are, perhaps during shares, midworkshops, and/or partner work.

As students move off to read the high interest nonfiction they have gathered, you will want to watch them carefully to see how they are working. If you notice, for example, many students reading a text then getting up to go find another one (thus losing some reading time), you'll want to teach students that they can set themselves up to read lots and lots by planning out what they'll read and gathering a bunch of books or texts so that when they finish one, they can begin another right away. (You can see Session III of *Building a Reading Life* to find further support in teaching this lesson).

"Readers must choose what our relationships to books will be. You can be a curmudgeon toward books or you can let books matter to you, reading them like they are gold. Today I want to teach you that one way to read a text like it is gold is by getting your minds revved up to read. You can do this by previewing the book, and imagining *what* and *how* it might teach you about a topic."

You'll also likely see that many of the same lessons that you did in the initial *Building a Reading Life* unit will be needed here. For example, you may see some students holding books far away from themselves or glancing up while reading, different than the way they hugged books close when they read fiction. So you may find that you need to teach a lesson in which you help students see that just as they chose what kind of relationship they wanted to have with their fiction, so they can also choose what kind of relationship they want to have with their nonfiction. "Readers must choose what our relationships to books will be. We can be a curmudgeon toward books or we can let books matter to us, reading them like they are gold," you can tell students. You might first show what it means to read like a curmudgeon, similar to the way you did in the *Building a Reading Life* unit. You can pick up a text like *Bugwise: Thirty Incredible Insect Investigations and Arachnid Activities* and open it with a bored, disinterested look. After you read aloud for a bit using a disaffected tone and facial expressions, you can then

demonstrate how you might read a nonfiction book like it is gold. You may want to begin by teaching your readers that it's a good idea to rev up your mind to read information texts, and that the way most informational texts are structured allows you to do this well.

"Oh, this looks interesting," you might say as you open *Bugwise*. "Before I just dive in let me get myself ready to learn what this text might teach me. I want to give myself some energy to read this book. Let me rev up my mind. I wonder if this text will have the usual categories of information that I've come to expect in animal-texts: the animal's body, eating habits, predators, habitat, and so forth..." You can continue to show students how you first welcome the text by previewing the text. You can notice what the author highlights in bold, and the text features he or she chooses when you first turn to a page: titles, subtitles, photos, captions, and charts. These features help you to get ready to take in the new information on the page, thinking "What's this page (or two-page spread, or chapter) likely to be about? What do I know about this topic already?" (See the teaching in session I of *Navigating Nonfiction* for further support of this teaching. The connection to that lesson will be used later in this unit once students are in Bend II).

You may give your children actual phrases to use as they talk, such as: "This heading says _____, so I think this page is mostly about _____," or "I looked at this (picture/caption/graph) and saw _____, and this (picture/caption/graph) and saw _____. If I put them together, I think these pages will be about _____." You might teach readers to scan across the page, part-by-part, and point to or circle the aspects they are paying particular attention to with a finger. Their partner should give them feedback and adjust or revise what the first partner said. It might sound like this: "But look at this (picture/caption/graph) where I see _____. So now I'm thinking that maybe _____." In doing this work, your students will again be using information gained from illustrations to demonstrate understanding of the text, work called for by the CCSS (RI 3.7).

As students preview, set expectations and read, you may see that they stick with their same expectation even when the text does not match that expectation. You've undoubtedly worked with students on this in your last unit of study, where readers may have gotten an idea about the character on page five, then stuck to that idea throughout the text. You taught those children to read and revise their thinking, adding new information, synthesizing it and developing a new theory about the character. Well, it's likely the same will be true in informational reading. If you've taught your children to get ready to read a page by noticing the headings and features, and then to anticipate what specifically they'll learn, they'll then need to read on and check that thinking. They'll need to revise their thinking by considering: "I was right about the topic of these two pages—it is about whales—but I was wrong about the main idea. This part is actually

"Today I want to teach you another way to read a text like it is gold: Reading it in a way that engages you and your readers. You can pause before exciting or dramatic parts, change the sound of your voice, and even read the text aloud as if you are addressing an audience."

mostly about how fishermen are a danger to whales in the Arctic, not just where whales live.” This flexibility of thinking, although challenging, is an important goal to take on!

Another day you might support students’ deep engagement with the text by helping them to develop nonfiction fluency. You might teach them that to get read a text like it’s gold and welcome and understand the text, it helps to see how you can read in ways that get you even more engaged. You might show a clip of a documentary and ask students to watch with their eyes closed, asking themselves how the speaker narrates the documentary in a way that pulls the viewer in. Students might notice:

- Speaker pauses before parts that are exciting/dramatic
- Speaker’s voice rises when parts are exciting
- Speaker’s voice is smooth, even when saying words that seem difficult
- Speaker emphasizes words that are important (you can almost imagine that they would be in bold)
- When reading a list, you can hear the speaker pause after each item, almost as if a comma was there. The sentence before sets up the list (There are many ways that penguins take care of their young:...)
- Speaker sometimes address the audience (you will note)
- Many speakers sound very formal (many of them are British)

You can then invite students to reread a section of their own books, thinking about how they would read it in a way that engaged their listener more and then have them reread to a partner. As students go off, you can remind them that it is important to read aloud in ways that pull your listener in but it is also important to read silently to yourself in the same engaging ways so that you pull yourself in!

For the share of that day’s lesson then, you might invite students to read parts aloud to each other and even schedule a visit to a younger grade so that students can practice reading aloud nonfiction to younger buddies in ways that are engaging and exciting. Students can also listen to books on audio tape and practice reading aloud with the narrator on the CD. This will help them work on rate and pacing and fluency.

By now, students should be reading tons of high interest and asking you for more books on topics about which they care. “Do you have any other books on Sharks?” they might ask. Or “I want to read more about Dinosaurs!” You might now begin to move them to see that part of developing a nonfiction reading identity is about being willing to try something new. So you might now push students to try to take on some new books. “Maybe you love our read aloud by Bobbie Kalman and you want to find more books by her,” you might say. “Or maybe you saw an interesting book on elephants and you don’t really know anything about them at all but you’d like to learn more.” As students move to finding books on other topics

in nonfiction, you might see that they may return to reading in ways that look slightly disinterested. And so, you will want to rally students to remember the biggest lessons they have learned---they can choose how to read and that the books matter. So you might teach a lesson where you show students they need to take themselves off autopilot and push themselves to deeply engage with the book and allow themselves to be moved. So, you might pick up *Insect Bodies* and read the part on page 15 which starts Did You Know? “I was just going to move past this part,” you might say, “But I’m trying to get off autopilot and let all parts matter to me. So let me read this part and expect to be fascinated and wonder and see what the author is saying. ‘Did you know? All bugs are insects, but not all insects are bugs.’ Hmm...I did not know that. Wow. I’m kind of confused. What insect would not be a bug? Hmm...I’m not sure...Let me keep going. Bugs are one kind of insect.’ Okay, wait so Hmm...that means that there are other kinds of insects. So this is like there are many kinds of hats. And baseball caps are one kind of hat. But there are other kinds of hats, too. So, right now let me try to picture an insect that is not a bug.....” You might keep going, continuing to show students how you read and make comparisons and connections, drawing on what you know.

By the end of the bend, students might begin to do nonfiction book buzzes to each other to try to sway kids to read topics they might not normally read on their own. In this way they can broaden their reading identities. They can listen to book buzzes with their notebooks in hand, considering what new topics they may wish to explore. (You can see Session VIII of *Building a Reading Life* for support in teaching a lesson on book buzzes.)

Bend II: Nonfiction Takes a Special Kind of Reading

At this point in the unit, students should now be reading with energy, working to rev up their minds before they read by previewing the text and setting expectations for what they might encounter. Up to now, they have been reading on topics of high interest and working to deepen their engagement with the text through reading with fluency and expression.

This bend of the unit will take a shift toward supporting students in determining the main idea(s) of a text. For a few sessions, they will now all be reading the same text (available on the DVD—see Appendix) so that you can be sure they are reading a text that will allow them to practice the work you have taught.

To start off this work you might let them know that by now they have probably noticed that nonfiction takes a special kind of reading. “By now, you are becoming experts at nonfiction reading, just like you are experts at fiction reading,” you might say. “And you’re probably noticing that nonfiction reading looks a bit different than fiction reading. Right now, show me how a fiction reader looks when reading.” You’ll likely see students imagining that they

are huddled up close with their books. You can then ask them to show you how nonfiction readers read. You may see students now no longer pretending to hold books, but rather bent over them, studying them intently. Some, perhaps, are demonstrating looking over a big page of text, studying parts closely. (For further support in teaching this part of the lesson, you can see the Connection of Session I in *Navigating Nonfiction*). You can then let students know that part of what makes nonfiction different to read than fiction is that the texts are set up differently.

“Nonfiction readers read with a pencil. You don’t just use a pencil to doodle palm trees around the words. You use a pencil to help you pay attention to the main ideas, to note the way those ideas are developed, and to make those thoughts and ideas visible.”

You might show them how expository informational texts often contain a main idea followed—or surrounded—by supporting evidence. This boxes and bullets structure will allow students to determine main ideas and key details. In your teaching, you will probably model reading a mentor text with an eye toward that main idea as well as for supportive specific details, and you’ll demonstrate that expository reading involves gleaning outlines and summaries of the text. Session II in *Navigating Nonfiction* describes this lesson, which teaches: “Nonfiction readers read with a pencil. You don’t just use a pencil to doodle palm trees around the words. You use a pencil to help us pay attention to the main ideas, to note the way those ideas are developed, and to make those thoughts and ideas visible.” The lesson goes on to show children how they can read a chunk of text, pause to recall content in summary form, boxes-and-bullets, and then list that information across their hands. One goal of the RWP’s informational reading unit is that this awareness becomes foundational to the way your children approach expository texts. In this way, you’d support reading expository texts in their entirety, enabling children to understand the main concepts that the text teaches as opposed to an “extractive” way of reading expository informational texts where readers mine texts for isolated nuggets of trivia or “cool facts” that, to their eye, might bear no connection at all to the larger scheme of a topic.

When students go off to read that day, they can read the same article so that they can support each other in finding main idea(s) and key details. Look in the Appendix to see articles you might give students to read. All of these articles have a clear structure to support this work. Students might talk together about what they are finding and confirm and/or challenge each other’s work. You can continue to coach into their work, by reminding them to use their hands as a tool to help them list key details and by helping them to take notes through boxes and bullets (see page 46 of *Navigating Nonfiction* for some great examples of students’ boxes and bullets note taking.)

“When you read nonfiction, it is important that you don’t just read for facts, but for main ideas. One way to do this is by stopping periodically to ask, “What is the one big thing that this text is teaching and how do all the other details connect with this?”

As you watch students do this work, you’ll likely see that predictable concerns arise. One is that this work of scrutinizing paragraphs for main ideas and key details may slow students’

work down to a crawl. If this is the case, you may want to teach a lesson where you help support students in reading nonfiction faster, stronger, longer (you can see Session III of Navigating Nonfiction to support your teaching of that work).

You'll also see students who are having difficulty in figuring out main idea(s) and key details. It is no easy task for children to determine the main idea of a paragraph or a passage, especially when these are mired in intriguing or overwhelming new facts and details. You will need to teach and then often remind students that readers to ask themselves, "What is the one big thing that this text is teaching and how do all the other details connect with this?" referring explicitly to the text as the basis for answers, as the Common Core expects third graders to do. You will want to model referring explicitly to the text in your read-alouds and teach partners to hold themselves accountable using phrases such as, "What in the text makes you think that?," "What part shows that?" or "Let's look at that part together."

"Today I want to teach you that nonfiction readers often look for the "pop-out sentence" as they read, knowing that often one sentence summarizes the content of a paragraph or a passage. This topic sentence is often the first or last sentence—but not always!"

Teach children that readers simply look for the "pop-out sentence" as they read, knowing that often one sentence summarizes the content of a paragraph or a passage. Tell readers that this topic sentence is often the first or last sentence—but not always! You might teach children to read the first sentence of a paragraph and ask, "What is this saying?" and then to read on, sentence by sentence, asking, "How does this fit with what's been said so far? And this?" To find the main idea, readers need to take the sentences they've read and say what they learned in one short statement, not a question. It may help children initially to make this underlying boxes-and-bullets infrastructure visible by penciling on a copy of a text to underline or box the main ideas and to "bullet" the supporting details. You'll want to teach children to break dense swaths of expository text into chunks—either with a pencil or with their mental eye—and tackle these chunks by fishing out and holding onto the main ideas within, rather than being side-tracked by supporting facts and details. At the end of each chunk, children will profit from saying (or writing on a Post-it), "This part teaches me..."

After this day, students will be reading all different expository nonfiction independently but you can always return to this article during small group instruction. Whenever possible, if students are in partnerships, reading the same text, that will support their main idea and key detail work immensely as they can help each other.

As students are beginning to determine importance and figure out main ideas and key details, you will want to give them opportunities to synthesize what they have learned. Readers of informational texts need regular opportunities to synthesize their learning by teaching someone else. This expectation creates accountability to the text—readers know they will have to explain the big ideas of the text to someone else, but this makes what

could otherwise be a mechanical process into something vitally alive and lots of fun. You're offering a chance for ownership and the opportunity to develop expertise on a topic—creating a real incentive for children to want to know how to master the structure and organization of texts. According to Danielson and Marzano, a higher level of teaching instruction occurs when students are given the opportunity to take ownership over their own work and process it collaboratively. You might ask kids to prepare for partner talk by rehearsing how they'll explain important information they've jotted on their Post-its—they might use the text's pictures and charts, an explaining voice, an explaining finger and gestures. We at the RWP suggest you teach that when partners meet, instead of just saying what they have learned, they might:

- Point out the details in the pictures or diagrams that highlight what they're saying.
- Link previous learning to the new information that they just encountered by flipping back and forth to show pictures that build off of one another and by explaining how those pictures go together.
- Add gestures to their explanations and use their voices to emphasize what's important.
- Act out what they learned and invite their partner to join in. For example, if one partner is explaining to his partner that owls don't flap their wings like most birds, but rather they glide, he could have his partner put out his arms and flap them like wings. Then, he could instruct his partner to sway his body and keep his arms out and still to illustrate the difference between gliding and flapping.

Moreover, giving your readers the chance to teach others about their topics will also help them to meet several key speaking and listening standards of the Common Core for third grade: "Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion" (SL 3.1a), "follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion)" (SL 3.1b), "determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally" (SL 3.2), "report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace" (SL 3.4), and "speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification" (SL 3.6).

(To view a lesson on this work, you can refer to the DVD which accompanies the *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, 3-5* series.)

As students are working to consider how the structure of texts help support them in determining the main idea and key details, another way to support their work is to teach them that readers look at key terms to figure out how a section has been set up. For example, students might notice words like “Just like...” or “Different than...” to notice that the author is likely setting up two sentences that compare and contrast information. Or students might notice a sentence like “As a result of the Earth’s turning, there are four seasons.” Students can notice phrases like “as a result of” to realize that the first part of the sentence is naming an effect and the second part of the sentence is naming a cause. This is not easy work for students and will likely be very helpful to them if this is shown in your read aloud. Seymour Simon often has very clear examples of different types of text structures in his text (and students may not always encounter the text structures the CCSS wants them to notice in their independent reading). So, you might put up a section from Seymour Simon’s *Dolphins* to show students how the signal terms are used to let readers know that this section is set up to compare.

“Today I want to teach you that readers look for key terms to figure out how a section has been set up. For example, we might notice words like ‘Just like...’ or ‘Different than...’ to notice that the author is likely setting up two sentences that compare and contrast information.”

Students should begin to see that a book can have an overall text structure or different parts can have text structures and so can different sentences within a part. (While they don’t need to name the overall text structure of a section until next year), if we want our kids to be above standards, then this is work that will get them to be above standards. In any case, they do need to think about the relationships between sentences in third grade.

Some key terms of which you might teach them to be aware:

- Comparison: “Just like...”, “Different than...”, “Alike...”, “Both...”
- Cause/Effect: “As a result...”, “Because of...”, “This brought about...”, “The effect of this was...”, “This changed...” “Therefore”
- Problem/Solution: “Threat”, “Challenge”, “Obstacle”, “Problem”, “Resolution”, “Overcame”
- Chronological: “First,” “Second”, “Next”, “Afterwards”, “Years Later”
- Question/Answer: “Who”, “What”, “Where”, “Why”, “When”, “How”

Some questions students might ask themselves and others:

- What is the relationship between these sentences?
- How does this paragraph connect to the one that came before it?
- How does this part connect to the whole section?

In addition to helping students notice these sorts of signal words, you’ll also likely see that you need to help them deal with other kinds of vocabulary. When reading books on

unfamiliar subjects, as is often the case when children take on informational texts, children will encounter many new words. It is wise for a unit of study on informational reading to contain several minilessons designed to help readers tackle challenging words. Students need to notice the vocabulary that is specific to the topic on which they are reading, determine the meaning of terms and transfer and apply this learning by using the terms themselves when writing or speaking about the topics. In addition, they need to transfer academic words across units and across the curriculum. Tier Two words such as “brief,” for example, can be carried across and discussed in each area of the curriculum.

Because you will be building on strategies previously taught to your readers, you might first involve your students in an inquiry to allow them to remind themselves and each other of strategies which they know. You might say, “Readers, you have been studying word solving skills your whole school career so now you are like experts. Today we’ll do an inquiry into how we can transfer and apply the word solving work that we have done to our new work. You can use all of the resources and learning you have about determining the meaning of words to help you. As you go off to read today, will you be thinking about the question, ‘How can I use what I know about word solving to help me read informational texts with power?’” In this way, you will be involving your students as invested owners in their learning rather than reiterating strategies of the past. As you watch your readers tackle this work, you may see that they are not transferring and applying strategies learned earlier in the year as well as strategies learned in previous grades, and you will know where your teaching needs to begin. You might gather small groups or do lessons to help readers hold onto the meaning of the text, such as “substitute the hard word with a synonym and then read on.” You might also remind readers of decoding strategies you’ve introduced in other units of study, such as: “Break up the word into its root, prefix, and/or suffix and use your knowledge of those word parts to try to figure out what the word might mean.” You can put up charts from previous units and help your readers to see that strategies live across a RWP unit and across grades.

You will likely need to support readers in transferring and applying these strategies and others to tackle unfamiliar words within these more complex texts. Since authors of informational texts often use technical or content-specific words a casual reader isn’t likely to know, it’s important for readers to use strategies that help us persevere and attempt to figure out those words. Understanding these new words is often integral to understanding the content. When these words appear in the text, the author often will define the word outright and explicitly in a marginal glossary feature, or in the glossary in the back of the book. Other times, the word that the author wants us to learn is illustrated or pictured on the same page. By looking to the text features on the page for support, a reader can often determine the meaning of these new content-specific vocabulary words. For example, an illustration that accompanies text that introduces “baleen whales” to a reader will likely have a visual representation of what baleen looks like. Children need explicit instruction to

learn to “read” illustrative portions of the text carefully (e.g., photographs, quotes, timelines, charts, and maps).

For third-grade nonfiction readers, it’s helpful to teach concrete ways to notice where in the text the definition is likely to appear. Many writers of nonfiction texts leveled J–O will define the word explicitly in the same sentence in which the word appears, or in a nearby sentence. Consider the following lines from *The Yangtze River* by Nathan Olson—they are typical of one way expository texts tend to go:

“The Yangtze flows north and then east into a series of gorges. Gorges are deep valleys with steep, rocky sides.”

As you may have noticed here, the new word is repeated in the second sentence with a definition, “_____ are . . .” Another common way that authors define words in context is to offset a synonym in a parenthetical clause within the same sentence in which the word appears. Consider this sentence from *Life Cycle of a Shark* by Bobbie Kalman:

“Most sharks have streamlined, or sleek, bodies.”

Other times, the definition will actually come in a sentence before the word, like in this cluster of sentences from *Volcanoes* by Seymour Simon. Sometimes, like in this sentence, the new word will follow “This is called _____”:

“Volcanoes are formed when magma pushes its way up through the cracks in the Earth’s crust. This is called a volcanic eruption.”

Even when the text makes overt efforts, in context or in text features, to give young readers direct accessibility to unfamiliar vocabulary, children may often resist adopting the new words they see in print. Technical vocabulary, with its infrequent real-world usage, unconventional spellings, and vague pronunciation, is not the easiest or most natural for children to incorporate into their own language. You’ll need to urge children to actively adopt the technical lingo of whatever subject they’re reading about, but you will also want to create a classroom environment that encourages this—ask children to think of themselves as teachers and topic experts and create space for partnership conversations around these topics so that children may have the chance to verbally use new content-specific words in a real context. Encourage your students to make word banks for themselves and keep these nearby when they are discussing or writing about their learning. The RWP has found research saying that it takes repeated experience with a new word to learn it—people need to hear or read the word, understand what the word is (synonyms), what it is not (antonyms), put the word in their own meaningful context, and use the word in their own speech or writing. You’ll also want to teach children to choose

flexibly from a variety of strategies and use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase, using known root words as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root.

Bend III: Synthesizing Across Parts and Growing Ideas About Nonfiction

This bend is all about synthesis. The work of this bend moves students from looking at one part to determine a main idea to looking across longer swathes of text. In addition, this bend is focused on students synthesizing by raising questions, making inferences, and so on to grow ideas across a text. Students are reading independently in books that are expository nonfiction. Whenever possible, it would be helpful for students to be in reading partnerships and looking at the same book or article.

After determining the main idea of a passage, children can move to determining the overarching idea of a chapter or two-page spread by noticing whether different sections continue to build on one main idea or whether the sections turn a bend, laying out yet another idea. Informational texts can be tricky because section dividers are often invisible—teach students that readers need to be vigilant, reading in such a way that they notice when the text has gone through a transition and saying, “Oh, this is about a new subtopic.”

“Today I want to teach you that readers need to be vigilant, reading in such a way that you notice when the text has gone through a transition and saying, “Oh, this is about a new subtopic.”

As children read across a book, you may want to teach them to look across the main ideas of chunks or sections, asking, “How does this all fit together?” For example, a child may learn in one part of a text about baleen whales and how they strain their food to eat. When the child turns the page and comes to the next part of the text which is about whales with teeth and how they eat, you will want a child to notice that this part of the text connects by comparison. We at the RWP suggest rather than broadly saying that this part is all about a new whale, you will want the child to say, “Oh, the last part showed me about whales who have baleen and now this part shows how whales that have teeth eat differently. It’s letting me compare. I’m seeing that one way whales are different is the way they eat.”

You will want readers to comprehend texts in their entirety, drawing attention to how information at the end of the text builds upon the main ideas presented at the beginning of a book or passage. Correspondingly, your teaching about a paragraph’s main idea will extend to a section’s main idea, as your children become accustomed to applying the boxes-and-bullets infrastructure across much larger chunks of text.

You could teach your children that readers often take notes on a few select pages that seem particularly interesting or particularly worth sharing with their partner. The amount of

writing might be just one Post-it for a large chunk of text, where the student draws a box at the top and bullets below. This note-taking helps make their thinking visible to you as you confer with students or walk around your room looking for small groups to pull. It also helps them be prepared in their partnerships to teach each other. You may continue to need to support students in categorizing their notes if it seems that they have just listed facts (you can see page 63 of *Navigating Nonfiction* for support in how to confer with students who need help with this work and view student work.)

By now, students are reading to hold onto information. A natural next step to paraphrasing and synthesizing text is to respond to what the text teaches. Children will have ready comments for all the new information contained in expository texts: “That’s weird,” or “That’s cool,” or “That’s interesting,” or “That’s gross.” Of course, these are just launching points—quick reactions children might have to these sorts of texts. You’ll want them to take such responses further so that they also think and talk about the texts, and grow their own ideas about what they read.

Readers will naturally question the information they are reading in expository texts. “How come male emperor penguins stay alone, keeping the egg warm on its feet for two months, with nothing to eat, while the female leaves to fish in the ocean?” a child might ask. The Common Core expects your third graders to ask questions and also to answer them, referring explicitly to the text for answers, so you’ll want to teach your children that readers not only read on, seeking answers, but also to think over everything they’ve read so far and everything they already know. In response to his own question, the child might offer as an answer, “Maybe the male emperor penguin keeps the egg warm instead of the mother because on page 12 it says he has that big flap of fat that she doesn’t have,” or “Maybe the emperor penguin is like the seahorse, and the males are the ones who are responsible for the babies until they are born.” Again, such an inquiry stance toward their expository texts has greater urgency and meaning for children when it is undertaken collaboratively with a partner rather than in solitude by a lone reader.

These inquiring partner conversations that readers conduct as they explore their topics can fuel their future reading. As they go back to their informational texts, they can read differently because they’ve had the opportunity to have a conversation. They can read holding those conversations in their minds. As Session VII in *Navigating Nonfiction: Volume I* notes, we can teach children to start a conversation by locating a big idea and then talking back to that idea. Then, we can teach them to use conversational prompts to elaborate on their thinking. By talking long and “talking back to the text” with partners, children can then

“Today I want to teach you that readers don’t just pose questions, they try to answer them. When readers are curious about something, they often jot that question in a notebook or on a post-it and then read on in search of answers.”

“Today I want to teach you that readers often take notes on a few select pages that seem interesting, important or worth sharing with their partner. They don’t just copy down facts, though. Instead, they think about how they’ll organize their notes before beginning. Readers might use boxes and bullets, timelines, T-charts, or other note taking systems.”

apply that same type of thinking to their independent reading. The speaking and listening section of the Common Core State Standards calls for students to ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others. We at the RWP think you'll want to emphasize those aspects during this part and teach children to explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion they have with partners.

Conversational Prompts to Talk Back to the Text

- I can picture how this goes. It probably . . .
- This makes me think . . .
- This makes me realize . . .
- I used to think, but now I'm understanding . . .
- Maybe it's because . . .
- My ideas about this are complicated. On one hand . . . But then again, I also think . . .

At the end of the RWP reading unit, partners or individual children who have read many books on a topic can come together and quickly plan a presentation that they'll make to the rest of the class, or to another class, on the shared topic they studied. Children in partnerships might each take one part of their studied topic and teach that part to others. They may make a poster board including diagrams or charts. They may choose to read a part and act it out or make a model or put together a PowerPoint presentation. These presentations are meant to be simple and quick but can help solidify what students have learned and add interest and investment to the topic studied.

Read Aloud

Throughout your read aloud you will want to demonstrate all of the skills you have taught happening in conjunction. You'll want to be sure to provide plenty of modeling of how readers learn new words from the context clues, from text features, and from glossaries, as well as demonstrate using word attack strategies. If students need support in previewing, for example, you'll want to model for students how nonfiction readers assess a text, make plans for how to read it, begin by chunking it and then move across the sections and pages, including the pictures and diagrams. You'll want to model considering how parts connect and how you are figuring out the main idea and how to use the text to explain how the main idea is supported by key details.

In addition, you'll want to provide plenty of modeling of various note taking strategies such as how to summarize a text in a boxes-and-bullets format, and how to keep adding to those ideas, sorting out when a text has introduced new ideas, and when it is giving the reader

additional information about a current idea. As you read aloud, you may want to organize a chart that shows how readers synthesize and retell the text as main ideas and supporting information/examples. So if you're reading a book called *Owls' Nests*, you might teach readers that they could try to infer the main idea of the text so far, after reading the first page—and that the system they may use to organize these notes is a boxes-and-bullets one that looks like this:

Owls don't build their own nests.

- They move into abandoned nests.
- They live in holes in the ground.
- They live in holes in trees.

To make nonfiction read-alouds interactive, in addition to pausing at strategic points and offering readers quick opportunities to respond to texts with such prompts as: "Turn and tell your partner..." or "Stop and jot," you may also demonstrate acting out information as you explain the part you just read before giving readers an opportunity to act out a part as they explain information to their partner. Having readers stop and sketch what you read, and encouraging them to add details to the sketch as you read on, is another way to do this. The chance to put the information they are hearing into action by adding their own drama will enhance comprehension. This allows students to synthesize the text they're hearing by activating their own experiences and imagination as they create meaning.

Of course, one of the most important elements of a read-aloud is your own voice. Your intonation alone might clarify the structure of expository texts. For example, as you read, you might use your voice to emphasize main ideas, varying your intonation where support details are suggested. You might count out bullets or listed points across your fingers. You will need to model thinking and inferring explicitly to scaffold and model the kind of work you hope children will ultimately do automatically without prompting.

When navigating nonfiction, readers will encounter specialized vocabulary. This makes it an opportune time to use read-aloud to highlight how readers take on new vocabulary and incorporate the words into their conversations. You may find it helpful to chart the most important vocabulary from the sections you will be reading aloud that day. We at the RWP suggest you give individuals or partners a word bank of the specialized vocabulary so they can find the words on their own sheets. Then, when students turn and talk, or during whole-class conversation, remind them to use their word banks. This way, they are actively using these words not just that day, but across the days that you read aloud that book. If you read aloud books on the same topic, readers will have repeated opportunities to use and learn these words.

You might also help students understand the information they are learning by giving them a picture or two that you have copied from the book, so they can label these as you read. For example, if you are reading about insects' bodies, and students have a picture of a grasshopper and a beetle in front of them, you can stop to have them add labels like exoskeleton, thorax, abdomen, and spiracles as you read about each one. Then, partners can meet and explain to each other what they learned, or during whole class conversations, students can reference their diagrams to explain, compare, and contrast.

During the RWP's informational reading unit of study, you will also want to provide some opportunities for close reading of shorter texts. As always you will want to engage students in studying sections of the text closely, rereading key parts of the text, summarizing the text and discussing their thinking, referring explicitly to the text for evidence. You can read sections aloud, ask your students to read together as partnerships and also provide some time to read a bit of text independently. You will want to pose questions which ask the students to reconsider the text, synthesizing and interpreting the text and analyzing it through speaking and writing.

Another method that teachers have found particularly helpful is having students talk across read-aloud texts by putting students into groups during read-aloud, with each group given a different previously read aloud text on the topic. As you proceed to read aloud a new text, you can involve the students in making cross-text connections between the text you are reading and the one in front of their group, looking for a main idea forwarded by their book; important points their author made, and so on. Any of the methods you used to help support students in interpreting fiction can now be tailored to help students interpret information texts.