

Lesson 7: Planning to Write an Informative Piece: Synthesizing Research on Expert Group Animals



CCS Standards

- **RI.4.9:** Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
- **W.4.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **W.4.2a:** Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- **W.4.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **W.4.5:** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- **W.4.7:** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- **W.4.8:** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.
- **L.4.3:** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- **L.4.3c:** Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion).



Daily Learning Targets

- I can synthesize information from my research notes onto a planning graphic organizer. (RI.4.9, W.4.2, W.4.5, W.4.8)
- I can group together facts from my research with related evidence in my informative piece. (RI.4.9, W.4.2)

Ongoing Assessment

- Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (RI.4.9, W.4.2, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.8)

Agenda

1. Opening

- A. Engaging the Writer: Creating an Informational Texts Anchor Chart (10 minutes)
- B. Reviewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)

2. Work Time

- A. Guided Practice: Planning the Introduction for an Informative Text (20 minutes)
- B. Guided Practice: Planning the Proof Paragraphs for an Informative Text (20 minutes)

3. Closing and Assessment

- A. Research Reflection (5 minutes)

4. Homework

- A. Choose an Informative QuickWrite prompt in your homework resources to respond to.
- B. Accountable Research Reading. Select a prompt and respond in the front of your independent reading journal.

Teaching Notes

Purpose of lesson and alignment to standards:

- This is the first in a series of lessons in which students plan and write the informative piece for Part I of the performance task. In this lesson, they discuss elements of informational texts to frame their writing for their informative piece (W.4.4, L.4.3c).
- In Opening A, students are introduced to a model informational essay. This essay is provided as a model to create a shared vision of what students are aiming for: what constitutes a high-quality informational essay. For teachers, this process informs instruction and planning; for students, it promotes critical thinking, creativity and craftsmanship. The model is referred to throughout the unit as students draft their own essays.
- Students synthesize their research notes using the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer. In this lesson, they focus on the Introduction and Proof Paragraphs boxes of the graphic organizer (RI.4.9, W.4.2a, W.4.5, W.4.7, W.4.8). The other boxes are completed in later lessons, so they should be left blank for now.
- Students will use the Informative Writing Planning graphic organizer over the next several lessons. They may be familiar with this graphic organizer from third grade, as it follows a similar format. The My Sources and the Vocabulary from my research to be used are new learning for fourth grade, based on the fourth grade writing standards.
- Students may benefit from organizing their materials for the informative piece in a writing folder.
- The research reading that students complete for homework will help build both their vocabulary and knowledge pertaining to animals and specifically animal defense mechanisms. 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 needing an extension can plan an additional paragraph for their informative piece, using their Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer, extension research question developed in the first half of the unit, and their research notes.
- In this module, the habit of character focus is working to contribute to a better world. The characteristic they are reminded of in this lesson is: apply my learning as they begin to plan part of the final performance task.

How it builds on previous work:

- Students use their research on the millipede from Unit 1 and their research on their expert group animals from Lessons 2–5 to begin planning their informative pieces.
- Students worked with the Informative Writing Checklist throughout Module 1. In this lesson, students review specific criteria from the checklist as they plan an informative piece about animal defense mechanisms.
- Continue to use Goals 1-3 Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation.

Areas where students may need additional support:

- Depending on the expert group, students may have the defense mechanisms for the proof paragraphs determined for them.

Assessment guidance:

- This first piece of the performance task will be assessed using the Informative Writing Checklist. This checklist is based on the Grade 4 Informative/Explanatory Writing Rubric, which can be found in the Module 1 Appendix. The checklist is introduced in Work Time B and discussed throughout the rest of the unit as students learn about each characteristic. The column “Things to remember in this piece” is designed to help students understand this module’s specific content focus.
- Collect in Categorizing research reading homework from Lessons 5 and 6.

Down the road:

- When reviewing students’ reflections from the Closing and Assessment, look for those who have noticed gaps in their research. Provide them with time to reread their research texts and notes, looking for additional information to add to their Introduction and Proof Paragraph boxes on the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizers.
- Students will refer to the model informational essay over the next several lessons as they draft each part of their own essay.

In advance:

- Post: Performance Task anchor chart; Guiding Questions anchor chart; learning targets.

- Work Times A and 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 their characters. (<https://creately.com/Free-K12-Education-Templates>)
- Work Times A and B: Students complete their graphic organizer 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 C: Digital research reflection:
 - Students fill out a Google Form or write on a class Google Doc or Google Spreadsheet.
 - Audio exit tickets: Students record their ideas in audio through free software or apps such as Voki (<http://www.voki.com>), Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>), or Garageband (<http://www.apple.com/mac/garageband/>).

Supporting English Language Learners

Supports guided in part by CA ELD Standards 4.IA.1, 4.IA.3, 4.IB.5, 4.IB.6, 4.IC.10, 4.IC.11, 4.IC.12, 4.II.A.1, 4.II.B.3

Important points in the lesson itself

- The basic design of this lesson supports ELLs in beginning to make U.S. writing conventions explicit, including the writing process and the “four-paragraph” essay structure.
- ELLs may find the writing process and “four-paragraph” essay challenging. ELLs may not be familiar with these conventions. In fact, many ELLs may be trained in writing conventions that are different. See suggested supports in the lesson.

Levels of support

For lighter support:

- Consider inviting students to participate in the writing process on a monitored social media network, where students plan, draft, and write a topic sentence, send it to a peer, revise it, and publish it.

For heavier support:

- Reassure students: “Today, we are going to learn a lot of new things about writing in the United States. We will learn about the writing process, informative essays, paragraphs, and types of sentences. As you learn, it’s okay if you don’t understand everything. Don’t worry. Ask a lot of questions. We will do this together. Soon, you will understand more, and you will be an even better writer!”
- Display and refer to these writing elements:
 1. Writing process (plan, write, show a friend and the teacher, change the writing to make it better, share the writing)
 2. How to write an informative piece with four or five paragraphs (writing about your expert group animal)

3. Types of sentences (topic and concluding statements and supporting details)

- Prep the Informational Writing Planning graphic by filling out selected portions with appropriate information from the expert group animal. Allow students to address the gaps in information. Alternatively, create an “Information Gap” activity for ELLs by completing half of the graphic organizer (Part A) for one group and completing the other half (Part B) for the other group. Make copies and distribute Part A to half of the students and Part B to the other half. Allow Part A students to mingle, asking questions about their gaps to Part B students, and vice versa. Example: “What details do you have about how the gazelle uses this defense mechanism?” Encourage students to share the information orally and then write the answers independently.
- Offer practice with U.S. writing conventions. Ask students to highlight topic and concluding statements in different colors when they read. Give them lists of varying supporting details and ask them to match them to the correct topic and concluding statements. Scramble the sentences in a paragraph and ask students to sequence them correctly.
- Students will see the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer again on the End of Unit 2 Assessment. Continually model using this organizer, correct serious errors students make using the organizer, and offer additional practice using the organizer for homework.
- Language structures. Students will be asked to process complex directions during this and subsequent lessons. Highlight language structures that are critical to understanding directions. Examples: “using your expert group animal notes,” “select the best evidence to include,” “use quotations to explain and support the ideas.” Work on comprehension of these structures—for example, by eliciting paraphrases of these structures.

Universal Design for Learning

- **Multiple Means of Representation (MMR):** In this lesson, support learners with auditory processing needs by writing keywords that students use during class discussions on the board as visual cues. Re-teach vocabulary as needed by providing students who may need additional support with a “cheat sheet” they can use to analyze words they see in today’s learning targets and in during the lesson.
- **Multiple Means of Action & Expression (MMAE):** Support strategy development for writing by reviewing the steps of the writing process. Provide students with an individual “cheat sheet” that includes each step and blank space for them to draw a sketch that will help them remember what to do during that step in the writing process. Let them know that they will be working on the planning step during today’s lesson. Show these students a sample of an informative piece so that they can see what they are working toward in terms of length and organization of the writing.
- **Multiple Means of Engagement (MME):** Support sustained engagement and effort by inviting students to recall and share the goal for the work they are doing during this lesson. Recall that students who may struggle with sustained effort and concentration are supported when these reminders are built into the learning environment.

Vocabulary

Key:

(L): Lesson-Specific Vocabulary

(T): Text-Specific Vocabulary

(W): Vocabulary used in writing

- physical description (L)

Materials

- ✓ Model informational essay (one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Informational Texts anchor chart (new; co-created with students during Opening A)
- ✓ “Fight to Survive!” (from Unit 1; one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Performance Task anchor chart (from Unit 1, Lesson 1)
- ✓ Working to Contribute to a Better World anchor chart (from Unit 1, Lesson 1)
- ✓ Equity sticks
- ✓ Guiding Questions anchor chart (begun in Unit 1, Lesson 1)
- ✓ Expert Group Animal research notebooks (distributed in Lesson 1; one per student and one to display)
 - Organizing Research note-catcher (from Lesson 5; pages 17–18)
- ✓ Informative Page Directions (one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Informative Writing Checklist (one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (answers, for teacher reference)
- ✓ Millipede Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (for teacher reference)
- ✓ Domain-Specific Word Wall (begun in Unit 1, Lesson 2)
- ✓ Index cards (one per student)

Opening

A. Engaging the Writer: Creating an Informational Texts Anchor Chart (10 minutes)

- Distribute and display the model informational essay.
- Invite students to follow along, reading silently in their heads as you read it aloud.
- Invite students to turn and talk with a partner. Ask, and then ask for volunteers to share out:
 - “What is the purpose of this essay?” (It is explaining how the millipede protects itself.)
 - “What type of writing is this—narrative, opinion, or informative? Why?” (Informative because it explains a topic.)
- Work with students to reflect on the elements of informational texts to create an **Informational Texts anchor chart** by inviting them to take out their “**Fight to Survive!**” text and to consider their expert animal web pages and the model informational essay.
- Invite students to turn and talk with a partner. Ask, and then ask for volunteers to share out:
 - “What is the purpose of informational texts?”
 - “What do these texts have in common?”
- Collect students’ ideas on the Informational Texts anchor chart. Be sure the following characteristics are included:
 - Informational texts inform or teach a reader about a topic.

- Informational texts are focused on the same topic throughout the piece.
 - Informational texts group related information in paragraphs and sections.
 - Informational texts have precise vocabulary.
 - Informational texts are based on research the author does before writing and list sources used in research.
 - Informational texts often have pictures or other visuals that support the text.
 - Informational texts are clearly presented and easy to understand.
- Tell students that when they write their informative piece for Part I of the performance task, they should include these characteristics.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who may need additional support with background knowledge: To ensure that all students are able to participate fully in the discussion about informational texts, check for understanding about texts in advance. (MMR)
- For ELLs: Repeat the questions "What is the purpose of informational texts?" and "What do these texts have in common?" Rephrase the questions. Example: "What is an informational text? Why do we write them?"
- For ELLs: Mini Language Dive. Highlight language structures that are critical to understanding the characteristics. Example:
 - "Informational texts are focused on the same topic throughout the piece." Work on comprehension of these phrases—for example, by eliciting paraphrases of these structures and asking questions about them:
 - "What does 'are focused on' mean?" (are mostly about)
 - "What is the focus of an informational text about gazelle defense mechanisms?" (gazelle defense mechanisms)
 - "Is it focused on how humans keep gazelles in zoos?" (no)
 - Bring attention to the grammar of these structures: "are focused" is "be" + verb + "-ed." This is a kind of verb used in special situations, such as science texts. Give other examples from the animal texts: "... the monarch butterfly is typically found at sites ..." "What does 'is found' mean?" (lives)
- For ELLs: Say:

"In the United States, writing is often organized into paragraphs. A paragraph is usually about five sentences long. Each paragraph should talk about one idea. A new paragraph should talk about a new idea. Both paragraphs should help each other talk about the main idea of your writing.

"Write a topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph. It is one sentence that tells the reader the most important or main idea of your paragraph.

"Write a concluding statement at the end of your writing. It summarizes the ideas in all of your paragraphs in one or two sentences. It helps your reader understand your ideas."
- Illustrate these terms with a visual on the board:

Main idea: "Gazelles protect themselves."

Paragraph 1 *Topic Sentence*: "Gazelles protect themselves by pronging." (+ 3 or 4 supporting sentences)

Paragraph 2 *Topic Sentence*: Gazelles protect themselves by communicating with other gazelles. (+ 3 or 4 supporting sentences)

Concluding Statement

Opening

B. Reviewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)

- Direct students' attention to the **Performance Task anchor chart** and remind them what they are working toward in this module: an informative piece about their expert group animal in this unit and a narrative featuring their expert group animal in Unit 3.
- Focus students on the **Working to Contribute to a Better World anchor chart**, specifically apply my learning. Remind students that they will be applying what they learned through writing this performance task.
- Point to the second bullet point of the prompt ("an informational page ..."). Tell students they are now ready to begin planning and writing the informational page.
- Use **equity sticks** to call on a student to read the second bullet of the prompt aloud.
- Ask, and then use equity sticks to call on students to share:

"Based on the prompt, who will be your audience?" (Other students, teachers, and parents will read our writing.)

- Ask, and then use equity sticks to call on students to share:

"What will be the purpose for your writing?" (Our purpose will be to teach our audience about our animal's defense mechanisms.)

- Tell students that before they can begin writing, they will need to plan their writing.
- Direct students' attention to the posted learning targets and read them aloud as students follow along, reading silently in their heads:

"I can identify characteristics of informative writing."

"I can synthesize information from my research notes onto a planning graphic organizer."

"I can group together facts from my research with related evidence in my informative piece."

- Tell students they just worked toward the first target when they created the Informational Texts anchor chart. Answer any clarifying questions about the remaining targets.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who may need additional support with visual perception: Offer individual copies of the Informational Texts anchor chart. (MMR)
- For ELLs: Repeat and rephrase questions.
- For ELLs: Mini Language Dive. Highlight language structures that are critical to understanding the posted learning targets. Example: "I can identify characteristics of informative writing." Work on comprehension of these structures—for example, by saying: "Please identify one characteristic of informative writing." (to teach a

reader about a topic) Paraphrase the structures. Example: "I can tell you about the things you find in informative writing."

Work Time

A. Guided Practice: Planning the Introduction for an Informative Text (20 minutes)

- Frame this part of the performance task by asking, and then cold call students to share out:
“What is the question we are trying to answer in our research?” (What does your expert group animal look like? What is its habitat? What are its predators? How does my expert group animal use its body and behaviors to help it survive?)
- Remind students that “How do animals’ bodies and behaviors help them survive?” is one of the guiding questions for the module.
- Draw students’ attention to the **Guiding Questions anchor chart**. Use equity sticks to call on a student to read the second question aloud.
- Explain that in this unit, students have been working on understanding how writers use research to inform their readers.
- Refer to the Informational Texts anchor chart and ask, then call on volunteers to share:
“What topic will we be informing or teaching our reader about?” (We’ll be teaching our reader about our expert group animal’s defense mechanisms, or We’ll be teaching the reader about how our expert group animal uses its body and behaviors to help it survive.)
- Point to the fourth bullet point on the Informational Texts anchor chart and read it aloud:
“Informational texts are based on research the author does before writing and list sources used in research.”
- Tell students that now that they have researched their expert group animals, they are ready to begin planning and writing their informative piece.
- Review the steps of the writing process by asking:
“What steps do writers go through when writing a text?” (Writers plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish their writing.)
- Tell students that researching is part of the planning process; writers need to learn about their topic before they can write about it.
- Refer to the second bullet point of the performance task prompt and ask:
“What kind of information do we need to include in our informative pieces?” (We need to include a physical description of our animal and information about its defense mechanisms and predators.)
- Invite students to take out their **Expert Group Animal research notebooks** and refer to their **Organizing Research note-catcher**. Remind them that in Lesson 5, they organized their research into these categories.
- Ask:
“Since we organized our notes in Lesson 5, are we ready to begin drafting our pieces?” (They have not created a written plan and need to do so before writing.)
- Explain that students will now have a chance to organize their research notes onto a planning page so the information for their writing is all in one place. Ask:
“Why is it important to plan our writing using a planning page?” (It will help us notice

any gaps in our research, or It will help us think about the organization and flow of our writing, or It will help us make sure we are answering our research questions completely.)

- Distribute the **Informative Page Directions** and display a copy. Invite students to independently read the directions. Answer any clarifying questions.
- Distribute the **Informative Writing Checklist** and display a copy. Explain that this checklist will be used to assess their writing. Point out the following characteristics on the checklist:
 - **W.4.9**
 - **W.4.2a**
 - **L.4.2, L.4.3b**
- Underline “Information is grouped in paragraphs and sections” and ask:

“Look at the Informative Page Directions. How can we group the information in our writing?” (We can have one section to describe the animal and its predator, and one section to describe its defense mechanisms and how a predator would respond to the defense mechanisms.)
- If productive, cue students to expand the conversation by saying more:

“Can you say more about that?” (Responses will vary.)
- Display and distribute the **Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer**. Tell students they will use this graphic organizer to plan their informative piece; explain that using it will help them include all the criteria outlined in the directions.
- Use equity sticks to call on students to read the headings and prompts in each box on the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer. Answer any clarifying questions.
- Point out the structure of the informative piece: It will have an introductory paragraph and two proof paragraphs, with a concluding statement at the end of the second proof paragraph.
- Ask students and select volunteers to share their responses with the whole group:

“Remember that modal auxiliaries are words that express the condition of a verb. Do you see any modal auxiliaries in the questions on this planning organizer?” (would)

“What modal auxiliary might you use to respond to these questions?” (Example: The armadillo would ... or The springbok could ...)
- If productive, cue students to provide reasoning:

“Why do you think that?” (Responses will vary.)
- Point out the My Sources box. Explain that authors of informative pieces always research the topic they are writing about and list their sources at the end of their writing. Remind students that they have been keeping track of their sources in their Expert Group Animal research notebooks. Tell them that as they use the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer, they should write down their source in the My Sources box.
- Explain that before completing the graphic organizer for their expert group animal, students will work through an example together for the millipede, based on the model informational essay.
- Model using the planning graphic organizer. Refer to the **Millipede Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (for teacher reference)** as needed. As you model, be sure to:
 - Note that students should leave the Focus and Concluding Statement boxes blank for now.

- Use your research notes to record information in the Introduction Paragraph box of the graphic organizer.
- Look back at the research texts for missing or more specific information than what was recorded in the research notes.
- Refer to the **domain-specific word wall**.
- Record the sources used.
- Invite students to independently look through their notes for information for their introduction paragraphs. Remind them to record their sources in the My Sources box.
- Circulate and support as needed. Refer to the **Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (answers, for teacher reference)**. After 5 minutes, bring students back together whole group. Reassure students that if they have not finished planning the introduction paragraph, they will have time later in the lesson.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who may need additional support with information processing: Provide a copy of the Informative Writing Checklist that specifies each characteristic. (Example: Where the checklist says, "My focus shows that I clearly understand the topic or text and is well supported with evidence from reliable sources," write "animal defense mechanisms" above "the topic or text."). Write in the exact title of the text the student used above "reliable sources." Specify all aspects of the checklist in a similar way. (MMR, MMAE)
- For ELLs: Say: "In the United States, many writers do the same thing to help them write well. It's called the writing process. The writing process is ..." On the board, write:
 - Plan*
 - Draft*
 - Revise*
 - Edit*
 - Publish*
- For ELLs: Mini Language Dive. Highlight language structures that are critical to understanding the second bullet of the Performance Task anchor chart and the characteristics in the Informative Writing Checklist.
 - Examples: "informational page," "physical description of."
 - Work on comprehension of these phrases—for example, by eliciting paraphrases of these structures. Examples: "a Web site that gives you facts," "writing or speaking that tells you facts about."
 - Ask questions about the structures: "Where do you find an informational page?" "What does an informational page have?"
- For ELLs: Ask: "Why do we want to group or organize the information in our writing?" (to make it easier to read; to make it stronger)

Work Time

B. Guided Practice: Planning the Proof Paragraphs for an Informative Text (20 minutes)

- Tell students they will now plan information for their proof paragraphs. Model deciding on the two defense mechanisms to write about and adding details to the Millipede Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer. As you model, be sure to:
 - Use your research notes to record information in each remaining part of the graphic organizer.
 - Look back at the research texts for missing or more specific information than what was recorded in the research notes.
 - Use modal auxiliaries where appropriate and explain to students why you are using that modal auxiliary.
- Invite students to independently look through their notes for information for their proof paragraphs. Remind them to look for information about their animal’s defense mechanisms and how a predator would respond to the defense mechanisms, and to record any new sources they are using in the My Sources box. Tell students that if they have not finished planning their introduction paragraph, they can do that now.
- Circulate and support as needed. After about 15 minutes, bring students back together whole group. Tell them they will now have a chance to reflect on their work.
- If productive, cue students to think about their thinking:

“What strategies helped you succeed in planning the proof paragraphs? I’ll give you time to think and discuss with a partner.” (Responses will vary.)
- 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.
- Repeat, inviting students to self-assess against how well they applied their learning in this lesson.

Meeting Students’ Needs

- For students who may need additional support with writing fluency: Invite students to add to their writing by asking, “How do you know that?” to encourage them to go back to the text and find details or quotes that they could use to support their thinking. (MMAE)

Closing and Assessment

A. Research Reflection (5 minutes)

- Ask students to keep out their Informational Writing Planning graphic organizers and distribute **index cards**.
- Invite students to record their name and respond to the following on their index card:

“Look at the boxes for the introduction and proof paragraphs. What information do you need to research further?”

- Collect students’ index cards to review.

Meeting Students’ Needs

- For students who may need additional support in making connections: Have developing writers circle or highlight places on their Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer that show gaps in research rather than writing these research needs out on the index card. This will help them connect their research directly to the informational writing. (MMAE)
- For ELLs: Repeat the question “What information do you need to research further?” In addition, rephrase the question: “Where do you need more information? How can you research to make your paragraphs stronger?”

Homework

A. Choose an Informative QuickWrite prompt in your homework resources to respond to.

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

Meeting Students’ Needs

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