

Lesson 8: Writing an Informative Piece: Crafting Introductions



CCS Standards

- **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.4.2b:** Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- **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.4.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **W.4.9b:** Apply grade 4 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., “Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text”).
- **L.4.1:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- **L.4.1c:** Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can*, *may*, *must*) to convey various conditions.



Daily Learning Targets

- I can write an introduction paragraph for my informative piece that describes my expert group animal, its habitat, and its predators, and has a focus statement that tells the topic of my writing. (W.4.2, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.7, W.4.9b)
- I can use modal auxiliaries to express the condition of verbs. (L.4.1c)

Ongoing Assessment

- Draft of introduction paragraph (W.4.2, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.7, W.4.9b)

Agenda

1. Opening

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

2. Work Time

- A. Examining a Model Introduction (15 minutes)
- B. Guided Practice: Writing a Focus Statement (10 minutes)
- C. Drafting an Introduction Paragraph (25 minutes)

3. Closing and Assessment

A. Third Draft of Sketch (5 minutes)

4. Homework

- A. Accountable Research Reading. Select a prompt and respond in the front of your independent reading journal.
- B. For ELLs: Complete the Language Dive Part 2 Practice in your Unit 2 Homework.

Teaching Notes

Purpose of lesson and alignment to standards:

- In this lesson, students begin drafting the introduction for the informative piece of their performance task (W.4.2a, W.4.2b, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.7, W.4.9b).
- In Work Time A, students reread the model informational essay and discuss how the author crafted an effective introduction, recording these points on the Informational Texts anchor chart (W.4.2a, W.4.4). Students will refer to this model as they craft their own introductory paragraphs.
- After examining the model, students craft focus statements and introductions for their informative pieces (W.4.2a, W.4.2b, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.7, W.4.9b).
- In Closing and Assessment, students read their introductions aloud to a partner outside of their expert group and receive feedback. Someone unfamiliar with the expert group animal is more likely to notice confusing or missing information (W.4.2a, W.4.2b, W.4.4, W.4.5).
- 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 have the opportunity to practice their fluency in this lesson by chorally reading the introduction of the model essay aloud, and by reading their introduction aloud to a partner.
- Students who finish quickly could use the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer, an additional research question they may have developed in the first half of this unit as an extension, and their research notes to draft an additional paragraph of their informative piece.
- Students who finish quickly could begin to consider other ways to present the information they have been researching. Invite them to brainstorm ways to present (e.g., PowerPoint presentation, create a poster, etc.), choose one, and begin planning this presentation.

- In this lesson, the habit of character focus is working to become effective learners. The characteristic they reflect on in this lesson is persevere when they reflect on writing their focus statement and introduction paragraph.

How it builds on previous work:

- Students use their research from the first half of Unit 2 and their planning from Lesson 7 to draft their introductory paragraph in this lesson.
- In this lesson, students revisit the Painted Essay® structure introduced in Module 1 to analyze the structure of the model essay. This analysis will help them to structure their own essays (W.4.2).
- Continue to use Goals 1-3 Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation.

Areas where students may need additional support:

- Students may need additional support with developing a focus statement and using their planning organizers to draft sentences. They may also need support with elaborating on their ideas. Check in and conference with these students during drafting time in Work Time C.
- Note that sentence frames are not provided for all students to use when writing in this module. Refer back to the writing lessons in Module 1 if students need this additional support.

Assessment guidance:

- Refer to the criteria related to W.4.2a on the Informative Writing Checklist when assessing students' work in this lesson.
- Consider using the Writing Informal Assessment: Writing and Language Skills Checklist (Grade 4) during students' writing in Work Times B and C. See Module 1 Appendix.

Down the road:

- Students will continue working on their informative pieces in the remainder of the unit by developing proof paragraphs and a concluding statement in Lesson 9, revising for supporting details and word choice in Lesson 10, editing for conventions in Lesson 11, and publishing their pieces in Unit 3.

In advance:

- Review the Informative Page Directions.
- Post: Informational Texts anchor chart; learning targets.

Technology & Multimedia

- Work Time C: Allow students to type their first drafts using Google Docs or other word processing software.
- Work Time C: Students complete their drafts 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>).

Supporting English Language Learners

Supports guided in part by CA ELD Standards 4.I.A.1, 4.I.A.3, 4.I.C.10, 4.I.C.11, 4.I.C.12, 4.II.A.1, 4.II.B.3

Important points in the lesson itself

- The basic design of this lesson supports ELLs with explicit instruction around the language of introductions.
- ELLs may find it challenging to write an introduction using U.S. conventions. Call special attention to the name and purpose of each piece of the introduction. See Levels of support and the Meeting Students’ Needs column for suggestions.
- In Work Time B, ELLs are invited to participate in Part II of a series of two connected Language Dives (optional). This series of conversations provides students with practice using a sentence structure they encounter and use repeatedly throughout the module. In Part I in Unit 1, students practiced paraphrasing a sentence to describe the main idea of “Fight to Survive!” In Part II, they will use their paraphrases and the structure of the sentence to practice stating a focus for the informative text about their expert group animals. Preview the Language Dive Guide 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. Create a “Language Chunk Wall”—an area in the classroom where students can display and categorize the academic phrases discussed in the Language Dive.
- Mini Language Dives. Highlight and discuss language structures that are critical to understanding the characteristics of focus on the Informative Writing Checklist. Examples: “I state my focus clearly and my writing stays focused throughout the piece.” “I have an introduction that gives readers the important information they need / to understand the piece.”

Levels of support

For lighter support:

- Invite students to highlight and label the focus statement in the model essay research text, and underline and label the detail sentences that describe. Ask students to identify samples of a focus statement and sentences that describe habitat, diet, or predators and discuss them in home language groups or heterogeneous English-speaking groups.

For heavier support:

- Remind ELLs about the steps in the writing process: plan, draft, revise, edit, publish.
- Give ELLs practice reading aloud the focus question from the Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer: “How does my expert group animal use its body and behaviors to help it survive?” Then allow these students to read the question aloud in Work Time B. Practicing with a partner and then reading aloud in front of the class can help build ELLs’ confidence and credibility.
- For Work Time C, provide students with a cloze introduction paragraph about their animal. Write the paragraph for them (or use a former student’s exemplar), but leave out key words and phrases for small groups to fill in together. Make the task simpler by writing a list of the key words next to the cloze paragraph so that students can select from the list.

- Reinforce the structure of an informative piece. Example: Write the parts of the informative piece on strips of paper. Scramble them and have students sequence them correctly:
 - Introduction Paragraph
 - Focus statement
 - Detail sentence #1 that describes
 - Detail sentence #2 that describes
 - Detail sentence #3 that describes
 - Proof Paragraph #1
 - Topic statement
 - Detail sentence #1 that describes
 - etc.

Universal Design for Learning

- **Multiple Means of Representation (MMR):** In this lesson, support developing writers in advance to show them examples of effective introductions and ask: “How did the author design the introduction so it grabbed the reader’s attention and gave important information?” Also discuss the following criteria for introductions: hooks a reader, provides context, and is appropriate to purpose and audience. Bridge the abstract to the concrete by discussing these criteria in light of the task for today’s lesson. Brainstorm specific ideas for how to hook a reader, what the context will be for this writing, and what the purpose and audience are.
- **Multiple Means of Action & Expression (MMAE):** Practice finding and writing focus statements by providing students who may need additional support with writing the chance to meet in a small group to look at sample introductions. Ask students to highlight the focus statement in each introduction and discuss what the focus question may have been. Remind students that their focus statement will be answering the question “How do ____ use their bodies and behavior to help them survive?”
- **Multiple Means of Engagement (MME):** Provide support for students who may need additional guidance in peer interactions and collaboration. For example, offer prompts or sentence frames that support students in asking for help or clarification from classmates. To support students who may need additional support in sustaining effort and/or attention, provide opportunities for restating the goal. In doing so, students are able to maintain focus for completing the activity.

Vocabulary

Key:

(L): Lesson-Specific Vocabulary

(T): Text-Specific Vocabulary

(W): Vocabulary used in writing

- introduction, focus statement (L)

Materials

- ✓ Model informational essay (from Lesson 7; one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Painted Essay® template (from Module 1; one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Painting an Essay Plan (from Module 1; for teacher reference)
- ✓ Informational Texts anchor chart (begun in Lesson 7; added to with students in Work Time A)
- ✓ Informational Texts anchor chart (example, for teacher reference)
- ✓ Equity sticks
- ✓ Language Dive Guide II: “Fight to Survive!” (optional; for ELLs; for teacher reference; see supporting materials)
 - Language Dive Sentence Strip Chunks I: “Fight To Survive!” (optional; for ELLs; from Unit 1, Lesson 7; one to display)
 - Language Dive Note-catcher I: “Fight To Survive!” Part 2 (optional; for ELLs; from Unit 1, Lesson 7; one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Informative Writing Checklist (from Lesson 7; one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (from Lesson 7; one per student and one to display)
- ✓ Millipede Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer (from Lesson 7; one to display)
- ✓ Lined paper (several pieces per student)
- ✓ Working to Become Effective Learners anchor chart (from Module 1)
- ✓ Expert Group Animal research notebook (distributed in Lesson 1; one per student)
 - Sketch page (page 20)

Opening

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

- Ask students if they’ve ever picked up a book, read a few sentences, and then decided to put it down.
- Acknowledge that most readers have done this because they don’t want to read something that doesn’t interest them. Most readers decide if a piece of writing is going to be interesting by reading the beginning of it. That’s why beginnings are so important.
- 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.)
- Ask:

“Where are we in the writing process for our informative pieces?” (We have researched and planned our pieces.)
- Direct students’ attention to the posted learning targets and ask for volunteers to read them:

“I can write an introduction paragraph for my informative piece that describes my expert group animal, its habitat, and its predators, and has a focus statement that tells the topic of my writing.”

“I can use modal auxiliaries to express the condition of verbs.”

- Ask students if they are unfamiliar with any of the words in the learning targets. They might identify these terms:
 - *introduction*—opening, beginning
 - *focus statement*—answers the focus question; tells the topic of the piece
- Write the synonym above the targeted word(s) in the learning targets and ask two more students to reread the targets.
- Ask students to show you a thumbs-up if they understand what they will be learning today, a thumbs-sideways if they need some more clarification, and a thumbs-down if they still don't know. Clarify as necessary.
- Students may need help remembering what modal auxiliaries are. If so, provide examples and discuss why one makes the writing more precise and accurate than the others: "The armadillo can curl into a ball," "The armadillo should curl into a ball," "The armadillo will curl into a ball."

Meeting Students' Needs

- For ELLs: Repeat and rephrase your questions. Example: "Which step in the writing process did we do last time?"
- For ELLs: To support students in processing emerging language, organize key words on the board.
- For ELLs: Mini Language Dive. Highlight language structures that are critical to understanding the learning targets. Examples: "I can write an introduction paragraph / for my informative piece / that describes my expert group animal." Work on comprehension of these structures. Example: "In this sentence, *that* is a special word." (point to *that*). "*that* means more information is coming. It is more information about the words before. So, *that* tells you 'describes my expert group animal' is talking about 'an introduction paragraph.'" (Draw an arrow from *describes my expert group animal* to *an introduction paragraph*.) "So, what kind of an introduction paragraph?" (one that talks about my animal)

Work Time

A. Examining a Model Introduction (15 minutes)

- Invite students to retrieve their model informational essay. Remind students that they worked with this model in the previous lesson.
- Point out that it follows the **Painted Essay® structure, just like the biographies they wrote in Module 1.**
- Guide students through color-coding their model informational essay using their Painted Essay® template. Refer to *Painting an Essay Plan* for further detail.
- Tell students they are going to analyze the introduction of the model essay. Invite students to silently review the parts of an introductory paragraph on their Painted Essay® template: introduction (background information to engage the reader), focus statement, and two points.
- Explain that in narratives we call the beginning of a piece "the beginning," but in informational writing we call the beginning an introduction. Explain that in all writing, authors need to

make sure their piece begins in a way that is appropriate for the audience, grabs the readers' attention, and makes them want to read more.

- Invite students to chorally read the introduction of the model informational essay with you.
- Invite students to help you record the parts of an introductory paragraph on the Informational Texts anchor chart. Refer to the Informational Texts anchor chart (example, for teacher reference) as necessary.

Meeting Students' Needs

- Throughout this unit and Unit 3, students read and use mentor texts. Mentor texts are model texts, written by real authors, that students examine to see strong examples of writing craft. In this unit, students analyze various examples of informational texts. For more information on the use of mentor texts, read *Study Driven* by Katie Wood Ray. (MMR, MMAE)
- For ELLs: Allow students to explore spelling and pronouncing aloud, synonyms, definitions, translations, word clusters, and word maps to increase understanding of "appropriate for the audience" and "grabs the reader's attention." Example: "grabs the reader's attention," "catches the reader's attention," "excites the reader," "hooks the reader," "makes the reader interested," "makes reading fun," "An interesting animal fact always grabs my attention," and "Which stories have a beginning that grabs your attention?" (e.g., "All children, except one, grow up" from *Peter Pan*).
- For ELLs and students who may need additional support with comprehension: Ask: "One example of good context for your introduction is to write about where the animal lives. What's another example of good context?" (MMR)
- For ELLs: Guide students through Language Dive II: "Fight to Survive!" (see supporting materials). Refer to the **Language Dive Guide II: "Fight to Survive!" (for Teacher Reference)**. Display and have the students retrieve the **Language Dive Note-catcher I: "Fight to Survive!" Part 2** and **Language Dive Sentence Strip Chunks I: "Fight To Survive!"**.
- For ELLs: Repeat the question "How did the author design the introduction so it grabbed the reader's attention and gave important information?" In addition, rephrase the question: "The writer made the introduction really exciting and gave good information. How did the writer do that?"

Work Time

B. Guided Practice: Writing a Focus Statement (10 minutes)

- Display a copy of the **Informative Writing Checklist** and ask students to take out their own copy. Remind them that this checklist will be used to assess their writing.
- Invite students to read the following characteristics of an effective informative piece to themselves:
 - **W.4.2a**

- Underline “stays focused throughout the piece” and ask students to turn and talk; then use equity sticks for students to share out:
“Why should the writing be focused throughout the piece?” (It should be focused so the reader doesn’t get confused while he or she is reading, or It should stay on the same topic.)
- Explain to students that they should keep these criteria in mind as they begin drafting their informative pieces.
- Invite students to take out their **Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer** and display the **Millipede Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer** started in Lesson 7. Point out the focus question at the top of the graphic organizer and cold call a student to read it aloud:
“How does my expert group animal use its body and behaviors to help it survive?”
- Explain that a focus statement is brief and to the point and answers the focus question.
- Rephrase the focus question so it is specific to the millipede. Ask students to discuss with an elbow partner, then cold call a few students to share out. As students share out, write their examples on the board:
“How does the millipede use its body and behaviors to help it survive?” (The millipede has many ways of protecting itself, or The millipede protects itself by rolling into a ball and using poison.)
- Choose one example focus statement from the student-generated list and write it on the Millipede Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer in the Focus Statement box.
- Invite students to Ink-Pair-Share a focus statement for their own piece, writing the focus statement in the appropriate box on their Informational Writing Planning graphic organizer. Give them 5 minutes to do so, circulating and supporting as needed. Look for those who may need additional support to develop a focus statement.

Meeting Students’ Needs

- For students who may need additional support with organizing ideas for written expression: Invite students to look at the sketch of their animal from Lesson 4 as they consider their answer to the focus question. This will help visual learners and students who may need additional support with writing see what their expert group animal actually has/does to survive and use this information in their focus statement. (MMAE)
- For ELLs: Repeat and rephrase questions.
- For ELLs: Ask for explicit feedback: “Why do authors write a focus statement?”
- For ELLs: Provide sentence frames to ELLs who need heavier support to bolster their success writing a focus statement. Example: “The gazelle protects itself by ____.” Intermediate ELLs can vary the structure: “To defend itself, the armadillo ____.”
- For ELLs: Label the sentences (“1. focus statement” “2. detail sentence that describes” “3. detail sentence that describes” etc.) as you craft the sentences that introduce the topic and describe the millipede.

Work Time

C. Drafting an Introduction Paragraph (25 minutes)

- Distribute **lined paper** and tell students they are going to complete a first draft of their introduction paragraph. Remind them that because it is a first draft, it does not have to be perfect.
- Using a total participation technique, invite responses from the group:
“What should we refer to while drafting our introductions?” (our planning graphic organizer, the introduction part of our graphic organizer, and the Academic and Domain-Specific Word Wall.)
- Remind them that when they write a draft, they should skip lines so they have room to make revisions and edits later in the writing process. Also remind them to use their research notes and planning page to ensure their writing is scientifically accurate.
- Encourage students to refer to the following while they are working: model informational essay, Informative Writing Checklist, Informational Texts anchor chart, their planning graphic organizer, Academic Word Wall, and Domain-Specific Word Wall.
- Remind students to use modal auxiliaries correctly to make their work precise as they express the condition of verbs.
- Give students 25 minutes to work. Circulate and support them as needed. Be sure to confer with students whom you observed needing additional support with planning their writing in Lesson 7. Help them focus on getting their ideas down on paper, as opposed to worrying about spelling or grammar. Remind them that they will have time to edit and revise later in the writing process.
- If productive, cue students to think about their thinking:
“What habits helped you succeed in drafting your introduction paragraph? I’ll give you time to think and discuss with a partner.” (Responses will vary.)
- Focus students on the **Working to Become Effective Learners anchor chart**, specifically persevere. Use a checking for understanding protocol for students to reflect on how they persevered as they wrote their focus statement and introduction.
- Invite students to record ‘Y’ for ‘Yes’ and the date in the final column of their Informative Writing Checklist if they feel the criteria marked on their checklists have been achieved in their writing in this lesson.
- 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 persevered in this lesson.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For students who may need additional support with self-regulation: Support time management strategies by utilizing a visual timer. (MME)
- For ELLs: During independent work, the teacher can support ELLs or students with special needs as needed. Just be sure to let them, too, struggle with the

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task, as successful completion after considerable effort builds both stamina and confidence.

- For ELLs: Allow students who need heavier support to complete a cloze proof paragraph that you have provided about their animal.

Closing and Assessment

A. Third Draft of Sketch (5 minutes)

- Invite students to work on the third draft of their expert group animal sketch on the **sketch page of their Expert Group Animal research notebook**.

Homework

A. 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)