



PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

Dr. Frank Ranelli
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. William Baskerville
Assistant Superintendent

Grade 6 English Language Arts

Content Area: English Language Arts

Grade Span: Grade 6

Revised by: Janine Albanese, Carrie Johnson

Presented by: Janine Albanese

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Members of the Board of Education

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Shantell Cherry – Vice President

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Zoe Scotto

Brenda Smith

Piscataway Township Schools

1515 Stelton Road

Piscataway, NJ 08854-1332

732 572-2289, ext. 2561 Fax 732 572-1540

www.piscatawayschools.org

COURSE OVERVIEW

Description		
<p>This course follows the structure of a literacy workshop. The teacher employs mini lessons as a way to introduce and expose students to various reading and writing techniques. Independent work is stressed throughout as students work to incorporate the repertoire of learned skills and strategies into their own reading and/or writing process. The use of small groups is also relied on as teachers instruct students at their level— reteaching, reinforcing, or extending upon the skills and strategies taught in the whole-class minilessons. This structure enforces student creativity, responsibility, and agency, while providing teachers with the ability to differentiate and provide individualized support. The content of this course’s curriculum emphasizes a repertoire of skills and strategies that will help students be more powerful readers and writers in whatever genre they encounter. This is a departure from the past, when middle school curriculums were perceived as a few reading texts or writing tasks that students would master. Instead in this course, students will focus on specific skills and strategies necessary for mastering a given genre, independent of text or task.</p>		
Goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhance the growth of communication skills in an environment that encourages students to read, write, listen, and speak. ● Foster flexible, resilient readers and writers who read and write for pleasure as well as for academic purposes. ● Help students develop a toolkit of strategies for dealing with difficulties so that they can confidently tackle any reading and/or writing task with vigor and expertise. ● Foster students who are knowledgeable on a range of subjects from their nonfiction reading as well as empathetic and nuanced in their interactions with others from their reading of literature. ● Prioritize time and space for high volume reading and writing. ● Provide direct, explicit instruction in the skills and strategies of proficient readers and writers. ● Encourage academic growth through assessment-based instruction and informative, responsive targeted feedback tailored to a student’s specific strengths and needs. ● Push students to read increasingly complex texts by stretching and encouraging them to engage with texts that are appropriately complex for their grade level. 		
Scope and Sequence		
Unit	Topic	Length
Unit 1	A Deep Study of Character & Realistic Fiction	40 sessions
Unit 2	Investigating Social Issues with a Literary Essay	30 sessions
Unit 3	Tapping the Power of Nonfiction and Research-Based Information Writing	40 sessions
Unit 4	Fantasy	20 sessions

Resources

Core Text: *The 6th Grade Reading and Writing Units of Study* (by Lucy Calkins and Colleagues from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project)

Suggested Resources: Grade-level writing units and mentor texts, Reading Curricular Calendars or grade-level reading units and mentor texts, Vocabulary.com, Grade-level Google Drive, Heinemann online resources (that correspond with each unit), The Reading and Writing Project website

ALL UNITS: INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

Summary and Rationale	
<p>The Units of Study in Reading and Writing, developed by Lucy Calkins and colleagues at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), are built on best practices and a proven framework developed over decades of work. The units were developed under the influence of the Common Core State Standards and also correlate to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts. The theories, techniques and strategies included in these units are shaped by research in curriculum and instruction as well as specialized categories of literacy.</p> <p>The content of this course builds on the skills and strategies students mastered in the intermediate setting and previews some of those that will be introduced throughout the middle school years. Units alternate between reading and writing as well as fiction and nonfiction. Sixth grade begins the year in fiction with a unit based on character analysis, where students are reacquainted to the routines and procedure of the workshop while deepening their analysis skills. This is followed by a unit that asks students to write a literary essay after investigating social issues in literature. Afterward, students transition into nonfiction, honing their ability to read complex nonfiction texts and brush up on their research and notetaking skills. They will then write an essay based on the research they completed. The year ends with an exploration into fantasy, where students revisit the genre (from fifth grade) to further optimize their reading ability in this popular genre common in young adult literature. Students also try their hand at writing fantasy in the final unit of the year.</p>	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards	
NJSLS – Writing, Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language (key standards)	
RL.6.10	By the end of the year read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems at grade level text complexity or above, scaffolding as needed.
RI.6.10	By the end of the year read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text complexity or above with scaffolding as needed.
W.6.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W.6.6	Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.
W.6.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apply Grade 6 Reading standards to literature. ● Apply Grade 6 Reading standards to literary nonfiction.
W.6.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
SL.6.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, group, teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on

	<p>that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed. ● Pose and response to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion. ● Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.
SL.6.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
L.6.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

UNIT 1: A Deep Study of Character & Realistic Fiction

Summary and Rationale

As the first reading unit of the sixth grade school year, this unit acts as a primer to what it means to participate in a literacy workshop. It reintroduces students to the instructional methods, routines, and expectations that will promote their expertise and independence in reading and writing. The unit is designed so that students grow as readers and writers through a deep study of character. As the unit progresses, students will adopt positive reading habits so that they read more, annotate and jot in ways that deepen their thinking, and hold smart literary conversations with other readers. Students are encouraged to adopt a reading life by embarking on a reading “course of study,” keeping record of what they read and using a literacy notebook to capture thinking.

In Bend I students will consider complex character traits. They will analyze characters, noticing that traits emerge across a narrative, that characters are often complicated, and that pressures exerted on characters often make them the way they are. Students will support their newly formed ideas with text evidence, and at times revise initial ideas when new information is presented. Next in Bend II, students will continue to call on their repertoire of character analysis strategies and add the layer of how setting shapes characters. Moving beyond basic identification of setting, students will learn to think about the mood of the setting as well as how that mood is developed by the author’s specific language. Students will investigate ways the setting changes as both a physical and psychological force that influences characters and how group dynamics and individuals influence a place. Finally, in Bend III students will analyze how characters act as vehicles for themes in novels. Considering troubles that characters face, students will identify possible motifs of a text. Then they will think deeply about the text to develop motifs into possible themes. As in Bend I and II, students will ground their theories in specific text evidence. Students will then apply all they know about fictional texts in the writing of their own realistic fiction story.

Although this unit will focus on narrative writing techniques, the qualities of good writing remain the same from one type of writing to the next. The skills and strategies learned in this unit align with the skills required for later writing units (informational and opinion).

Recommended Pacing

Bend I: Considering Complex Character Traits
 Bend II: Investigating How Setting Shapes Characters
 Bend III: Analyzing Characters as Vehicles for Themes

State Standards

Writing Standards

NJSLS.W.3.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Reading Standards

RL.6.1.

Cite several pieces of textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.6.2.

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.6.3.	Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
RL.6.4.	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.
RL.6.5.	Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.
RL.6.6.	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
RL.6.9.	Compare, contrast, and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.
Speaking and Listening Standards	
SL.6.2.	Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.
SL.6.3.	Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reading and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
SL.6.4.	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
Language Standards	
L.6.4.	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. B. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., belligerent, bellicose, rebel). C. Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech. D. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in a context or dictionary).
L.6.5.	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., literary, biblical, and mythological allusions) in context. B. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonym, antonym, analogy) to better understand each of the words). C. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., refined, respectful, polite, diplomatic, condescending).
Instructional Focus	

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Literature mirrors reality.
- Perspective creates empathy.
- Experiences teach lessons.
- Transferring knowledge strengthens ability.

Unit Essential Questions

- How do characters change and evolve across a text? What causes these changes?
- How does understanding the complexities of characters help us understand ourselves?
- How do characters and setting intersect?
- What can characters in books teach us the world?
- How can reading help us understand and question the world?

Objectives

Students will know:

- Information about a character's traits are often included in subtle details.
- Characters are complicated, often exemplifying numerous character traits.
- Characters reveal themselves over time.
- Readers reevaluate and revise their initial ideas during the reading process.
- Characters are complex—with likable and unlikable parts.
- Significant character traits affect the plot.
- Strategies to improve writing about reading:
 - Prioritize quality over quantity (10% of reading time spent writing only)
 - Only jot what can't be remembered.
 - Record the most interesting thought (as opposed to the first thought)
 - Determine a type of writing based on thinking (annotations, post-it, table/sketch/diagram in notebook, fast and furious write long).
- Internal and external pressures cause characters to behave in less-than-likable ways.
- The ending of a text offers increased perspective—new parts seem significant or new insights are developed about characters and plot that may have been confusing before.
- Setting does not only entail the time and place a story takes place—it also includes the mood or atmosphere created by the place.
- The mood or atmosphere of the setting shapes characters.
- Author's use specific language to show the mood, atmosphere, norms, and tempo of a place.
- External pressures from their surroundings (setting) can create inconsistencies between a character's behaviors and their inner thinking.
- Settings in stories can change both physically and psychologically.
 - Change in mood or atmosphere
 - Change in time (to develop backstory)
- Characters act as positive or negative forces on a place.
- Trouble and conflict in a text portray possible motifs in a story.
- Motifs can be developed into themes by reexamining relevant scenes.
- Authors layer symbolism that relates to or develops the theme into narratives.

Students will be able to:

- Identify multiple character traits for a single character.
- Weigh the most accurate word choice to use for a specific trait.
- Compare how new information about a character confirms, contradicts or extends past information.

- Integrate new character details with initial ideas to formulate new theories.
- Recognize a character’s less likable sides.
- Evaluate and choose which character traits matter most.
- Describe how significant character traits matter to what happens in the story.
- Critique their writing about reading and set a goal for improvement.
- Choose and employ a strategy to lift the level of their writing about reading.
- Speculate possible causes of unlikable behaviors by looking for pressures exerted on the character.
- Analyze key parts of the text with the perspective of the ending in mind.
- Infer how characters are affected by the mood or atmosphere of the setting.
- Consider how an author’s specific language about setting evokes emotions and images.
- Assess how external pressures from the setting create character behavior and thought inconsistencies.
- Trace how the setting changes over time and analyze how it affects characters differently in different moments, allows for new insight into a character
- Evaluate the positive and negative effects group dynamics or powerful individuals have on a place.
- Develop ideas about possible motifs by focusing on character troubles and conflicts.
- Formulate theme statements from motifs.
- Identify and explain how certain objects or moments take on symbolic significance and help develop theme.
- Transfer all they’ve learned about reading fiction to new texts.

Resources

Core Texts:

- Teacher’s Edition: *A Deep Study of Character* by Mary Ehrenworth
- *If...Then...Curriculum* by Lucy Calkins
- “Popularity” by Adam Bagdasarian, from *First French Kiss**
- “The Fight” by Adam Bagdasarian, from *First French Kiss**
- “You Belong with Me” a music video by Taylor Swift
- “Thank You, Ma’am” by Langston Hughes
- Student Texts:
 - Suggested novels (this is not an all-inclusive list):
 - Track Series by Jason Reynolds
 - *The Parker Inheritance* by Varian Johnson
 - *Amal Unbound* by Aisha Saeed
 - *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
 - *Hurricane Child* by Kacen Callendar
 - *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora* by Pablo Cartaya
 - *Hello Universe* by Erin Entrada Kelly
 - *The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman
 - *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park
 - *Towers Falling* by Jewel Parker Rhodes
 - *The First Rule of Punk* by Celia. C. Perez

Additional Resources (including anchor charts) can be found in the Heinemann books and on the website

- Resources suggested in Teacher Edition from Heinemann site
- Reading notebooks and reading logs
- Centers (developed by Teachers College)

UNIT 2: Investigating Social Issues with a Literary Essay

Summary and Rationale

Social Issues Book Clubs aim to take on the lofty goal of working today to create a better tomorrow. It aims to teach reading in a way that pushes students to rethink the status quo and promote reform. In middle school, many issues begin to come to light and weigh heavily on students—relationship issues, school issues, a growing awareness of larger societal pressures, etc. Social media use, bullying, economic burdens, family issues, and exposure to violence all play into how students view themselves and others. It is important that educators teach students how to navigate the increasingly complicated world with empathy and grace. This unit works to do just that.

The unit begins with a focus on the relationships between characters. Students use relationship issues as a jumping off point for considering how power, perspective, and conflicts affect characters. With the goal of lifting the level of analytical work, students are asked to push themselves to contemplate the complex dynamics between two characters being more precise, considering cause and effect, and weighing/evaluating. The unit then shifts to issues that are more systemic in nature. Students will notice when issues are related to groups that a character is a part of (gender, class, race, age, etc.) and consider how a group's issues are often related to power issues. Being mindful of whether their text replicates or challenges stereotypes, students will read closely for themes and consider their own roles in group issues. Then, students work to deepen the connections they make to literature. This works to help students appreciate how their own experiences are their lens for reading and conversely how that lens is different for every reader. By becoming conscious of the connections they make, students will view them as more meaningful. Throughout the entire unit, students will be working in books clubs. They will have time in class to read, talk, and push their understanding and interpretation.

The goal of this unit, as well as any other unit, is for students to grow as readers and writers, not only as authors of literary essays. With its focus on setting and working toward goals, it is used to encourage growth in all students. The unit highlights the structures and tools used in writing workshop that support the work of writing with increased independence. Tools such as strong exemplars, mentor texts, and checklists all allow students to clearly visualize and understand the elements of a literary essay; by allowing students multiple opportunities to self-assess and set goals, they will work with more agency and increase their success. Students read with a focus on the characters in the text and the ways those characters interact with one another and the conflict. As students continue to focus on conflict and the text's commentary on larger social issues, they will consider how to transform their ideas into the basis of an essay. Additionally, students will consider how they can analyze similarities and differences in themes across texts. This analysis will culminate in the publishing of a compare/contrast essay.

Recommended Pacing

Bend I: Studying Character's Relationships

Bend II: Analyzing Group-Related Issues: Considering Power, Perspective, and Tone

Bend III: Writing Strong Literary Essays

State Standards

Writing Standards

NJSLS.W.1.

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Reading Standards

RL.6.1.

Cite several pieces of textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.6.2.	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
RL.6.3.	Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
RL.6.4.	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.
RL.6.5.	Analyze how a drama’s or poem’s form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.
RL.6.6.	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
RL.6.9.	Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems, historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Speaking and Listening Standards

SL.6.3.	Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reading and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
SL.6.4.	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Language Standards

L.6.4.	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. B. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., belligerent, bellicose, rebel). C. Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech. D. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in a context or dictionary).
L.6.5.	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., literary, biblical, and mythological allusions) in context. B. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonym, antonym, analogy) to better understand each of the words). C. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., refined, respectful, polite, diplomatic, condescending).

Instructional Focus

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Literature mirrors reality.
- Perspective creates empathy.
- Experiences teach lessons.
- Transferring knowledge strengthens ability.

Unit Essential Questions

- How do characters change and evolve across a text? What causes these changes?
- How does understanding the complexities of characters help us understand ourselves?
- How do characters and setting intersect?
- What can characters in books teach us the world?
- How can reading help us understand and question the world?

Objectives

Students will know:

- Character relationships often spark issues.
- Character relationships are apparent in how each reacts differently in times of trouble.
- Character relationships can be both positive and/or negative.
- Character actions and reactions contribute to relationship issues.
- Book Club members employ many strategies to grow ideas.
 - Listen closely to understand what members are saying.
 - Stay on the same topic for a while.
 - Find multiple examples of an idea in the text.
 - Name out and focus on a big topic.
 - Try out different ways to say what you're thinking.
 - Notice when a strong idea has emerged.
 - Track ideas to talk about.
- Power dynamics between characters affect relationships.
- Power dynamics are windows into larger social issues and life lessons.
- Entrenched, long-lasting character traits can cause potential conflicts.
- Character issues are not always personal, they are at times group-related.
 - A group's access (or lack of access) to power.
- Group-related (or social) issues often affect characters' actions, beliefs, motivations, etc.
- Common literary themes can be applied to many stories and used as a jumping off point when developing one's own theme.
- Individual characters' responses to group-related issues highlights lessons to be learned.
- Groups of people are not issues.
- Issues about a group are presented in positive and/or negative ways.
- Stories can reinforce or challenge common stereotypes and assumptions about a group.
- People/Characters can play various roles (bystander, upstander, perpetrator, victim) when issues arise.
- Meaning is created from the text as well as a reader's character traits, personal history, and groups with which s/he identifies with.
- Reading literature together can teach how to be better people.
- Less admirable characters teach lessons about life as well as admirable characters.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze character relationships to determine issues and build ideas about characters.
- Determine whether character relationships are either positive, negative, or both.

- Generalize a set of guidelines for fostering positive relationships in their life.
- Analyze how characters contribute to relationships issues in the text.
- Use various strategies to talk long about one idea in a book club conversation.
- Consider how power issues play out for characters in a text and how relationships are affected.
- Notice when power shifts among characters.

Resources

Core Texts:

- Teacher’s Edition: *Social Issues Book Clubs* by Audra Kirshbaum Robb & Emily Strang-Campbell
- Teacher’s Edition: *The Literary Essay* by Lucy Calkins, Kate Roberts, & Kathleen Tolan
- “My Side of the Story,” by Adam Bagdasarian, from *First French Kiss*
- “Inside Out” by Francisco Jimenez, from *The Circuit*
- Student Texts:
 - Suggested novels (this is not an all-inclusive list):
 - *Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga
 - *The Front Desk* by Kelly Yang
 - *Amina’s Voice* by Hena Khan
 - *The Best Man* by Richard Peck
 - *El Deafo* by Cece Bell
 - *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
 - *Ghetto Cowboy* by Gregory Neri
 - *George* by Alex Gino
 - *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper
 - *The Jacket* by Andrew Clements
 - *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan

Additional Resources (including anchor charts) can be found in the Heinemann books and on the website

- Resources suggested in Teacher Edition from Heinemann site
- Reading notebooks and reading logs
- Centers (developed by Teachers College)

UNIT 3: Tapping the Power of Nonfiction and Research-Based Information Writing

Summary and Rationale

Global standards have increasingly shifted focus onto nonfiction reading skills, which are essential to students' achievements in every academic discipline. Increasing a child's proficiency in nonfiction reading, makes them a strong student, who is better able to read articles in science and primary sources in history. Focusing on nonfiction reading skills also fosters informed citizenship, a passion for knowledge, and a lifelong joy of reading to learn.

Students will embark on the unit learning about informational writing by writing an informational essay on a broad topic. They will then transition to reading nonfiction chapter books and focusing on the challenges that are common within this genre. Then, students will work in research groups learning about new topics. Across this unit, teachers will help students develop a solid set of nonfiction reading skills: discerning central ideas, summarizing, synthesizing within and across texts, building vocabulary, growing ideas, and reading critically to question the author's point of view. Additionally, students will develop flexibility as they read across a variety of text types (nonfiction chapter books, articles, trade books, and online resources) and as they transfer what they know from one text type to the next. They will build on this work by sharpening their focus on one particular part of a broader topic, allowing this interest to guide them in developing an information book. Students will build background knowledge to support their research process and learn deeply about various topics. Students will show what they have learned about nonfiction and appropriate research practices by writing a research-based informational essay.

Overall, the unit works to teach sixth graders increasingly sophisticated ways to understand and critique information, to improve upon it and to develop ways to take action by explaining it thoroughly in various forms of writing. Looking deeply into the information and analyzing a wide variety of sources will allow students to develop a big-picture view of a topic, discover key points within that topic and draft information that shows the strength of their understanding and analysis.

Recommended Pacing

State Standards

Writing Standards

NJSLS.W.2.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W.6.7.	Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.
W.6.8.	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

Reading Standards

RI.6.1.	Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
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RI.6.2.	Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
RI.6.3.	Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).
RI.6.4.	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
RI.6.5	Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.
RI.6.6.	Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
RI.6.7.	Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
RI.6.8.	Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
RI.6.9.	Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).
Speaking and Listening Standards	
SL.6.2.	Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.
SL.6.3.	Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reading and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
SL.6.4.	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
SL.6.5.	Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.
Language Standards	
L.6.4.	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>A. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</p> <p>B. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., audience, auditory, audible).</p> <p>C. Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.</p> <p>D. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).</p>

L.6.5.	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p>A. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.</p> <p>B. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., cause/effect, part/whole, item/category) to better understand each of the words.</p> <p>C. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., stingy, scrimping, economical, unwasteful, thrifty).</p>
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Instructional Focus

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Processes promote efficiency.
- Point of view is relative.
- Increased knowledge leads to understanding.

Unit Essential Questions

- How can we read to learn intentionally and effectively?
- As we do this work, how do we learn to tackle more dense nonfiction, synthesizing ideas and details while increasing our knowledge and broadening our interests?
- How can I determine more than one central idea across a text?
- How can I use narrative and expository text structures and features as a way to help navigate the ideas and information in a text?
- How can I keep track of many central ideas about a topic while reading across texts, sorting and synthesizing new information as I read it?
- How can I use writing and discussion to think through and question what I'm learning?
- How can I re-read closely to be sure I'm understanding complicated concepts?
- How can I analyze the author's use of craft to help better understand key points about the topic?
- How can informational writing help me understand more about the world around me?
- How can I develop a growth mindset in regards to writing, one that will help me to envision myself becoming ever more powerful as a writer?
- How can I develop writing work that will take me to the next level as a writer and will increase my knowledge, power, creativity, and worldly awareness?
- How can I develop a deeper understanding about social issues that will allow me to connect to the struggles of other groups and individuals?
- How can I write in such a way that I discern the issues, lessons, and themes that topic present, and how my writing develops those issues, lessons, and themes?
- How can reflecting on my writing help me become a more focused and engaging writer?

Objectives

- Students will know:**
- The front matter (cover, table of contents, introduction) are a preview for a text's main ideas.
 - Book clubs are successful when all members come to the meeting prepared.
 - Strategies for determining main idea:
 - Use pop-out sentences and headings.
 - Locate details across sections and determine how they fit together.
 - In complex nonfiction, the central idea is revealed over time.
 - Stories embedded in nonfiction text portray an author's central idea.
 - Ideas, events, and people in a text are all linked to the central ideas.

- Self-assessment and goal-setting promote growth.
- Strategies for beginning a research topic:
 - Preview sources to get the gist of the topic.
 - Read easier sources to build background.
- Nonfiction reading strategies aid in the research process.
- Summaries include the central and main ideas, as well as some important details.
- New information will fit with, extend, or contradict old information (synthesize)
- Reading broadly helps readers comprehend a topic fully.
- The content vocabulary associated with their research topic.
- Reading is an active thinking process.
- Online research presents unique challenges to the research process.
- Techniques authors use to convey point of view
 - Including (and not including) certain voices, issues, and stories
 - Including words that spark emotions Including statistics and other numerical information
 - Choosing certain graphics (photos, charts, maps, artifacts) over others
 - Stating an opinion directly
 - Using “I”
- Some sources are less trustworthy than others.
- Writers have a purpose for writing.
- Writing is a multi-stage process.
- Information is organized in different ways.
- The habits of a growth mindset include finding a mentor, hard work, practice, building a vision, the celebration of small steps, charting progress.
- There are multiple avenues to express yourself in written form.
- Rate and volume are essential to writing.
- Information writing supports social activism.
- Ideas are complex and they often change over the course of exploring a topic.
- Challenging topics provide opportunities for writing.
- Certain details portray theme more prominently than others.
- Digital publishing requires reshaping your writing.
- Research strengthens credibility in writing.
- Reflection lends to more refined writing.

Students will be able to:

- Orient to nonfiction texts.
- Prepare for book club conversations by noticing significant parts of their text.
- Determine multiple central ideas in a text.
- Revise initial ideas in light of new evidence to determine a more accurate central idea.
- Explain how embedded stories in a nonfiction text contribute to the central idea.
- Analyze how ideas, events, and people connect to the bigger ideas of the text.
- Self-assess and goal-set in order to do higher-level reading work
- Survey sources to identify subtopics.
- Order sources easiest to hardest to determine which to read first.
- Recall what is known about reading nonfiction to start a research project.
- Summarize a text.
- Evaluate how new information relates to previous information (synthesize).
- Facilitate their understanding by reading easier texts, explanatory texts, or texts that provide follow-up information.
- Define and apply content vocabulary in a variety of ways based on how they fit together.
- Develop their own ideas about their topics.

- Compile a text set around a given topic.
- Devise possible solutions for challenges faced during online research.
- Determine an author’s point of view and explain how it is portrayed in a text.
- Distinguish trustworthy texts from a variety of sources.
- Produce a TEDTalk to interest others in their topic.
- Recognize the many different reasons to write.
- Develop a growth mindset by adopting the habits of a growth mindset (find a mentor, work hard, practice, build a vision, celebrate small steps, chart progress).
- Locate credible sources to gather information for their topics.
- Demonstrate their thinking while researching by collecting details that connect to their topics.
- Use checklists to track progress.
- Analyze flash-drafts to identify areas of success and opportunity.
- Evaluate writing habits and set goals for improvement.
- Recall what is known about information writing to write with purpose.
- Infer an author’s position on a topic to formulate ideas about the information in the text.
- Reframe their initial thoughts and ideas about a topic.
- Compare and contrast how different authors present information on a topic.
- Justify possible themes with text details.
- Evaluate text details to find the best match for a given topic.

Resources

Core Texts:

- Teacher’s Edition: *Tapping the Power of Nonfiction* by Lucy Calkins & Katie Clements
- Teacher’s Edition: *Research-Based Information Writing* by Lucy Calkins, Maggie Beattie Roberts, & Emily Strang-Campbell

Suggested Resources:

- Resources suggested in Teacher Edition from Heinemann site (must register book to obtain)
- Reading notebooks and reading logs
- Centers (developed by Teachers College)

UNIT 4: Fantasy

Summary and Rationale

The final unit for sixth grade emphasizes students’ developing knowledge of literary traditions and continues to encourage students to read with more maturity and independence. This unit repeats many of the concepts covered in the fifth grade Fantasy Book Club unit; the reason being that this is an increasingly difficult, popular genre for the more complex reading levels students will be moving into. The unit is organized so that students work in book clubs that will support them as they read multiple fantasy texts, immersing themselves in the genre. The emphasis is on transfer: students are encouraged to use all they’ve learned about fiction (understanding characters, analyzing themes, etc.) as they navigate this new genre.

To begin, students focus on orienting to the world of fantasy right away using details to learn about the setting and “magic” of this new world. Students will be alerted to how this genre is more complicated than others, and how they need to read more carefully, suspending judgment as they analyze scenes and characters. Next, students will begin to think metaphorically and analytically about the quests and themes within their fantasy texts. Students will dig deeper to interpret the implications of the conflicts, themes, and lessons in their stories and how they relate to the lives they want to lead. Finally, students focus on studying literary traditions—archetypes, quest structures, and symbolism.

Recommended Pacing

Bend I: Reading Closely at the Start of a Book: Learning to Build the World of the Story When It’s Another World

Bend II: Developing Thematic Understanding: It’s about More than Dwarfs and Elves

Bend III: Literary Traditions, Including Archetypes, Quest Structures, and Thematic Patterns

State Standards

Writing Standards

NJSLS.W.3.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Reading Standards

RL.6.1.

Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.6.2.

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RL.6.4.

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

RL.6.5.

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

RL.6.9.

Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Speaking and Listening Standards

SL.6.4.	Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate speaking behaviors (e.g., eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation).
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Language Standards

L.6.4.	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>A. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</p> <p>B. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., audience, auditory, audible).</p> <p>C. Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.</p> <p>D. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).</p>
L.6.5.	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p>A. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.</p> <p>B. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., cause/effect, part/whole, item/category) to better understand each of the words.</p> <p>C. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., stingy, scrimping, economical, unwasteful, thrifty).</p>

Instructional Focus

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Experiences teach lessons.
- Genres follow predictable characteristics.
- Transferring knowledge strengthens ability.

Unit Essential Questions

- How can I tackle the demanding and complex genre of fantasy reading?
- What will my strategies and goals be that help me to make sense of multiple plot lines, layered characters, complex themes?
- How can I learn to read closely at the start of a novel, paying careful attention to the role of the setting, to multiple plotlines, and to new information as it arises?
- How can I use all I have learned about how authors develop themes to study the way authors approach common themes in fantasy?
- How can I deepen my thoughts about fantasy stories by thinking about the choices the authors have made—especially thinking about symbolism, allusion and craft?

Objectives

Students will know:

- Authors include clues about the setting and magical elements of fantasy books in the cover, back blurb, and initial details from the beginning of the story.

- Setting has psychological (mood, tone,) implications as well as physical.
- Different Aspects of power:
 - Power of Choice
 - Overt Power (a king)
 - Resentment/Acceptance of Power
 - Aspirations for Power- good? Or dangerous?
 - Acquisition/Loss of Power
 - Power in Society
 - Power in Character Relationships
- Characters of fantasy texts begin not knowing a lot of knowledge and then learn very quickly.
- Lessons learned by characters of a text are also lessons for the reader.
- Unfamiliar terms used in fantasy books (ie “muggle” from Harry Potter) can be defined by thinking about how the word is used, word families, and/or Latin roots.
- Characters in fantasy texts face inner conflicts that haunt them.
- Characters have both inner and outer struggles.
- The metaphoric and physical dragons (conflicts) a character faces drives the character’s actions.
- Plot is a vehicle for teaching about ideas (themes).
- In fantasy, a dominant theme emerges as a struggle between good and evil.
- The narrator’s point of view dramatically influences how events are described in the novel.
- More complicated texts often have multiple plotlines.
- Multiple plotlines can be tracked using charts, timelines, and other graphic organizers.
- Characters in fantasy novels often play expected roles (archetypes).
- Fantasy novels often follow the traditional literary structure of a quest.
- Small details and overall structures reveal the character’s internal and/or external quest.
- The genre of fantasy will include similar characters, plots, themes, etc, but the author may approach each differently.
- Characters in fantasy may conform or break common stereotypes and gender norms.

Students will be able to:

- Infer details about the setting and magical elements of their fantasy book.
- Analyze the setting of their story to determine mood.
- Analyze signs of power in its different forms.
- Recognize times when a character, who knows little, learns a lot.
- Infer life lessons based on those learned by characters.
- Determine the meaning of key terms based on how the word is used, word families, and/or Latin roots.
- Identify characters’ inner and outer conflicts, pressures, and/or struggles.
- Explain characters’ motivations by analyzing identified metaphoric and physical dragons (conflicts).
- Consider how the author develops themes across a narrative using connecting scenes.
- Critique how the dominant theme of a struggle between good and evil is played out in a text.
- Analyze how the narrator’s point of view is shown and how it affects the story.
- Separate and follow multiple plotlines using charts, timelines, and other graphic organizers to track problems that arise.
- Decide the traditional archetypal roles characters in their fantasy novel play.
- Determine whether a fantasy novel showcases a physical or psychological quest.
- Critique the small details and overall structure of a text to discern a character’s internal and/or external quest.
- Evaluate to what extent characters in their fantasy novel fulfill archetypal roles.
- Compare how authors approach a similar genre differently.
- Consider a character’s actions and appearances in order to read critically for stereotypes and gender norms.

Resources

Core Texts:

- Teacher's Edition: *Fantasy Book Clubs* by Lucy Calkins

Suggested Resources:

- Resources suggested in Teacher Edition from Heinemann site (must register book to obtain)
- Reading notebooks and reading logs
- Centers (developed by Teachers College)