

Lesson 3: Writing Informational Texts: Planning an Introduction about My Freaky Frog



CCS Standards

- **RI.3.1:** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- **RI.3.3:** Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.
- **RI.3.4:** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 3 topic or subject area*.
- **RI.3.7:** Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
- **RI.3.8:** Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).
- **W.3.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **W.3.2a:** Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.
- **W.3.4:** With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
- **W.3.5:** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- **W.3.7:** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.
- **W.3.8:** Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.



Daily Learning Targets

- I can write a clear focus statement that explains the main idea of my essay. (W.3.2a)
- I can plan an introduction using my research notes that gives the reader important information needed to understand the piece. (W.3.2a, W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.7, W.3.8)

Ongoing Assessment

- Participation in Language Dive discussion (RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.8, W.3.2a, L.3.1a, L.3.1g)
- Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (W.3.2a, W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.7, W.3.8)

Agenda

1. Opening

- A. Engaging the Writer (5 minutes)
- B. Reviewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)

2. Work Time

- A. Analyzing a Model (20 minutes)
- B. Guided Practice: Planning an Introduction (25 minutes)

3. Closing and Assessment

- A. Share (5 minutes)

4. Homework

- A. Respond to an Informative QuickWrite prompt using the provided prompts in your Unit 3 homework packet.
- B. Accountable Research Reading. Select a prompt to respond to in the front of your independent reading journal.

Teaching Notes

Purpose of lesson and alignment to standards:

- In this lesson, students begin to use the poison dart frog essay model as an example of an informational essay like the one they will write. Students study the introduction of (W.3.2a) and use their observations when planning their freaky frog essay independently (W.3.2a, W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.7, W.3.8).
- Students participate in a teacher-led Language Dive discussion that guides them through the language structure and vocabulary of the focus statement from the Poison Dart Frog Model (RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.8, W.3.2a, L.3.1a, L.3.1g). Students will apply their understanding of the structure of this focus statement to write their own focus statements in Work Time C.
- Students focus only on planning the introduction paragraph of their essays in this lesson. They will elaborate on and draft their essays in Lessons 4–7. Note that the Informative Essay Planning graphic organizers (answers, for teacher reference) in the supporting materials are complete; use these as examples to informally assess the content students have planned for Lessons 3–7.
- The research reading that students complete for homework will help build both their vocabulary and knowledge pertaining to frogs and specifically frog adaptations. By participating in this volume of reading over a span of time, students will develop a wide base of knowledge about the world and the words that help describe and make sense of it.
- Students will have the opportunity to practice their fluency in this lesson by following along and reading silently as the teacher reads the Poison Dart Frog Model aloud in Work Time A.
- Students who finish quickly or require an extension can add additional general information about their freaky frog for their introduction paragraph, using additional sources. They can also begin to consider other ways to present the information they have been researching. Invite students to brainstorm ways to present (i.e., PowerPoint presentation, create a poster, etc.), choose one, and begin planning this presentation.

How it builds on previous work:

- Students refer to the research completed in Lessons 1 and 2 as they plan their informational essays.
- When analyzing the essay model in Work Time B, students refer to the Informative Writing Checklist. Students used the same checklist in Unit 2, so they should be familiar with it in this unit. Throughout this unit, students examine each characteristic and consider how it applies to an essay.
- Students are introduced to the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer as a tool to plan their essays. They will add to their plans throughout the next several lessons as they alternate between analyzing a section of the model, planning that section of their essay, and then drafting that same section. This graphic organizer builds on students' understanding of informative writing and the Painted Essay® from Module 1, allowing them to gather their ideas, evidence, and elaboration for their essays in one place.
- Although the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer is new to students, it uses familiar headings and language similar to the research note-catchers used in Unit 2 and in Lessons 1 and 2 of this unit. Students discuss the difference between the short paragraphs they wrote in Unit 2 and the writing that will be required of them in this unit when analyzing the model essay in Work Time B.
- The model students analyze follows the Painted Essay® structure introduced in Module 1. The Painted Essay® (Diana Leddy, Vermont Writing Collaborative) guides students to code each section of their essay a different color to understand each part, the content of each part, and how the different parts connect.
- Continue to use Goals 1-3 Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation.

Areas where students may need additional support:

- Students may have difficulty determining the most important and relevant research notes to use as they develop their plans. Consider flagging important pages of students' research notebooks or having them use sticky notes to mark key pages or notes.
- Some students may require support recording their information in the correct box of their Informational Writing Planning graphic organizers.

Assessment Guidance:

- Use the following criteria from the Informative/Explanatory Writing Rubric: Grade 3 (see Grade 3 Writing Rubrics document) to assess student progress toward the learning targets:
 - Focus is clear and mostly maintained (W.3.2a).
 - Introduction provides some context on the topic (W.3.2a).
- Consider using the Writing Informal Assessment: Observational Checklist for Writing and Language Skills (grade 3) to informally assess the writing process in Work Time C.

Down the road:

- Students will continue to learn about verb tenses in Lessons 4 and 5. They will apply what they have learned about verb tense when drafting and editing their essays.
- Students will use their planning from this lesson to draft their introduction paragraphs in Lesson 4. Lesson 5 and 6 follow a similar pattern as this lesson, with students analyzing a

model and adding criteria to the Informative Writing checklist based on the model, and then planning the detail and conclusion paragraphs.

In advance:

- Review the Painting an Essay Plan from Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson 5 to familiarize yourself with the color-coding and the purpose of each choice of color.
- Preview the Language Dive Guide: Focus Statements and consider how to invite conversation among students to address the questions and goals suggested under each sentence strip chunk (see supporting materials). Select from the questions and goals provided to best meet your students' needs.
- Prepare the sentence strip chunks for the Language Dive (see Language Dive Guide).
- Display the Performance Task anchor chart.
- Prepare poison dart frog photographs (see note in Technology and Multimedia).
- Post: Learning targets.

Technology & Multimedia

- Work Time B: There are a number of free images showing poison dart frog adaptations on the internet. Perform an image search for “poison dart frog adaptations” in a search engine. Carefully preview the images to ensure that they are age-appropriate and meet the criteria of the lesson. Be aware that many websites contain advertisements that may not be suitable for children. Display photographs during the Language Dive discussion as indicated in the Language Dive Guide: Focus Statement.
- Work Time B: Students complete their graphic organizers in a word processing document, for example a Google Doc using Speech to Text facilities activated on devices, or using an app or software like Dictation.io (<https://dictation.io/speech>)
- Work Time B: Allow students to use an online graphic organizer such as Creately or ReadWriteThink's Webbing Tool to brainstorm, record, or share initial ideas about the introduction of their essays (<http://creately.com/Free-K12-Education-Templates> or <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/readwritethink-webbing-tool-30038.html>).

Supporting English Language Learners

Supports guided in part by CA ELD Standards 3.I.A.4, 3.I.B.6, 3.I.B.8, 3.I.C.10, 3.I.C.12, 3.II.A.1, 3.II.B.3, 3.II.B.4, 3.II.B.5.

Important points in the lesson itself

- The basic design of this lesson supports ELLs with an opportunity to unpack the focus statement of The Poison Dart Frog Model during a Language Dive. This conversation allows students to develop the habits of mind and character they need to approach other complex texts and to develop their own academic writing skills. In addition, students have the opportunity to test their oral language skills, confirming their successful communication or “repairing” communication that is not understood by other students. These oral processing sessions are critical for language development.

- ELLs may find it challenging to produce a larger volume of writing in this lesson. Allow them time to discuss what they want to write before they begin, perhaps in home language groups.

Levels of support

For lighter support:

- Buy or ask for large paint chips from a local hardware or paint store, or print them online. Write the words *unique*, *special*, *unusual*, each one on a different shade of the paint chip. Place them on the wall and discuss the shades of meaning in relation to the poison dart frog adaptations.
- Reinforce the function of *that* as a word that introduces a phrase describing or giving more information about the noun before it. Give students sentence starters they can complete with *that* _____. Example: “The glass frog’s skin helps it stay invisible to animals _____.” (*that want to eat the frogs*)

For heavier support:

- During the Language Dive in Work Time A, support students who need heavier support by encouraging them participate in parts that allow for acting out. Dictate the sentence for them to recite so that they practice using verbal language.
- During Work Time B, distribute a partially filled-in copy of the Informational Writing Planning Graphic Organizer. This provides students with models for the kind of information they should enter, while relieving the volume of writing required.

Universal Design for Learning

- **Multiple Means of Representation (MMR):** This lesson offers a variety of visual anchors to cue students’ thinking. As in previous units, consider creating additional or individual anchor charts for reference. Recall that additional scaffolding in visual representation, such as the use of graphic organizers, charts, highlights, or different colors will prompt students to visually categorize information into more manageable chunks and reinforce relationships among multiple pieces of information.
- **Multiple Means of Action and Expression (MMAE):** Continue to support students in organizing their ideas during writing. Model grouping information into paragraphs using either a familiar text or a text of high interest to the students. Consider color-coding information to help students see this concept more clearly. Recall that some students will benefit from time to discuss what they want to write before they begin.
- **Multiple Means of Engagement (MME):** Similar to Units 1 and 2, students have opportunities to share ideas and thinking with classmates in this lesson. Continue to support students’ engagement and self-regulatory skills during these activities by modeling and providing sentence frames as necessary.

Vocabulary

Key:

(L): Lesson-Specific Vocabulary

(T): Text-Specific Vocabulary

(W): Vocabulary Used in Writing

- purpose, introduction, focus statement (L)
- physical adaptations, behavioral adaptations, special, unique, survive, habitat, predator, prey (W)

Materials

- ✓ Informative Writing Checklist (one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Performance Task anchor chart (begun in Unit 1, Lesson 1)
- ✓ Freaky Frog essay prompt (from Lesson 1; one to display)
- ✓ Poison Dart Frog Model (from Lesson 2; one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Red, yellow, blue, and green colored pencils (one of each per student)
- ✓ The Painted Essay® template (completed in Module 1; one per student)
- ✓ Painting an Essay lesson plan (from Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson 5; for teacher reference)
- ✓ Poison Dart Frog Model (example, for teacher reference)
- ✓ Language Dive Guide: Focus Statement (for teacher reference)
 - Language Dive Sentence strip chunks: Focus Statement (for display; see supporting materials)
 - Language Dive Note-catcher: Focus Statement (one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Freaky Frog research notebooks (from Unit 2, Lesson 1; one per student and one to display)
 - My Freaky Frog Research note-catcher (page 9 of Freaky Frog research notebook)
 - My Freaky Frog Adaptations Research note-catcher (page 10 of Freaky Frog research notebook)
- ✓ Domain-Specific Word Wall (started in Unit 1, Lesson 1)

Opening

A. Engaging the Writer (5 minutes)

- Display and distribute a new **Informative Writing Checklist** and remind students that they worked with this same checklist throughout Unit 2 when writing shorter informational paragraphs, and in Module 1. Read it aloud as students follow along, reading silently in their heads.
- Tell students they will use this checklist throughout Unit 3 as they write their longer informative pieces, and they will look at it now to refamiliarize themselves with the checklist and what makes a good informative piece.
- Invite students to form a circle.
- Give them a minute to reread the checklist and underline a word or phrase that stands out to them.
- Explain that in a moment, students will take turns reading the phrase they've underlined to the group. Explain that as each classmate shares, they should look for a phrase they've underlined that matches or connects in some way with the phrase they've just heard. This process continues until there are no more phrases students want to share aloud.
- Invite students to begin sharing. Continue until there are no more phrases students want to share aloud.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who may need additional support with comprehension: Consider giving students a copy of the Informative Writing Checklist in advance. Read it with them, or have a strong student reader work with them, and allow them to choose which phrase to underline ahead of the lesson. (MMR, MMAE)

Opening

B. Reviewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)

- Draw students' attention to the **Performance Task anchor chart** and cold call a student to read the prompt aloud. Remind them that they are working toward creating an informational book and trading card. Review each of the bullet points below the prompt with students.
- Point to the third bullet point of the prompt under "Your book will include" on the Performance Task anchor chart and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud:

"Informational writing to amaze your readers with the unique, sometimes freaky, adaptations of the frog you researched."

- Remind students that they have been reading texts to learn about their frog and its unique adaptations. Explain that today they will begin to plan their essay about their freaky frog.
- Review the purpose for writing by asking:

"What do we mean by purpose for writing?" (the point or the reason for our writing)

"What is the purpose of our informational essays?" (to teach third- and fourth-graders about our freaky frogs and their adaptations)

- Direct students' attention to the posted learning targets. Read them aloud while students follow along, reading silently in their heads.

"I can write a clear focus statement that explains the main idea of my essay."

"I can plan an introduction using my research notes that gives the reader important information needed to understand the piece."

- Explain that before they begin planning their own essays, they will analyze a model to understand the characteristics of an informational essay. Reassure students that even though this piece will be longer than what they wrote earlier in the module, they will use many of the things they learned about informational writing as they plan, draft, revise, and publish these essays.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who may need additional support with information processing: Provide copies of the Performance Task anchor chart in advance so they can maintain focus, sketch or take notes about their thinking, and access important information as they work independently. (MMAE)
- For students who may need additional support with reading fluency: Invite them to practice reading the bullet points on the Performance Task anchor chart in advance and then call on them to read aloud to the class during this lesson. Giving these students an opportunity for public success will build their confidence and internal motivation. (MMAE, MME)

- For students who may need additional support understanding the terms in the learning targets: Write synonyms or descriptions above key terms such as *introduction*, *clear*, *focus statement*, *explains*, *main idea*, and *important information*. (MMR)
- For ELLs: Ask:
“What will your clear focus statement do?” (explain the main idea of my essay)
“What will your introduction do?” (give the reader important information needed to understand the piece)
“What do you notice about the word that in these two learning targets?” (It introduces a phrase that describes or gives more information about the noun before it.)
- Consider underlining the *that* clause in each learning target. Then ask students to draw a line from the clause to the noun it describes.

Work Time

A. Analyzing a Model (20 minutes)

- Display the **Freaky Frog essay prompt** and draw students’ attention to the second paragraph of the prompt. Ask:
“What information should we include in our essays?” (description of our frog and two adaptations that help it to survive)
- Display and invite students to take out their copies of the **Poison Dart Frog Model**. Remind them that this is the model they will analyze over the next several lessons to understand what makes a good informational essay. They should be familiar with it from their work in class for Lesson 2 and for homework. Explain that using this model will help them determine what to include in their own essays and how to organize them. Display and read the text aloud, inviting students to chorally read it with you.
- Using a total participation technique, invite responses from the group:
“What verb tense is used in this essay? What in the text makes you think so?” (present tense; verbs are written in their base form)
- Read the text aloud a second time. After each paragraph, ask and note student responses by each paragraph of the model essay:
“Based on the Freaky Frog essay prompt, what information is included in this paragraph?” (Paragraph 1: description of the frog; Paragraphs 2 and 3: the frog’s unique adaptations and how they help it survive; Paragraph 4: concluding section)
- Guide students through using **red, yellow, blue, and green colored pencils** and their **Painted Essay® Template** to color-code their Poison Dart Frog Model. Refer to **Painting an Essay Plan** for further detail and to the **Poison Dart Frog Model (example, for teacher reference)** as necessary.
- Point out that the essay has information grouped together into paragraphs that each explain an idea. The first paragraph introduces the reader to the frog by describing it, and the second and third paragraphs build on that by explaining the frog’s adaptations.
- Consider explaining that this type of grouping is very common in the United States but that some English-language writers or writers using other languages may group information differently, by starting with an interesting detail or with the conclusion, for example. Invite students to share other types of grouping they may know.

- Using a total participation technique, invite responses:

“Why is it important for writers to group information?” (It makes the writing clearer for the reader.)

- Validate student responses and explain that it might be confusing to start off the essay by talking about the adaptations of the frog without knowing what the frog looks like or where it lives.
- Point out the first paragraph of the model essay. Invite students to turn and talk, and then cold call students to share their responses after each question:

“How is the introduction of this essay similar to the introductions we wrote in Unit 2?” (It tells the focus of the writing and gives the reader background information that is needed to understand the topic.)

“How is the introduction of this essay different from the introductions we wrote in Unit 2?” (It is longer; it gives basic information about the topic and ends with the focus statement.)

- Point out that, just as in the paragraphs they wrote in Unit 2, their informational essays will include a *focus statement*.
- Pair students and guide them through a Language Dive discussion using the **Language Dive Guide: Focus Statement** (see supporting materials).
- Ask:

“What is the purpose of including a focus statement in our writing?” (to state the focus of our writing; to tell the reader the main idea of our writing)

- Point out the following criterion on the checklist: “I state my focus clearly and my writing stays focused.” Ask:

“Are there any specific criteria about focus statements in this essay that you should be aware of and list in that column on the checklist?”

- Record students’ suggestions in the Characteristics of My Frog Informative Piece column as needed.
- Point out the following criterion on the checklist: “I have an introduction that gives the reader important information needed to understand the piece.” Ask:

“Reread the Poison Dart Frog Model introduction to yourself. What important information is included in this paragraph?” (the name of the frog, its habitat, what it looks like, its predators, its prey)

- Ask:

“Are there any specific criteria about the introduction in this essay that you should be aware of and list in that column on the checklist?”

- Record students’ suggestions in the Characteristics of My Frog Informative Piece column as needed.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who are overwhelmed by too much print on a page: Consider copying the text so that there is only one paragraph on each page, with an organized space for recording the gist and information included in each paragraph. (MMR)
- For students who may need additional support with comprehension: Consider highlighting and labeling the important information in the Poison Dart Frog Model introduction in advance so they can locate it easily during the Language Dive. (MMR)
- For ELLs: Display the Poison Dart Frog Model and annotate each paragraph as you discuss it. For example, next to Paragraph 1, write "description of the frog" and underline phrases like *quite small* and *one inch long*.

Work Time

B. Guided Practice: Planning an Introduction (25 minutes)

- Tell students that they are ready to begin planning the introduction paragraph for their essays. Display and distribute the **Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer**. Cold call a student to read the focus question at the top of the graphic organizer.
- Remind students that they worked on writing focus statements throughout Unit 2 and examined the focus statement of the Poison Dart Frog Model in depth in Work Time A. If necessary, direct them back to the Informative Writing Checklist to review what a focus statement is.
- Invite students to think on their own for a minute of a focus statement they can use for their essays, using what they learned about the focus statement of the Poison Dart Frog Model during the Language Dive discussion. Then, invite students to share the statement with an elbow partner. Cold call students to share out whole group.
- Invite students to think of a different way to write their focus statement so that it includes a *such as* phrase to include examples of the adaptations. If necessary, use the poison dart frog as an example: "Poison dart frogs have special physical and behavioral adaptations that help them to survive, such as toxic skin and hiding eggs."
- Give students several minutes to write a focus statement for their essays in the appropriate spot on their graphic organizers.
- Cold call a student to read the headings of the boxes on the graphic organizer. Point out that the boxes in the top row and the box in the bottom left row correspond to paragraphs in their essays. Explain that students will focus only on the Introduction Paragraph box today.
- Invite students to chorally read the questions in the Introduction Paragraph box.
- Ask:

"Where can we find this information about our frogs?" (in the research texts, in our research notes)
- Invite students to take out their **Freaky Frog research notebooks** and find the **My Freaky Frog Research note-catcher** on page 9 and the **My Freaky Frog Adaptations Research note-catcher** on page 10.

- Invite students to independently plan the introduction paragraph of their essays, completing the corresponding box on their Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer as they work. Circulate to support students as needed, reminding them to work only on planning the introduction paragraph and to refer to the Informative Writing Checklist and **domain-specific word wall** as needed.
- If productive, cue students to think about their thinking:
"What strategies helped you complete the introduction box on your Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer? I'll give you time to think and discuss with a partner." (Responses will vary, but could include: I used only nouns and verbs; I focused on certain sections of my notebook and note-catcher.)
- Focus students on the learning targets. Read each one aloud, pausing after each to use a checking for understanding protocol for students to reflect on their comfort level with or show how close they are to meeting each target. Make note of students who may need additional support with each of the learning targets moving forward.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who may need additional support with writing fluency: Consider providing a sentence frame for the focus statement, such as: "(Name of frog) have interesting adaptations, such as (specific physical or behavioral adaptations)." (MMAE)
- For students who need additional support in organizing ideas for writing: Consider color-coding their Freaky Frog research notebooks to correspond to what information fits in the boxes on the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer. (MMAE)
- For ELLs: In preparation for the mid-unit assessment, ask: "Why is the introduction in the Poison Dart Frog Model appropriate to the task and purpose?" Discuss this sentence frame and criteria: "The introduction in the Poison Dart Frog Model is appropriate to the task and purpose because ..."
- It uses formal language.
- It has a clear focus statement.
- It includes facts about the name, habitat, appearance, predators, and prey.

Closing and Assessment

A. Share (5 minutes)

- Invite students to find a partner, preferably someone who is writing about a different frog.
- Ask them to decide with their partner who will share first. Tell students to take turns pointing to a piece of evidence on their graphic organizer and saying it to their partner the way they would write it.
- Repeat as time allows.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who need additional support with organizing ideas for writing: Model saying a piece of evidence as it would be written or allow them to just say their piece of evidence and have their partner brainstorm how to write it in an essay. (MMAE)
- For ELLs: Model the sharing protocol with an ELL who needs lighter support.

Homework

A. Respond to an Informative QuickWrite prompt using the provided prompts in your Unit 3 homework packet.

B. Accountable Research Reading. Select a prompt to respond to in the front of your independent reading journal.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For ELLs and students who may need additional support with writing fluency: Refer to the suggested homework support in Lesson 1. (MMAE)