



COMMON CORE READING & WRITING WORKSHOP

A CURRICULAR PLAN FOR The Reading Workshop



LUCY CALKINS AND COLLEAGUES FROM
THE READING AND WRITING PROJECT

firsthand
HEINEMANN
DEDICATED TO TEACHERS™



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The Reading Workshop
Grade K

Common Core Reading and Writing Workshop

Lucy Calkins
and Colleagues from
The Reading and Writing Workshop



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Contents

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR FOR KINDERGARTEN READERS	1
UNIT 1: We Are Readers Exploring the Exciting World of Books	13
UNIT 2: Readers Read, Think, and Talk about Emergent Story Books	28
UNIT 3: Readers Use All Our Powers to Actually Read	40
UNIT 4: Readers Study Patterns in Big Books and Little Books to Help Us Read and Talk about Books	56
UNIT 5: We Can Be Reading Teachers: <i>Teach Yourself and Your Partners to Use All You Know to Read</i>	74
UNIT 6: Learning about Ourselves and Our World: <i>Reading for Information</i>	89
UNIT 7: Readers Are Brave and Resourceful When We Encounter Hard Words and Tricky Parts in Our Books	100
UNIT 8: Readers Get to Know Characters by Pretending and by Performing Our Books	113
UNIT 9: Giving the Gift of Reading: <i>Reading across Genres</i>	124



Overview of the Year for Kindergarten Readers

SEPTEMBER	UNIT 1: We Are Readers Exploring the Exciting World of Books
OCTOBER	UNIT 2: Readers Read, Think, and Talk about Emergent Story Books
NOVEMBER	UNIT 3: Readers Use All Our Powers to Actually Read
DECEMBER	UNIT 4: Readers Study Patterns in Big Books and Little Books to Help Us Read and Talk about Books
JANUARY	UNIT 5: We Can Be Reading Teachers: <i>Teach Yourself and Your Partners to Use All You Know to Read</i>
FEBRUARY/MARCH	UNIT 6: Learning about Ourselves and Our World: <i>Reading for Information</i>
MARCH/APRIL	UNIT 7: Readers Are Brave and Resourceful When We Encounter Hard Words and Tricky Parts in Our Books
APRIL/MAY	UNIT 8: Readers Get to Know Characters by Pretending and by Performing Our Books
MAY/JUNE	UNIT 9: Giving the Gift of Reading: <i>Reading across Genres</i>

We are very pleased to share with you the 2011–2012 Curricular Calendar. Those of you who receive new calendars every year may glance at this quickly and notice that in many ways it is similar to last year’s calendar. It is true that we’ve tried to maintain most of the same units as last year, but this does not mean there are not crucially important changes woven throughout.

This curriculum calendar has been designed for kindergarten teachers and is aligned with the new Common Core State Standards. We have also taken into account benchmark reading levels for kindergarten. You can find the TCRWP's Benchmarks for Independent Reading Levels chart on our website: www.readingandwritingproject.com. This chart has been developed based on data that we have collected over the years. To determine these levels, we queried New York City schools, researched what other states were doing, learned the levels of passages used in New York State's ELA exams, distributed tentative recommendations, received feedback, and finally settled upon some expectations. We acknowledge from the start, however, that these are open to debate. Therefore, we are not necessarily advocating that a district adopt levels we propose.

You'll notice that this year we include the reading benchmarks at the top of each unit. These include ones for months when you may be formally assessing your students (September, November, March, and June), as well as approximate levels for interim months. The purpose of this is to give you a sense of how children will ideally progress across the entire year so that you can help pace your students. Please note that this is just a suggested path; it will not hold true for all children. You may find it helps to refer to these month-by-month benchmarks as you create your own big goals for each unit.

We've written this curricular plan imagining that your classroom contains a wide array of readers, as kindergarten classrooms generally do. We also assume your children will enter at various stages of reading. Some of your students may know how to read leveled books while others will know many letter names and sounds. There will still be some who only know a few letter names. The calendar is designed with an eye toward helping your readers progress in a way that, by the end of the year, they'll be in the proximity of Levels D, E, or higher. If the majority of your readers enter kindergarten reading books like *Father Bear Goes Fishing* (D) you'll probably want to look at the first-grade curricular calendar for the way each of the units described here looks when it supports readers who are working at those levels.

Reading instruction happens moment-to-moment in the classroom as teachers establish the conditions in which children learn to read and to write, assess what children can do, and then teach children to take one step and then subsequent steps forward as readers. Starting in kindergarten and continuing through higher education, teaching is always responsive; it is always assessment based. But this doesn't mean that teachers cannot imagine, beforehand, how the classroom work will probably evolve across the year.

As readers grow, their needs change fairly dramatically—and our kids don't all grow in sync! It's almost as if one teacher needs to simultaneously support a kindergarten, first-, and sometimes even a second-grade curriculum. Then too, readers always need to integrate sources of meaning, so when a teacher teaches a unit of study that focuses on one aspect of reading, the teacher always needs to say to children, "Don't forget the topic we're NOT focusing on right now—you need to be thinking about your characters, too!" You will see that in this curricular calendar, we discuss ways in which a teacher can use components of balanced literacy to be sure that children progress in all aspects of reading. That is, if the unit of study is on comprehension, for example, you may use shared reading or interactive writing to remind children to use their word attack skills and strategies.

This curricular calendar was written with input from teachers, literacy coaches, staff developers, and reading experts. We are excited to offer this as one informed pathway for your upcoming year, and we offer it in hopes that as a learning community we can be on congruent work as the upcoming year unfolds. However, we are under no illusions, and we know that there are hundreds of ways a teacher could plan a curriculum calendar for the upcoming year. We expect that all of you, as kindergarten teachers, will work with grade level colleagues to determine your school's own curricular calendar for kindergarten. What you decide may differ somewhat from this one as you consider your own areas of expertise, children's needs and interests, the standards and assessments to which you and your children are held accountable, the span of reading levels in your classroom, and your school's larger curricular plans. We hope that you can, actually, produce a written document representing your own curricular calendar—that you write some of your own descriptions of units or bring some units from last year's calendar into this one. Above all, we strongly recommend that you and your colleagues agree upon a shared journey, one in which you will be able to support each other.

New Work for the Coming Year

You will see that we have made some substantial revisions to units we've carried over from last year and have added in some new ones, too. Another important change to note is that we decided to reduce the number of units from ten to nine. Our rationale for this was that in the past, teachers have felt rushed. Having one fewer unit will allow you to spend more time on units you feel will especially benefit your children. In our overview we suggest a possible progression through the units, with the last four units spanning longer than a month. You may decide to structure your units otherwise. Always, our intent is that teachers will adapt this curriculum in ways that benefit their particular classroom of children.

The Common Core State Standards emphasize that children should read both fiction and nonfiction throughout the year. This year, we added a new unit in February, "Learning about Ourselves and Our World: Reading for Information." You will see that many of the kindergarten units of study position students to read across genres, for example, "Readers Study Patterns in Big Books" and "Little Books to Help Them Read and Talk about Books" and "Giving the Gift of Reading: Reading across Genres." Notice, too, that we added a new unit in January, "We Can Be Reading Teachers: Teach Yourself and Your Partners to Use All You Know to Read," to account for the fact that, by then, many of your students will already be reading in conventional ways. Finally, we revised each unit with an eye toward helping you pace and bring students up the ladder of text difficulty, so that all kids will meet or surpass the end-of-the-year benchmark Levels D/E.

This calendar aims to give children a well-balanced reading curriculum in kindergarten and prepare them for the work ahead in first grade.

Workshop Structures

The structure that your reading workshop will follow from day to day will stay the same, even when the unit changes from month to month, and grade to grade. For example, every day in your reading workshop, you'll provide direct and explicit instruction through a brief minilesson; you'll provide children with long stretches of time to read emergent storybooks, shared reading texts, interactive and shared writing texts, and just-right books; and you'll provide individuals with assessment-based conferences and coaching. Most of your children will enter the year reading out of book bins of familiar stories, texts, and concept books, then meeting with a partner, perhaps in the middle of reading workshop, to read and talk about their books. Each day your kindergarten children will have time to sit hip-to-hip, one copy of a book between them, reading aloud or approximating their reading, in unison or taking turns. You'll also convene in small groups within the reading workshop. Some schools provide additional time for small groups outside the workshop—this is most apt to be the case for strugglers.

Minilessons generally start the day's reading workshop, providing you an important way to rally and instruct your children toward an essential skill pertaining to your entire community of learners. For example, you might teach your children that it is important to try their best to figure out what the words in their books are saying. You'll want to teach your learners ways to problem solve when they come to tricky words, and to use the beginning letter sound/s and think about what would make sense based on what is happening in the story. You'll want to teach your kids all about ways of working with partners, how to tackle tricky words, monitoring for sense, using fix-up strategies when sense falls apart, marking places to share with partners, and so forth. Minilessons revolve around a clear teaching point that crystallizes the message of a lesson.

Each minilesson is designed to teach readers a skill that they can draw upon that day and any day—not to assign children a particular bit of work one day, and another bit of work another day. It is a misunderstanding of workshop teaching when a teaching point is worded, "Today we *will* . . ." or "Today *you should* . . ." Because the goal is for readers to accrue a repertoire of strategies they will draw upon over and over, it helps to create and post a chart of abbreviated teaching points so that readers can review what they have learned from prior minilessons. You can then bring these anchor charts from one unit of study into subsequent ones. Always, it is essential that you make these charts fresh each year within the presence of new learners.

The most important part of a reading workshop is the actual reading time. Children disperse from the minilesson, book bins or baggies in hand, and either go to their tables or find a special spot in the room to read. At the start of the year, children will not necessarily know how to read with a partner (or alone), so some teachers suggest that children first read alone for ten minutes, then with a partner for as long as it works (fifteen minutes at the start of the year is a victory). As September evolves, the time frames for reading will increase, and many teachers begin to suggest that children read first with a partner (sitting hip-to-hip, sharing a book, taking turns or reading in unison), and then after fifteen to twenty minutes read independently for similar lengths of time.

Independent reading time will grow as children's skills grow (and eventually it will come first). Keep in mind that whenever kids are reading new texts, social support should come first so that later, as kids move up levels, they may read new and hard books with a partner initially, and then practice those on their own. By February, reading workshops are approaching forty-five to fifty minutes, with at least thirty minutes of this time reserved for readers to work alone or with partners on their reading.

In any case, children will read by themselves, and during this time they can Post-it places they are dying to talk about: funny parts, important pages, places where they grew a big idea or learned something surprising. They'll later share those places with partners. Across the year, you will want to vary their configurations so children are sometimes meeting with just one partner, and sometimes meeting in clubs consisting of foursomes.

As you progress in and out of different units of study, you will channel kids' reading so that, for specific chunks of time, they are reading one kind of text. Before they are ready for conventional reading, kindergarten children read out of bins in the classroom and then begin to use book baggies or bins that hold their shared reading texts, emergent story books, and any other texts they are working on reading. In general, children should have about ten to twelve things to read in the bin, box, or baggie. When kids are ready to read conventionally, they'll always have books to read at the text level you've assessed as their just-right level and ones at levels that are easier than that level. Usually, children select about ten to twelve leveled texts, as well as possibly some texts that the child can read because he or she has experienced them through shared reading and/or shared writing. Children might spend some additional time with emergent storybooks. They read their collection of books over and over throughout the week.

Although some children will move almost seamlessly from one level to the next, the majority of your students will move up the trajectory of levels more gradually. During the transition from one level to the next, they will begin to read books at the higher level, probably with some scaffolding, but will still feel mostly at ease in their current level. You'll give your students what we call "transitional book baggies," that is, baggies that include mostly titles at the child's just-right level as well as a handful of books at the next one. The latter can come from books you've shared with the child through a book introduction, or during guided reading, or it might include titles that the child has read with his or her partner. The idea is to scaffold readers as they move into a new level.

As children read, you'll be conferring with individual students in addition to leading small groups. You'll also sometimes just give book introductions—especially to help children who are relatively new to a level. Your conferences in reading may follow the research-compliment-teach structure of many writing conferences. Otherwise, they'll consist of you coaching into children's reading. Reading recovery teachers are expert at the latter, so learn from them! Some small groups will need help with integrating sources of information, so you may decide to do a bit of small-group shared reading. Some small groups will need help retelling what their books are about. This may mean that you do a strategy lesson with them. Some small groups may need support moving to the next level with book introductions, and you may do guided reading with them. Your small groups need to be flexible, need-based, and quick, lasting no more than approximately ten minutes a group.

Alongside the Reading Workshop Be Sure You Also Teach Reading through the Components of Balanced Literacy

A full balanced reading program includes not only a reading workshop, but also a variety of other structures. Some of the most important for early elementary school-aged children are reading aloud, shared reading, interactive writing, phonics (also referred to as word study), and writing workshop.

Once children are in kindergarten, the reading workshop lasts about forty-five to fifty minutes every day. In addition, you'll want to read aloud every day. At least a few times a week, you'll support conversations about the read-aloud book. You will also need to lead a writing workshop, and this, like the reading workshop, will last approximately an hour a day. Kindergarten children still have a lot to learn about spelling and phonics, and so it will be important for you to lead word study time every day. In addition, you'll draw on the other components of balanced literacy. Sometimes, these other components will be woven into your social studies, science work, or morning meetings, and they will include additional small-group work, shared reading, and interactive writing.

Reading Aloud

One cannot stress enough the importance of reading aloud. You will want to read aloud to teach children discipline-based concepts that are integral to social studies and science. You'll also read aloud to create a sense of community and to show children why people love to read. And you'll read aloud to teach children vocabulary and higher-level comprehension skills. As you conduct a read-aloud session be sure that it includes opportunities for accountable talk.

To do this, plan the read-aloud to demonstrate a skill or a collection of skills. For example, you may decide to support your students' effort to understand a story by teaching them to approach the text thinking, "How is this character behaving?" After reading just a bit, pause and think out loud some of your thoughts. Then read on, revising what you think based on what you see the character doing. To use the read-aloud text as a forum for teaching reading skills, plan for the read-aloud by placing Post-its in the text ahead of time, marking places where you'll either think aloud to model a reading strategy or where you'll ask students to do similar work together by turning to talk to a partner about their ideas. Your prompts for getting children to turn and talk could be something like, "Look at what that character just did! Turn and tell your partner what you think will happen next," or "Let's think about what's going on here. Turn and tell your neighbor what you see happening." After a one- or two-minute interlude for partners to externalize their thoughts (that is, to talk), you'll read on, not wanting to lose the thread of the text.

After pausing several times to either demonstrate or to provide children with guided practice doing what you have demonstrated, and after reading the chapter or the section of the book, you'll probably want to engage in a whole-class conversation.

These longer conversations will probably happen at least twice a week. During these conversations, it is important for children to direct their comments to each other and to carry on a talk in which one child responds to what another has said. That is, these conversations are not occasions for you to pepper the class with questions, calling on one child and then another. Instead, the class might for a time entertain a general question—say, talking back and forth about whether Poppleton is really a good friend—with one child saying, “I want to add on to what you said . . .” or “I know another part like that! Remember when . . .” or “I don’t understand what you mean”

You may wonder about the read-aloud partnerships, asking, “Do the same partnerships support both independent reading partnerships [these are ability matched as partners read the same books] and reading aloud?” This is a question you will need to answer. It is organizationally easier for children to maintain the same partnerships across both independent reading and read-aloud, but it is educationally preferable for read-aloud partnerships to be different, so these relationships need not be ability based. In fact, some teachers call one partner “Partner A” (or Partner One) and one “Partner B” (or Partner Two) and quietly group students so that the A partners are the stronger readers and talkers. Then, when you set children up to do challenging work, you can say, “Partner A, will you tell Partner B . . .,” and if the task is one that you believe is perfect for Partner B, you can channel the work that way.

Your read-aloud work will sometimes foreshadow work that the whole class will be on soon. That is, if your class will soon begin a unit on nonfiction reading, you may want to get a head start on this by reading nonfiction aloud during the last week of the previous study. By the time your children embark on their own independent work, you will have already provided them with a common resource to draw upon.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is that time in the day when teachers and children have eyes on one text, reading in sync with one other. Usually shared reading revolves around big books, songs, or enlarged texts written on chart paper, with the teacher pointing under words as the class reads in sync. Usually a classroom community spends some time rereading familiar texts and some time, usually less, working together with a new text.

In many classrooms, with a large number of students learning their concepts about print, many teachers begin the year with daily shared reading time (sometimes twice a day) for about ten to fifteen minutes. They use shared reading to work on concepts about print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and to practice the print strategies that they’ve determined many of their students still need to internalize and to use on the run as they read. Additionally, the act of gathering all students around a text in the beginning of the year helps build community and inspires enthusiasm for reading.

Word Study

A school needs to decide upon an approach to phonics. The TCRWP does not try to make this decision for a school. Most schools that we work with draw upon a combination of *Words Their Way*, *Phonics Lessons*, the *Firsthand* series written by Fountas and Pinnell, and Pat Cunningham's work.

Assess your students' knowledge to determine what features you will focus on. Most kindergarten teachers use the Letter Identification Task, Concepts about Print and student writing to find out their students' stages of spelling development. Once you have assessed your students, you will want to organize your teaching into whole-class instruction or small-group instruction. Most kindergarten teachers begin with whole-class instruction for the first few months of school as they are teaching their students routines and concepts all children need to learn. Plan to focus on what most students are ready to learn next. Choose features to work on that most students find confusing. For example, if you notice that many students are confusing ending sounds, you'll want to make that your focus. Once you differentiate your class into three groups for word study, you'll want to begin by teaching students the routines to several word study activities so that kids can work in partnerships as you are working with one group.

Once you have assessed your students and decided how to organize your instruction, we suggest following Donald Bear's *Words Their Way* and/or Fountas and Pinnell *Phonics Lessons* as a phonics curriculum. Be sure you spend enough time on studying each feature (for example, beginning sounds, spelling patterns) in a variety of ways. You will want to make sure that you are supporting students' ability to read and write these features both in isolation and in context. You'll want to make sure that you are doing plenty of shared reading and interactive writing to help students understand how letters and words work within the context of reading and writing. Always make sure to provide explicit teaching of phonics as part of your day. In some units you will notice that there is an emphasis on word solving. During these units you will want to support children's transfer of their word knowledge into their reading.

Small-Group Instruction

Much of your instruction is based on ongoing assessment of your class. Kindergarten literacy work rests on keeping up-to-the-minute with how your children are progressing. Of all grades, the different levels of your children in kindergarten are most varied, and the changes, or sometimes the plateaus, are especially intriguing. Therefore, you'll spend the year looking for key indicators that will guide you as you make crucial decisions for your class. Throughout the year, make it a habit to use the writing of your children so you know when to gently nudge each child to the next level of word work.

It is critically important that you lead small-group instruction as often as you can. When you think about small-group work, start with the idea that any teaching you do as a whole class can also be done in a small group. So you can do small-group shared

reading, small-group interactive writing, small-group phonics, small-group read-aloud and accountable talk, and so forth. Your small-group work can be used to reteach, or enrich, and can also be used to preteach.

Your small-group work will be shaped especially by your assessments. For example, if you have some children whose writing is not readable, who do not yet represent every sound they hear in a word with a letter (correctly or incorrectly), then you know you will want to begin with extra assessments. Do they know their letters of the alphabet? Their sound-letter connections? How many sight words do they know? Once you've determined the level of work at which these children can be successful, you can essentially look back in these calendars to be reminded of the sort of instruction they will need. You may decide to do some book introductions to level A, B, or C books. You might want to pull a small group and work on one-to-one matching or even a bring a group together to practice retelling with a partner.

Assessment

You will see in Unit One that we suggest using the TCRWP Assessment Tools as soon as possible in September to help you learn about the strengths and needs of the readers and writers in your classroom. You may want to administer the Letter and Sound Identification Assessment individually during your word study time and to give the spelling inventory to the whole class or in small groups at another time during the day. (You can consult Donald Bear's book *Words Their Way: Word Study for Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* for more information on how to analyze this inventory.) You could administer the concepts of print assessment during reading workshop.

The data you collect from these three assessments will help you plan your mini-lessons in upcoming units of study. For example, if most of your children don't know the difference between a letter and a word, as indicated on the Concepts of Print Assessment, include instructions on this concept in your plans for shared reading, reading workshop, and interactive writing. It's also important to plan for how you'll continue to assess your children throughout the year. Many teachers institute a system for keeping track of children's reading levels and growth (both by individual and by class) and for moving readers along to more challenging texts when they are ready.

Take note of the sight words that your children can read with automaticity. If your children are progressing well, they will be learning words throughout the year. By March, many students reading C or above will have somewhere around twenty or more high-frequency words that they can read. To help your students learn and use these words throughout the year, you may decide to give each child a key-chain full of word cards representing the sight words that the child knows or almost knows, and the child may take time during every reading workshop to flip through these cards, reading each aloud to herself. Children may play "I spy a word that . . ." games with partners involving word wall words, and certainly you may ask each child to take time each day to use the pointer and read aloud all the words on the word wall. (Some teachers try to jazz

this up by asking the child to pull directions from a can. One day the directions will say, “Read the sight words in a witch’s voice,” and another day, “Read the sight words like you are a cat—meow each word.” Do whatever you need to do to lure kids to develop automaticity in reading an increasing bank of sight words, and of course help children use these words as they read.)

You’ll need to attend to your readers’ developing abilities to comprehend texts deeply. You’ll learn this best by listening closely to book talks, by hearing what children say to partners, and by listening to children’s retelling of their independent reading books. Although we do not have a scale with which to measure this, the truth is that there is little that is more important. You may want each child to keep a reading portfolio that includes artifacts that represent the child’s growing abilities to comprehend. For example, you might read aloud a short story and, at preset places in the text, ask each child to either turn and talk (as you record their responses) or stop and jot in response to the prompt, “What do you think will happen next?” or “How does the character feel and why?” You could date the child’s responses and keep them, plus the text, from September and from several subsequent months, perhaps also including a rubric that analyzes what that child does and does not do yet when asked to predict. Or you may ask students to stop and jot during a read-aloud and then collect and analyze these responses. Similar records could be kept for any other comprehension skill, and we strongly suggest you select a few skills and make a point of keeping this sort of record. There is a rule of thumb that says, “We inspect what we respect.”

It’s important also to plan for how you’ll continue to assess your students throughout the year. Many teachers institute a system for keeping track of children’s reading levels and growth (both individual and by class) and for moving readers along to more challenging texts when they are ready. That is, you may decide to devote the reading workshop on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of each month to a consideration of whether children are ready to progress to new levels. In general, your children need to make rapid progress this year, at least moving to a higher level of text every other month (if not more than that), so teachers need to vigilantly watch for and seize opportunities.

You will find that the TCRWP has assessment tools on our website: www.readingandwritingproject.com. There are two sets of leveled texts used for primary Levels A–I. One is a set of multicultural books from the BeBop Books series, and one is a set of books from Scholastic. On the website there is information telling you how to order whichever set you select. For readers beyond Level I, there are text passages that can be printed right from the website.

Choice Time

Kindergartners need the opportunity to have a regularly scheduled choice time as part of their curriculum. By choice time, we mean the time of the day when children play (yes, we said *play*) in centers of their choosing, such as blocks, art, or dramatic play, to name a few. These centers often highlight different modes or styles of learning, and

many children gravitate to their area of strength. When children are given the time to play in these different choice time centers (especially those that reflect a child's area of strength), many important skills are developed. As children dramatize pretend stories—or the stories from their lives—they are developing an understanding of narrative structure. As children build pretend cities and rebuild these to make them look just right, they are working on the important skills of revision and problem solving. Above all, choice time is a vehicle for language development. As children engage in authentic conversations around their work, they are learning the language of negotiation and planning. Vocabulary development occurs naturally as children talk about the structures they are creating: “Hey, give me that triangle so I can put a roof on this firehouse!” a child might say. Lev Vygotsky, the famous Russian psychologist who studied child development, said that “[i]n play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself.” Choice time opens doors so that all students can innovate, approximate, build stamina, and work with zeal on collaborative projects. These are all qualities that are essential to early literacy development.

Choice time is also a perfect time to observe and to take notes on the work your class is doing. Listen for language, keep the bits of writing generated, step back, and observe how conversations start and how they are sustained. You will learn new things about your children, and these observations will influence your next steps in instruction.

Classroom Libraries

Once your students have each been assessed and you've matched them to just-right books, you will want to be sure that they know where to get their just-right books in your classroom library. If you have lots of children reading Levels B, C, D, for example, then you will need lots of books at those levels. If you have no children reading levels J and K, then there is not a lot of reason to have those books in your library at this time. That is, your library should reflect your readers. Students will need help, especially early in the year, as they learn to manage their independent book choices. You should establish a system for checking out and returning books that travel between home and school.

Finding Great Literature to Build and Refresh Our Libraries

One of the key factors in making any unit of study successful is having a collection of excellent books that can be used as emergent story books, shared reading texts, just-right books, and read-alouds. Through our work with students and educators across the country, we have begun developing lists of books to support particular units of study. On our website you will find many book lists that support our reading units. The book lists will include levels. We use Fountas and Pinnell's levels, if those exist, or Scholastic levels. If neither source exists we note the Lexile level, which you can use

to create levels by converting this Lexile level to an approximation of Fountas and Pinnell levels (take those with a grain of salt). You may want to visit our website at www.readingandwritingproject.com throughout the year for updated information.

As you well know as kindergarten teachers, this is a transformative year for your children. They are ready to dive into the reading world, to think in more sophisticated ways, and to set bigger goals. It is a year of huge growth and a time for children to meet high expectations as they ready themselves for the demands of kindergarten. Enjoy the wonderful work with your energetic readers!



UNIT ONE

We Are Readers Exploring the Exciting World of Books

September

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: Emergent Story Books & Shared Reading Texts)

There is no school-year beginning like the kindergarten beginning. In every other grade, teachers welcome their students *back* to the world of school, whereas kindergarten teachers welcome children *into* the world of school. For many kids, the first day of kindergarten may be their first day of school ever, and first impressions matter and linger.

For this reason, you've taken extraordinary steps to make sure the classroom environment is inviting and that the classroom tone is comforting. Right from the start, kindergarten teachers do all they can to make sure all children feel like they belong—regardless of whether they have a wiggly tooth, or can zip their zippers, or cry when their mommy leaves, or write their name with lowercase letters, or can count backwards from 20. You've worked hard to create a space where everyone will feel welcomed and loved and where everyone will think and learn.

When we zoom in on the first month of kindergarten reading, specifically, our biggest hope for September is that all children finish this first unit with a confident sense of reading identity. "Yes, I am a reader!" they'll say emphatically by the time the first unit wraps up. They'll be able to say this because by the end of the unit, they will, in fact, have at least several texts they can read. They'll have authors they love, they'll have books they call their favorites, and they'll have friends they gather to look at the newest addition to the classroom library or to muse over the illustrations in the gory insect book. In the Common Core State Standards it suggests that students read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding. That is, you will want your kids to see, experience, and understand how books are filled with information and stories that they can read.

To achieve the hopes and goals of this unit, teachers will want to be sure to provide students time with texts that are engaging, and that within each classroom there is an instructional environment where students learn to love to read while they also learn how to read. In other words, kindergarten teachers know that teaching kids how to read and inspiring kids to love reading are inseparable and indistinguishable goals, right from the start.

This sounds lovely, we realize, but the behind-the-scenes work to achieve these dreams for our kindergartners involves lots of sweat and heavy lifting. After all, our young students are heading toward those goals from many different starting points. You'll likely have some children who can read conventionally (and eagerly let you know this) the moment they walk in the door, while some children are unable to differentiate between letters and numbers. You'll have some kids whose first choice would be to spend the day poring over a pile of the books in your classroom library and other children who would prefer to spend the day anywhere else but in your classroom library.

With these vast differences in reading abilities and dispositions in mind, we've designed this first unit to support all of your students in several ways. First, you'll want to make use of plentiful opportunities to offer children rich and undeniable invitations to fall in love with reading as you read aloud engaging texts. From the start, as often as possible throughout the day, you'll want to read aloud all kind of texts; from short, sweet poems to rhythmic and rhyming big books, from beautiful and literary picture books to simple little books with a line or two of text on the pages. You'll want to read aloud nonfiction and realistic fiction, silly stories and soulful poetry, list books and lists themselves, songs on charts and directions to activities. You'll want to be sure your read-aloud selection includes something for everyone in this first month of school. This means that teachers will want to make every effort to get to know their children's interests, passions, and quirks, so that they can tailor their read-aloud times in ways that reach each and every child.

Second, you'll begin to teach kids how to read during reading workshop and throughout the day. The foundational skills section in the Common Core State Standards outlines all of the skills for kindergarten children to acquire in this year. You'll want to model these skills not only in reading workshop but across the day. These skills include book-handling skills, concepts about print, phonemic awareness, phonics, and strategies for meaning-making, word solving, and fluency. Your reading workshop will be characterized by intention and purpose and joy. This means you'll want to know, as quickly as possible, what your students can already do as readers and what they need to know next.

Third, you'll want to help your students build relationships around reading, so that your classroom becomes a community in which it's safe to take risks, to share ideas, and to ask for help. In the Common Core State Standards it says students should actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding. You'll show your students how to make reading connections with each other—"Hey, you like Eric Carle and so do I!" or "I love to read funny books, just like you do!" You'll teach your students to forge reading relationships based on intentions and purpose—"Let's learn about what sharks eat in this part!" or "Hey, you be the snowman and I'll be the boy, okay?!" You'll teach kids to grow reading relationships characterized by a spirit of cooperation

and generosity, saying, “Let’s figure this out together!” or “Can you help me with this part?” To do this work well means that you will want to quickly understand the social chemistry of your classrooms so that you can quickly help children connect with one another in meaningful and unexpected ways.

When planning a unit of study, after expressing our hopes and dreams for the outcome of this unit, it’s time to also address the practicalities and the pathways we’ll take to reach these goals. Before getting into the details of the unit, however, it’s worth noting here and keeping in mind throughout the month that finding opportunities for small-group instruction is essential for all of your kindergarten children, right from the start. You’ll likely have a group of conventional readers whom you gather to do a guided reading with instructional-level texts. You’ll likely have other groups that you’ll meet for strategy lessons on topics as varied as one-to-one match, phonemic awareness, letter recognition, letter-sound relationships, phonics, and so on.

One of the slight alterations to this unit is a subtle shift in timing. We can’t keep kindergarten children waiting for what they need, whether they are English language learners or precocious chapter book readers. It’s important that right from the start, all kindergartners receive instruction that matches their strengths and needs. There’s no reason to delay teaching children about the alphabet through songs and games, if that’s what they need from the first day. There’s no reason to wait to offer guided reading instruction and just-right texts when you have some conventional readers from the beginning. It’s important to clarify that this isn’t a suggestion to rush conventional reading instruction. Instead, it’s a call for kindergarten teachers to meet each child where they are as literacy learners, right from the start, and to provide instruction that moves them along in appropriate ways. In other words, we’re not suggesting teachers “force feed” reading instruction to kindergartners, but we’re also not suggesting they withhold appropriate reading instruction simply because it’s the beginning of the year.

As you read the following descriptions for the parts of this unit, it’s likely that you’ll need to make slight alterations and adjustments to tailor this unit to your class. Your decisions will be based on not only your students’ reading profiles, but also on their learning, linguistic, developmental, and social needs.

In any case, in planning and envisioning this first month of kindergarten we’ve strived to strike a delicate balance in a couple of ways. We’ve tried to find the balance between instruction that teaches reading skills and strategies right from the start, and instruction that serves more as an invitation that entices children toward text, especially those who may be reluctant, hesitant, or resistant toward books.

We’ve tried to find a balance in our expectations for kids—we want them to understand a variety of purposes that readers have, so that they go about their reading with intention and focus. Yet even so, we also want to celebrate and encourage kindergartners’ natural playfulness with texts and language.

So, to start the unit, the first part (which may last for the first week or so) will be filled with invitations to live a vibrant, fun, and purposeful reading life. We’ll teach kids the possibilities for adventure in text while we also steep them in the procedures and expectations for how reading will look and sound in our classroom.

Of course, alongside your reading workshop you will be teaching your kids about phonemic awareness and phonics through shared reading, interactive writing, and word study time. Depending on your children's attention and stamina for reading you may decide to "add" an extra shared reading or phonics time after the teaching share in your workshop. Across the fall you will want to build your students' ability to sit and read books alone and with a partner. By the end of your first or second unit of study your aim is to have students able to read for thirty minutes. To do this, they will need to know what to do in reading time and will need materials to help keep them engaged.

Next, we'll turn a corner toward some more explicit reading instruction, once we've "read" our kids. If we have a kindergarten where most of the kids know most of the letter-sound relationships and can recognize their names and some basic sight words, we might offer print strategy instruction geared toward readers of B–D level texts. On the other hand, if our kindergarten class is mostly comprised of children who need instruction in recognizing letters and numbers, and who don't confidently or comfortably pick up books and know what they can do, we'll want to teach them with their specific needs in mind. There's no one way this will go. A teacher will need to assess her group and make decisions that make sense in her classroom.

Finally, the last part in this unit will continue early reading strategy instruction while also emphasizing how to read joyfully and purposefully. There will be opportunities to teach children how to read well with a buddy, and how to work hard and play hard as readers.

Let the Reading Adventures Begin

This is a precious time for you and your students. It's the time when you cozy up to reading together while you build up students' confidence and desire for reading on their own. Many children will be approximating reading, picking up familiar books and reading them from memory. Some children will read books because they are interested in the cover or the topic. Other children will choose books they can actually read conventionally, while others may simply grab books from a basket and flip through them, going through the motions without any sort of purpose or pleasure.

Your big instructional emphasis during this part (and throughout the unit) is to teach children that readers have intentions and purposes for reading, no matter what kind of reading they are doing. As you teach these purposes, you'll also want to tuck in necessary instruction about management, procedures, and expectations for reading workshop.

One of your first minilessons for reading workshop might be something about what readers do when they enter the world of a book. We'll teach them that readers go on adventures in their books and show them some ways to do that. You might begin by saying something to this effect: "When I was little, I used to love to go into the woods by my house with my friends. We'd always yell, 'adventure time!' as we ran in. We'd make up stuff to do in the woods, like building a fort, finding a treasure, searching for the pretend bad guys, or catching tadpoles in the little shallow stream that snaked

through our woods. But you know, here's the thing. Readers have 'adventure time' too. Before you go into a book, you too can make up stuff to do with the book. For the next few days, I'll teach you about some of the adventures you might have in your books, and you'll try them out. I bet you guys will even invent your own special book adventures, and I hope you're willing to share them with your reading friends!"

You'll want to teach your students that to get ready for their adventures, they'll want to pick a book, look at the cover, and think about what's going on. You could teach your students about book-handling skills if most of your kids are struggling to orient themselves to front/back, left/right. If only a few children are facing these challenges, you'll want to meet with them in strategy groups, and then offer continuing support during shared reading and writing workshop.

You might teach kids to find stuff they know in books. "When I used to go in the woods with my friends, I knew this kid named Jay who was a poison ivy expert. He could always find the poison ivy. He knew lots of plants, too, so he would warn us if something was poisonous. Sometimes Jay would put sticks around the poison ivy so we'd know it was there. This makes me think of our reading adventures. I'm thinking that you can be the kind of kid who always finds something in your books, the kid who is the expert about something. For example, when Davis read this book, he said, 'Hey, the words 'my dad' are on each page! Look at this.'" Then he went in and checked to make sure. Next thing I knew, he put a Post-it note on his book and wrote "my dad" on the note. It was like he was warning the next people to read this book that they'll find "my dad" on each page! It was so cool.

Other things you might teach kids to do in this part is to have pretending adventures, where they can study the pictures and then pretend to be the characters. Of course, you'll have to model this several times, and you'll need to support it with a heavy hand in your conferences, at first, as well as during shared reading and read-aloud time. This will both encourage more oral language development and help emergent readers begin to "approximate" reading.

You will want your kids to have bins of concept books, like alphabet, colors, and counting books. You will want your shared reading texts like *Hickory Dickory Dock* available alongside copies of big books that you are reading, like *Mrs. Wishy Washy*. In word study time you are probably studying the names of the students you have in the classroom as well as the alphabet. You might include the alphabet chart or a name chart in the bins as well. You may include texts that you create and write with kids about "The Things I Like," where each page is about a different student in your class. You will want to introduce and develop a repertoire of texts that kids are familiar with and that you can get into their hands quickly at the start of the year. These will be read-alouds, shared reading texts, and even texts that you begin to write together. You might then teach children that they can have different adventures depending on the kind of book they are reading. If they pick a book they know well, such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*, they can read it like a grown-up, all fancy and perfect. They can be pattern detectives, too, looking for word patterns, rhyming patterns, and so on. If they choose a nonfiction book, they can read it like a researcher who is searching for information by studying the pictures

and saying, “This picture teaches me that . . .” If they select a book they’ve never read before, they’ll have to get to know the book well by turning the pages and studying each one, by checking to see if they know any words, and by rereading it at least another time before retelling the story to themselves or a partner. For those children who can already read conventionally, you’ll want to help them get just-right books in their hands and support them with appropriate and timely strategy instruction.

During shared reading and read-aloud not only are you working on your concepts about print, but you are also working on helping your students understand the reading process. You will want to show them what readers do before, during, and after they read books. You will want to show them how to understand and anticipate how a book is going to go. It’s important to introduce your students to all of these skills early on in this unit of study so that they come to their reading with a stronger idea of what they are trying to “get out” of their books.

One of the essential things to understand and convey during this first part is that readers have intentions as they read, and that reading workshop is not an “eyes-glossing-over-the-pages-that-we-turn-so-quickly-we-don’t-even-have-a-thought” time. We want our children to realize, right away, that we expect them to do something with their books during reading workshop, whether it’s reading the words conventionally, or whether it’s looking closely at and trying to understand the illustrations to have an idea to share.

To reinforce our expectations early on, we’ll want to teach our students that when we confer with them, we’ll often ask, “So what are you doing as a reader now?” We’ll expect them to answer and to show us. For example, a child might respond, “I’m looking for bull sharks.” We could follow up with, “How are you doing that?” and help the child reach his or her intention. Likewise, if we ask a child, “What are you doing as a reader today?” and the child responds with a shrug of the shoulders or by saying, “Nothing,” we’ll want to work with that, too. “Hmmm, you’re not sure about it, huh? Let’s think for second. What was it about this book that made you pick it?” We could then use their response to that question as a starting point to help the child create his or her intention or plan.

Readers Do Lots of Work with Words and Pictures So that They Enjoy Their Books

In this part, you’ll offer more explicit reading instruction during whole-class lessons, while also reinforcing early reading behaviors. Much of your teaching during this second part will continue to pull threads from the first part, as well. You’ll extend your work on management and procedures for reading workshop, and you’ll want to continually reinforce the idea of and possibilities for readers’ purposes.

By now, your children also know several shared reading texts and emergent story books very well, so you will want to start putting these into tabletop bin circulation. Your students can work and play with these highly engaging texts, building on the support

you've offered through the multiple rereadings. You'll want to use nursery rhymes and familiar shared reading texts in your minilessons to teach children about one-to-one match. You'll want to make these texts available in the tabletop book bins so that kids will have familiar texts with which to try the strategies you've taught.

In this part, you will want to continue to emphasize the idea that readers always have an intention as they read. As your kids pick books from their tabletop book bins, you'll want to teach them to be able to say what kind of intentions they have, based on the kind of text they've selected.

For example, if they choose *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, an emergent story book text you've read several times, you'll want to teach them several ways they might read that text. You can discuss telling the story across pages, using words and illustrations as anchors, focusing on a particular character and acting out that role, studying the other characters in the book and giving them words, and so on. On the days when you teach these sorts of strategies, you'll want to make sure you send your children off from the minilesson knowing that one of their most important reading jobs that day will be to try this work in an emergent story book.

If your children choose an unfamiliar text, you'll want to reinforce some of what you taught in the first part about starting an unfamiliar book by trying to get to know it. You'll teach them to read the pictures by studying them closely so they can figure out what important things are happening on each page. You'll want to teach them to connect one page to the next, with words like *and then*, or *next*, and so on. In some cases, you'll guide children to attend to the words a bit, looking for known words and noticing repeating words throughout the book. You can suggest that if something repeats in the pictures or the words, it must be an important part of the story. Again, you'll want to ensure that your children try this work when you teach it by making sure they select an unfamiliar book or two during reading workshop.

If children choose one of your handmade nursery rhyme books or simple pattern texts using high-frequency words and picture support (i.e., *Mrs. Foley's class likes to write*, *Mrs. Foley's class likes to read*, etc.), you'll want to see if they know they can point under the words, locate familiar words, find patterns, find rhymes, and so on. You may want to make pens and pencils available so that children can circle, underline, and highlight words in these books. Some teachers even attach extra pages to the end so that kids can add to the text, using the patterns on the previous pages as a guide.

Some teachers put these handmade books in plastic bags, along with cut-out words and pictures. When the children pick one of these bags from their tabletop book bins, they can read the handmade text and then do a variety of activities with the cut-out text, such as making sentences that match the ones in the book, matching pictures to the words, putting the sentences in order, and so on.

If your children are selecting books they can read conventionally, you may want to meet them in guided reading groups to nudge them along, and confer regularly with them to be sure they're reading in a well-rounded way—with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.

During this part in the unit, you might want to add another segment to your reading workshop. Although most kindergarten teachers have a word study session at another time of the day, you might want to add another mini-word study session in the form of a ten- to fifteen-minute addition to reading workshop that you could call “word games,” or something to that effect. Some kindergarten teachers attach this to the end-of-reading workshop, right after share time, because children are warmed up from reading. Other teachers might have word games before reading workshop, to act as a warm-up. The other benefit of word games is that it could be a temporary addition to reading workshop that you bring back at various times of the year, as children’s knowledge of letters, sounds, and words grows more sophisticated.

During word games time, your children can build their skills in many different areas, from phonemic awareness to sight word recognition. You’ll want to be sure to differentiate the games so that children who need support with letter recognition will be singing the alphabet song and poring over ABC books. For children who need support with letter/sound relationships, you’ll have activities available where they’ll play letter-sound concentration or Go Fish. For children who are working on one-to-one match, you’ll set up your easel with shared reading texts and poems and several pointers, so that children can be the teacher while working on essential skills. Some kids who are reading conventionally (or almost conventionally) may be playing sight word concentration or something of the kind, which reinforces and introduces them to essential sight words. While children huddle around a variety of games, the teacher might pull some small groups for guided reading or strategy lessons.

Share Your Reading with a Buddy through Book Talks and Performances

During the first two parts of this unit, your students had time to talk and read with a buddy every day. In most classrooms, the buddy arrangement was informal—children paired up simply because they were sitting near each other. At this point, you know your children and understand the social dynamics of your classroom much better, so you may want to consider assigning reading buddies that last for several days or a week. We tend not to recommend creating long-term reading partnerships at this point in the year. Instead, we suggest waiting until most of your children are reading conventionally, perhaps in December or January. The week-long reading buddies in the fall are a temporary and transitional arrangement that leads to more formal reading partnerships later in the year.

During this part, as you put more emphasis on the work of reading buddies, you may want to up the ante and increase the expectations for how children read together. Some of your minilessons, conferences, and small-group work during this part will be in support of buddy work. That said, you’ll be pulling threads of instruction from the first two parts, offering continuing support for management, procedures, and expectations as well as providing instruction on early reading behaviors, reading skills, and readers’ intentions and purposes.

To start this part, you might say something like this: “So, readers, we’ve been learning so much about how readers go on adventures in their books—how they work and play with books, noticing and discovering so much as they read, read, read stuff in the world. Well, for the next week or so I’m going to teach you that you don’t have to do this fun stuff alone in this classroom. I’m going to teach you how you can have a buddy as you read, a buddy that will go with you on reading adventures.”

You’ll support your kindergartners’ early buddy work by showing them how to take turns and make plans with each other. This is year-long instruction, of course, but in late September, reading buddies are still a new idea. It’s important to start off on the right foot and teach good buddy habits and behaviors. You might want to add a second minilesson that offers direct instruction for buddy reading.

Often teachers will plan minilessons during this part that complement each other. For example, in the first minilesson, you might (re)teach your children how readers can look closely at the characters in their books and imagine what they’d say and how they’d say it by looking at facial expressions and thinking about the story. Then, for the minilesson that supports buddy reading, you could teach your students how they can act out their characters for their partners.

You may be teaching your readers how they can use anchor words in texts to help them remember what the page says, especially if many of your readers are choosing to read small copies of shared reading texts or emergent story books. You might follow this up in the second minilesson by teaching your children how their buddies can help them find anchor words and recall the particular part of the story. One of the activities you might want to teach your readers to do with their partners is to act out familiar stories. Many teachers tell their children to select a Star Book (an emergent story book) that they’ll share with a buddy. Their job is to act out a scene from both children’s books, with each child taking on the roles of characters. Because both children will know these books equally well, the emergent story books or shared reading texts lend themselves well to this sort of task.

For share time during this part, you might want to spend time working on reading-buddy etiquette or setting up the reading buddies for specific activities. For example, when you call your class back to the meeting area for the teaching share time, you could ask them to sit beside their reading buddy. You may want to ask your kids to practice particular aspects of reading-buddy work, such as looking at your partner when he says something, helping your partner figure something out, and so on.

Toward the end of this part, you may want to consider a celebration for the unit. If your children have been acting out scenes from texts, especially during this last part, you may want them to act out scenes for each other during the celebration. Perhaps you’ll want to invite others into your classroom for the performances. Maybe you’d prefer that this first celebration maintains an air of intimacy or a “just us” feeling, in an effort to deepen a feeling of community among your students.

As your first unit wraps up, you’ll want to take time to reflect and acknowledge what has changed in your class. The children who walked into your room that first day of school are now all identifying themselves as readers, whether they’re able to read conventionally or simply able to read their names at this point. Because of your lessons,

conferences, and small-group instruction (in combination with the other components of balanced literacy), you can see a room full of children comfortably and confidently handling books, turning pages correctly and recognizing where to start on a page.

Your kindergartners have books and authors they love, nursery rhymes they know by heart, characters they can imitate in voice and gesture. They know how to use the pictures to help them figure out words or to approximate what the words may say. They point under the words, with an understanding of how one's finger moves from word to word, whether or not they have perfect one-to-one match at this point. They likely have at least a few words they can read by themselves. You've covered a lot of ground, while also helping your children develop a healthy attitude toward reading and a hunger for time to read.

The Multilevel Power of Shared Reading

Reading workshop doesn't operate on its own. It works best when it is combined with other literacy components that provide opportunities for well-rounded support and specific reading instruction. One of the most important components for helping kindergartners learn to read is shared reading.

You'll want to begin the year by providing at least a couple of shared reading sessions each day. These sessions will tend to be fifteen to twenty minutes long, and yet they provide bountiful opportunities for multilevel instruction within that time frame. For example, as you read the big book, *The Red Rose*, you may mask parts of some words in an effort to demonstrate to nearly conventional readers the strategy of using the onset and the picture to figure out a tricky word. As you read, you'll also think aloud about the concepts of print to appeal to those students who need such support, "Oh, where do the words start on this page?" or "Hmmm, let me look closely at this cover to get to know the story a bit. I think it may be about . . ."

You'll also want to vary the types of texts you read with the students during shared reading. Many kindergarten teachers move between big books and poems, nursery rhymes, and songs written out on chart paper. You will likely read the same text over several days, with the expectation that each time you read it, more and more children will join and read along with you, mimicking your intonation and oral expression. They'll begin to notice that the word *see* or *this* is on every page. Perhaps some will realize that there is a rhyming pattern in the text and you'll emphasize the rhymes as you read, so as to bring all of the students toward that realization. You will likely plan for shared reading based on your students' abilities, needs, and interests, but it's also wise to be flexibly planned so that you can follow their curiosities and observations during shared reading.

Once your students know a shared reading text well, you'll want to provide them the chance to read it themselves as well as opportunities to play with the text. Many teachers have baskets in their libraries called "Shared Reading Texts," where they keep small copies of the texts the class has worked on, played with, and learned to read during shared reading. This basket of shared reading texts will likely include small versions of big books,

teacher-made and -bound books, and poetry and songs in sheet protectors. Teachers also include Popsicle sticks (or something like that) for children to use as pointers as they read.

In another part of the room, there might be a chart stand with a pocket chart that holds sentence strips. You might have cut up the short poems your class has learned during shared reading so that your children can recreate them, using the text itself, as they find anchor words, repeating words, and so on. In the meeting area, the children will likely want to mimic the way you lead a shared reading session, using your easel and pointer, and your stash of big books and texts on chart paper. In this playful interaction with text, your children will be learning much about book handling, concepts of print, early decoding strategies, the difference between words and letters, one-to-one match, and so much more.

The Many Faces of Read-Aloud Time

Reading aloud frequently and regularly is one of the most important things that early childhood teachers can do for their young learners. In her book *When Kids Can't Read—What Teachers Can Do* (Heinemann, 2002), Kylene Beers cites research showing that children who have been read to frequently before entering school are familiar with about 35,000 words. Children who lack these literacy experiences begin school knowing about 12,000–14,000 words.

Children who enter kindergarten having been read to frequently are more likely to be successful in high school than children who enter knowing their alphabet letters. For these reasons and more, it's absolutely essential that teachers read aloud to their students as often as possible, at least several times every day. There are many ways this read-aloud time may look.

Sometimes the read-aloud will simply be a cozy time when you share a beloved book. Many teachers call this “story time,” and believe that above all, this attracts children toward a reading life. Imagine a rainy day, and that outdoor play before lunchtime is not an option. Some kindergarten teachers capitalize on these found moments to say, “Oooh, I just love it when I get an unexpected pocket of time to read. Like right now, outdoor recess is canceled because of the rain, so I’m thinking we got lucky! We can fill our time with stories. I’ve got this great book, *Pete’s a Pizza*, about a boy who does something crazy with his family when it’s raining out.”

You will also want to regularly read aloud what Elizabeth Sulzby calls emergent story books (also known as “star books”) beginning on the first day of school. Star books tend to be lively, plot-driven stories such as *Caps for Sale*, *The Snowy Day*, *Corduroy*, *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, to name a few. They also tend to have a repeating refrain or line, and the illustrations are detailed so that children can use them to anchor their reading. Sulzby recommends that a teacher read each emergent story book aloud about five times over the course of days. This way children will know these books well enough to “read” them during independent reading, as they sit with their own copies of the books (see the October unit of study for more information).

As soon as you've read aloud one of the emergent story books four or five times, many teachers put copies of that book into what some teachers refer to as a "star book bin." You could also distribute these common texts among the tabletop bins. Many teachers put a special sticker, such as a star, on these books so children can distinguish them from others and return them to the correct book basket. By the end of the first month of school, we recommend that children know a few emergent story books really well. It is important to continue rereading these titles aloud throughout the fall, and you will also want to introduce (and reread) a couple of other new emergent story books.

What makes a book a good emergent story book? According to Elizabeth Sulzby, there are several criteria, including the following:

- The book has an emotional content relevant to young children.
- The pictures are supportive of the text and move the story along from page to page.
- The text tends to contain dialogue and strong characters.
- The text contains rich language structures and vocabulary.
- The text may have a repeating refrain that children can use to anchor themselves when they begin to "read" it themselves.

The interactive read-aloud (also known as the read-aloud with accountable talk) is another kind of read-aloud that happens every day in classrooms with emergent readers. In fact, the interactive read-aloud is considered by many to be a non-negotiable daily component of a balanced literacy framework. During interactive read-aloud, you'll read a text aloud to the class. As you read, you'll think aloud a bit, modeling the work that proficient readers do as they read, and you'll provide a few small intervals of time for children to turn and talk for a moment or two about the text with partners. You'll often culminate this with a whole-class conversation. In most classes, teachers devote about fifteen to twenty-five minutes a day to interactive read-aloud time, which includes time for conversation.

The interactive read-aloud is a critical component of balanced literacy that demonstrates for your children exactly what it looks like, sounds like, and means to be an engaged, well-rounded, highly proficient reader who strives to make meaning on a word level and on a story level. During the interactive read-aloud, the teacher reads and occasionally pauses to think aloud, modeling for children the kinds of thinking proficient readers do. For example, you might pause to think aloud and say something like, "Oh, I wonder what this story is going to be about. Let me look at the cover and flip through the pages. Let me study the back cover. Oh, I think it's going to be about . . ." Next, you might read a few pages, stopping to say aloud, "Yes, I thought it was going to be about . . . Yes, I am right, because . . . Now I wonder what is going to happen next?" As you read on, you may also want to show children when your predictions miss and how you react when they do. "Oh wow! I am surprised! What I thought was

going to happen actually didn't. See what happened instead . . ." These are examples of how readers think about what is happening in the story, make predictions, and check in on them as they read through a book.

Provide opportunities for children to "turn and talk" with each other throughout the book. This allows all children to say something about the text and to make meaning of the story in the company of a partner. In September, however, you'll find yourself teaching children expectations for how to sit and listen to a story, and how to turn and talk to a partner during interactive read-aloud. Often these turn and talks will be about what readers think about as they listen to a story. For example, young children often talk about themselves when listening to a book. They may say, "My grandma is coming" as they listen to *The Relatives Came*. You can also have children turn and talk to make and gauge predictions about the story, and notice the characters—what they are doing and how they are feeling. All of this helps them to make meaning while pushing them toward independence. At this time of year, many teachers strategically choose texts about going to school, building community, and making friends, because children can relate to these topics and will be more likely to have something to say about them.

Word Study/Phonics

Kindergartners need to learn so much about letters and words and how they work. Therefore, an effective word study curriculum covers phonological awareness, letter/sound relationships, spelling patterns, high-frequency words, word structures, and strategies for problem-solving words. You will also want to make sure that you are showing children how to transfer what they are learning about words to their own reading. Students need to see how what they are learning about letters and words works, within the context of reading. The goal in word study is to help children build a better set of high-frequency words and knowledge of features of words to become better problem solvers as they read. Therefore, you will want to balance your instruction so that some of the word work occurs in isolation and a larger portion occurs within the context of reading and writing.

It's very important to begin the year by finding out what your children already know about letters and sounds, since you may have little information about your children's prior knowledge. You may find that from year to year your children's knowledge is a bit different. Some years you have only a few children who can name more than four or five letters in the alphabet; other years almost every child arrives writing his or her name and identifying most letters. The knowledge your children bring to the classroom is a starting point for developing plans for word study and phonics instruction. We recommend administering a letter identification assessment and a concepts-about-print assessment. The letter identification assessment will help you learn what students know about letter names and letter sounds. The concepts-about-print assessment will help you know what students understand about how print works. You will want to find out whether students understand reading from left to right and can name some upper- and lowercase letters

of the alphabet. Students should know the difference between a letter and a word before we go further into teaching them about words. You will also want to assess students' phonological awareness. According to the Common Core State Standards, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds. Phonological awareness will encompass the ability to hear and produce rhyming words and blend and segment syllables, while phonemic awareness will encompass isolating beginning, middle, and ending sounds as well as adding or substituting sounds.

In most kindergarten classrooms, teachers begin the year of word study through a name inquiry. Each day in whole-class lessons, one child's name is featured, and the class studies the name in many different ways. Through a name study, children learn the concepts of words and of letters, first and last sounds, letter names and features, hearing and saying syllables. For example, if the featured name for the day is Theo, you might help children notice things like: Theo's name starts with the same letter as Teneisha's name; Theo's name has four letters; the last letter looks like a circle; the first part of Theo's name sounds like *think* and *thirsty*; *the* is in Theo's name; Theo's name has two beats (syllables), and so on. You'll want to teach children to use their own names as a resource for learning other letters and word concepts. If most of the children in your class can't yet recognize and/or write their own names, give them time to practice making their names with magnetic letters and writing on dry-erase boards. This would be a perfect opportunity to work on letter formation as well. Teach students how to form letters as each name is studied. Students can make the letter big in the air as you are saying the verbal path for formation. For example, when making the letter *h* you might say "start at the top, come down, up, over and down." Keep the language you use consistent for each letter so that kids begin to internalize it and use it when they forget how to form the letter on their own. They can also make a rainbow letter where they trace the letter in different colors.

You will also want to do some work with phonological awareness. By the end of the year kindergarten students should be able to recognize rhyming words and syllables in words. A perfect time to work on rhyming words is during shared reading. Select texts with lots of rhyming words such as "Down by the Bay" by Raffi and nursery rhymes. After reading the text several times you might ask kids to snap their fingers each time they hear two words that rhyme, only focus on the sound rather than the way the word looks. You can also use pictures to have kids match and sort words that rhyme. You'll also want to work on hearing syllables. There are a few ways students need to know syllables by the end of the year. You might begin with clapping the syllables in their names and then moving on to other familiar words they have heard during shared reading. Support students with counting the number of syllables they hear in a word. Many times children will confuse the syllables in the word with the number of words they hear in a sentence. The more students understand about syllables in words, the easier it will be for them to understand word-to-word match when they are reading.

The following chart can serve to guide you toward more information about planning a word study curriculum:

If you decide to teach . . .	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K— Pinnell & Fountas</i>
Names	4-18 to 4-19 (pp. 118–119)	ELC 1 (p. 71), ELC 2 (p. 75)
Phonological Awareness: Rhymes	4-6 to 4-11 (pp. 111–115)	PA1-PA3 (pp. 105–116)
Letter Knowledge: Names, Fonts	4-18 to 4-26 (pp. 118–123)	LK1-LK7 (pp. 211–238)
Concept of Word	4-32 to 4-36 (pp. 125–128)	



UNIT TWO

Readers Read, Think, and Talk about Emergent Story Books

OCTOBER

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: Emergent Story Books & Shared Reading Texts)

Have a look at the books young children seek out most in the classroom, and you'll notice a clear trend—the most popular picks are the ones you've read aloud. As soon as children have heard your rendition of *Koala Lou* or *No, David!* they'll clamor to have a go at these books themselves during reading workshop time. What's more, this enthusiasm increases exponentially the more times children hear a book read aloud. This means that children will be especially eager to read the emergent story books that you've read to them again and again. In the Common Core State Standards' fluency section, it directly states that kindergartners should read emergent story books with purpose and understanding.

There's good reason for this. Each time you reread these texts to your class, your children grow a deeper understanding of the story, a stronger sense of the language of the text, and an increased willingness to read it themselves—because they believe they can. You'll want to capitalize on this newfound confidence and "can do" attitude. This unit provides an opportunity to say to children, "Yes, you can!" and to support them as they continue their adventure in reading.

This unit, then, takes advantage of the familiarity your children now have with the emergent story books you have read aloud to them this year. By providing time for your children to read, think, and talk together about these books, you will continue to build on their growing knowledge of early reading skills and concepts of print. This emergent story book unit enables you to bolster your children's sense for how stories go, as well as their use of literary language and expression and their ability to think more deeply about story elements such as characters and plot according to the Common Core State Standards Appendix A.

The act of rereading high-interest, engaging stories (note the emphasis on *stories*) is especially helpful for children who are English language learners and for children who may not have had frequent experiences with books before they started school. Rereading emergent story books helps to increase receptive language skills, vocabulary inventory, concept knowledge, an understanding of language structures (syntax) in books, and a sense for how stories tend to go.

This unit of study has been influenced by and is largely based on the work of Elizabeth Sulzby and the Kindergarten Literacy Program. Studies by Sulzby and her colleagues have shown that when emergent readers have many opportunities to read familiar emergent story books on their own, they are more likely to advance quicker through the early reading levels once they are reading conventionally. This is especially true if they have also been taught letter-sound correspondence through word study and a writing workshop.

Many teachers call emergent story books by other more child-friendly names, such as “Star Books” or “Old Favorites,” and create baskets for the emergent story-book titles that children know well. Some teachers might put all the titles into a couple of general “Star Books” baskets, for example, while other teachers might put all copies of particular titles into their own basket. In this case, a teacher might have a basket full of *Caps for Sale*, another basket full of copies of *Corduroy*, and so on. The labels for these baskets have the name of the text and often a big star or another symbol to signify that they contain emergent story books.

Before you begin the unit, you will want to think about a story line (or theme), one that makes sense for kids. For example, the unit could begin with an emphasis on “We don’t just say ‘I can’t!’ We figure out how to read the story.” That first section could highlight readers being active problem solvers, who use everything possible including each other to read books. The next part could be, “We don’t just read through books, slam them to the side and say, ‘I’m done.’ No sir-ee! Readers study books, we think between books. We grow ideas about books.” Then the third part could be, “Readers invent fun things to do with our books.” Such a progression would mean that the class would focus first on the mechanics of reading, then shift to thinking and discussing as readers, and end with a neat twist. Whatever you decide, you will want to create a story line (or theme) that is concrete and within grasp for kids. *The Depths of Knowledge* by Webb talks about the level of work being studied. They rate this work on a one-to-four rubric. Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* believes this is a Level 3 skill.

Organizing the Unit

At this point in the year, many teachers decide to split reading workshop into two distinct portions, both to continue the work that they’ve been doing during reading workshop around building stamina and to add in time for children to read emergent story books in a focused, concentrated way.

You will probably want to extend the children's reading time by giving them some different kinds of books to read. We recommend that this added reading time might be devoted to work with ABC books, since these will channel your children to look at and talk about letters. During this time, children might sing the ABC song as they touch the letters on the pages of beautiful ABC books and do similar work in number books, touching the numerals as they say the numbers and then checking the picture to make sure the number of items matches the pictures. Children might compare ABC books, noticing that one has a mouse and another, a mother on the M page. They might make their own Post-it additions to a page, drawing a self-portrait on one page, a picture of an item on another page. You could show children a way that you read ABC books by doing a quick shared reading minilesson, and then invite them to do likewise for a few minutes, reading their books from tabletop bins alone for a bit, then with a partner.

In addition to private reading time, it will benefit your children to also participate in partner reading time, during which children can work together, sharing what they are noticing in their books. At the end of the workshop, we suggest you have a brief share to give closure to the reading workshop. According to the Common Core State Standards, under range of reading and level of text complexity, students should engage in many different ways of reading independently and in partnerships with purpose and understanding.

Getting Books into Children's Hands and Assigning Partnerships

During this unit, children will shop for both emergent story books and for whatever second kind of book you decide to channel them toward during the additional reading time. There are several ways teachers have children shop for books. In most cases, children will shop on a designated day each week. In the case of this unit, children can shop for a couple of Star Books and keep them in their own Star Book baggie. They will bring this baggie of Star Books to their independent and partner reading time. Another approach is to give each partnership a Star Book baggie to share, and let them shop together for four or five Star Books they want to read together over the course of the week. Yet another option might be to put the Star Books into specially designated baskets, which will go on the tabletops during reading workshop. The point of any of these systems is to make it easy for children to differentiate between Star Books and the other books that they read during reading workshop—and that matters because the sort of work the children will be doing with the different kinds of books will be distinct.

Early on in this unit, you will move children from the buddy-reading arrangements that characterized the first unit of study into more formalized partnerships. By now, you know much more about your children and can strategically assign partnerships that are likely to succeed. Readers who are not yet reading conventionally can be paired with children who bring out the best in them (i.e., a social pairing) or with children who can support their language needs and strengths (in the case of English language learners, for example). Those of your readers who are reading conventionally will need

to be placed in matched book partnerships. We suggest that partnerships stay together at least across the length of a unit. Children will benefit from coming to know one another's styles of learning over time and from gaining a certain level of comfort in a partnership according to the Common Core State Standards.

It is important for you to know the signs that children are ready for conventional reading, because teachers do not wait for those signs to emerge. Instead, those signs emerge because of the instruction children are receiving, so teach to make sure these indicators are in place for all children soon. The criteria many early childhood educators use to determine whether to move children toward conventional reading are the following:

- Is the child able to use, sometimes, the correct beginning and ending letters when she writes? Is an adult (who is not her teacher) able to read swatches of her writing? This child might write the sentence, "I rode my bike to Sam's house" like this: "I rd mi bik tt 2 Sam's ows." If your children are not doing this yet—what do they need? More phonics? More writing? Nudges to record more labels during writing?
- When you nudge the child to do so, can she reread her own writing, pointing under the words as she does so, even realizing if she forgot a word and to say "oops" and add it?
- Does the child "read" emergent story books with very close approximation to the actual texts, with expression, and in a way that conveys meaning?

If a child meets most of these criteria, launch them into conventional reading ASAP and skip to Unit Five for either small-group suggestions, or, if you find that most of your class is ready for this, just move ahead.

In the write-up below, we summarize a progression of work for the emergent story-book portion of your reading workshop.

Readers Figure Out How to Read the Story

At the start of the unit, you'll issue an invitation: "Readers, I've noticed a lot of you picking up the books I read aloud to you earlier this year and reading them on your own. It's like these books are old familiar friends that you want more time with. Well, guess what? You're going to have a chance to get that time! We're going to be rereading books we already know well, and because you're the kinds of readers who say, 'I can,' you're going to read these even better today than you did yesterday—and even better tomorrow than you did today!" Based on the introduction of the Common Core State Standards, repetitive reading for K–2 leads to deeper understanding and comprehension of what they read.

That is, your first message will be that all of us, as readers, can take books we know well and read them even better—as best we can. Once you get students approximating reading, you'll want to study what they do so you imagine next steps for them. You

may find that many children's reading will involve just looking at and naming objects they see on the page. They may approach each page as a separate entity, not tied together by a story line. Meanwhile, you'll hear other children comment on or narrate each picture ("He's walking. He's funny!"). You will want to coach and teach children toward approximate reading in a way that sounds as if they are reproducing the words and cadence of the text ("One fine day, a little bear . . .").

As children work, help them solidify their control of concepts of print. This is an important part of the foundational skills according to the Common Core State Standards. Some of your students will begin sweeping their fingers under the words of the text and going from left to right, top to bottom. Nudge them to point under words rather than on top of them so they can look at the word as they say it (though remember, children will not actually be reading the letters and words yet—this is approximate reading). If your students have concepts about print in place and know some letters and sounds, they might begin to notice the high-frequency words in their books. You will see that some children memorize the pattern in the text—you can easily say, "Hey! There's a word-wall word right in this book!" As children become more skilled, you may want to steer them toward books that, ironically, have fewer words. The reason to do this is that you will be helping children to focus on words and letters in the text, saying things like, "I see the word 'caps' on this page. It's right here. It's got the same beginning as Calvin's name!" With less text on each page, children will be able to concentrate on the words that do appear.

You may also find that some children get going with a head of steam but then come to places midway through the book where they lose hold of the story line and sometimes seem paralyzed. This is a great forum for teaching problem solving and resourcefulness. You can teach children to use the pictures to name things they see and then to predict what will happen next and to move on. Over time, you will demonstrate that careful readers use the pictures to remind us of what's going on in the story—that we reread to figure out where we are, use our voices to sound like characters, and connect one page to the next in order to read Star Books like one whole story.

A great way to give children extra practice holding onto the story line as they read is to have them do some retelling of their favorite emergent story books during choice time. Children can collaboratively choose their favorite Star Books and reenact these in dramatic play, build the settings in blocks, and paint murals of the stories on large sheets of butcher paper in the art center. This opportunity to bring stories to life enhances comprehension because children are experiencing the stories from the inside out. It also provides a concrete scaffold for ELLs, who can use the kinesthetic and visual nature of choice time to help them convey meaning, while simultaneously working on language development. Many teachers set up props in the different centers to help enhance students' play, or suggest that children create their own props. In one class, a student created buttons out of construction paper in the art center so other students could use them to reenact *Corduroy*. As stated in the Common Core State Standards, with prompting and support, students should be able to describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear.

Throughout this first part, you will want to introduce children to the “mechanics” of partner work, helping partners know how to read together and how to work out problems in partnerships without having to depend on you. That is, you’ll be teaching toward independence. Remind (or teach) children that partners sit hip-to-hip with one book between them—and that they make a plan about what books they’ll read and who’ll read first. In this emergent story-book unit, it’s often the case that one child reads a book all the way through, and then the partners talk about it. Then the other child picks a book, reads it through, and then they talk about it.

Read-aloud time this month should especially engage five-year-olds and all the quirky ways they respond to books. Let them “ooh” and “ah” at the pictures and turn and talk to partners about the stories they’re reminded of as they listen to you read. Continue to have them share their thoughts as they listen to a book, and have them talk about how their thoughts connect with the book and can help them understand what the book is about, as in the previous month. The hope is that when you start to introduce more formal ways of talking about books, they’ll bring this same love and excitement with them. You may also want to carry over the things you teach during minilessons (such as how to share thoughts as you read) and provide opportunities for children to try these things during read-aloud. This natural sort of talk will let children understand early on that talking about books helps us understand and love them more.

Readers Can Read Emergent Story Books with a Partner—and Notice Connections between Texts

Once children are able to read the Star Books in a way that more closely approximates the texts (due to their knowledge of how the story goes, rather than their ability to read the words), teachers may spend time helping partnerships talk about the stories together. Some teachers may introduce Post-it notes at this time, so children can mark places in books during private reading time that they want to share with their reading partners. It’s likely that you won’t teach your emergent readers to jot on Post-its, but rather, you’ll show them how to leave blank Post-its on pages to remind them what parts they want to discuss with their partners. The underlying idea for teaching children how to mark pages with a Post-it is that readers can prepare for their partnerships by marking places in the text to share. You can say, “When readers are reading by ourselves, we’ll often have thoughts like, ‘Oh, this is so cool!’ or ‘Huh, I don’t get this,’ or ‘Hey, this is just like our class!’ These are exactly the kinds of things readers share with a partner. So when you notice something that you want to share, put a sticky note on the page to help you remember the part when you share with your partner.”

During this part of the unit, you will teach children how to make connections within and across books. You might show them how to put pages together not just to tell the story (as you taught in the previous unit), but also to find parts of books that are similar and different. In *The Snowy Day*, for example, children might look at the beginning and the end of the book and notice how Peter goes out into the snow in both places.

They might realize that the same thing happens in the beginning and at the end, or they might infer that Peter really likes snow because he plays in it whenever he can. These kinds of rudimentary connections and inferences, which emergent readers make as they look at books, are the prerequisites for the more sophisticated skills they'll need to use when they are reading conventionally.

Your real hope is that your children continue to be natural, spontaneous, and inquisitive conversationalists about books. You can give them ideas of things to talk about but you won't want these to feel like scripts. Instead, see if you can make suggestions that children grab hold of with spontaneity—you could suggest children might talk about parts that give them a strong feeling, or about pages that connect, or about how different books and different characters can be alike and different, and so on. It's important to note here that although you may spend several days teaching specific things readers can talk about, the goal isn't for every partner conversation to be about that day's minilesson. You are teaching children possibilities for talk and then providing them independence (and support) as they decide, in their partnerships, exactly what they want to talk about on any given day. The integration of knowledge and ideas section of the Common Core State Standards states that "with prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories."

Besides supporting them with possibilities for talk topics, you also want to teach youngsters to talk in more detail, offering more substantiation, textual support, and clarification as they discuss. For example, when Malik laughs at a page in *Caps for Sale*, you can ask him to think and talk about what made him laugh and why. You might say, "Malik, I heard you laughing on this page. What is it that is so funny to you?" Malik might respond, "It's funny." You can ask him to say more. "Let's study the page together for a moment. Let's figure out what's so funny to you." As you linger on the page for a bit, you might say, "So what's the funny part of this?" Malik might say, "The monkeys. They're funny because they're copying the guy, and look at his face. He's so mad!" In this example, you are taking the stance of a proficient partner in this conference. You are nudging Malik's thinking forward in a natural, comfortable way. You're getting him to say more about something he noticed or reacted to in the illustrations. This work will help him and others in reading well beyond this unit.

In general, whenever you sit alongside a child or a partnership and listen as children make comments about texts, you can help them stretch their thinking by asking open-ended questions like, "What makes you think that?" or "What do you think about that?" or "Why do you think it's like that?" and so on. Soon, you can teach partners to ask each other these sorts of questions to help their talk become stronger.

Read-aloud is a perfect opportunity to demonstrate for children how to think across texts. You might read aloud several stories that are all about a character who is struggling with the same thing or who faces a similar challenge. *Noisy Nora*, *Peter's Chair*, and *Nobody Notices Minerva* all feature a child who must make room for siblings—and the jealousy that conjures. Each acts out in a different way—Nora hides, Minerva sulks, and Peter runs away—but all three of them respond negatively to less attention, and then eventually learn how to cope with a new brother or sister or the many siblings, and

still feel good about themselves. Chances are, some of your children will have dealt with a similar situation—or may be about to. As often as you can, read aloud books that will resonate for the kids in your room. This allows you to help the students master the standard “Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood” in the speaking and language section of the Common Core State Standards.

Readers Can Invent Fun Things to Do with Stories We Know Really Well

By the end of this unit, when your children are more familiar with several emergent story books, they are likely to approach these texts with higher levels of confidence and flexibility. By this point, they will not just “read” the stories together, they’ll also have something to say about them, commenting on the story line and the characters, making connections, wondering, and questioning. This is a perfect time to suggest to your children that readers often invent fun things to do with texts we know well.

For example, you might tell children that some people see the same movie over and over and over (just like they have been reading their favorite books over and over and over) and that those people come to know a movie so well that sometimes they’ll act out a scene in the movie they particularly love. “*Readers* can improvise and dramatize our stories, too,” you’ll say. Children can try this with their partners, picking a scene to act out together and figuring out the reason why they chose it (i.e., importance to the story, drama involved, favorite part, and so on). You can also model the way careful readers think about how the characters feel in their books, reminding children to make their voices sound just like the characters would sound, and to use facial expressions and body gestures that go along with the actions and feelings of the characters. The Common Core State Standards emphasize how students should be understanding text in many different ways, such as drama.

Read-aloud is a perfect time to demonstrate this dramatization of books. After “acting out” the book you are reading, children could do likewise, taking on the voices of characters and using their bodies and facial expression to help them engage in the text and show what they are thinking. You could get kids to talk more about the book in partnerships and to take on the characters together by giving them some lead-in prompts.

You can also use shared reading to give children a chance to practice reading with character voices. After reading, rereading, and discussing big books of traditional tales like *The Three Little Pigs*, you can divide the class among the characters, and they can chime in when each character speaks using voices that reflect the feelings and actions of the character in that part of the story. They will be reflecting the feeling of the story—and of the characters in the story—by the way they chime in.

Some teachers give children tongue depressors to use as low-maintenance puppets as they act out their stories. During choice time, children might decorate a set of these “puppets” for particular books and then put them in their baggies. When they meet

with their partners, they take out the tongue depressors and act out the stories. In a few classes, children have made background scenery during choice time and have used these scenes as props.

You might prompt readers to try to read books like storytellers, using storyteller voices. You can say, “A storyteller reads a story in a way that holds listeners’ attention. A storyteller tries to make the story sound interesting or exciting so that everyone pays close attention. Storytellers practice reading this way when they read to themselves, and they have little tricks they use to read in storyteller voices.”

One thing you can teach your children that will support their “reading like storytellers” is to read with expression. You can show them how to think about what a character might be feeling or thinking and to imagine how his or her voice would sound. For example, you can look closely at one of the pages in *Caps for Sale* when the peddler is frustrated with the monkeys. You can model thinking aloud how he might be feeling. “Oh, I bet he’s really frustrated and angry because the monkeys keep teasing him in a way. I bet his voice would sound like this:” Then, you can give children a chance to try it during the active engagement portion of the lesson by saying, “Now, I want you to really study the monkeys. Imagine what they might be thinking or feeling and try to make your voice and your face match it when you say their part here.”

You can teach children that storytellers have other tools besides their voices when they tell a story. You can show them how storytellers also use facial expressions and body gestures to make the story as interesting as possible. For partner work, you can suggest that partners might help each other read like storytellers together, sharing their best storyteller voices, facial expressions, and gestures.

Word Study/Phonics, Interactive Writing, and Shared Reading

In many classrooms, the name study continues into October. You’ll want to create a word wall and a name chart with children’s names near the meeting area, which will become an important resource during reading and writing time. You’ll want to read those together each day. Reading the ABC chart and the class name chart during shared reading time can support letter name, letter sound work, and concepts about print. According to the Common Core State Standards, “These standards are directed toward fostering students’ understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English writing system. These foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves; rather, they are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines.”

Work with letters and words in a balanced way so some instruction occurs in isolation with instruction that is happening within the contexts of reading and writing. If we only teach students about words in isolation, they may not transfer this knowledge to their independent reading and writing. During shared reading, we can show students

how we can use our knowledge of words to read, and during interactive writing, we can show students how to hear sounds in words and match them to letters as we write. Continue to work on phonological awareness (rhymes and syllables) using children's names, rhymes, and songs.

To help children begin to recognize the distinct features of each letter and form letters, you might also have children sort letters by features (e.g., tall letters, short letters, tall sticks, letters with circles). During word study, have students sort using magnetic letters and practice forming letters with Play-Doh. Help students notice these letters during shared reading. Have students go on a hunt for all the tall letters or all the letters with dots, and so on. During interactive writing, highlight the features of the letter as you write.

It is important that children learn how to form letters as part of their overall letter knowledge; you might begin spending time on this. Many teachers spend about five minutes each day in a whole-class setting teaching children how to form a letter. As you teach the formation of the letter, you can say its verbal path; for example, for the letter *t* you might say "down and across." There is also a suggested sequence for how to teach the formation of letters in the binder for Fountas & Pinnell's *Phonics Lessons K*. As part of phonological awareness work, many teachers do picture sorts by letter sound to work with children on hearing beginning sounds. This works best when you're connecting beginning sounds to children's names. For example, you could sort pictures of things that begin like Sarah's and Natalie's names. You might also work on hearing beginning sounds when you're gathering or dispersing children; for example, you might say something like, "If your name begins with the sound of *b*, go back to your seat."

You will want to have kids practice using the name chart and ABC chart during interactive writing. For example, if you are creating a class story about getting caught in the rain during recess, you'll begin by inviting children to help you recreate the story. One child might come up and draw one part, say the rain, while other members of the class "draw in the air" or draw with a finger only on their knees. You could then have the kids work together to label the key elements in the picture. You can say, "Let's put a label on the raindrops that fell on our heads so everyone will know what this is. Say 'rain' with me. What sound do you hear at the beginning of 'rain'? rrrr . . . What letter makes that sound?" Then a child whose name begins with the letter *r* can write the first letter of *rain*. You can keep going in this same way, inviting children whose names begin with the first letter of other objects in the picture to come up and label them.

You will want to have some consistency with the activities during word study so that students can eventually do the same work in partnerships. You might teach students how to sort, how to work with magnetic letters, and how to play simple games like memory. Also, have a balance of whole-class teaching with partnership work. For example, one day you might introduce two letter sounds in a whole-class pocket chart sort and on the second day have students work in partnerships with the same two letter sounds in a sort. Then you might have students hunt for pictures of things that begin with the targeted sounds in a shared reading text on one day and on another day have kids look for the sounds in their own books.

If you decide to teach . . .	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K— Pinnell & Fountas</i>
Names	4-18, 4-19 (pp. 118–119)	ELC 1 (p. 71) ELC 2 (p. 75)
Phonological Awareness: Rhymes, Syllables	4-6 to 4-11 (pp. 111–115) 4-14 (p. 116)	PA1–PA3 (pp. 105–116) PA5–PA6 (pp. 121–128)
Concept of Word	4-32 to 4-36 (pp. 125–128)	
Letter Knowledge: Distinguishing Letters in Print Letter Names	4-18 to 4-26 (pp. 118–123)	LK1–LK7 (pp. 211–238)

Just as you did in September, during shared reading this month, you will also want to support children’s awareness of concepts about print, such as the difference between a letter and a word and the concept of word. Children could come up and find a letter or a word so that they understand what particular labels refer to.

As you teach, use prompts such as, “Where should I start reading? Here at the top of the page?” “I’m at the end of a line, where should I go next?” You will build on the work from September by teaching children to not only identify the beginnings and ends of the book, but to look more closely at how the pages go together to tell the whole story. Children can also listen for words that rhyme and for language patterns, and use both of these as they read along to anticipate what the next words will be. You may show children how you use the first letter to help figure out what a word says, and you’ll surely show them one-to-one matching. You’ll also read fun, brief poems (e.g., “Bugs, bugs. I love bugs. I love bugs. I give them hugs” from *The Art of Teaching Reading*), and have children come up with silly rhymes as a way to further develop their phonemic awareness.

It is important to continue to read wonderful stories, poems, and nursery rhymes with refrains or other places in the text that encourage children to join in. As children reread they can put on the face of the character or stand up and act out a scene. Your classrooms will brim with laughter at the sight of children pretending to be the animals in *The Farm Concert* or Mrs. Wishy Washy scrubbing her animals. You might also consider using simple gestures to act out texts during shared reading. Many children are already familiar with using gestures for songs like “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” or “I’m a Little Tea Pot.”

In the next unit, children will reread the simplest of shared reading texts that they have learned so far. You will want to make sure that you are gathering up shared reading texts that are A/B level and using the supports in the classroom, such as charts and signs, to show kids how to read. You will also want to be rereading an interactive and shared writing that you have done as a class and begin to make little copies of these texts so that in the next unit children will be able to read these as part of their work-shop time.

Some teachers write out the shared reading text on sentence strips to give children additional practice recognizing letters and words. Small groups of students can match the sentence strips with the text by placing the text in a pocket chart. For example, you can write out a nursery rhyme on sentence strips and place these in the pocket chart. Students can have their own sentence strips with high-frequency words and they can match the words with the nursery rhyme. You can also give students the shared reading text on sentence strips and have them re-create the text with a partner by placing them in order on their table. Then they can practice reading the text together. These shared reading activities help students deepen their concepts of print as well as their concept of words and letters. This could be done as part of shared reading, word study, or small-group work in reading workshop.



UNIT THREE

Readers Use All Our Powers to Actually Read

NOVEMBER

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: A/B)

In this unit, you will help children channel all that they have been learning during word study time, writing workshop, and reading workshop toward the job of actually reading the words in books and in the world. This doesn't mean they will all end the unit as conventional readers—some will not be quite ready for that—but you will be bringing them closer to conventional reading. The skills you will be supporting during this unit include locating known words, using initial sounds, integrating sources of information, reading with prosody and expression, one-to-one matching, prediction, monitoring for sense, envisionment, and developing concepts of print. The texts that you choose, create, and read with kids become an integral part of this unit. According to the Common Core State Standards, this unit builds the foundational skills needed for children to begin to become proficient readers.

Getting Ready for the Unit—Gather Up All the Texts that Can Teach Readers to Read

One of the most important things we can do to successfully teach youngsters to read is to give them texts that they'll have *success* in reading. Then too, many of your students will need highly supportive material as they learn. This means that a large portion of the texts you'll give children will be familiar ones (ones that you have read and used as a class together many times) and ones that the children have co-constructed or authored with you. In earlier curricular calendar write-ups, we have described those books—some will be the familiar story books that kids can story-tell, and some will be the books you've read aloud in shared reading so many times that kids can sing the

song of them. In this unit, the latter category will be a special mainstay of your unit. And because you are hoping that kids not only practice concepts of print but also “read” with one-to-one matching, during this unit you will especially steer children toward very simple, repetitive shared reading books. *A Monster Sandwich* or *What’s for Lunch?* will be more helpful than *Caps for Sale*. If a book is not familiar, make sure it is highly supportive, containing concepts and themes that are familiar, and that it includes language patterns kids are apt to use or ones they have heard often during shared reading and read-aloud. For example, a text that reads, “I see a chair over there,” will be easier for a child than one that reads, “Over there, I see a chair.” The Common Core State Standards Vocabulary Acquisition discusses identifying new meanings for familiar words and applying them accurately (e.g., knowing *duck* is a bird and learning the verb to *duck*).

Ideally, you will create texts with your children and then turn them over to the kids to read. Plan to create such big books quickly—during morning meeting, math, social studies, or any time during the day except for writing workshop, which you will need to reserve for kids to do their own writing. These books might contain about five pages about “Our Trip to the Zoo” or “The Time We Made Cookies,” with large pictures that show what happened during this class experience. The picture might contain labels that you and the children write together. On most pages, there might be five or so labels such as “sun,” “school,” “bus,” “kids,” or “tree.” Children can use pointers to locate and read the labels on those pages. Of course, there will also be a sentence on each page and children can read that as well (perhaps with help). Consider creating a patterned text so that students have the support of repetition and predictability when reading. For example, one page could read, “We like to . . .” and subsequent pages would cite similar statements. You might also create some big books with your class. Turning these big books into little books that can go into readers’ baggies is another way to support young readers who are developing concepts of print.

During this unit, children can also read the print that fills your classroom. By now, you will have labeled many items and, as we described during September’s unit, during reading time, children will have a chance to carry a pointer around and “read the room,” reading the labels, signs, charts, shared writing, and anything else that they see around the classroom. Meanwhile, you’ll help children transfer the skill of “reading the room” to the important survival skill of “reading the world,” as you invite them to do similar reading throughout the school and their lives. This will encourage an active stance toward print, a core desire to make meaning, as well as a growing sense of confidence as readers.

Although the new emphasis in this unit will be on children reading books that they can almost read conventionally, it is also important to maintain the rich thinking work that children have been doing around books with detailed pictures, story-book language, and so forth. Children at this age and level of development may find it tricky deciding which books they should be reading with pointer in hand, and which they should pore over, approximating the text, and discussing it. We suggest, therefore, that you put the emergent story books (*Caps for Sale*, for example) into separate containers

that you bring out at a different time during the reading workshop (most likely toward the end), so that readers have time each day when they are expected to read the words (as best they can) according to the Common Core State Standards.

Readers Learn What Superpowers Are and Begin to Use Them

It is always important to rally kids around a mission that they can understand. As you launch this unit, you might, for example, tell children that this month, they will be using their superpowers in order to *actually* read. Superheroes, you'll tell kids, have their own special powers and cool devices. Spider-Man has super strength and can throw webs. Wonder Woman has her magic lasso and an invisible airplane, Superman can fly, and Batman has a special car. Follow that with something to the effect of, "Very soon, I think your superpowers will give you the strength to write anything you want to write and to read anything you want to read. For the next several weeks, I'm thinking that we will discover all of our superpowers and learn some cool tricks for reading."

As you begin to arm your super readers with powers, you may want to give them little tools to help them unleash their powers. This might be a magic wand (in the shape of a tongue depressor) or a power pointer finger that helps them do strong pointing, or it might be a small piece of highlighting tape that they can place on words they know like a snap! Regardless of whether you give your class little aids like these, you will want to rally your children's energy to do the work of this unit. "You are Super Readers!" you'll remind them as they read.

Perhaps the first power your children will learn is to point under words, using one-to-one correspondence. This is an important fundamental skill mentioned in the Common Core State Standards. You'll need to support your children as they learn to do this. For some children, this will involve instruction in what it means to point *under* the word, not on it, not over it, not near it. This may mean that children spend some time reading the name chart and ABC chart in your room, pointing under each as they read the names, letters, and pictures, while solidifying their letter/sound knowledge and practicing one-to-one match. For other children, the support you offer might be a little tip—for example, that the number of words they say needs to match the number of words on the page. Yet other children will need you to help them understand how to point once under polysyllabic words or how to avoid pointing three times for a three-syllable word.

As you work with your children, you will want to use the shared writing texts you and your class may have made as well as Level A/B big books and the texts that you and children have been creating during interactive writing, because you will be focusing on the early reading strategies that readers use in leveled texts. During shared reading, make sure that you're pointing under words in the same way that you want children to do in their own texts. Your pointing, like theirs, should be crisp and sharp. Be sure to point directly under the words without sweeping or dragging your finger. It's also important to remember to point only once under polysyllabic words.

Your students will have copies of the shared reading texts that you read together as a class and, also, some very simple concept books, which include one-word labels located next to pictures to help readers think about what the words on the page say. In a book all about colors, for example, there may be a red fire engine. Next to the fire engine is the word “red.” You could coach kids to study the picture, then find the word, put their finger under the word, and say what they think it is. You might also teach readers that they can look at the first letter of a word and see how it looks similar to a known word—like a friend’s name—for example: “Red” starts like “Robby.” Or perhaps you’ll give kids an animal book and point out a label that says “fish.” You might then have kids say what they see and look on the page for the word. Kids can then say the word “fish” as they point underneath it. Of course, you’ll also aim to help children be able to recognize and find words, and to distinguish these from letters. With that in mind, you’ll also want to encourage children to relate the letters they see to sounds and to other words (namely on your Name Chart and ABC Chart).

It’s likely, too, that you’ll have a couple of children who no longer need to point under words at all. These are readers who are able to read Levels D, E, or even higher-level books. It’s worth spending some time assessing children’s needs with pointing under words in order to gather them into specific groups for strategy lessons that will address their needs. Other strategy lessons you might do are on directionality, searching the meaning in the illustrations, and one-to-one match.

At this time of year, most teachers begin to add one high-frequency word (*I, is, in, at, me, to*, etc.) to the word wall each week, and also to study that word with children in the contexts of shared reading and interactive writing. During interactive writing or phonics/word study time, we suggest you make some pieces of writing that incorporate these high-frequency words as said in the phonics and word-recognition section of the Common Core State Standards. You may decide to make some big books that are pattern books. For example, “Things I Do in School”: *I am writing. I am reading. I am playing. I am eating.* You may decide to use photographs of your children as the picture supports, or you may use center time to have different children draw a picture that represents each page. You can turn these pieces into little copies to be used in this month’s reading workshop. You may also decide to turn labels into phrases or sentences. If earlier you labeled the classroom door “door,” now you might add “the” to the label so it reads “the door.” Then you could make some sentences with these words: “This is the door.” These will all make wonderful reading materials to use during the reading workshop.

During reading workshop, you’ll teach children to pay attention to the words they read, transferring their growing knowledge of letter/sound relationships to their reading. You’ll teach them to use their letters and sounds powers to recognize and use the high-frequency words they know and the repetitive words and refrains in books to anchor themselves to a text.

Once your emergent readers begin attending to the words on the page and in their world, support them in using all they know to figure out what the words say. You can support their transference and use of the high-frequency words they are learning in writing and word study. During reading workshop, point out to children that there are

many words they know by heart, such as their names, and words like *I, my, the*, and so on. Tell them that authors use these words a lot, too, because they help young children be able to read books. In a minilesson, you could demonstrate how finding high-frequency words in a text can help us figure out what the text says. Say something like, “Today, when you’re reading, try and notice the words you can read by heart. You can use these words to help read the other stuff on the page, and during partner time, you might want to show these words to your partner so he or she can use them too!”

You’ll also teach children that they might look for repetitive words and familiar refrains in books. In *The Carrot Seed*, for example, show them how to spot the word *seed* and to find it again as it recurs. In big books, you might make readers aware of how authors write sentences with “glue words” (high-frequency words) that hold the other words together (e.g., “*I like to swim. I put my boat in the tub.*”). These little words “hold” the other words together. Readers can find “glue words” in big books, on word walls, and in lots of other books in the classroom. You’ll model for children how to take an active stance toward reading the world, and you’ll support their growing confidence as writers and readers.

It is important that children learn how to form letters as part of their overall letter knowledge. To support this learning, you might begin spending time on it during your phonics/word study time. Many teachers spend about five minutes each day in a whole-class setting, teaching children how to form a letter. As you teach the formation of the letter, you can say its verbal path; for example, for the letter *t* you might say, “Down and across.” There is also a suggested sequence for how to teach the formation of letters in the binder for Pinnell & Fountas’s *Phonics Lessons K*. As part of phonological awareness work, many teachers do picture sorts by letter sound to help children hear beginning sounds. This works best when you’re connecting beginning sounds to something that children will readily respond to and hold onto, for example, their names. If you sort pictures of things that begin like Sarah’s and Natalie’s names, you might include pictures of scissors, soap, socks, or of net, necklace, night. You might also work on hearing beginning sounds when you’re gathering or dispersing children; for example, say something like, “If your name begins with the sound *b*, go back to your seat.”

All of these activities help kids pay attention to print on the page and discover the concept of what a word is. They also support the fundamentals stated in the Common Core State Standards. To support children in reading both familiar shared reading and interactive writing texts as well as reading the room and the world, some specific strategies you might teach include:

- Readers think about what would make sense given the context of the print (e.g., a label next to a picture in a book, a sign on a bathroom door, etc.).
- Readers notice the initial letters/sounds as they read labels, signs, etc.
- Readers can make connections between the initial letters/sounds of a word to the alphabet chart/name chart of kids in the classroom (e.g., “the dddd door. That’s like dddd dog and like Dddd david”).

- Readers get used to words they see all the time and can usually figure them out really quickly.
- Readers can point under each word they read.
- Struggling readers should trace the word with the fleshy part of their finger as they say it.

As children attend more to the words in familiar and environmental print, you may also coach them to use various concepts of print, such as moving from left to right, top to bottom. You could begin to teach how careful readers use crisp one-to-one pointing and how they make sure they match the number of words they say to the number of words on the page. You can coach and teach the difference between letters and words, and also how to use charts such as the word wall or an alphabet/name chart to help them monitor and check on some of their guesses as they read.

For at least half the time during a shared reading session, you and your kids will probably reread familiar texts. It's important to continue to read wonderful stories with refrains or other places in the text that especially encourage student involvement. Invite children to join in on reading nursery rhymes, songs, and poems, too. You will also begin to reread and introduce some new simple songs and poems that you can use during the next two units of study. Throughout shared reading, steer kids to continue looking for and using high-frequency words as they read, and to think about matching one-to-one as well as thinking about the difference between a word and letters.

Readers Use Many Superpowers All at Once

During this next part in the unit, you will want to impress upon your children that when we read, more often than not we use lots of different “powers” all at once. Most readers don't just use the initial sound when they read—they create an orchestration. You might say something like, “When we read, often we will need to use more than one of our superpowers to figure out the story. Think about the superheroes you know. They don't solve the problems in the world by using *only* their powerful eyesight, or *only* their strong muscles, or *only* their ability to make themselves invisible! No way! They use all of these powers, often all at once. When Spider-Man sets out to catch a bad guy, he draws on his super strength and agility, *and* his ability to cling to surfaces, *and* his spider-web shooting power, *and* his penchant for reacting to danger quickly with his “spider-sense.” We can do the same thing with reading! When we encounter problems in our reading, we can think about all the powers that we have for dealing with those and we can try to use as many powers as possible—so, for example, we might point to words and use the first sounds, locate words we know, and then read and use the first sound.”

The teaching in this part of the unit involves continued modeling of the reading process. Although you're beginning to focus your children's attention on the graphophonics of text, you still want to emphasize how careful readers use the other two

sources of information, meaning, and syntax, as well. For instance, when children are reading their small copy of *Things I Do in School*, guide them to think about meaning and syntax to help them generate (or remember) the language of the text, because that will help them to actually read the words. Encourage them to use their pointer to track words in shared reading using their known word-wall words as “islands of certainty,” knowing that they are matching one-to-one appropriately. Nudge them to find their word-wall words and other words they know to help them read and monitor for sense.

For the most part, your shared reading sessions will look pretty similar to the way they looked in September, although at this point, you’ll want to begin to pay more attention to the features of print and to early reading strategies. Remind children how to make predictions in unfamiliar texts before they begin reading and to check in on their predictions as they read through texts. Model how to search for information when you get stuck on a tricky part by looking at the picture and thinking about what is happening in the story. These are all features of the literature standards we see in the Common Core State Standards. Then model how to make a guess and reread to see if it makes sense, asking yourself the question, “Does this make sense?” and teach children that this means to check that what you read goes with what is happening in the whole of the story or the book. Teach children how to notice patterns in texts by listening as you read, and how to use the pattern to help you read the texts, asking yourself, “Does it sound right?” Teach children to listen as they read to see if what they just read not only makes sense with what is happening in the whole of the story, but also sounds like how you would say it if you were talking. Finally, be sure to teach kids how to locate known words, such as sight words or high-frequency words, and how to use these to anchor yourself while reading to help with one-to-one matching. Since most of your children will now have fairly strong letter/sound knowledge, you will also want to help them use the first (and sometimes last) letter to check their reading of tricky words. As you do this, you can teach children the final cross-checking prompt, “Does that look right?”

In your reading workshop, you can teach children to use all the sources of information at their disposal as they read. Although the emphasis for graphophonics at this time is recognizing sight words—and possibly looking at the beginnings of words to figure these out—you will want to remind children to take a good look also at the *pictures*, since doing so will help them figure out the words. Teach children that the words they read need to make sense for the story, and that they can monitor for meaning by asking themselves, “Does this make sense?” Then, too, teach them to check to see that the words sound like talking by asking themselves, “Does this sound right?” You may even begin to help children look at the first letter to confirm their thinking. According to Webb’s “Depth of Knowledge,” a Level Four for kindergarten students begins when they begin to ask themselves questions about what they are reading. As they reach an unknown word in the pattern they might think, “It says, ‘We like to . . . in school.’ Hmmm . . . I know that word is going to be something we do (syntax), and I can see in the picture that the class is working with crayons (meaning), so the word must be something like ‘draw’ or ‘sketch.’” Then children could check the first letter to decide which word it is. You might prompt, “What letter would you expect to see if the word

is ‘draw’?” In this way, your teaching during this part of the unit will model for children how all three sources of information work together to help a reader make meaning from a text.

While many of your children will be working hard at the challenge of “reading” these new class-made and practiced texts, there will be other children in your class who will now be ready to read conventionally. To spot them, be on the lookout for kids who read along on a first read of a shared reading book—sometimes their voices might even be ahead of yours! Or notice children who are starting to write—with spaces—and reread sentences of their own during writing workshop. Or perhaps you’ll notice children in your class reading their emergent story books with particularly strong expression and with eyes that linger on the print. When you identify these behaviors, you’ll want to follow up with some quick assessments—the Concepts About Print task, letter and sound identification, perhaps even a running record! These assessments will help you to place the proper books in these students’ hands. Then too, you’ll need to provide these readers with small groups, teaching strategies, and supports for conventional reading. As you continue to assess and plan for this unit, don’t forget that your “already readers” will need many of the same strategies that your more emergent readers need, but that you will also want to supplement that teaching.

In this unit, you will continue the work you began in October with interactive writing. Your children can help you draw and label the pictures and also help you write simple sentences. For example, you may say to children, “Yesterday, we ate lunch in our classroom. Let’s all say that together: ‘Yesterday, we ate lunch in our classroom.’ Close your eyes and picture everything you saw as we ate lunch in our classroom.” You or a child might make the sketch of what you all saw in your minds. But then you will all want to work on the writing. What you generate will turn into another reading material for the class!

You might ask some children to label a few of the important parts in the picture. According to the Literature section of the Common Core State Standards, students should use illustrations to help them understand words. You could decide how many things in the picture are important to label and count the words that you will write. You may even decide to include articles like *the* or *a* to then really work on the concept of word. You could prepare children for writing by saying, “Yesterday, we ate lunch in our classroom. Let’s count how many words are in that sentence as we say it again. Watch as I count it on my fingers.” Have children repeat the sentence while you count the words. “Wow, that is seven words. I am going to write one line for each word.” As children say it again, write a short line for each word. Then invite a few kids to write some of the high-frequency words or sounds inside of words that the class is approximating. Once again you will write the parts that are either too easy at this point for the class or too difficult. Each time a word is complete, have a child point and have the class reread it. The idea is for children to remember what comes next, to make sure a word sounds right on its own and within the story, and that he or she is holding onto early reading strategies. This whole interactive writing time will be only about seven to ten minutes at the most, given how long young readers and writers can sustain this sort of work.

Readers Practice to Perform Our Superpowers

During this final part of the unit, you will want to implicitly continue to support partnerships while explicitly teaching children how to help each other with confusing parts in their texts. You might say something like, “You know, for the last couple of weeks, we’ve all been developing our own reading superpowers. Some of us are amazing at pointing under words, and others of us are getting so strong at using the pictures to help us figure out what the words say, and some of us are working especially on using the letters in our words to help us read. We each have our own reading talents. But you know what? When you and your partner get together, you can put your talents together! That’s just like what superheroes do, after all. I remember a show called *Superfriends*, and there were several superheroes that helped each other. For example, if the criminals were using a submarine to get from place to place, Aquaman would use his talents to find them. If the criminals were on the roof of a skyscraper, Spider-Man would scale the side of the building or Wonder Woman might swoop in on her invisible airplane and lasso them. Just like superheroes work together, super partners can work together. You can combine your reading talents to help each other read anything in your baggies or anything around the room. For the next couple of days, we’ll learn ways we can help each other get ready to show off our superpowers to others!”

Although you will support partnerships as they help each other figure out their shared texts, you’ll also reinforce the reading strategies and dispositions toward reading that you’ve introduced so far. So, another approach you might take during this portion of the unit is to show partners how to continue their playfulness with texts, even though they’re doing some serious work with these. One partner can pretend he’s the teacher doing shared reading while the other partner is the student. You can show this partnership how to be each other’s reading coach, offering help when they can, and how to prompt with kindness. For example, you can teach them to say things like, “Check the picture” or “Remember to point!” or “I don’t think it’s ‘hamburger.’ Let’s try something else. Let’s say the sound of that letter another way. It has two sounds.” And, of course, during share times, you can continue to spotlight the inventive ways of playing with texts that kids come up with on their own as they read together.

Kids will be working on rereading their texts and you will want to teach them ways to get ready to perform their reading and show off their powers. Fluency, even at this beginning stage, is critical to teaching kids how to read and reread their texts with more meaning. You can teach them how to make sure that their voice matches the song, the story, or the information that they are reading. You will want to show them how they can scoop up more words as they read in order to sound like a storyteller or a singer. Our “super partners” can remind us to read with more power in our voices, pick up more words while we are reading, and reread parts to make our voices sound more beautiful.

In some classrooms, a number of children will be ready for guided reading with just-right books (most likely Fountas and Pinnell Level A and Level B) if they meet the criteria for conventional reading outlined in the previous unit. When children

participate in guided reading lessons, the texts you use for the lesson can become part of their book baggies for that week. For those children you can also begin assigning partners who are more closely matched to each other's reading ability.

During phonics/word study time you can continue to work with small groups or with the class as a whole on phonological awareness (hearing syllables, rhymes, beginning sounds), and sorting letters by feature, if children still need this work. This would be a good time to reassess letter/sound knowledge to plan for letters that still need to be taught. Once you've determined which letters children still need to learn, you can decide which ones to study with the whole class and which to study with small groups as stated in the Common Core State Standards.

Read-Aloud

To support the unit, you'll want to continue reading aloud a variety of texts, nonfiction texts as well as stories. You may even read aloud a few leveled books to show children how they can talk about these books as well. You'll probably focus more of your time on helping children turn and talk about the texts you read aloud and having whole-class conversations in which you stick to one topic as stated in the Common Core State Standards.

Many teachers begin to teach children how to retell using their fingers, noting character, setting, and plot. You might give them questions to think about as you read, such as, "Who are the characters in this story?" or "Where is this story taking place?" or "What happened first, then next, then next?" This sort of retelling can help children talk about books in ways that keep them close to the story line.

As you read nonfiction texts, initiate a talk with children about the information they are learning. Perhaps you'll read some nonfiction books that have to do with a topic you are studying together—school or family, insects, neighborhoods, parks—and think about ways to use that information in the classroom. Gather up as many related materials and books as you can find and spread that information into your classroom environment (this may contribute to the environmental print that children read and reread).

It's important to continue to read aloud emergent story books during this unit and throughout the rest of the year, so children become familiar with more and more texts.

Emergent Story Books Continued

Although these children are moving into conventional reading, you may still have time for students to read emergent story books—and now children will begin to connect more closely to the words on the page as they read. They'll use more story language and text vocabulary, and they'll move from one page to the next without losing the flow of the story itself. Some children will likely begin to read in a more conventional way, actually reading the words on the page by using their knowledge of how the story goes, the support of the illustrations, and their growing sense of graphophonics.

As you watch your children read emergent story books, ask yourself, “What are my children doing to help themselves read these books? Are they thinking about what the whole book might be about and using the pictures and story language, but not attending to the print yet? Or, are they thinking about the whole book, using the language, *and* also beginning to use the print?” Reflect upon the oral language your children are using to read their star books. Is it fluent and expressive, moving between narrative story language and dialogue that reflects the tone of the characters? Or do they read in a way that sounds mostly like dialogue, with little or no narration?

Celebration

Celebrate the fact that your kids are beginning to read words. One way to do this might be to invite reading buddies, parents, or outside classroom teachers to tour the classroom as children read the room to their guests. Each child will show his or her guest(s) around the various parts of the classroom, from the library, fish tank, and word wall to the Star Book center, blocks, and even to the sink. During these tours, children will read and introduce the parts of the room to their visitors. You may want to spread children’s big books out around the classroom, and put up a piece of interactive writing on the easel and place some little books and concept books in baskets on tables. As kids take their visitors around the room, they can share all the materials that they have been creating and reading all month.

Take your class on a walk around the school or even the block and take your pointer with you. You can point out and kids can find different signs and charts and things to read. Sometimes you might say, “Joel, come read the sign on the door.” Or you might say, “What do you see here that we can read together?” as you point to the words and children read them in unison. Children can read the word “EXIT” in the school, or “McDonald’s” on a neighborhood walk.

You might have kids bring in stuffed animals or dolls from home. Kids and their partners can set their toy friends up in front of a chair that is holding a big book and act out shared reading, using pointers. Perhaps instead of bringing in stuffed animals from home, kids can get together in small groups and gather around to be led by a classmate through a shared reading session. Kids in groups of four could take turns leading a shared reading session. Then you could gather kids in the meeting area, take some of the classroom’s favorite texts, and the class could read those together with guest pointers from the class!

Word Study

At this time of year, most teachers begin to add one high-frequency word (*I, is, in, at, me, to*, etc.) to the word wall each week and also study the word with children in the contexts of shared reading and interactive writing.

You will want to use shared reading time to introduce students to new high-frequency words rather than introducing the words in isolation. Many English language learners have difficulty with high-frequency words if they are only working with them in isolation because there is no meaning connected to the word.

You might select a couple of texts that contain the same high-frequency words so that students can reread those words in different sentences, which will get them to read the words with automaticity. We also suggest you make some Interactive Writing pieces that use these high-frequency words. You may decide to make some big books that are pattern books. For example: Things I Do in School—I am writing, I am reading, I am playing, I am eating. You may decide to use photographs of your children as the picture support, or you may have different children during center time draw a picture that represents each page. You can turn these pieces into little copies to be used in December's unit of study. You may also decide to turn labels into phrases or sentences—You labeled “door” in the classroom. Maybe now you add “The” to the label so it reads “The door.” You may make some sentences with these words: “This is the door.” You will want to read these texts during shared reading as well.

You can continue to work with small groups or with the class as a whole on phonological awareness (hearing syllables, rhymes, beginning sounds), and sorting letters by feature. This would be a good time to reassess letter/sound knowledge, in order to plan for letters that still need to be taught. Once you've determined which letters children still need to learn, you can decide which ones to study with the whole class and which to study with small groups.

If you decide to teach ...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K—</i> Pinnell & Fountas
Phonological Awareness: Hearing Beginning Sounds	4-27 to 4-30 (pp. 123–124) 4-14 (p. 116)	PA8–PA9 (pp. 133–140)
Letter Knowledge: Forming Letters Letter Names	4-18, 4-20 (pp. 118–120) 4-18 to 4-26 (pp. 118–123)	LK16 (p. 271) LK8–LK11 (pp. 239–254)
High-Frequency Words	pp. 182–183	HF1–HF2 (pp. 373–380)

Additional Resources

Teachers, since the start of the year you've been modeling conventional reading for your kindergartners in shared reading, read-alouds, and in minilessons. This unit is designed to turn the materials you've been using over to your children so that they can approximate reading conventionally on their own. The following teaching points can guide you through this unit, but you may want to make a few adaptations, depending on the needs of your children.

For example, there is a good chance that many of your children are ready to read leveled books, and if this is the case, you will probably want to refer to later units of study for strategies to support those students who are working at the higher levels. You certainly don't want to find yourself with students who entered kindergarten reading Levels A/B and are still reading Levels A/B in December!

It is also possible that the strategies that follow are just right for your students, but that their stamina for the work is too short. If they seem to be falling apart after ten minutes of reading, then you may want to angle this unit toward building stamina (in addition to the print work) by highlighting the use of reading partners. After asking students to read privately for as long as they can, you might switch to partner reading for another ten minutes. Each day, you can increase their reading time another few minutes, building them up to the thirty minutes that you're looking for by midyear.

Lastly, if you find yourself in the situation where it feels like your class is very far behind, then you will want to angle the unit toward addressing your students' needs, doing extra reading work every day to catch up. That is, if by now many children in your class still do not demonstrate one-to-one correspondence, then you will probably want to do two or three shared reading sessions each day instead of one, highlighting one-to-one match, and angle your reading workshop minilessons or small-group work toward one-to-one match and toward using familiar patterns and predictable text. If your children have trouble storytelling with pictures, you'll want to amp up your emergent story-book reading, perhaps reading these books two or three times per day, and you may want to add an additional ten or fifteen minutes to your reading workshop for emergent story books, highlighting reading with partners so that children can hear their partner model storytelling language.

These teaching points are far from encompassing, nor are they set in stone. They are meant to help you imagine a possible pathway, one that will need to have detours, and alternate pathways to the same end that may branch out very differently.

One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

Part One: Readers Learn What Superpowers Are and Begin to Use Them

- "When readers read the books we write during the writing workshop, we often think about what's happening in our book and point to the words that we have written (and to parts of the picture), and that gives us the *superpower* to read the story that goes with those pictures and words! Today, I want to teach you that when we want to read someone else's book, we do the *very same thing*! We think about what's happening in the book, point to the pictures and the writing, and poof! We have the power to read the story that goes with those pictures and words."

- “You know how when we *write* our own stories we make a picture in our mind and then we put that picture on the page—and when we *read* our writing, we look at the picture and that helps us get a movie in our mind about what’s happening in the book? It is the same when we *read*. Today, I want to teach you that when we read we look at the picture on the page and then we get a movie in our mind about what’s happening in the book. The movie in our mind helps us think about what the words probably say.” (Teachers, we aren’t sure if five-year-olds can be conscious of making movies in their mind. If you question this, you could try teaching this differently, saying something like, “The picture on the page in a book is like the picture in our writing. It tells more about the words on the page.”)

- “Today, I want to teach you that when we read our books we make sure that we point to each word on the page and that the number of words we say matches the number of words we see. If it doesn’t match, we go back and fix it up.”
 - ▮ *Tip:* “We point crisply and sharply *under* each word as we say it; we don’t point around the word or on top of the word or near the word.”
 - ▮ *Tip:* “We point to each word only once, even if the word has more than one syllable.”

- “Readers, today I want to teach you that just like we use words we know in a snap (word-wall words) to help us *write*, we also use the words we know in a snap to help us *read*. We come to those words and we think, ‘I know that in a snap!’ Then we say the word and keep going.”
 - ▮ *Tip:* “Sometimes when we look over a book, we see a word we know in a snap. We already know that when we get to that page, we’ll know that word! Readers can look for words they know when they take a book walk before they read their books.”

- “When we *write*, we say words slowly and put the letters that we hear onto the page. Today, I want to teach you that when we *read*, we look at the letter that *someone else* has put on the page, and we make the sound that goes with *that* letter. We look at the letter, think, ‘What sound does that make?’ and then we make that sound and try something that makes sense and starts with that sound. It is pretty cool!” (Teachers, Reading Recovery Experts would phrase this, “Get your mouth ready. Say the first sound.” You can choose.)

- “Remember how when we write a word—like *rabbit*—we say the word, then write down the sounds that we hear? Then we reread that word and think of the next word, say it slowly, write down the sounds, and then reread the words we have written and keep writing like this until we have all our words down for our

story. Today, I want to teach you that we reread a lot when we are *reading*, too. Whenever we are stuck, we go back and reread and that helps us keep going. It's like it gives us a running start before we make a big jump."

Part Two: Readers Use Many Superpowers All at Once

- "Today, I want to teach you that when we read, readers can't just use one superpower at a time. We use all we know—we think about the story *and* study the pictures *and* look at the words. We use many superpowers together to figure out the story of the book."
- "Today, I want to teach you that when we want to get ready to read, we can remember a superpower that we have, and then we can say, 'I'm going to bring that superpower to this book.' We can look through the book and get that superpower going as a way to get ready to read it. For example, we can decide we will use the superpower of knowing some words in a snap, and we can look over a book, just finding those words. After that, we can read the book."
- "Readers, today, I want to teach you that sometimes when we are reading, we say a word that makes us think, 'Huh? That doesn't sound right! I don't know a word like that.' When that happens, we need to go back, reread the word, and use the picture to make another guess. We think, 'What word matches the picture?'"
- "Today I want to teach you that readers often notice a pattern in our books. That means that we see a few of the same words over and over on every page. The books sounds or talks the same way on every page. Once we notice the pattern and read it smoothly, it helps us read the rest of the book, because we can notice if each page sounds/talks like the other pages."
 - *Tip:* "Readers, have you noticed that sometimes in the books that we are reading the last page is different from the rest of the book? That's right! The pattern changes! The book sounds/talks different. We need to keep our eyes wide open, think about what's happening in the book, and notice when the last page changes/sounds/talks differently so that we understand how the book ends."
- "Today, I want to teach you that readers think, 'What's *the way* my book goes?' When we know how the book goes, we think about what is going to happen next, then turn the page and read it to check. Then we say, 'Yes, what's happening is what I thought' or 'Oh! I need to change what I thought was happening to what I learned as I read the page—which is something different/new!'"

Part Three: Readers Practice to Perform Our Superpowers in Reading

- “Today I want to teach you about how you can get ready to share your books and powers with others. Super Readers can read our books again and again, getting better and better at reading them each time. When we read them a third or fourth or fifth time, we read them with more power so that they sound smoother and more beautiful.”
- “Super Readers can read making sure that our voices match what is happening in the story. Today I want to teach you that if the story is happy, our reading voice is happy; if the story is sad, our reading voice is sad.”
- “Today I want to teach you that Super Readers make sure that our reading sounds like talking. We can scoop up more of the words at a time when we read.” (Teachers, Reading Recovery experts would probably say this differently. They’d say, “Readers read words together.” You can decide.)
- “Today I want to teach you that we can practice our reading by reading to a friend. Super Readers try to read so a friend who is listening can really understand and feel the story. Our friend can give us tips on how to read it better and with more feeling.”
- “Today I want to teach you that reading partners are like our coaches. They cheer us on! They don’t sit and watch us have a hard time. No way! They jump in to help! They help us build our reading muscles. They remind us of strategies we can try: ‘Check the picture. Think about what’s happening in the book,’ they say, and they point to the picture. ‘Get your mouth ready!’ or ‘That’s a snap word!’”
 - *Tip:* “Reading partners also act as coaches by alerting us when something doesn’t quite sound right or look right. They say, ‘Wait, read it again!’ or ‘I think that says . . .’ Partners don’t wait; they jump in and coach.”
 - *Tip:* “Reading partners give suggestions, like ‘Read that part with more “happy” in your voice’ or ‘Make this sound more silly.’”



UNIT FOUR

Readers Study Patterns in Big Books and Little Books to Help Us Read and Talk about Books

DECEMBER

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: A/B)

This is the time of year when you breathe a sigh of relief. All of a sudden, you're aware that your reading workshop has been running smoothly on a consistent basis. Your children are most likely talking with each other about books much more easily, and they look forward to reading time every day. Your partnerships work with a hum rather than in spurts and starts. You're able to confer with a satisfying number of children and meet with small groups for guided reading and strategy lessons as well.

For all the equilibrium you might be experiencing, it's important to remember that this is also the time of year when your reading workshop is about to turn a corner. You can present this unit to children as a graduation of sorts. You can say something like, "Readers, guess what? It's almost vacation, and we have come so far! When you entered kindergarten, you were the kinds of readers who used mostly the pictures to help you read, but *now* every one of you comes running up to me all day long saying, 'Look, I can read that word and that one too and that word over there . . .' You're really reading now!" Of course, many of your children are actually still doing emergent reading—using the pictures to story-tell, pointing to and reading familiar words, and using what they remember about the story to figure out how the entire text goes. Compliment students for this kind of reading, as well as for conventional reading.

This unit is designed to teach your children to orchestrate sources of information—meaning, syntax, and visual (graphophonic)—to read more conventionally. The overarching plan of the unit is to teach children that they can do the same work you've been doing in shared reading in their own books during reading workshop. We often call shared reading texts "big books," though we really mean this to include songs,

poems, charts, and all sorts of texts that the whole class has studied. In this unit, children will be reading little copies of big books.

We begin by teaching children that readers can be swept along by the patterns in our books, and that the pattern can give us strength to solve the non-patterned or new parts of their books. In the first part of the unit, you'll encourage children to read as best they can, moving their finger under each word, using the pattern, pictures, familiar words, and initial sounds of words to help if they get tripped up. In the second part of the unit, you'll ramp up the strategies children use for solving words, and you'll help kids think more deeply about patterns. During the third part of the unit you'll teach students engaging ways to read books again and again for automaticity, phrasing, and expression—just as you have been doing in shared reading. You'll end the unit by teaching children how readers read to understand more deeply. Children can think and talk about how some pattern books are like stories, while others are more like lists or non-fiction books.

Starting the first week of school, you will have worked on several shared reading texts per week, every week, and so your children will know these texts inside and out. Many have predictable patterns that support children in making sense of the text and reading the words. To prepare for this unit, set up baskets of small copies of any big books, songs, and poems that you have shared with your class. Aim to provide a range of genres—both fiction and nonfiction. Keep in mind that many of your children are ready for leveled texts. You'll want to conduct a running record as soon as a child shows signs of one-to-one correspondence and can retell the gist of a story.

Hopefully, you'll already have lots of texts on large-sized paper, some from interactive writing sessions, others from shared reading. A fair number will be predictable texts or pattern books. For this new unit, create small copies of these large texts and add them to the baskets in your classroom library. You might also create new books by innovating shared reading books. This could include changing one part—the characters, what happens, the endings, or even writing the next book as if it were a series. In addition, you will probably want to include some texts from writing workshop, where children are writing their own pattern books this month.

You can also prepare for this unit by getting to know the books in your library, with particular attention to the kinds of patterns children are likely to encounter. In the earliest levels, it's usually the case that only one word will be different, one page to the next, until the last page where the pattern often breaks (e.g., I saw a monkey. I saw a camel. I saw a rhinoceros. I saw a zebra. I saw a lot of animals). The patterns in C/D books might be more sophisticated, containing clauses and more word changes (e.g., At the zoo, I saw a brown bear eating. At the zoo, I saw a striped zebra running. At the zoo, I saw a pink flamingo standing). Some of your shared reading texts might contain more complex patterns that stretch across pages or hold more than one pattern in the book. The patterns of these are likely to fall into a number of broad categories. Colors, counting, question/answer, a list of parts of things, and days of the week are just a few of the common patterns you might find. You may want to sort these books into separate baskets in the classroom library, based on either the complexity or the type of the pattern.

Readers Can Be Swept Along by Patterns in Our Books

Kindergarten teachers know that shared reading is a favorite time of day. It often ends with children crying, “Read it again! Read it again!” To launch this unit, then, you might use shared reading to read one of your children’s favorite big books, making it as engaging as you possibly can. Then, when you finish the book, you’ll say, “Don’t you wish we had time to read it again? Just one more time?” When your children cry, “Yes! Read it!” You can say, “Well guess what, today is your lucky day, because during reading workshop, each of you is going to find a special surprise at your table! I’ve put a copy of all our favorite big books, songs, and poems at each of your tables so that you can read the same books during reading workshop! There are even copies of all the pattern books we’ve written together as a class!”

You have probably reread certain big books enough times that your children know the patterns well. Now that children are holding small copies of the same big books you’ve studied, you can show them how the pattern can help when they read on their own. You might say, “When you already know how the pattern goes, you can carry it with you across the pages. The pattern can sweep you along in your reading. When you read your books aloud, you can point under each word of the pattern, matching what you say to the words on the page.”

Remind children that they can get ready to read by looking through the pictures in a book to notice things that repeat (or stay the same), knowing that if something repeats in the pictures, we can predict that it will probably repeat in the words too. You can use mid-workshop teaching points or teaching shares to remind children that before reading, readers can point to and name out loud what they see happening in the pictures to get their minds ready to read the words on the page, knowing that sometimes it’s not the object on the page that changes, it’s the action. For example, there might be the same duck on every page, but on one page the duck is swimming, and on the next it’s diving. Saying the actions aloud will help children predict what the words will say. Remind kids to scan their page both before *and* after they read it to help anticipate what the page is about and what it will say, as well as confirm or revise their predictions.

Reading the pattern is usually the easy part of reading predictable texts—it’s the parts or words that *change* that give readers pause. You might say to children, “Remember when we read *The Farm Concert* and we had to figure out the words that change? We realized that the pattern in that book was that there was a new animal on each page, so we knew that the word that would change was going to be the name of each new animal. You can do the same thing in your books—when you get to the part that changes, you can think about what the pattern is to help you figure out what the word will be.”

You can also support your kids by encouraging them to listen for how a book sounds—Does it repeat? Does it rhyme? Does it have a rhythm?—and to match the words they say to the words on the page, pointing under the words one at a time. You might even encourage kids to double-check their reading by looking at the beginning letter in the words. According to the phonological awareness and phonics section of the Common Core State Standards, kindergartners should be able to do this by the end of the year.

Now is a good time to check in on children's basic understanding of patterns. For example, perhaps you read aloud the book *Dan, the Flying Man*, in which each page introduces a new place that Dan flies over. If, after reading aloud a few pages of this book, you ask, "What could be next? Could it be . . . a cookie?" and half of your class says yes, then you have more work to do to help children understand that when a big category like *places* repeats over and over in the pattern, we can use that to predict what will happen on the next page.

You can also look over running records that you have done with your children, this time using the pattern as a lens for analyzing the data—How many children clearly need support carrying the pattern from one page to the next? How many children need support understanding what the book was mostly about? This will help you decide how big to make the first part of this unit.

While many teachers are tempted to dive right in to teaching how individual words repeat again and again across the pages, we suggest you hold off on that until later in the unit, especially if your children need more support understanding the basics of patterns (as we suspect many will). Instead, consider ways to reinforce children's understanding of how patterns work and how patterns tend to be attached to a category, or what the book is mostly about. During shared reading, or during partner time, you can show children how to play a pattern "game," in which they use a pattern from their book to make up new parts to fit with it. For example, if the book goes, "I like dogs. I like cats. I like mice," then partners can take turns adding to the book, using the same pattern: "I like rabbits. I like squirrels." They can check that their additions both make sense and sound right for the book they are reading. "I like cookies," for example, wouldn't make sense, and "My favorite is . . ." wouldn't sound right. A reader who has a strong sense of pattern can easily come up with innovations on the pattern that make sense and sound right, but don't be alarmed if this is challenging for many of your children at the start of the unit. Practicing with partners for a few minutes each day will help them get stronger.

The texts your children are holding are very familiar, for the most part, but some children are bound to encounter difficulty or forget how a page goes. You might say, "I've been noticing that sometimes there are tricky parts in our books and we're not sure what to do. Here's a tip. Sometimes it helps to go back a page or two to get a running start. Read the words as smoothly as you can, and then reread if you need to smooth it out so that you can really hear how the pattern sounds. Sometimes if we read too slowly it makes it harder to hear the pattern."

You can also teach your children that readers can study the picture and think, "What's going on here?" or "What is on this page that might help me figure out this word?" Finding and pointing to an object or action in a picture can help a child make better guesses about a tricky word. Also, if the word is not in a child's vocabulary, pointing can help the child begin to grow a context for what the word looks like and means. For example, perhaps a child reading about things to do in the park comes to the line, "I am swinging in the park," and stumbles on the word *swinging*. If you ask the child to point to where the action is happening and she points to the picture of the person

swinging, you can gauge that the child understands that pictures convey meaning. If, however, the child cannot point to the object or, in this instance, the action, then you know that she is still building on the most beginning concepts of reading—that the text needs to make sense, and the pictures can help with that.

For children who need even more support, you might gather small groups and write some predictable texts together—something you’ve probably already done quite a bit of as a whole class, as well as during writing workshop. New, personalized predictable texts for some groups of children can be highly supportive and engaging, especially texts that include the names of children in the class, or favorite toys or games (a great support for ELLs).

It is important that you spend time helping children draw on the work you’ve demonstrated on shared reading texts (which they have probably read on their own, too) to discover how the parts of their own books (pictures, letters, and words) go together. You will also want to transfer the tools you have used with children during word study to the reading workshop time. Chances are you have noticed that some children know their letters and high-frequency words in isolation but don’t recognize these when they are reading their own books. You’ll want to make this connection explicit during this part of the unit. Take, for example, the high-frequency words you and your children have been learning during word study. You’ve had your kids make these words with magnetic letters and write them on dry-erase boards during that component of the day. Now, during reading workshop, you could give a group of children a baggie of some of those high-frequency words written on index cards, and ask them to match the words on the cards to the words in the text. You can also write the words on Post-its and have the children place the Post-its over the words in the text. Children could even tally how many times they find each of these words in the big book. Once they find the word in the text, teach them to read the sentence so that they are practicing reading the word in context. So, for example, if there is a group of kids who are reading the little book version of *The Farm Concert*, they can begin reading the text with a partner, then match the high-frequency word cards to the text and reread the book again.

You’ll also want to help children transfer what they have been learning about beginning sounds to their independent reading. Teach them that the whole point of learning beginning sounds is to use these to help us read the words in our books. You might show children how to go on a picture and word hunt. You can model this during shared reading, and then have children practice it with you several times. The idea is to get them into the habit of searching their whole book for information that can help them read on their own. Teach kids to begin by searching the picture carefully as they are thinking about what’s happening. For example, if they are reading *The Farm Concert*, they can search the page that says “‘Quiet!’ yelled the farmer,” by first looking at the picture and noticing the farmer is in it. Then say to children, “Yes, that is the farmer. Say the word ‘farmer’ slowly and listen to the first sound. What do we hear?” Your class will chime in saying the sound /f/. “Yes! That is the letter . . .” Let your voice trail off as kids respond, “F!” Then say to the students, “Let’s look for the ‘F’ and find the word ‘farmer.’” Kids might say they see the farmer is yelling. You can do the same thing with that word.

You will want to model how to point to the beginning letter of each word you read. Later, children can practice doing this with partners. As you do this with children individually you will also be able to assess whether they know the difference between first and last letter as they read.

You may want to do a “guess the covered word” activity during shared reading. This is a great way to get kids to think about using all sources of information as they read. To do this, you will cover a word in the text, then read aloud the sentence and ask children to fill in the blank. Sometimes teachers cover the whole word, and sometimes they reveal the first letter. For example, if the text reads “If I had a dog, I would play with it all the time,” the teacher might cover the word *dog*. Kids might then guess “puppy” or “dog,” both of which would be meaningful, or the teacher could cover the whole word except for the letter *d*. Choosing to do the latter will set them up to make a guess that is both meaningful and one that makes them attend to the print. If you do this work on a regular basis, you will be helping kids get ready to read early leveled texts, which is something the Common Core State Standards state that kindergartners should be able to do. You’ll want to continue to do plenty of this work during shared reading.

After playing “guess the covered word” with children several times during shared reading, you can teach them to try it with their partners during reading time. For example, one partner can cover up a few words in the text with Post-its before their partner reads the text. Once the partner makes a few guesses, both children can check to see which one looks right. Whenever kids are learning something new, it’s easy to neglect other things they have learned, so you’ll want to make sure that your students aren’t so focused on the print that they forget to think about the story. The most important thing we can highlight even as we work on getting kids to attend to the print is that *always*, we read for meaning. You’ll want to remind kids of this often during this unit.

Readers Use the Pattern to Figure Out Tricky Parts of the Book

Now that you have provided children with tons of material and ample opportunities to study patterns, you can ramp up your teaching. In the first part of this unit, you encouraged children to attend to print. Now you might shine a spotlight on what readers do when we encounter tricky parts of our books, pointing out that in every pattern, there are words or parts that change, which can be a bit harder to get than the parts that repeat over and over. Tell children that for the next week or so, you’ll show them lots of different ways to figure out those tricky parts.

As children read their books, pointing under words, they are bound to encounter pages that don’t fit the pattern. Sometimes the pattern changes on the last page—there’s a “twist” at the end. Often, that is the hardest page for children to read because of this departure from the pattern. Teach children that it is helpful to think about what the book is mostly about, or to look at the pictures on the last page, which provide clues for figuring out the twist. Other times we have to think, “Hmm . . . What would the character be saying here? What would make sense?” to figure out the twist at the

end. When they find themselves stuck, children could refer to a chart showing pictures of three different ways to figure out the twist at the end, and then choose the strategy that fits best.

When the pattern breaks at the end of the book, children often have to be resourceful and think a lot about what's going on to figure out tricky words. Children must think about everything that happened on the previous pages, what's going on in the last illustration, to figure out the tricky words at the end of a pattern book. To do this, you might flip through some pages throughout the book about making a hamburger and say, "They put all those things on the hamburger, even the top of the bun." Turn to the last page and put your finger under the first letter of the first word on that page. When it says, "Now take a bite," breaking the previous pattern, allow children time to say the letter sound and think about the pattern change.

You could even highlight for children that there are different kinds of twists at the end—sometimes the pattern breaks and there is an "opposite," or sometimes it talks about the "whole something." For example, in *The Face Sandwich*, each page lists an ingredient, and then the last page says, "The face sandwich!" naming the whole thing. *The Face Sandwich* is also the title of the book, which is another common type of twist at the end of many pattern books. Sometimes the twist is something funny—for example, in *Worm Is Hot* the character Worm, who has been trying to cool down in front of several large fans, actually blows away on the last page. You'll probably want to take a look at a sample of ten or so pattern books in your classroom library to see how the patterns change in your own leveled books.

It's important to teach children to cross-check their attempts on a tricky word with more than one strategy—using the picture, the pattern, and the beginning letters, and asking themselves all three questions: "Would that make sense here?" "What would sound right in this book?" "Look close at the word." You can model this in shared reading sessions and during the demonstration portion of a minilesson. When conferring with children or assessing their reading with running records, take careful notes and analyze their miscues to find out where their strengths lie. Do your children substitute words that make sense? Do they use the pattern (or sentence structure)? Are they cross-checking with some visual (graphophonic) information like the letters on the page? Ultimately, strong readers use all three strategies as expressed in the fundamentals section of the Common Core State Standards.

You may want to explicitly teach your class how to use the charts in the room when they are stuck, saying, "You know, whenever we're stuck, we can look around this classroom for help—we have all these great charts to remind of us of all the strategies we know for figuring out the tricky parts of our books. Watch how I do that when I'm stuck."

Remind children to point under each word, even when they know the pattern by heart, because it will help them make sure they aren't skipping any words by accident, and can help when they get to a tricky part. You might say to kids, "If you're pointing you'll know if it is a long word or a short word, one word or two words that you need to figure out." If some of your children are reading leveled books, you can teach them to use the first letters of the words, along with the illustration and meaning, to figure out tricky words.

When kids are reading books with their partner during reading workshop they can continue using all of the strategies, partner games, and accountable talk prompts you've already taught them, and now you can add in some print work they might do together. It might be helpful to list all the choices they now have on a chart somewhere in the room. You can teach children that they might practice reading the book pointing under the first letter of each word as their partner reads along, drawing their attention to the beginning letters of words. Be sure that you're also assessing whether children know the difference between first and last letter as they are engaged in this activity. Some children might know their sounds, but may not know the difference between first and last.

We Can Dramatize and Make Our Books Come Alive

Many of the texts your children are reading are meant to be read or sung together. Your children will likely want to read together, clapping and chanting, using gestures, and changing their voices. During partner time, your children have probably already been inventing great ways to read and reread their books together, drawing on the partner work you've already taught in previous units, as well as their experiences from shared reading. This is a great opportunity to teach into it and build up their repertoire for ways to reread.

As children reread their baggies of shared reading, shared writing, student-authored pattern books, and leveled books over the course of a week, it's fair to expect that their fluency will improve each successive time they read a particular text. You can demonstrate how the first read is often characterized by a stop and start or two because there may be a tricky word. After stumbling through the tricky word(s) on an initial reading, the second and successive readings should sound much smoother. Show them what this looks and sounds like, and request that they hold themselves accountable for reading more smoothly each time they reread the text.

Show children how patterns can help them read with fluency as described in the language section of the Common Core State Standards. For example, if the pattern rhymes, the reading should reflect that. Often, children will read text with rhymes but their pacing is so slow that it's hard to even tell if the text rhymes at all. Show them how careful readers don't read too slowly; instead, they read with a quicker pace.

Of course, one of the most effective teachers of fluency will be the voice modulation, pacing, and prosody of your own reading throughout the day. Modeling can happen during minilessons where you demonstrate fluent reading, but also in other components—particularly during shared reading and read-aloud. During reading workshop, you might do a *co*-shared reading with a group of students, sometimes reading the repeated portion of the sentence text and letting children finish up the page. As *you* dramatically read, pointing to the words in the text, the hope is that children will keep pace with you and change their voices to match yours.

You can work on this in read-aloud as well. Pick your favorite books and read them often. Read them in ways that are fun for children, through choral readings or by assigning a different child to help you with a dramatic read-aloud each day, to

channel your whole class into practicing reading with fluency and expression. Then show children how they can do the same work with their partners.

Your small-group work around fluency will need to be matched to the different levels of readers. You can teach some groups how to read chorally and how to echo read (one partner reads a page, the other partner reads the same page over again, like an echo) as a way to practice reading in their best voice and with fluency. Choral reading and echo reading are especially supportive for ELLs, since they can read along with their partner, or repeat their partner. Emergent readers who have been reading shared reading texts and class-shared writing texts might also benefit from the support of choral reading and echo reading to get ready to perform their books, while still practicing their one-to-one match. Children who are starting to read leveled books might take turns reading pages, or take turns reading whole books for their performances. You can also encourage all your students to be creative and invent their own ways to perform their books.

You could gather your children and say something like this, “Kindergartners, I was watching TV over Thanksgiving vacation with my nephews and guess what show I saw? *Maisy*! I couldn’t believe it. What a coincidence! Right after we studied and read so many *Maisy* books! Our favorite was on TV! Someone turned it into a cartoon TV show and you could see the characters move and talk. As I looked at the TV show schedule, I saw others of our class favorites—Little Bear and Franklin. It got me to think that any of our books could become TV shows! And you know what—I’m dying to be an actor in one of those shows. Wouldn’t you like to be one of those actors?” Then, if you have a shared reading book that has been made into a television show, or just any shared reading book that the class knows, you can engage the class in a read-aloud that can set the children up to reenact as they listen. You’ll find this works really well, especially if you, as you read, register what you are reading on your face, in your hands, your shoulders. You probably won’t expect children to stand up and walk around as you read, but it is amazing how much acting can be done while sitting in one spot on the rug! You could say something like, “How about if we try it—right here, right now. I am going to read our big book, *Maisy at the Fair*, and we’ll all start at the beginning when *Maisy*, *Eddie*, and *Tallulah* go on the slide. So right now, while you are sitting here, will each of you kids be *Maisy*? What can you imagine she is saying to *Tallulah*?”

Of course, any unit of study is really going to be about the work that you hope children will do on their own as they read. So after you’ve engaged the class in a dramatic shared reading, you could say to them, “Oh my goodness! You are all so good at almost becoming the character as you read! I’m just wondering if maybe, just maybe, you’d be willing to spend this week really working on reading every story as if you were acting it out. I’m thinking that what we just did with the shared reading book could be something that we do with partners/groups and then in our own minds as we read any book! In partners and groups you can take parts and be the characters and read the books together just like we have been doing with our shared reading books. Are you willing to try? It would mean reading and trying to become the character as we read, thinking as you read, ‘I bet she’s really mad now,’ and then

giving the words the character says a mad tone. It would mean noticing when the character's feelings might be changing, and making sure that the voice in our head changes with the character's feelings."

Readers Can "See Through" the Pattern to Figure Out What the Book Is Really About

Many of the pattern books in your classroom libraries will likely fall into two general types of books: pattern books that actually do tell a story, and pattern books that are more like lists or information books. This final part is designed to lift the level of your children's comprehension by getting them to think more deeply about their pattern books, saying to themselves, "Hmm . . . Is this book more like a story? Or more like an information book?" Tell them that sometimes as readers, we have to think about more than the pattern to figure out what the book is really about. We can use the title, the pictures, and think about what is happening to "see through" the pattern and figure out what is really going on. Doing this will lead to mastery of the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten.

Keep in mind that your children have already written both stories and information books in writing workshop. In the beginning of the year they wrote their own personal narratives, and more recently they wrote like scientists, making lists, observations, and information books. Currently they are writing their own pattern books and have probably been doing some work in writing workshop to think about topics and ideas for pattern books. Now you can help them transfer that knowledge into reading workshop. You might teach kids that we can read each book once or twice to figure out the pattern and the tricky parts, but then read it again to decide if it is more like a story or more like a list.

You might teach kids a string of lessons to search for stories in their pattern books. One strategy is to search for books with characters who do things and say things across the pages. Or read to see if there is a "first, next, then, finally" sequence to the text—or not. You could teach kids to give it the "story test": 1) Does it have characters? 2) Do they do something? 3) Does it have a beginning, middle, end? If yes, it is probably a story, so we should read to find out what happens and how the characters feel. You'll want to highlight that we don't just decide, "Yup, story," and toss the book aside. Instead, we know that when we read stories, we read differently. For example, we read thinking about what the characters might do next and keeping track of the main things that have happened.

Another string of lessons might concentrate on searching for books that are more like information books, or lists. Again, we might read a book the first few times thinking mostly about the pattern and figuring out the trickier parts, but once we're comfortable reading, we might reread one more time to see if the book is teaching information, or listing different kinds of objects, or colors, or days of the week. Remind children of all the different kinds of lists they already know—for example, the lists they made during the science writing unit. They know that lists can be attribute lists, or can count, or might list different parts of something. As children read, they might sort their

books into little piles—all the “story” pattern books, all the “list” books, and maybe an “oddball” pile (just like they do during word sorts during word study time). Discussing the oddballs could be a great source of conversation for partnerships, or for the teaching share with your whole class. Once we know that a book is listing something, we read thinking, “What else could be on this list?” or “What’s the main thing I’m learning here? What’s this book mostly about?”

You might want to wrap up the unit by reminding students of a few strategies they probably already know about figuring out what the book is mostly about. After all, this is one of the skills we use to assess whether children might be ready to move to a new reading level. We want them to be in the habit of constantly thinking, “Okay, I know this is a story (or a list), but what is it mostly about?” For example, the book might say, “I see the knife, I see the fork, I see the spoon . . . Let’s eat!” When a reader talks about the book, hopefully she cannot just repeat back the literal details—the spoon, knife, fork. She can also think across the book to notice what’s the same, and then use her own words to put together all the pages of the book according to the informational standards of the Common Core State Standards. “It’s about silverware,” or “This book shows you how to get ready to eat.”

Celebration

Near the end of the unit, you could gather children around a favorite big book and you might tell them that the last day of the unit will be a special one. For the last few days of the unit, you might recruit volunteers to help videotape each partnership performing one of their favorite big books, songs, or poems. If you decide to go this route, you’ll want to let your children know beforehand. You could show children different ways to perform their books—reading together with their partner, taking turns, adding gestures. Encourage children to practice their chosen book again and again leading up to the videotaping, and the day of the celebration. Then, on the very last day of the unit, instead of a regular reading workshop, you might gather your class at the meeting area and show the video on your classroom whiteboard or television. You could even pop some popcorn to make it that much more memorable and special for kids.

Word Study/Phonics

According to the Common Core State Standards language and foundational skills, you’ll want to begin with phonological awareness work during word study. This is especially relevant if you began the year with children who didn’t know many letters and struggled with early print concepts such as left-to-right progression and the difference between a letter and a word. You’ll want to do some work teaching about hearing rhymes and syllables in words. One of the great things about studying phonological awareness is that it can take place at any time during the day. You might work on hearing beginning and

ending sounds by asking children to tell you a word that rhymes with their name. Make sure you've spent enough time on beginning sounds before moving to ending sounds, since ending sounds are more difficult for children to hear. Remember, the goal is to teach kids how to listen for sounds in words, so you won't want to include the full word when you do this lesson. Have kids listen for the beginning sound, the middle sound, and the ending sounds in words. You might begin with one of the earliest phonemic awareness tasks called phoneme identity. During this task, you say three words that begin with the same letter (Ex. *cat/can/cake*). Then ask kids to tell you what sound is the same in all three words. You might have kids sort pictures of things that rhyme the same way. For example, in a pocket chart you might have a picture of a *coat* and a *goat*. Then you can ask the children to find other pictures that have the same rhyming parts. According to the Common Core State Standards, students should also be able isolate and pronounce the initial, middle, and ending sounds in CVC words. Many teachers use Elkonin Boxes, a reading recovery method to support students with hearing the individual sounds in a simple word such as *bat*. As the teacher is saying the sounds in the word, the child pushes counting cubes into boxes.

At this point in the year, some of your students may be able to identify most of the letters and know many of the letter sounds. However, you might notice that these children are not using what they know about letters and sounds as they write. In other words, they know the letters in isolation, but aren't transferring word sounds into their reading and writing. You'll want to work on solidifying children's knowledge of letters and sounds with word study, focusing on using sounds they know and can recognize in texts. They should continue to work on sounds they are still confusing. For students who need support with letter/sound relationships, you might pull them together in a small group to work on beginning sounds through picture sorts. For example, if they need to learn the letter *w*, you might have students sort pictures in a pocket chart with things that begin with *w* and *t*. To make your instruction more targeted to student needs, you'll want to select the letters that were missed on their assessments. You'll also want to do plenty of shared reading with these students to use what they know about letter sounds and high-frequency words. Once these students know some easy high-frequency words and letter sounds, they will be ready to move into Level B and C texts.

At this time in the year for word study, you'll want to make sure that you are spending plenty of time on high-frequency words. According to the Common Core State Standards, students should be able to read common high-frequency words by sight, such as *the, me, is, and, to*. Add these words to the word wall as well. When working with these words, you'll want to be sure you are teaching them with Clay's three ways of remembering (so children are able to store information about words' salient features):

- Seeing them in print
- Talking about what the word looks like (tall and short letters, letter sequences in words)
- Learning the words using movement, such as writing the words in various ways, and saying the word as it is written

If you decide to teach ...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K— Pinnell & Fountas</i>
Phonological Awareness: Blending Syllables Hearing Beginning, Middle, and Ending Sounds	Adapt 4-27 to 4-30 (pp. 123–124) 4-14 (p. 116)	PA 16 (p. 165) PA 17 and PA 18 (pp. 169–176)
Letter Knowledge: Letter Formation	4-18, 4-20 (pp. 118–120)	LK16 (p. 271) and LK19 (p. 283)
Letter/Sound Relationships: Beginning Sounds and Ending Sounds	Adapt 4-28 to 4-31 (pp. 123–125) 5-6 to 5-8 (pp. 157–158) 5-10 (p. 159)	LS2–LS5 (pp. 313–328)
Simple CVC Patterns (-an and -ay)	5-12 to 5-14 (pp. 160–162)	SP3 and SP4 (pp. 351–358)
High-Frequency Words	pp. 182–183	HF3 and HF4 (pp. 381–388)

Additional Resources

This unit, like the unit before it, is all about moving every one of your kindergartners into conventional reading. Some will already be there—perhaps half—and children who are reading Level B, C, D books progress fairly quickly up levels, so don't neglect to keep an eye on children who are ready to progress up the ladder of text-difficulty. You can use guided reading groups to move those children from a level in which they are reading with ease to one that is a notch harder.

But the real focus in this unit is on supporting the children who are working to solidify one-to-one matching, using the first letter of words as well as the pictures to help them read, and, especially, to use the way the sentence sounds to figure out tricky words. You will be watching to see that when your kids come to a word they don't know, they use the picture, the first letter, and the sound of the sentence (and the pattern in the book) to help them make a reasonable guess. You should see this happening all the time, with all your kids.

Be prepared to find that some kids have trouble using the sound of the sentence, that is, the pattern of language, to help them. These are especially likely to be your English language learners. They need more immersion in English—make sure these children are socially situated so they are engaged in conversational English as much as possible. Choice time, lunch, recess, and transitions are all times in the day when these children can be immersed in English. Small-group shared reading will be vitally important for these children. If, however, you see that these youngsters are taking a bit of time to rely on the patterns in sentences, this ultimately shouldn't surprise you too much, and the good thing is that they can also rely on phonics to figure out hard words. If possible, be sure you are giving these children opportunities to read books in their first language—and notice, if you can, whether they are relying on syntax and patterns more in those books.

One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

Part One: Readers Can Be Swept Along by Patterns in Our Books

- “Today I want to teach you that there are ways that readers can get ready to read our books. One way we can get ready to read is to think, ‘How will this book go?’ Some of our books we know well. We can remember how these books go based on the many times we have read them. We can look at the cover and the pictures, remember some characters and what happened, and think how the book will go. Then as we read, we can see if we were right or wrong.”
- “Today I want to teach you that when readers read a familiar book, we already know how the pattern goes and we can carry it with us across the pages. The pattern can sweep us along in our reading. When we read our books aloud, we can point under each word of the pattern, matching what we say to the words on the page, letting the pattern sweep us along.”
- “Readers can get ready to read by looking through the pictures in a book to notice things that repeat (or stay the same), knowing that if it repeats in the pictures, we can predict that it will probably repeat in the words too.”
- “Today I want to teach you that just like we do when we read star books (emergent story books), readers can point to and name out loud what we see happening in the pictures, to get our minds ready to read the words on the page, knowing that sometimes it’s not the object on the page that changes, it’s what the object is doing that changes. For example, there might be a duck on every page, but on one page he’s swimming, and on the next he’s diving.”
- “Readers, today I want to teach you that readers listen for how our books sound. We can ask ourselves, ‘Does it repeat? Does it rhyme? Does it have a rhythm?’ and then match the words we say to the words on the page, pointing under the words one at a time.”
- “Readers, just like we made predictions about how our books might sound before we started to read, we can also make predictions as we read. Today I want to teach you that when we figure out the pattern of a book, we can use that to predict what will happen on the next page.”

Part Two: Readers Use the Pattern to Figure Out Tricky Parts of the Book

- “Readers, we have been working hard to find the patterns in our books and make them sound right. The patterns are there to help, but sometimes authors challenge us by changing the last page. Often, that is the hardest page to read because the words may not follow the pattern we’ve just gotten to know well. Today I want to teach you that we can use what the book is mostly about to help us figure out the twist, or sometimes the pictures on the last page can help us figure out the twist. Sometimes we have to think, ‘Hmm . . . What would the character be saying here? What would make sense?’ to figure out the twist at the end.”
 - ▮ *Mid-workshop teaching point:* “Readers, we know that there are lots of different kinds of patterns in our books. And we know that books sometimes have a surprise ending and that ending can be tricky! Once we have figured out the ending we can use the end, the break in the pattern, to figure out what the whole book was about.”
- “Readers, we have been using lots of strategies to figure out the tricky words in our books. Once we make a guess at a tricky word we can check to see if we were right. We can use the picture, the pattern, and the beginning letters, and ask ourselves all three questions: ‘Would that make sense here?’ ‘What would sound right in this book?’ and/or ‘Look closely at the word.’”
 - ▮ *Mid-workshop teaching point:* “You know, whenever we’re stuck, we can look around this classroom for help—we have all these great charts to remind us of all the strategies we know for figuring out the tricky parts of our books. When we get stuck we can check the chart to remind ourselves of the strategies we can try.”
- “Readers, today I want to remind you that sometimes we can get stuck on tricky parts in our books and we’re not sure what to do. Here’s a trick. Sometimes it helps to go back a page or two to get a running start. We read the words as smoothly as we can, and reread if we need to smooth out our reading so that we can really hear how the pattern sounds.”
- “When readers get stuck on tricky parts, we can try lots of things to get out of trouble. Today I want to teach you that readers can study the picture and think, ‘What’s going on here?’ or ‘What is on this page that might help me figure out this word?’ We can find and point to an object or action in a picture and use that to help us make better guesses about a tricky word.”

- ## Part Three: We Can Dramatize and Make Our Books Come Alive

- A CURRICULAR PLAN FOR THE READING WORKSHOP, GRADE K, 2011-2012

Part Four: Readers Can “See Through” the Pattern to Figure Out What the Book Is Really About

- “Kids, I’m going to tell you an important secret that can help you read! Readers know that things go together in a book and that this secret will help us read. The picture *and* the title on the cover of a book *and* the stuff inside the book—like pictures on this page, and this page, and this page—all go together.”
 - ▮ *Example:* “So do you think that if a book is called *At the Zoo* it will have a picture on the cover of John flying an airplane? No way! Because the title and the picture on the cover go together—and they also go with what will be in the book!”
 - ▮ *Tip:* “Readers know that the title and the cover of a new book can actually help us to think about what we will read in that new book. So—if we see a zoo on the cover and the book is called *At the Zoo*, then we know that we’re going to learn more about the zoo on each page as we read the book.”
- “Today, I want to teach you that readers think about what their book was all about when we finish. We don’t just finish the last page and say, ‘Done!’ Knowing the pattern can help us know what our book is all about!”
 - ▮ *ip:* “Readers know that sometimes it is not just the words that come over and over—*what’s happening* in the book also comes over and over. The book makes a pattern! So in *At the Zoo*, on this first page, the little girl shows her family one animal at the zoo—a tiger. And on this next page the girl shows her family one different animal at the zoo—a giraffe. And then, guess what will be on this *next* page? That’s it! The little girl shows her family one more animal. Now we know that this book is all about the girl showing her family all the animals at the zoo!”
 - ▮ *Mid-workshop teaching point:* “Readers know that we can use what has been happening over and over in the story to guess what will happen on the next page.”
- “Readers, today I want to teach you that when we read books we need to make sure our reading makes sense. We know it makes sense if it fits with what has been happening on all of the pages and the page and picture we are working on. We can remind ourselves to always do this work by thinking, ‘What makes sense?’”
- “Today I want to teach you that when readers think about what our book is mostly about, we look at all the stuff that makes up a book—the title, the cover, the pictures, the words—we think about what is the same, and then use that to say what the whole book was about.”

- *Tip:* “Then we read our book together to make sure this is true.”



UNIT FIVE

We Can Be Reading Teachers

*Teach Yourself and Your Partners to Use
All You Know to Read*

JANUARY

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: B/C)

Happy New Year! A brand-new year is a time for new beginnings. It can be a time to gather your kindergartners and start off with a genuine compliment: “When I look at you kids, I see new people. I see grown-up readers. Remember last year, on the first day of school, when you sat on this carpet for the very first time? We didn’t even have reading partners yet! No book baggies, no Post-its! And now look at us. We can read. We can shop for our own books. We can tell stories across the pages—even point under the words. We can talk about books, read with our partners, even mark parts of the book with a Post-it to go back to later. We’re starting this new year so much stronger!” You should also realize that by now you have fulfilled some of the Common Core State Standards required for kindergartners.

Acknowledging all they’ve achieved will help you rally your readers to do even bigger and better work. You will want to spell out this goal from the very start: “This year, we’re going to do some grown-up reading work, since I can see that you kids are ready for it.” Tell your readers that in this new month—indeed for the rest of the year and their lives—they no longer need the crutch of a teacher’s support to do basic reading work. That is, you’ll tell your children that readers don’t have to ask for help when we get to tricky parts. We can simply use all that we know about reading and books to solve what stumps us. So rather than crying out, “Help me, help me!” when faced with a tricky word or when meaning breaks down, we can take a deep breath, have some courage, and say, “I can solve this myself! I can be my own teacher!” You’ll show your kindergartners that they can muscle through their own reading troubles by drawing on strategies and reading tools they’ve learned in the previous months.

Once you've complimented them on their "grown-up reading habits," you'll want to name a quick checklist of the most basic ones, such as sitting quietly with books, choosing lots of books at a time, and "warming up" before reading. Bring out the charts from previous units. You might renew student attention toward these by rearranging them in the room to provide a fresh vantage point and then briefly revisiting the strategies the charts list. For example, you probably have a chart that lists "Different ways to get ready to read," with strategies like looking at the cover, the title, the back of the book, doing a picture walk, thinking ahead about what kind of words might appear in the text, and looking through all the pictures before you read. You've also taught your kids strategies for stopping and thinking (listed on a chart somewhere), for using Post-its, and for things to talk about with partners (favorite parts, funny parts, important parts, retelling, etc.). According to the Common Core State Standards' discussion of research and presenting knowledge, students should be taught to hold onto information.

You might want to spend the first few days after the winter break reassessing children to see what they can do and what they need as readers. You will likely find that most of your children are ready to read levels conventionally. You'll also need to support new management work. For example, you will need to help children know where to find their just-right books. Many teachers gather children who are reading the same level of just-right books into a small group in the classroom library and then show them a basket of books from which they can select titles that are just right for them. You might say something like, "The kinds of books that will help you grow strong as readers are the books with yellow dots on them. These books will help you build up your reading muscles. I'm going to give each of you an index card with a yellow dot and ten to twelve lines written inside. You can keep this card in your book baggie. It means that when you shop, you'll go to the yellow dot baskets and find ten to twelve books to read for that week. There are lots of great titles in this basket, and I'm sure you'll each be able to find lots of stuff you like."

Keep in mind that lower-leveled books only take a minute or so to read, so your children will need lots of books in their book baggies to keep them engaged during reading time. Supplying each child with ten to twelve books at these levels is usually sufficient and will still involve some rereading during the week. At this point of the year, it's highly likely that you'll need many books at Levels B, C, and D (and above), so children can shop for enough books to last them for the week. Some schools are book-rich, so this is not a problem. If you don't have enough books at this level, however, you might consider the following recommendations:

- Look at your guided reading inventory. Many teachers have an abundance of guided reading text sets for Levels A–F. It's probably safe to recommend that teachers keep about four to six sets of texts at these levels for guided reading. If you have more than that, it's advisable to put the extra texts into the classroom library. After all, any child is likely to move past Level A after four guided reading lessons and all the other instructional support we offer throughout the day.

- If books are an issue, some teachers put the books they have into several A/B, C/D, or E/F baskets and then put these baskets on tables. During private and partner reading time, the readers at these levels sit at the tables and read a book from their basket. Then they put it back and choose another.

Because you'll have children reading just-right books, your children's shopping habits and the contents of their book baggies will change accordingly. Readers might shop for the following each week:

- Those children who are emergent readers (still developing one-to-one correspondence) will shop for ten to twelve A/B books at a time, as well as some shared reading texts from the previous unit and an emergent story book.
- Those children reading Levels A/B conventionally will shop for ten to twelve A/B books and possibly a few Level C books, some shared reading texts, and an emergent story book.
- Those children reading Levels C/D conventionally will shop for ten to twelve just-right books, and possibly a few Level E books for children who have been reading at Level D independently.

Right at the start of the unit, we also suggest setting up reading partnerships between children reading at the same level. These partnerships work together for a while and only change if one reader surges ahead, showing that they are ready to tackle a higher level of text. You'll reinforce the notion that in addition to teaching ourselves, we also teach and learn from partners and our classroom reading community. Right from the start, seat partners together during read-aloud and shared reading. Now and throughout the month, you will want to remind readers of the protocol of an effective partnership—that partners are good listeners to each other, take turns talking, and work hard to know and support each other as readers. Refer to charts on partnerships if you have them (otherwise, create some). Somewhere in your classroom you might have a chart that lists "Choices for reading with your partner," and "I read/you read," "Choral reading," "Echo reading," "Sing your books together," and so on. Reinforce the message of "grown-up independence" to partnerships. Tell kids that they're jointly in charge of the work their partnership will accomplish. They'll learn to make plans for what to work on before they talk with partners, during talk with partners, and after they talk with partners. These are the rules that are directly stated in the speaking and listening section of the Common Core State Standards.

During independent reading you'll be gathering small groups of children in a variety of ways. For example, you may choose to pull a group of A/B readers and introduce a Level C text, coaching them through it in a guided reading lesson. Then you might pull another group of newly conventional readers (Levels C and D) into a guided reading session to help them as they read or reread a text that is just above what they would read independently. You might gather a third group of children with their reading partners to

help them practice reading to each other, coaching each other through the tricky parts. The start of a new year is also a good time to look around your room. Are children reading for extended periods of time? A quick, informal assessment of your children's reading habits can be helpful. Are your kids tallying up the number of books or rereads for each book? Are kids using Post-its to mark places where they have ideas about their books? All these are indicators of a strong reading workshop where volume is high and children are highly engaged. If readers need help establishing these habits, you'll want to set aside some moments for small-group (or whole-class) coaching on these.

Read-aloud time is a gold mine of teaching opportunities, and you will want to choose varied, exciting books to do this work from throughout the course of the unit. To exploit their maximum teaching potential, aim to make your read-aloud sessions interactive. This may require slight preparation. Once you've selected an appropriate book to read aloud, skim the text for strategic spots where you might invite children's responses. For example, mark the spot where enough of a predictable rhythm and pattern has been established that children ought to be able to predict the next rhyming line or step in the story. While reading, you might pause slightly and encourage them to chime in at these parts—expect laughter and full involvement when this happens. Similarly, when the story takes an unexpected turn or a poignant new detail is revealed, you'll want to insert a reflective pause and ask readers to turn and talk to partners about why this part is significant or what they think will happen next. You may stop at a spot to ponder aloud why you think a character said that, or why the writer is mentioning a particular detail over and over. This is an invitation for children to ponder along with you. If the story is particularly action-packed, you might ask children to act out these actions as you read, and afterwards, with partners, to retell the chronology of actions. This fulfills the Common Core State Standard: confirming the comprehension of information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details, and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

You will also want to model your own thinking as you read aloud. As the story unfurls, stop and connect whatever is happening now with what came earlier in the story. Remember, though, that your leveled books only take a minute or so to read, so depending on your children's stamina and listening skills, you may want to begin reading short chapter books aloud. If so, make a big deal out of this, and choose brief ones. Don't think that your read-aloud text needs to always be the same level that your students are reading—you can easily go up a level or two from your class's average reading level. This is a tremendously useful scaffold. Once they've heard a book and all of its words read aloud, once they've understood and interpreted its story with peers and laughed at its funny parts, that book becomes "accessible," though it may be at a higher reading level. Do leave read-aloud books lying around the room so that children can pick them up and reread them on their own.

You might organize your teaching according to these parts:

- Readers Teach Ourselves about a Book before We Start to Read It and Then We Use What We Know as We Read

- Readers Can Be Teachers for Our Partners
- Readers Reread!
- We Can Share Our Books and Ideas with Our Community

Readers Teach Ourselves about a Book before We Start to Read It and Then We Use What We Know as We Read

Start this part by reminding children about the important work that happens even before readers read the words in their books. You can teach children how careful readers get their minds ready to read books—studying the cover, including the title and the cover picture—to get their minds ready for what might be inside the story. You might say, “Readers, when you say the title and look at the picture on the cover, you’ll want to think to yourselves, ‘What might this book be about? What words and ideas might I find inside?’ That’s like warming yourself up before you read.” From the start of the unit, you will want to strengthen each teaching point by taking advantage of the fact that readers are seated in partnerships. Suggest that readers give their partner a picture walk through their book before they start reading, or that they line up their combined books in the order they want to read together, from easiest to hardest, or favorite to least favorite. They might play thinking “games,” like “Guess What’s Going to Happen in My Book?” or “What Do You Think My Book Will Mostly Be About?” The “game” is simply to ask your partner the question and see what they think. For example, Partner A, reading *Super Mouse* (part of the Brand New Readers series published by Candlewick) would show her partner the cover and read the title. Partner A would ask, “What do you think will happen?” Partner B might respond, “I think Super Mouse is going to fly.” Then Partners A and B would read the book together. As they read, Partner A could ask her partner just like a teacher would, “Does this fit with what you thought was going to happen?” and Partner B would have the chance to confirm or revise his prediction. This is a Common Core State Standard that starts in kindergarten.

Children already know how to do picture walks from earlier units of study, but now you can teach children to hang onto their predictions and picture walks as they read, thinking to themselves, “How do these pages connect?” They can also ask themselves, “Does this fit with what I thought this book would be about?” You might say to kids, “Remember how I kept asking you those questions during shared reading? Today I want to teach you that you don’t have to wait for a teacher to ask you those questions—you can be the teacher and ask yourself those questions. Ask yourself, ‘Does this fit?’ If it does, keep reading. If not, you can change your idea about the book to fit with what you are learning.” You might also tuck in some lessons that help children look ahead at the print for words they know (word-wall words/high-frequency words) to get ready to read. Then, they can use those familiar words as “stones in the creek” when they encounter difficulty, particularly for children who are reading, or are almost ready for C or D. Meanwhile, you’ll also show students how to revisit some of their habits, like using their pointer finger to touch under each word, and looking to the pictures for help making meaning.

You'll also want to remind them to note how patterns change from page to page. You may have also taught students to think about how the pattern goes along with the big idea of the book. By doing so, you will have fostered the good habit of always trying to figure out what the book is all about. This is another teaching point that is worthy of revisiting now. You'll remind students that the last page of a book is often the trickiest part of books at Levels C and D, because the pattern often changes on this page. You'll remind readers that the last page often connects to what the whole book is all about, and that there are often different kinds of "twists" at the end of the book (see Unit Four for more on this). Teach students that we can read the last page and think, "How does this go with the title and all the other pages? What is this whole book all about?" These are standards that not only apply to kindergarten, but begin to prepare your students for first grade as well and toward more rigorous text complexity.

It is essential for you to spend a little time each day in reading workshop, launching children who are still reading at Levels A and B into their books. As you confer, it will be necessary to read the titles and the first pages aloud for readers at Levels A and B, to support their abilities to read on in the story. Many of the A/B books children are reading are attribute books, a kind of informational text. "A party, a chair, a cake—all this is about a party." "A mother, a father, a sister—a family." By January, however, most of your children who have been at Levels A and B will be ready to read Levels C and D. You may want to support them by reading some of the more popular titles aloud to small groups of beginning readers, or even to the whole class. You might give brief introductions, reading the title and talking about the characters and the setting, then giving the kids a chance to give these books a try, coaching them with lean prompts as they go. Most of your Level A and B readers would have a few Level C books in their baggies that you have introduced. Remember you can always reread Unit Three, which discusses superpowers and getting kids ready for conventional reading.

Shared reading during this unit should continue daily and be much like the work of December. You will want to match the shared reading focus to the reading strategies that your children will need to use in the books they are reading (Level C, D books as well as as ones that get them ready for E and F). You may also introduce and invite children to try the print strategies, showing them how to monitor for meaning, handle the return sweep, cross-check, self-correct, and so forth. You may also help children locate known words in a text. Although there is a heavy emphasis on print work during this unit of study, you still want to provide opportunities for children to share ideas and thoughts in response to shared reading.

Readers Can Be Teachers for Our Partners

Independently trying out all the strategies you've taught will reinforce children's learning. But even more effective learning occurs when children teach others to use the same strategies they are practicing themselves. In this part of the unit, you will set up partners to teach other good reading habits and strategies. As mentioned earlier, partners must be

at the same reading level so that they can share books and remind each other of strategies that are matched to their needs as readers. During read-aloud and shared reading, you can have children sit next to their reading partners so that they can practice talking and coaching one another. When you ask children to turn and talk, listen in on them and whisper to one partner, “Ask your partner what they mean by that,” or “Ask your partner to say more.” This way you are encouraging partners to coach each other, rather than rely only on you to ask the right questions. You might even have teaching shares where you ask a child to share what their partner did well that day, highlighting how partners pay attention to each other and support each other according to the Common Core State Standards.

The first lesson you might ask partners to give each other is one on phonically figuring out unfamiliar words. As your children move on into Level C and D books (and higher), they need to think of the beginning and then ending letters in conjunction with meaning and syntax to figure out the words. No matter what strategy you teach children to use to figure out the words in their books, it’s vital that they learn to always ask themselves and their reading partners, “What would make sense here?” or “Does this sound right?” Using graphophonics to figure out words is only one-third of the information available to children; your goal is to enable them to rely on meaning and structure as well. You might want to spend a minilesson reminding children that the pictures are present in texts not only to make them interesting but also to help readers figure out words and understand stories. Teach them that when their partner gets stuck on a tricky word, it helps to look at the picture, which is designed to help readers. In most early-level books, often just one word changes from page to page. The changing word is usually featured in the picture. So as children attend to the patterns, you can offer them a little trick of the trade. You might set up your teaching demonstration by saying, “Readers, one of the little tricks that careful readers know is that in patterned books, the tricky words or the changing words are usually revealed in the pictures. If your partner gets stuck on the changing word in a pattern book, be sure to check the picture. It’s there to help you. Let me show you what that looks like.” You can model this during shared reading and demonstrate it in a minilesson. According to the NAEP 2011 Reading framework, text comprehension is influenced by readers’ ability to apply the essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge, fluency, and understanding of word meanings or vocabulary to comprehend what they are reading. This begins in kindergarten.

During partner time, you might pull up next to a partnership and whisper to one child, “Ask your partner if that made sense,” or “Remind your partner to look at the pictures *and* the first letter.” You could create a chart of prompts that partners can say to each other, with phrases like, “Does it make sense?” “Does that fit the pattern?” “Does that sound right?” or “Check the first/last letter.” When partners coach each other like this, they are really teaching each other!

It isn’t just during partner time that children are thinking like teachers—they can also think about their partners while they are reading independently. You might say to your readers, “You worked so hard on the tricky parts of your books today. Now get

ready to teach them to your partner! You can put a tiny Post-it on each of the parts you think might be tricky for your partner. Then during partner time, let your partner try to figure those parts out. You can be your partner's teacher by using our special prompts (listed on the charts in our room). Regular Post-its cut into thirds work perfectly for this. Many teachers keep a supply of Post-its in a small basket at the center of each table and teach children to take just one Post-it at a time when they need them (see Unit One for more on this).

Readers could also share with one another their new learning by saying things like, "Today I learned . . . and I tried it here (pointing it to specific parts in their books)" or "I practiced . . . today. Let me show you how to do it too . . ." You might also teach students to demonstrate for their partners how they used a reading strategy earlier in the workshop to figure out a tricky part. During your mid-workshop teaching points, you might suggest to readers that they start thinking about what they will teach and share with their partner. In this way, you are setting readers up for strong partnership work. In addition to all the new work mentioned above, kids will also continue to talk about books with their partners, and read together.

Readers Reread!

Read the Common Core State Standards, or just look at the young readers in your own room to see: good readers seem to figure out the benefits of rereading while struggling readers tend to abandon books. Of course, as with all other skill-enhancing habits, this becomes a vicious cycle. Rereading makes the strong readers even stronger while readers who skip pages or abandon books become even more disinterested and dispirited about reading. Research reveals the advantages of rereading: it facilitates decoding, meaning-monitoring, deeper interpretations, and new-word acquisition. What a useful strategy to teach readers in kindergarten: all readers reread! This is the big message of this part. Rereading, according to the Common Core State Standards, is one of the most important skills kindergartners can attain as they become readers.

This is a great time to revisit the charts you've already made in previous units that name some of the choices that readers have for rereading (and to create some new charts as well). You'll want to remind children that often we reread a bit faster and a bit smoother each time we read, and we don't have to wait until the end of the whole book to go back and smooth parts out. We also reread to search for things we might have missed the first few times through—we can spend a little more time on the pictures, picturing not only what is on the page, but also picturing what's not on the page. We can think to ourselves, "Where does this book take place? What do I picture?" or "What is this character saying? What would that look like?"

You'll want to make clear that rereading does not involve the stringent practice of starting at the beginning, reading to the very end of a book, and then restarting from the beginning. While rereading an entire book does have many advantages, you will want to teach children that we can reread a *word* several times to get it right, or a *sentence* if it

made us laugh or we need to understand it better. Readers might open up a page they loved and reread the best parts. The point is to be flexible with the policy of rereading because our teaching must mirror the natural things that readers do. When adults read a book or an article that we find interesting, we often reread sections—or particularly gripping sentences—and not necessarily the entire article. If we find a word or sentence confusing, we don't proceed further—we reread until comprehension is restored. When we teach our kids to reread, therefore, we'll want to make clear that rereading satisfies many purposes: increasing our enjoyment of humor, clarifying meaning, making better sense, and seeing things that we didn't see in our first reading. Teach children that there are many different ways to reread—that the best readers reread an entire word, sentence, page, or book, depending on our own reasons. Urge partners to explore each other's reasons for wanting to reread a portion of text.

However, at the same time, you will want partners to reread entire texts, to improve fluency, comprehension, and enjoyment. It is rewarding if you can make a game of this for partnerships to enjoy together. Remember that children have already learned a whole list of choices for ways to read and reread with partners, games to play, and kinds of things to talk about. Partners can read and reread to each other. In the last unit, they learned to play the “pattern game” and the “guess what's going to happen game.” And in previous units, they earned to echo read (I read a page, you read the same page back to me), and choral read (reading together) in a whisper voice. They can have fun inventing new ways to reread as well. Maybe one partner reads a whole book and the other partner reads the same book right away. (In this way, one partner is providing the book introduction for the other). Maybe one partner reads the book while the other says what the character is thinking and feeling. Or one partner reads, while the other acts parts out with gestures and facial expressions. Another possibility is that they pick a part to practice over and over and then get with another partnership and perform that part.

The possibilities for engaging ways to reread their books are endless. The important thing is that children reread with increasing automaticity and fluency. Rereading is one of the major ways that young children develop a familiarity with high-frequency words, sentence structures, common spelling patterns in words, and many other building blocks for increasingly challenging levels of reading. Most importantly, the repetition and practice of rereading teaches them to persevere with confidence that meaning is hiding there and it will appear!

Readers Share Our Books and Ideas with the Community

One of the ultimate goals of this unit is for children to share their books with each other and teach one another to become stronger, more confident and strategic readers. Just as you come together during read-aloud to talk about favorite stories and characters, your readers can come together now to share favorite books, favorite pages, and favorite parts, questioning and coaching each other as they do this.

You'll teach your readers to share the books they are enjoying the most with their partners. You could even teach them to trade books with each other and then talk about the books they both have read. They can learn the art of a "book talk," such as how to hold up a book, point to pages, and talk about the book in a way that makes others want to read it. You can remind children to continue to talk about favorite parts, funny parts, retell, ask questions, and wonder about their books together—all of which you've already taught them to do in previous units. You can remind them that the pictures also offer fuel for partner conversation. Teach children to attend to the pictures when they reread their just-right books and notice details they hadn't seen before when they reread to their partners. You could teach them to follow a character across pages and talk to their partners about what they notice. You may want to teach your children some prompts for talking about main ideas in their books with partners. For example we can say, "This book is about all different . . ." (especially for nonfiction Level A and B list books). Or, "All the pages fit with . . ." or "This book is mostly about . . ." Partners can be teachers to each other, by asking each other, "What's your book mostly about?" and "How does this page fit?" You'll pick and choose partner work to teach to your children in response to what you see them doing well and where they clearly need more support. If they tend to talk really well, you may decide to concentrate more on strategies for reading to each other. If they tend toward reading to each other and not talking, then you might want to support them with some new lessons on partner talk. Readers don't have to be reading complex chapter books to know that reading communities enjoy books with each other.

As this unit comes to an end, instead of having simple partnership talk time, you might try putting two partnerships together to talk, share, and teach each other about their books in small groups. To do this, you might scaffold this small-group talk during your read-aloud time. After your read-aloud, your students can sit together in small groups of four or five and talk together about the book and their thinking. Once kids practice this talk around a shared picture book, they may be more apt to share and talk when you ask partnerships to join together during reading workshop.

Word Study/Phonics

Once you have assessed all of your students, you will have a better sense of how you can organize your word study time. Word study is an important part of the Common Core State Standards in the fundamentals section. At this point in the year, you are probably noticing that some children in your class are ready to work with short vowel spelling patterns such as *-at* and *-an*, while some children still need to work on letter recognition. You might administer some assessments to find out which children still need to work on letter names, letter sounds, and high-frequency words. You can observe them as they are reading and writing texts. You'll want to form small groups for word study based on the needs of your children. Managing small groups can at first feel daunting, but by now your children probably already know some routines for word

study activities such as sorting, hunting for words in texts, making words with magnetic letters, and some games they can do in partnerships. If you find that your students don't yet know the routines for some of these activities, you will want to teach the routines as a whole class, perhaps as you review some of the features taught in the previous months. Most teachers have small-group word study happening on a daily basis in their classrooms for about twenty minutes. Typically in a kindergarten classroom, you might see one group working on ending sounds, one group working on beginning sounds, and another working on short vowel spelling patterns. Each day the teacher conducts lessons with a different group to introduce concepts to children. You will also want to continue working on phonological awareness during small-group word study. Research shows that phonemic awareness is most effective when it is done in small groups. You might notice that some of your students need to work on isolating sounds while others are ready for segmenting or manipulating sounds, so you can group your students accordingly.

This is also usually the point in the year when you notice which kids are going to have a hard time getting into leveled texts and which students will be ready to read leveled texts. You'll want to make sure that kids at this point have a few easy high-frequency words they know well so that they can use those words as anchors as they are reading Level A and B texts. By now you probably will have introduced kids to four to five high-frequency words. Make sure you are assessing as you go before adding too many high-frequency words to the word wall. If you have kids that are having a hard time learning these words, you'll want to spend extra time on them. It helps kids understand how to use the high-frequency words if you introduce and work with the words in the context of reading and writing. You might introduce kids to a new word during shared reading. After reading a shared reading text for two to three days, you might say, "In this book there is a word we read over and over again. The word is *to*. This is a word we'll use a lot in our reading and writing, so let's add it to the word wall."

You can use interactive writing to produce texts where kids are working on the phonics work that they need (short vowel patterns, digraphs, etc.) that are two (or perhaps three) lines long. Obviously you may produce one of these texts over a sequence of days. Create texts that match what your children are approximating as both readers and writers. The interactive writing can help children think about concepts of words, pointing while reading, directionality, the return sweep needed to read two lines of text, locating known words, and so forth. Remember to continue to reread each time a word has been written to help the children make sure that what is written sounds right and makes sense in the story they are writing. This whole interactive writing time will be only about seven to ten minutes at the most. Don't forget that these texts also become a rich resource for reading during reading workshop.

You will probably begin to introduce some simple spelling patterns (*-at*, *-an*, *-in*, *-it*, *-op*, *-ot*) to children who are ready for this work. This will help children notice patterns in words when they're reading and use these patterns to help them write new words. You might give out the magnetic letters needed to make all the *-at* words or do this work as a whole class at the easel. Point out that by changing the first letter in the word

and keeping the last part, children can make many new words. It's helpful to use phrases like, "If you can write the word 'sat,' you can also write the word 'mat.'" As you teach spelling patterns, you also want to teach children how to transfer knowledge of the spelling pattern into their own reading and writing. Continue to add one high-frequency word a week to the word wall and provide children with time to practice with partners and/or in small groups, so children are working on words they still need to learn. All children can practice words in the same way, but the words may be different based on your assessment.

If you find you still need to do some whole-class work, make sure the concepts you choose to focus on are ones that most children are already using in their writing, but inaccurately. For example, if most of your children are using short vowels but sometimes confusing them, then they are ready for some instruction on vowels.

If you decide to teach ...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K— Pinnell & Fountas</i>
Phonological Awareness: Hearing Beginning Sounds and Ending Sounds	Adapt 4-27 to 4-30 (pp. 123–124) 4-14 (p. 116)	PA8–PA9 (pp. 133–140), Beginning Sounds PA10 (p. 141), Ending Sounds
Letter Knowledge: Letter Formation	4-18, 4-20 (pp. 118–120)	LK 16 (p. 271)
Letter/Sound Relationships: Beginning Sounds	4-28 to 4-31 (pp. 123–125) 5-6 to 5-8 (pp. 157–158) 5-10 (p. 159)	LS1 and LS2 (pp. 309–316)
Simple CVC pattern (e.g., -at)	5-12 to 5-14 (pp. 160–162)	SP2 (p. 347)
High-Frequency Words	pp. 182–183	HF1–HF2 (pp. 373–380)

Additional Resources

If your children are doing really well, many of them will be reading Level C books by now. You will want to make sure you are not holding some kids back in Level A/B books unnecessarily. For example, you should not be expecting them to read Level B books with accuracy before moving to Level C. All that they need to show you is that they can point under words as they read with one-to-one matching, and when they do not know a word (and it is not implicit in the pattern), they use the meaning of the sentence, the picture, and the first letter of the word to make a good guess. Your kids should all be able to do that by now—if some need more help, be sure they are getting one-to-one instruction so they do move into this work within a few weeks.

Your children who are just starting to read Level C books will need strong support. You'll be busy with lots of guided reading groups and lots of book introductions. The

point of this unit is that children can also help each other. You'll want to assess your partners to make sure the stronger reader is not doing all the work. The unit moves quickly, teaching one strategy after another after another, and you may decide to slow things down and give kids more chances to practice these strategies repeatedly. If you teach a strategy one day, then you will want to make sure you remind them to use it another day, another day, another day. Don't take for granted that they will draw on the strategies taught on previous days—assess for this and reteach. You will also want to encourage kids to invent their own strategies. Watch to be sure you are teaching the big thing, which is for kids to have a sense of agency an “I can do this” attitude, and to be resourceful (not panicked) in the face of text difficulties.

One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

Part One: Readers Teach Ourselves about a Book before We Start to Read It and Then We Use What We Know as We Read

- “Readers, today I want to teach you that when we read books, we need to remember to ‘warm up’! Just like before you play soccer, you stretch your bodies, before we *read*, readers stretch our *minds*. So here’s the thing to warm up: we look at the pictures and the title on the book and we say to ourselves, ‘What might this book be about?’ and ‘What hints do the title and the cover of the book give me about what I might find inside?’”
- “Readers, in the previous session I taught you that we ‘warm up’ before we start reading. Sometimes we need just a *quick* warm-up. We can look at the pictures on the cover and think about the title and then we are ready to read. But today I want to teach you that *sometimes* we need a *longer warm-up*. That’s when we look through the pictures in the book and say what we see happening. As we go through all the pages, we think about what the book might be about. That helps us get ready to read new words.”
- “Today, I want to teach you that when we read our books and we get to a new or tricky word there are special reading muscles we use to figure out the word. We look at the picture *and* the first letter of the word and we think, ‘What in the picture starts with that sound?’ We make our best guess about what the word might be and keep reading to see if that works.”
- “Readers, today I want to teach you that when we read books, readers make sure our reading makes sense. We know it makes sense if it fits with what has been happening on all of the pages and it also fits with the stuff on this page. We can remind ourselves to always do this work by thinking, ‘What makes sense?’”

- “Readers, today I want to teach you how to make your reading ‘sound right.’ The words you are reading should sound the way a person would talk. If when you are reading, you notice that it does not sound right, go back and read it again, thinking, ‘Did I leave a word out? Did I say the right words?’ This will help you make it sound right.”
- *Tip:* “We can ask ourselves, ‘Does it sound like the way I would talk, or does it sound like the way a story would go?’”

Part Two: Readers Can Be Teachers for Our Partners

- “Readers, sometimes when we are reading by ourselves or even with a partner, we say a word that makes us go, ‘Huh? That doesn’t sound right!’ Today I want to teach you that when that happens, we need to remind our partners or go back ourselves, reread the word, and use the picture to make another guess. We think, ‘What word would match the picture?’”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers can teach each other to use the letters in a word to help each other read our books. When your partner is reading, check to make sure that the words look like the ones they read.”
 - *Tip:* “You can also remind your partner to use the letters and say, ‘Make the first sound!’ or ‘Check the letters to make sure it looks right,’ or ‘Read it again!’”
- “Today, I want to teach you that reading partners are like our coaches. They cheer us on! They don’t sit and watch us have a hard time. No way! They remind us of strategies we can try. ‘Check the picture,’ they say, and they point to the picture. ‘Get your mouth ready!’ or ‘That’s a snap word!’”
 - *Tip:* “Reading partners also act as coaches by alerting us when something doesn’t quite look right or sound right. They say, ‘Wait, read it again!’ or ‘I think that says . . .’ Partners don’t wait; they jump in and coach.”
- “Today, I want to teach you that partners are good helpers and thinkers. They think, ‘What’s the way this book is going to go?’ As your partner reads, you can be a good helper and think about what is going to happen next. Then as your partner turns the page and reads it, check to see if it is right. Then we say, ‘Yes, I was right!’ or ‘Oh! I need to change what I thought was happening to something new!’”
 - *Tip:* “If your partner is having a hard time making good guesses, give your partner a tip or a little clue to help them.”

Part Three: Readers Reread Our Books and Share Our Books and Ideas with the Community

- “Readers, today I want to teach you that we can share books with our friends. We do this by telling our friends about the book. We tell who the book is about, what is happening, and then we read the book together.”
 - *Tip:* “Readers, we can also tell them about the funny parts that make us laugh, or the hard parts to read, or even about pictures that we loved.”
- “Readers, today I want to remind you that when you don’t understand something that a friend is telling you about a book, you need to ask questions. If you aren’t sure who the character is, you can ask, ‘Who is this book about?’ Or if you aren’t sure about what’s happening, you can say, ‘I don’t get it. Let’s read it together and think about what’s happening in this story.’”
 - *Tip:* “Today, I want to teach you that we can learn about great books that we may want to read, from our friends. So after our friend finishes telling us all about the book, we can say to ourselves, ‘Now that I know all about this book, is this a book that I want to read?’ Then I can read that book to my partner and maybe even put it in my baggie.”
- “Readers, today I want to teach you that we can remember all of the big parts of a story, so when we are finished reading, we can say the story back to ourselves. Sometimes when we retell the story to ourselves we notice that we forgot parts. We can go back and read the story again and again, to make sure that we remember all of the big parts of the story.”
 - *Tip:* “We can ask ourselves questions like, ‘What was happening with the characters? Where were they? What were they doing?’”



UNIT SIX

Learning about Ourselves and Our World

Reading for Information

FEBRUARY/MARCH

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: C)

When children enter kindergarten, they are just beginning to explore the wideness of the world, to see that there are wonders much bigger than their own inventions. It's thrilling to watch a five-year-old ask how a rainbow is made or where air comes from, and to then listen, rapt, to our answers. But with those questions comes a big responsibility. As teachers, it rests on our shoulders to continue to pique our little learners' curiosities, giving them experiences that will foster this beyond-the-horizon learning. When we take children to the zoo or the park, or when we give them a role in the weekly household laundry, we are not merely spending time with them or getting work done, we are also teaching them to read and think and learn about the world.

As teachers, we know that children come to kindergarten with a wide variety of backgrounds and because of this, we plan class trips, assemblies, and performances for our classes that we know will delight and engage them. We plan these events both to foster student learning and to create class bonds, but mostly we plan such events as a way of exposing our students to more and more about the world. This unit is designed to teach youngsters how to discover more about the world through information books. Nonfiction reading offers our beginning readers the chance to experience the world through "everyday" exposure to topics that are often farther flung in books than a field-trip perspective might offer. Books take us into the lair of a lion and to the bottom of the ocean—they take us to places we might otherwise never go!

The Common Core State Standards state that kindergartners should be able to “describe familiar people, places, things, and events, and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.” By teaching our youngsters to think and speak in ways that help them make sense of their experiences, using particular words to talk about specific activities or places and modeling thinking as we look at monkeys or folded socks, we not only bolster kids’ knowledge of the world, we also strengthen their technical vocabularies and arm them with the language to present knowledge and ideas. Through building on each others’ ideas, articulating their own ideas, and confirming they have been understood, children are able to demonstrate command of standard English and use of wide-ranging vocabulary. This also helps ELLs develop their understanding of context and content. More broadly, children become self-directed learners.

Nonfiction books won’t be new to your readers, of course. All this year, kids have been reading both fiction and nonfiction texts as they practiced emergent story-book reading, learned about concepts of print, and studied patterns of text in little and big books. However, whereas earlier children will have been mostly focusing on learning to read, now they will expand their focus to include reading to learn. You might issue the invitation in this way: “Readers, for the past five months you’ve been strengthening your reading muscles, getting better and better at learning how to read. And those muscles have gotten so strong that *now* I think you’re ready to use them to read not just books, but the world! For the next few weeks we’re going to be delving into things that we already know a little bit about—and we’re going to learn much more!”

As children begin to read informational texts, you will want to be sure you are supporting readers at all different levels. Children reading Level A–D books will, in general, have some knowledge of what they are reading, since these books tend to focus on basic topics such as cleaning your room, different animals at the zoo, or kinds of transportation. As children move into Levels D and E and above, one of the most dramatic changes is that kids will encounter more topics that are outside of their personal backgrounds.

Setting Up the Nonfiction Library

To prepare for this unit, you’ll want to spruce up your libraries and pull informational picture books from your baskets to use for read-alouds. Place the books you select in full view—perhaps with covers facing out on top of your shelves and around your library—to entice your students with the array of topics they’ll explore. You’ll also want to take out some informational big books and place them in a basket near the library. These will be great resources both for quick warm-ups before shared reading and for demonstrations during your minilessons.

During book shopping, you might want to begin building genre knowledge by teaching your students how to identify nonfiction books. One way to do this is by highlighting how information books often have photographs both on the cover and on the inside pages. You might also conduct a quick book walk of two books, one fiction and one nonfiction,

to show kids how to spot the difference. You could even have kids sort books from a basket into two piles: stories and information texts. It's best to actively engage students so they learn how to make distinctions between these genres on their own.

While your students are still learning to differentiate between the genres, you may need to support their book shopping by informally grouping information books inside of the leveled baskets. To support students who are English language learners, you may want to go a step further and rubber-band together books on the same topic. For example, if you have a ton of books on farm animals, communities, and families in your Level D basket, you could band together farm animal books with other farm animal books, community books with other community books, and so forth. During book shopping, you might guide students to select a stack of banded-together books so that when they read, they see the same content words repeated across several books. In studies, this practice of reading across many books on the same topic has been shown to have a strong influence on vocabulary development.

When looking through your libraries in anticipation of this unit, you'll want to ask yourself, "What can my library teach my kids about the world?" This is an exciting question! So often we set up our libraries with levels at the forefront of our minds. Now we have the opportunity to set them up thinking about richness and teaching opportunities. Knowing your books and the kinds of topics that students are reading will be helpful as you begin to think about your minilessons and the topics you'll reference during your connections and shares. As you prepare for the unit, you might flip through your baskets, reading the titles and previewing the books.

Readers Work Hard to Learn Information

To launch this unit, your first step will be to rally children around the work they will be doing. You might do this by telling your children that each book is a trip. Who doesn't love a trip? You could remind them of school outings they have taken, and you could ask them about trips they have made with their families. Once they are listing the places they have gone and the things they have seen and learned there, you might say something like, "That's the thing about trips—because we go to new places we end up learning new things. That's what books can do for us too!"

You'll want to remind students of how they pay close attention and learn new things when they are on trips or vacations. You could remind them that when they go to a new place they probably don't just look straight ahead. Instead, they look all around them to see what's new about this place, peering at small things closely, squinting their eyes to see far off in the distance. They probably also touch objects, listen to sounds, and try out new activities. For instance, if a student went to the beach for the first time, she would look up and down the beach and then out to the ocean's horizon, trying to learn everything she could about the seaside. The child might touch shells and sand, listen to the waves crashing and birds flying overhead. She would probably jump waves again and again, trying each time to do it just right. Maybe she would build a castle, decorating it

with shells and seaweed. Later, she might rebuild the castle, this time making a moat around it and filling the moat with water. She might dig a big hole, seeing how far she could get, or cover herself up with sand. She'd jump into this new adventure, experiencing and learning about all the things around her.

At the start of this unit, you'll teach readers that the same is true when we actively read and reread information books. We closely study the pictures and imagine the sounds we might hear if we could be inside the photographs. Just like an actual visit to a new place, we learn new words and facts on our reading trips. We wonder and notice and make sense of the world around us.

Once your students are excited about the prospect of "traveling" into books to read and learn, you will need to teach them strategies to facilitate and elevate this work. You might begin by reminding your students that they already know a lot about getting ready to read the information books in their book baggies—and they'll want to draw on that knowledge now. Demonstrate for your students how to use the title to figure out the main topic of a book. "The title of your book is like a sign that tells you where you are going on your trip," you might say. "Book titles help us ready ourselves for the noticing and naming we will need to do on our travels in this new place." Point out that the images on the front and back covers of a book can also give them clues about the book's main idea. As you teach this valuable thinking work, you'll also be reinforcing the Common Core State Standard of identifying the front cover, back cover, and title page of books.

Another way of doing this work is to teach readers to use what they already know about a topic to help them get ready to read. Teach students that as they look at a book's cover, they can say things like, "This reminds me of . . ." or "This is just like . . ." or "I've seen this before . . ." Then, as students read their books, they can use the thoughts they've had about the title, cover, and what they already know about the topic to help them read each page. This strategy is especially useful when kids run into tricky words. Tell readers, "When we get to a word that we don't know, we can look to the picture on the page, but if that doesn't help us we can also think about the title and what we know about the topic of the book to help us figure out the tricky word." You might even model for readers that they can confirm some of their initial thinking about a topic or book as they move from page to page. For instance, if the book a student is reading is titled *The Zoo*, a student might read the title and say, "This reminds me of my trip to the Bronx Zoo! I saw a cobra, monkeys, a camel, and giraffes!" Then as she reads each page, she could use that information to confirm what she reads. She might say, "This page is all about giraffes! I *thought* there would be a page on giraffes!"

You'll want to coach into children's thinking about their books, asking them questions to assess whether they are grasping not only the main idea of a book, but also important details. According to the Common Core State Standards, children at this stage of the year should, with prompting and support, be able to identify the main topic and retell key details of a text. You'll need to scaffold this work a bit. You might, for example, prompt the child who guessed there would be a page about giraffes to share what she notices about the information the author gives us about giraffes, both in the text and in the picture.

Now is a good time to revisit all the work that you and your children did during the pattern book unit. Remind kids that anticipating the next pages in your book helps readers to not only read the words on the next page but to also think about what is the same between one page and another, and about what this particular book is teaching. Some kids can do this work on the first read, but many will do it on a second or third read. You may want to use shared reading to support students who continue to struggle to identify the pattern and to comprehend that all information books teach us something. Model how the pattern often holds the meaning of the book, as it conveys a single idea over and over, and how you think about the idea within the pattern as a way to guess what words may change when the pattern breaks. You can also teach children that if they know the pattern of most pages, they will be able to read that part smoothly. However, be sure to teach them, too, that wise nonfiction readers know to check to see that what they are reading makes sense, sounds right, and looks right, especially when the pattern changes.

If students are having difficulty drawing on prior knowledge as they read, you may need to explicitly teach them ways to detect whether they have familiarity with a topic. Chances are that most of your children will know something about the topics of some of the books you put out—ones that focus on cats and dogs, sports, parks, the weather. But some of your books will be on topics that children know little or nothing about, and you'll want your students to not only spot that difference, but also feel comfortable acknowledging it. Stephanie Jones's work has shown that sometimes children feel like they have to act as if they know something about a certain topic or have prior experiences with things even if this isn't the case. Many of us can recall a time when a student said something like, "I've seen a monkey before. My mom gave me one as a pet for my birthday when I was little." Jones demonstrates the power of teachers modeling disconnections in front of students to show them it's okay to admit when you have not had experiences with something before. You might demonstrate for readers how you can study the cover of a book and say, "This is different than books I've read before," or "I haven't seen this before," or "I really don't know much about . . . but hope to learn . . ." When students don't have a direct personal link to a text, we can teach them that just like in the previous unit, they can be their own teachers. They can learn about new topics all on their own by carefully studying the pages of their books. Essentially, we want students to know that when readers work hard to gather new words and facts from the pages of our books, we can learn about things we never knew existed.

As part of this work, you might teach students to closely study a book's illustrations to learn about the topic. Show students how to put their fingers on the photographs of each page and point to the important action or object that dominates the picture. When you model this, do a think-aloud, saying something like, "What's going on here?"

You will learn a lot by studying the mistakes children make as they read. For instance, if a child says that one part of the book is about *bee* mouths, but the word on the page is *butterfly*, you can guess that the child is struggling because she is only looking at the first letter of the word. You will want to make sure that your readers are cross-checking

meaning—that they are using the picture and what they know about the rest of the text along with visual information, like the first and last letter of a word, to help them read with accuracy.

Once a reader gets to the end of a book, you may want to teach that child to reread the title and say back across his fingers some of the new facts he learned. As you near the end of this part, we suggest you set kids up to share their new learning and thinking with their reading partners. By this point, they will have learned a lot and will feel good about showing off their new knowledge. Teach partnerships to share their learning by opening to specific pages, pointing to photographs and teaching newly acquired facts or words. Just as children share all about what they saw on a trip to the zoo or the park, you'll teach your students to share the highlights of their reading journeys with their partners.

This partnership work supports the speaking and listening sections of the Common Core State Standards, which suggest that at this stage of their learning, children should be able to “participate in collaborative conversations about kindergarten topics and texts, with peers and adults in small and larger groups.” You will need to check in with partnerships, making sure that they “follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).” Meanwhile, children should be able to carry on and “continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.” If you see conversations petering out, you may need to teach children some prompts for keeping talk going (such as “I can add on to that . . .” or “Why do you think that?” or “How does that work?”).

You can use read-aloud time to teach kids ways to talk with one another about what they are learning. It would be wise to also use this time to teach students ways to question one another as a way of getting children to say more about their thinking and learning. After one partner has already shared a fact or two, you might teach students to ask, “What else did you learn about . . . ?” or “What’s the most important thing to know about . . . ?” Such inquiries will help children extend and build onto their thinking, as well as supporting the Common Core State Standard of asking and answering questions about key details in a text.

Nonfiction Readers See More than the Text on the Page

As you move into this next part of the unit, your students will continue to build upon both the monitoring-for-meaning strategies you’ve taught them and the main idea work they began in the first part of this unit. In this next portion of teaching (and learning), you’ll show students not only how to collect new vocabulary and facts as they read page after page, but also how to synthesize the various pieces of their learning in such a way that they begin to develop big ideas around topics. If you think this is too sophisticated for kindergarten, bear in mind that your teaching throughout the whole year has prepared them for this. It isn’t that children will necessarily wow you with their insights—that’s not the point. What matters is that they begin to formulate ideas—and to understand that having thoughts about books is work that readers do again and again.

Before you move into teaching your students how readers synthesize words and pictures when reading informational texts, you may want to revisit all of the word-solving strategies that you have been teaching throughout the year. You will want to do this in a way that prepares them for the domain-specific language that they are likely to encounter. You might say, “Readers, when you are reading for information, you may come across words that you have never seen before or even heard. For example if you are reading a book about flowers, there might be special words about flower parts, or if you are reading about the ocean, you may find words that scientists who study the ocean use.” Then you will need to teach your students specific strategies to help them solve these words. You might teach them to stop at such words to ask, “What might this word mean? Are there any clues in the picture? In the other words on the page?” You will then need to show them how to find the answers to these questions. This work will help your readers to better understand the content they read, and it aligns to the Common Core State Standard that requires kindergarten readers to “ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.”

One word-solving strategy you can teach your readers is to look closely at the visuals in a book to take a guess at what an unknown word means. For example, if a sentence says, “Frost is water,” and there is a picture of a flower with ice crystals on it, you could demonstrate how to say some words to talk about and describe what you see in the picture: “Oh, I see like a little bit of snow on the flower. It is stuck to the parts of the flower, but it is not snowing around the flower.” Then you could use this description to say, “Hey, maybe this word here means something like snow stuck to a flower when it is not snowing.” Another word-solving strategy is to teach readers to search a picture and find which parts of it teach the words and which parts of it teach other things.

As you move beyond vocabulary to teach students to engage in the big work of this part, it will be important to emphasize how partnerships can work together to study the pictures in their books. They may do this by pointing and labeling parts, commenting on what they see, and saying how parts in the picture go together. This heightens students’ awareness of the big idea we hope to convey in this part—that readers see more than text on the page. You might also teach students to take turns describing the pictures in their books to their partner or friends. Nudge them to think, “What part of the picture would I describe first? What seems to be the most important part? What do I want to say about this?”

As you get kids to think about the pages in their books, prompt them to look between the pictures and the words. The Common Core State Standards suggest that kindergartners should be able to not only read the images but also read between the text and the picture on the page. Nudge kids to “bring the picture to life” both by observing the action in the image and by taking note of what is happening in the text. You may wish to suggest that students start by reading the words and then using the pictures to add on to their understanding. For example, after reading a page that says, “Birds live in trees. They make nests,” a student can look to the picture and ask, “What do I see happening here? How are they doing that?” This will help the child to not only process

what the text of this particular page conveys, but also infer additional information about what goes into nest making. According to the Common Core State Standards, kindergartners should be able to ask and answer questions both in partnerships and as they read, so you will want to nudge your young readers to continually pose and address questions such as “How does this work?” and “Why does this happen?”

You might ramp up this work for partnerships by teaching them more advanced ways of inspecting photographs together. One way to do this is to demonstrate how you can read a page and then talk about how the picture on the page helped you to add on to the information you gathered from the text on the page. For instance, if the text says, “Monkeys climb trees” and the photograph paired with that text depicts a monkey hanging from a tree limb with just one hand, you could share that even though the words just teach the reader that monkeys climb trees, the *picture* teaches the reader that monkeys have strong arms that help them as they climb and hang from trees. Teach students to respond to the text by saying things like, “The words say _____. I also see _____ in the picture and it makes me think _____.”

It is important to model this kind of extension work inside your read-aloud. Demonstrate by thinking aloud about how you connected your thinking from facts gathered from the text with information you gleaned from text features such as photographs or diagrams to grow your ideas about your topic. Then ask students to do the same kind of work when they turn and talk with their partner. These opportunities will scaffold students’ independence so that they can do this higher-level thinking work inside of their own books.

Highlighting rereading at this point in the unit will be important for your young readers. While students already know that rereading books makes their reading smoother and stronger, you’ll now want to emphasize the power of rereading new words and sentences as a way of actively learning about a topic. Readers can work with their partners to do some of this rereading work together, showing one another parts that confused them and how they reread to work through those spots.

Nonfiction Readers Can Read More than One Book about a Topic to Compare and Contrast

In this final part of the unit, you will want to teach children two big things: how to combine their learning from more than one book and how to compare and contrast books. Looking across books like this opens up multiple perspectives to our students, allowing them to look for commonalities and differences across the information they are gaining as they read.

You might want to teach partnerships to play the “Same and Different” game. To do this, one partner selects a book from her book baggie and then asks the other partner to dig into his baggie and find a book on a similar topic. You can teach kids to say something like, “I have a book that’s about _____. Do you have a book that is the same?” Once partners have found similar books, they can look through them,

flipping page by page, and search for facts and images that are the same and things that are different across both books. As they notice similarities and differences, they might say things like, “Look at this page. This page is just like your page on ____.” Or, “Our books are both on ____ but the pages are different. My pages go like ____ and yours go like ____.” To get even more reading mileage out of this partner game, you can teach students to reread lines and even whole parts to each other as they talk about the information they have learned. Kids might take turns reading lines or parts together.

Once kids are able to talk with a lens toward similarities and differences across books, you may want to push them to dig deeper into compare-and-contrast work. You might teach your most sophisticated readers to think about what the author of each book is trying to teach. You could demonstrate how the teaching that is done through the pictures and the teaching that is done through the words may be the same or it may be different. Using a page or two from a nonfiction shared reading experience, you might show students how to say, “The picture teaches me ____, but/and the words on this page say ____.”

Next, you might teach partners to use the patterns in their books to look for similar information and ideas that are in their books. For instance, partners might notice that they both have books on the zoo. One book might say something like, “Giraffes are tall animals. They have long necks. Birds are short animals. They have small beaks.” The book about zoo animals may have a pattern like, “This is a giraffe. It uses its neck to eat. This is a bird. It uses its beak to eat.” Show partners how to talk about these pages by asking, “What did the authors want us to learn about the zoo animals? Let’s look at what is the same and different about the information on the pages.” This way you set up the partners to look across the texts and begin to notice things that will help them as they carry on in their own books. Your students will be inferring and synthesizing information as they engage with comparing and contrasting across their books.

In all of this work, your students will have been looking at what different books and authors can teach about the same topics. Depending on your library, those topics might be broader or more focused. If the books for this unit come only from your library, you may find that your topics are broad ones such as animals, places, and family. If, however, you can combine libraries with your colleagues, you might have more focused topics such as insects and mammals, cities and countries, or siblings and parents. Teach your readers to lay books side by side and then ask themselves, “What did I learn about the topic from this one and what did I learn about the topic from this other one?” Essentially, you’ll be teaching kids that when it comes to learning it is important to listen to many voices. When you listen to many voices you are layering multiple thoughts and perspectives to say more about a topic. After reading several books on a single topic, your kindergarten students can meet with their partners to share all that they are learning. They can move from book to book, saying a sentence or two about the learning they did in each one.

Word Study/Phonics, Interactive Writing, and Shared Reading

At this time in the year in word study, you'll want to begin to introduce some simple spelling patterns (*-at, -an, -in, -it, -op, -ot*) to support students who are reading or getting ready to read levels C/D/E. Students at these levels will need to be able to combine the meaning of the story with their knowledge of simple spelling patterns to problem-solve words. You might begin this work by doing some phonemic awareness activities. According to the Common Core State Standards, students should be able to blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-syllable words. Show students a picture of a simple word like *cap* and have students break up the word into onset and rime: /c/ and /ap/. The ability to hear the rime in the word will support the work they do with spelling patterns.

Your teaching might then move toward sorting words that have the same spelling patterns. Help students notice that all of the words in one column have the same part. You will also want to show students how knowing these patterns can help them know lots of other words. According to Marie Clay's research, it is not necessary for students to learn every word on a list of spelling patterns. Instead, they should know many different spelling patterns so they can use these to get to lots of new words. Teach students how to manipulate letters in words to make new words. For example, you might give out magnetic letters needed to make all the *-at* words or do this work as a whole class at the easel. Point out that by changing the first letter in the word and keeping the last part, children can make many new words. It is helpful to use phrases like, "If you can write the word 'sat,' you can also write the word 'mat.'" As you teach spelling patterns, you will also want to make sure children remember to transfer their knowledge of these spelling patterns into their own reading and writing. At the same time, you will probably want to continue adding one high-frequency word a week to the word wall and providing children with time to practice with partners or in small groups, so children are working on words they still need to learn. All children can practice words in the same way, but the words may be different, based on what your assessments show each child needs.

You may find it helpful to support your teaching about information books with interactive writing. When you are writing together, sharing the pen with students in small groups, you may want to write the kinds of texts that students are encountering in their reading. This means that you will write books with students that have the text characteristics of Level C or D information books (lower or higher if need be). One sort of typical text that children in your class are reading may go like this: "Dogs have fur. Dogs have four legs. Dogs have ears." Another may read, "On rainy days, we like to jump in puddles. On rainy days, we like to carry umbrellas. On rainy days, we like to drink the rain," and so on. These texts will have a language pattern that repeats, known high-frequency words, pictures that match the text, simple sentences, and familiar concepts. Considering the text elements as they create texts will make students more tuned in to them when they read. If you opt to write texts like these during interactive writing, plan to complete them not in one day, but across several days.

If you decide to teach . . .	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K— Pinnell & Fountas</i>
Phonological Awareness: Blending Syllables Hearing Beginning, Middle, and Ending Sounds	Adapt 4-27 to 4-30 (pp. 123–124) 4-14 (p. 116) 4-18, 4-20 (pp. 118–120)	Blending Syllables PA 16 (p. 165) Hearing Beginning, Middle, and Ending Sounds PA 17 and PA 18 (pp. 169–176)
Letter Knowledge: Letter Formation	Adapt 4-28 to 4-31 (pp. 123–125) 5-6 to 5-8 (pp. 157–158)	LK16 (p. 271) and LK19 (p. 283)
Letter/Sound Relationships: Beginning Sounds and Ending Sounds	5-10 (p. 159)	LS2–LS5 (pp. 313–328)
Simple CVC patterns (-an and -ay)	5-12 to 5-14 (pp. 160–162)	SP3 and SP4 (pp. 351–358)
High-Frequency Words	pp. 182–183	HF3 and HF4 (pp. 381–388)



UNIT SEVEN

Readers Are Brave and Resourceful When We Encounter Hard Words and Tricky Parts in Our Books

MARCH/APRIL

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: C/D)

Ever since the fall, you've been featuring strategies for solving words in your instruction. It's as if each of the ensuing units has been an extension of the one that came before it, offering more time for children to control the particular print strategies they need to read texts at their just-right reading level. By this point, it is our hope that most children are able to read books at or above Level C with a degree of comfort. That is, they match words one-to-one with crisp pointing under words, they check the picture to help figure out what the words say, they recognize sight words from page to page and book to book, and they are able to hold onto the patterns in their texts and to use these as a support when they read. Your kindergartners will need to read a lot at these levels to internalize these behaviors and strategies. According to the Common Core State Standards, acquiring the habit of reading independently with high volume is essential to students' future success. So encourage your young readers to shop for a lot of books—they should have at least ten books at Levels A–E to hold for the week in addition to their shared reading materials.

Research suggests that typical readers need only spend up to a few weeks in Level A/B books before moving to higher levels. With this in mind, we've planned this unit of study to offer support for children who may be encountering new challenges as they move into new levels of texts. This unit is designed both to teach children more strategies for word solving, cross-checking, self-correcting, and meaning-making, and to model for them the resilience of careful readers. We want

children to know that careful readers don't give up, pass over, or ignore hard parts in their books. In fact, careful readers use everything at their disposal to figure out the hard parts in their texts. In this unit, you'll teach children to do many of the things suggested in the Common Core State Standards' foundational skills—to demonstrate knowledge of one-to-one correspondence and of letter/sound relationships, to use common short vowel spelling patterns, and to read common high-frequency words by sight.

If we return to the superhero metaphor for a moment, we might now tell our children that even superheroes are known to face challenges or to get stuck when something is hard. When this happens, superheroes rise to the occasion, using all the powers they have to get themselves through the hard times. "This reminds me of many of you," you might begin. "As superhero readers, I've watched you work so hard to figure out tricky words. I've listened as you and your partners have pondered confusing parts of your books. I've seen many times when you haven't given up. Let's spend the next few weeks making sure that everyone in this room feels strong as a reader, even during those hard times."

During this unit, as children read privately or in partnerships, you'll conduct individual conferences, guided reading groups to help children integrate sources of information as they read, and strategy lessons to address the diverse needs of your readers. You will, of course, find yourself pulling together groups of children reading at the same level who need extra support to negotiate the level. You may also pull students who read *across* levels yet share a common need. For example, children reading at Levels C, D, and E who are focused on figuring out the words in their books may forget to think about what would make sense and to then look at the letters and parts of words to confirm their guesses. Additionally, shared reading will be a time when, with your scaffolding, students practice the strategies that they are already using and the ones they will need to use to read successfully at higher levels. By pulling together lots of small groups, teaching strategic shared reading lessons, and coaching students as they read, you will capitalize on this crucial time in kindergarten reading, a time when kindergarten readers have recently moved up in levels (certainly one or two or more since January) and are ready to soar.

As you plan instruction for this unit, you'll want to think about the strategy needs your children have by looking at assessment data and the corresponding analysis to see what they can and can't yet do. Many teachers find it helps to have a whole-class checklist out while conducting running records so they can plan for individual and small-group instruction at the same time. Your checklist might contain categories such as "monitors," "preview the text and uses visual information," "comments on meaning," and so on. Also, you'll want to investigate children's current instructional levels to determine what strategies they will need to read the next levels with proficiency. You might want to look closely at students' spelling assessment data, think about what you are teaching during the word study portion of your day, and help children use what they know to problem-solve tricky words in their reading.

Readers Notice When There Is a Tricky Part and We Take Action

During this portion of the unit, your intentions are twofold. You'll introduce and teach the strategies children need to read proficiently as they move to a higher text level, and you'll teach children to use these strategies with some flexibility. In other words, you'll do your best to help children avoid the "one-trick pony" syndrome. Often a reader will have lots of success using a particular strategy, say, checking the picture, and will use it again and again—even if it fails to lead him to read the text accurately, at which point the child is at a loss for what to do. In this unit, then, you'll teach children to draw on *all* the strategies and skills they've learned this year so that they can fix *any* problem or challenge they encounter in their texts. Some teachers use the metaphor of a backpack of strategies to convey this idea. "Readers, by now your backpacks are bulging with word-solving strategies," you might say. "When you come to a tricky word, remember to reach into your backpacks and find the one that works. You might have to try one, then another, then another until, voilà, one works!" This instruction—and this unit overall—supports the Common Core State Standards, which call on us to teach children a variety of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words, particularly in the foundational skills, and to be able to ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

During this part, you'll want to demonstrate in your minilessons over and over how readers use a whole backpack of strategies to tackle tricky words. You might model from a text with pictures that don't help with a tricky word. Next, you'll model looking at the first letter of the word. Ask yourself, "Does this make sense?" and shake your head, no. After this, you could model making another attempt, this time looking at the *sentence* and asking, "Does this word sound right in a sentence?" Stumble again. Finally, demonstrate for children how to think about the whole book, considering all that's happening, pointing out that often doing so provides enough hints to successfully determine a tricky word.

When you replay all the steps, you might say something like, "Readers, did you notice that I got to this tricky word and checked the picture, like I always do? The picture didn't help by itself, so I looked at the word's beginning letters. Did you hear how I guessed 'pieces' but when I reread the sentence, I found that 'pieces' didn't make sense? So then I looked at the whole sentence but that didn't help either. *Finally*, instead of giving up or getting frustrated, I tried again, thought about the whole book, and figured it out. Did you see how I tried lots of different things until I landed on something that worked? That's what I hope you do as readers!"

You might also draw on a chart of possible word-solving strategies during your minilessons. Again, make a show of struggling with a tricky word. This time, instead of voicing over the work you are doing, have children coach you by referring to the chart. They can call out tips or check off what strategies they notice you using on smaller versions of the chart, and then can turn and tell a partner what else you might try.

After several days of introducing a few strategies, tell your readers that they need to carry all their strategies with them to any book they read. Although you will have taught these strategies several times now, ultimately some of your readers will need additional

reminders. For example, if children have mastered scanning the picture and using the first part of the word, coach them to also check the end of the word. Gather your Level D readers and beyond who are still pointing under each word and coach them to read with their eyes so that their reading sounds more like talking. As students move beyond Level D they will need to start looking across the entire word. Coach them to not only think about what is happening in the text, but to say the first part of the word and think about what would make sense. Children who look across a word and only say each individual letter's sound need to "put the sounds together" and, again, think about what would make sense. Your workshop will be loaded with quick, small groups each and every day that will help children practice putting these strategies into action.

Your higher-level readers may encounter word features (word endings, compound words, or CVC words) or high-frequency words (*come, where, through*) that you have not studied as a class. Guided reading is a perfect place to introduce these new features and words. You can give readers cards with their new high-frequency words (or features) and encourage them to practice reading these. Then you might have them look for these in their guided reading text and again in any new texts that they read. After your book introduction to the guided reading text, you will spend time coaching each child as he or she reads the text. Make sure to give lean, consistent prompts that match the level of support the reader needs. After you have heard each child read, reconvene the group. As the children talk about the book, assess their comprehension and decide what to teach in order for this group to become independent readers of this new level of text. Students should keep their guided reading books in their baggies and continue to practice them all week.

As the rest of your class is moving forward, inevitably some students will be stuck at Levels A and B. Often these children struggle to use the initial sounds in words and tend to over-rely on pictures. In addition, they have not built a sight vocabulary large enough to enable them to move to the next level. These children will need your attention. Plan to give them a lot of guided reading instruction in Level C books. Their baggies, then, should be transitional ones, full of A/B books they can read independently as well as C books they've received during guided reading. You may find it helpful to build up your A/B readers' vocabulary by creating mini-text sets to support these children's particular needs. Students who need help with high-frequency words might read several books with the same repetitive words and patterns, and those who need help with vocabulary in general might read several books about a particular topic so that they encounter the same words again and again, thus committing those to memory. Reading several books with the same words also helps children learn how to use these words in context.

Although we often pair readers homogeneously so that they can share leveled books, you may opt to place your transitional A/B readers in a partnership with a solid C reader. When such partnerships meet, they will be reading C level books chorally or the A/B reader will echo his or her partner. This helps the A/B reader negotiate the challenges of the C level book with support. When teaching an A/B reader, whether in a conference or a small group, you will want to ask, "How did you know that word was _____?" The child

will probably say, “Because I see it in the picture.” You’ll then want to respond, “How else do you know that it’s _____?” This prompts the child to use another strategy.

During this part of the unit, design your minilessons so that they open up how partners can help each other tackle tricky parts. Perhaps what’s slowing them down is a lack of fluency. In this case, partners can help each other read parts more smoothly or with more expression; they can make their voices sound excited or scared or surprised. You can remind partners, too, that sometimes books sound different than talk. For example, if the text reads, “Up goes the elephant. Up goes the lion,” point out that when people talk it sounds more like, “The elephant went up. So did the lion.” In the book version, there’s a pattern in the language (“*Up* goes . . . *Up* goes . . .”), which a reader can emphasize by making her voice sound peppy. If the book takes a turn to “*Down* goes . . .,” the reader can make her voice go down. Partners could read a book together, then, and plan out how their voices will go. They can also try to read a part different ways, seeing which one sounds best.

Readers Reread with Purpose

Over the course of the year, you’ve given children purposes for rereading. Now, it might serve you well to suggest that rereading is actually an opportunity for rethinking a tricky part of a text. You can nurture this by having children meet with their partner before they read, look through the books, and plan how they’re going to reread their books. They might place a ready-made bookmark inside the book to remind them of why they are rereading (e.g., “I’m rereading this book with a smooth voice”). It won’t be surprising if you find that early in the week, when kids have just shopped for new books, many of them will choose to reread to figure out tricky words. This means that on Monday and Tuesday, many of your conferences will feature instruction on word-solving strategies. After Wednesday or so, most children will be rereading their books for the third, fourth, or fifth time, and may have different-purpose bookmarks in their books. Throughout this unit, you will want to make sure there is a balance of methods in your conferences. Some conferences will teach students how to problem-solve words, while some will coach students to use the strategies you have already taught. Some students will need more demonstration of the strategies in your conferences, while others will need more prompting.

If you see that your children are still not rereading with purpose, you’ll want to remind them that careful readers reread with a particular goal in mind. Readers reread to figure out confusing parts, or scan our books for the tricky words that we’ve figured out and rehearse these words before we reread. Other times, we reread to find information or details we didn’t notice before, or reread with a specific focus in mind. For example, “This time, I’m going to read and think about what I’m learning about the character.” Sometimes, to understand what the book is about, we reread thinking about the title of the book and how the pages go together. At this point you may want to share new reasons for rereading, such as figuring out why certain parts of a book are particularly meaningful.

You may want to revisit how to reread while paying attention to expression and fluency. Children can choose to do this work alone or with a partner. Working in pairs, children might decide to reread by putting their two voices together to make one smooth voice. They may seesaw read, one partner reading a page and the other reading the next page. You can teach your readers that they can make their voices reflect the way they imagine a character's voice. You can also suggest that your children try reading their books like you read to the class, during which they read a page, then turn the page around and show it to their partner. Don't hesitate to invent ways for your readers to reread their books. Teach your children to make plans for how they will work together as partners. They can refer to the charts hung around the room to remind them of all the choices they have. It is important that partner time is for reading and talking together, asking and answering questions, and seeking help. The Common Core State Standards devote an entire section to information clarification in the Speaking and Listening standards.

Partners Help Each Other When We Encounter Tricky Parts

To wrap up this unit, turn your children's attention to how partners can support each other, both with words and overall comprehension. Remind readers that they can also get ready for partnership work by considering their partner's likes, needs, and things they might work on together. They can mark places in their books where they think to themselves, "My partner would like/love/enjoy this part," "I want to show my partner how I figured this out," "I want to ask my partner about this because it makes me wonder," and so on. They can also mark parts in their books where they need help. They can remind each other to use the title, the pictures, and the words on the pages to figure out what their books are really about. Partners can coach one another through hard parts, offering reminders to use strategies and to be brave.

Partners can prompt each other to discuss strategies, asking, "How else might you have figured that out?" or "How else would you know that?" Partners can listen carefully to each other's reading to make sure the words sound right and make sense and to be sure they agree with each other's interpretations. If children are simply retelling the story, partners can support each other to figure it out. They can say, "Let's read this together and think about how all these pages go together." They can think about what's changed in the book from the beginning to the end. They might ask each other, "Did the person in my book make important decisions? Take care of someone or something? Make the world a better place?" Partners can consider these questions and grow ideas about the message of the book. Partners can also share their triumphs, placing Post-its on tricky passages explaining what they did to discover meaning.

For some of your children the tricky parts of the book are not the print or graphophonics, but vocabulary. We've all encountered children who can sound out a word, but when asked "What do you think that word means?" they cannot answer. Partners can support each other by talking before, during, and after reading. First they can

talk about their predictions, looking through the pictures and guessing what will happen in the book. As partners read together they can do a number of things to support each other with unfamiliar vocabulary. If one partner knows the word, he or she might point out how the picture shows the word. If neither child knows it, they might choose their best guess of what the word might mean, or a word in their native language if they are English language learners. Teachers can support partners who are working on vocabulary by creating sets of books with similar vocabulary, reading aloud from book baggies to the whole class or small groups, or by partnering students in the early stages of learning English with students in later stages.

A guided reading session aimed at helping children move up a level typically starts with getting children to think about the meaning of a book. You'll draw their attention to the cover and some pages of the book to consider what it's going to be about. You'll want to introduce unfamiliar **key** vocabulary words and have students practice saying and locating the words in the text. Next, you might focus on the structure of the text (especially if the book language is different than the way children talk). Support students with structure by using the exact language of the text and by rephrasing students' ideas into the language of the text. For example, if a child says, "The bear is running," and the text says, "Little Bear ran through the woods," say back to the child, "Yes, Little Bear ran through the woods." Finally, move to the visual information that will be tricky for *these* readers. This might include pointing out that the print is now two lines instead of one or that print appears above the picture on one page and below the picture on the next. You might introduce new/different punctuation that appears in the text as well.

Read-Aloud

Read-alouds provide the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the use of your strategy toolbox. Because you will have just finished the nonfiction reading unit, you can use read-alouds to model these important strategies. You'll want to give children opportunities to ask plenty of "Why?" questions to deepen their thinking and foster curiosity. Choosing sets of nonfiction books on a topic will enable children to encounter new vocabulary in multiple texts, and help them compare and contrast information. All of this will prepare them to tackle increasingly complex nonfiction texts. Through read-aloud, you will continue to model vital strategies such as finding the main idea, asking and answering questions, and figuring out new vocabulary. The Common Core State Standards identify these tools as important skills for kindergarten students. All of this work with nonfiction will also pay off in writing. Since your children will be writing all-about books, be sure to notice the craft and elaboration strategies that the information texts illustrate. This will help your students see a myriad of ways to write with volume and voice.

You'll want to read aloud books that support this unit of study in both writing and character, the focus of next month's reading unit. The Common Core State Standards dictate that students should be able to identify characters, settings, and major events

in stories. Additionally, the CCSS ask that students be able to compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories. Beginning this kind of work will prepare students to continue it in their own independent reading. You'll probably want to read several books about one character to help children see how readers think across texts. Nudge children to get to know their favorite characters in depth, steering them to look at characters' actions and behaviors as well as their feelings. You might have kids act out different parts, noticing the patterns and similarities among characters in different books.

Word Study/Phonics and Shared Reading

During this month, your shared reading can play an integral part in bridging word study with your reading workshop. You'll continue to support students using various sources of information to make sense, while reading texts at their level and slightly higher (Levels C, D, E, and F). You may also begin to work on the skills they will need to move up to the next level. The goal is to help children use all sources of information independently when they encounter difficulty. You can check on this and support your kids by saying to them, "Does that make sense? How do you know?" You can ask these questions when their reading makes sense and when it does not. This way, children will learn to monitor themselves for coherence. Using clear prompts during shared reading, like the ones you use in guided reading, will help children problem solve independently.

You will also model how to use print strategies to problem solve hard parts and words in texts. Reinforce the strategies that kids are using and will need to move up to higher levels. You may begin to focus on using short vowels, consonant blends, and digraphs. You might have kids "guess the covered word." Help them be resourceful as they do this, cross-checking their guesses for both meaning and spelling. That is, a child guessing the final word in the sentence "Look at the _____" by looking at a picture of a feathered bird might guess "chicken." But the word is, in fact, "hen." The child will have to look at the letters in the word to cross-check her original guess. Similarly, if a child is looking at the sentence "Look at the hen" and is asked to find the picture that matches the word, the child may recognize the letter "H" and guess "hat." In each scenario, encourage kids to give many guesses, rather than a single perfect one.

You can use the information gathered from your spelling inventories to decide on spelling features and word-solving strategies to highlight, and you could refer to the chart on the next page as a guide.

To support the work you're doing with spelling patterns, continue to work on blending onset and rimes during phonemic awareness work. For example, you might say /c/ (onset) and /an/ (rime), and have children say the word *can*. To work on hearing and substituting sounds, you could say a word and have them change the first sound. For example, "Change the first sound in *pot* to /h/." Continue to introduce simple CVC spelling patterns, high-frequency words, and letter/sound relationships, while studying them in the contexts of shared reading and interactive writing.

If you decide to teach . . .	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K— Pinnell & Fountas</i>
Phonological Awareness: Hearing/Blending Rimes Hearing/Substituting Sounds Syllables	4-6 to 4-11 (pp. 111–115) 4-14 (p. 116)	PA19 (p. 177) PA21 (p. 185) PA16 (p. 165)
Letter Knowledge: Uppercase and Lowercase Letter Formation	4-22 to 4-24 (pp. 120–122)	LK17 and LK18 (pp. 275–282), Uppercase and Lowercase LK16 (p. 271) and LK19 (p. 283), Letter Formation
Letter/Sound Relationships: Beginning and Ending Sounds	4-18, 4-20 (pp. 118–119) Adapt 4-28 to 4-31 (pp. 123–125) 5-6 to 5-8 (pp. 157–158) 5-10 (p. 159)	LS2–LS5 (pp. 313–328)
Simple Spelling Patterns CVC	5-12 to 5-14 (pp. 160–162)	SP3 and SP4 (pp. 351–358)
High-Frequency Words	pp. 182–183	H3 and HF4 (pp. 381–388)

You can apply the strategies and spelling patterns that you are teaching children in word study and use these in interactive writing. You will also want children to look through a word to see if, in fact, their writing looks correct. In writing texts like this, call on certain groups of children to write various parts of the texts, depending on children's repertoire of reading and writing strategies and their knowledge of letter/sound correspondence. As always, this whole interactive writing time will be only about seven to ten minutes at the most.

Celebration

As you bring this unit to a close, you might have a celebration in which children share new words with visitors. Perhaps you'll invite another kindergarten class into your room and have the kids in your class read their favorite books to that class. You could also invite other people from within the school or children's families. The choice is yours.

Additional Resources

This unit again highlights print strategies, so you may want to look back at Unit Five and the statement preceding those teaching points. The important thing to remember as you approach this unit is that sometimes during a nonfiction reading unit, such as the one just before this, children's volume of reading slacks off. They spend a lot of time reacting to pictures of cute baby hamsters—all nine of them—and sometimes

neglect to get into the swing of reading along through words and sentences, book after book. So as you approach this unit, aim to support print work on the run, as kids progress through their baggies of books. Make sure they are reading something like ten books a day, and make sure their reading sounds smooth, like talk.

You'll be watching kids' abilities to draw on a whole repertoire of problem-solving strategies when they come to unfamiliar words. If you see some kids who sound out words phonetically but with no semblance to any word in the English language, those kids should cause you concern. They are over-relying on phonics and under-relying on meaning. You'll want to add some minilessons or small-group work on making sure that books make sense, and saying "Oh no!" when they don't. Your readers who are reading Level E books will be coming to unfamiliar vocabulary as they read, and these readers will not be able to guess at the word—they won't know it. These children, then, will need help looking all the way across the words. Look ahead to some of the early first-grade units for some small-group help with these readers.

One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

Part One: Readers Notice When There Is a Tricky Part and We Take Action

- "Today I want to teach you that readers act when we read a part that does not make sense. We are brave. We search the pictures on a page and across the book. We check the word to make sure what we are reading matches the words and letters on the page. Then we think about what is happening and what strategy we can use to help us check the word. We ask ourselves, 'What strategy can I use now to help me check the word?'"
- "Strong readers don't give up when we run across something difficult. We take action! We say to ourselves, 'Which strategy can I use to help me figure out this hard part?' One strategy we can use is to look at the picture. Today I want to teach you that when we read, we can't just look at the picture like this (glance); instead, readers scan the whole picture and think, 'What's happening here?' or 'What's this about?' Then we think about how everything in the picture goes together to tell what's happening in the story and how we can use that to help us figure out the hard part."
- "Readers, today I want to remind you that when we come to word that is tricky, we don't just stop. We are brave and take action. We remember the words we just read and look at the pictures. We ask ourselves, 'What is happening in this part of the story?' Then we go back and reread, getting ready to say the first part of the tricky word and thinking, 'What would make sense here?'"

- ▶ *Tip:* “When readers get ready to read a tricky word in a book, we look at the picture and also think about what the characters may be saying to each other. Then we use that to help them with the tricky words on the page.”
- ▶ *Tip:* “When readers get ready to read a tricky word in a book, we think about what’s happening in the story. Then we make a guess and we search the first and last letters of the tricky word to see if it looks like the word we are saying and makes sense in the story.”
- “Sometimes our books are tricky and we lose track as to what is going on in our stories. Readers can always think about how we sound as we read by asking ourselves, ‘What are the words in this book saying? Does this book have a pattern? Does this part sound like people talking? Is someone telling this part of the story?’ We can reread a few pages thinking about what is happening.”
- ▶ *An example:* “In the book *Worm Smells*, the words say, ‘Worm sees a flower. “Smells nice,” says Worm. Worm sees a pine cone. “Smells nice,” says Worm.’ As you search the pictures and words, you should notice this book is about Worm smelling things. You also notice that on some pages someone is telling about what Worm smells and other pages tell what Worm is saying.”
- “Readers make sure the words we are saying match the letters/word in the book. We check the beginning of the word, the ending of the word. We know that if we read words that do not match the letters of the words in the book, we may change the information the author has in the book.”
- “Readers think about what is happening in the story to make sure that we stay on track with the words on the page so we do not get confused. As we read, we look across the whole page, first checking the picture and making sure what we have read makes sense with what is happening in the picture. Then we read the words on the page, making sure the words we are reading match the author’s words, and what we are reading makes sense. We ask ourselves, ‘Do these words fit with what’s happening in the story?’”
- “Readers work hard to figure out words. We don’t give up after one try. One thing that I want to teach you is, if one strategy doesn’t work, try another one! Readers are flexible and try different strategies if the first one doesn’t work.”

Part Two: Readers Reread with Purpose

- “Today I want to teach you that readers reread! When we notice that the words we just read don’t make sense or don’t connect with what came before, we stop and say, ‘Wait! This does not go with what I just read. What’s happening?’ Then we say, ‘Oh, I can go back to where the book made sense and reread those pages. That will give me a better idea of what the words say on this page where it didn’t make sense.’”
 - *Tip:* “When readers reread, we look at the pictures and say what is happening in the story. Then we turn to the next page and read using the pictures and the words and ask ourselves ‘What’s happening on this page?’ Then we think, ‘How does what’s happening on this page go with the pages I just read?’ Finally we put the ideas together. We keep rereading until the pages are going together and making sense. Then we read on.”
- “Readers pay close attention to the words in the book and what is happening. Sometimes readers lose track of what they are reading or their reading just doesn’t sound right. Another thing that you can do is reread the sentence or page that you are on and think about how the words we are saying sound. We ask ourselves, ‘Does this sound like the words that would be in this book?’ Then we check the word to be sure we aren’t adding in our own words and changing the story.”
 - *Tip:* “When readers are confused, we can go back to the beginning or the part where they last remember what was happening. We quickly retell what we remember and then reread carefully, checking in with ourselves: ‘Wait, what does that mean? What is happening here?’ We use the pictures and the story to help us work through the hard parts. Then we can read on, thinking about how all the pages go together.”
- “When readers are confused, we can go back to the beginning of the sentence. We think about what is happening. We get a running start and look at the first part of the word and think what would make sense.”
- “When readers finish a book we don’t just say, ‘I’m done!’ We often go back through the pages and find all of the words that gave us trouble—the words that we worked hard to figure out. Then we practice rereading and remembering each word. Finally, we reread the book again, this time trying to make it sound perfect!”
- “When readers finish a book we don’t just say, ‘I’m done!’ We remember what the whole book is about and retell the important parts to ourselves. Then we reread to make sure that we did not leave anything important out!”

Part Three: Partners Help Each Other When There Are Tricky Words and/or Parts

- “Partners help each other when one of us gets stuck on a tricky part. When one partner is stuck, the other partner becomes a helper. S/he doesn’t tell the word; s/he coaches the stuck partner like a teacher! S/he uses prompts such as, ‘Try something.’ ‘Look at the picture.’ ‘Think about what is happening in the story.’ ‘Go back and reread up to the tricky word.’ ‘Think about where the tricky word is in the sentence, and think about what kind of word it might be.’ ‘Look at the word.’ The helping partner gives the stuck partner the energy to continue.”
- “Partners listen to each other read and think alongside each other. We try to catch each other’s mistakes! When something doesn’t seem quite right, we remind each other to ‘Check it,’ ‘Fix it,’ or ‘Try that again.’”
- “Partners help each other when we listen to each other read and notice that something our partner tried did not work. We often help our partners to look more closely at words. We might say, ‘Read this again,’ and then point under the first part of the word. Or we might say, ‘Cover the last part with your thumb and get a running start. Think about what would make sense.’”
 - *Tip:* “Help your partners to look and say the parts of the word. You might get them started. As soon as they figure it out, remind your partner to reread and smooth it out!”
- “Partners listen to each other and think together. When you finish a book together, don’t say, ‘I’m done!’ Remember, partners retell the story to each other to make sure we both understand what is happening in the book. If you or your partner forget a part, go back and reread to find the missing part. If one partner doesn’t agree with something the other partner said in a retelling, we go back together and reread to fix our retelling.



UNIT EIGHT

Readers Get to Know Characters by Pretending and by Performing Our Books

APRIL/MAY

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: D/E)

Young children are keen observers and spend much of their days closely watching and then precisely imitating the people in their lives. Many families share stories of discovering children slathering suds on their faces in the bathtub so they can pretend-shave like Daddy, or stories of children clip-clopping around in too-big shoes, their faces distorted by too much lipstick, as they pretend they're heading off to work. Parents share memories of eavesdropping on their children playing house and mimicking the exasperated tone of stressed adults, and they recall memories of their kindergarten-aged kids setting up stuffed animals in a circle, and saying teacher words, like, "Readers, one-two-three, eyes on me!"

Whether it's a demand for a Justin Bieber-like haircut or a cap worn sideways like their favorite actor, kids imitate and emulate the people in their worlds. It is through this kind of role-playing that children come to understand the nuances of different personae, from the swagger of the singer to the rushed steps of a parent heading off to work, from the teacher's lilt when requesting students' attention to their parents' agitated tone when telling kids (for the fifth time) that it's time to wash hands for dinner.

This unit capitalizes on children's natural inclination for imitation and role-playing by inviting them to do this same sort of pretending with the characters in their books. The hope is that as children take on the roles of Piggie and Gerald, Fly Guy and Buzz, Chrysanthemum and Victoria, Biscuit and his girl, and so many others, they will come to know these characters, and the stories in which they live, with a particular intimacy

because they've walked in the characters' shoes. Then, too, we hope our youngsters walk away from this unit with a stronger sense of themselves as discerning readers, realizing a bit more about their tastes in books and characters.

Of course, while children are hamming it up and playing with text during this unit, they'll also be engaged in important, authentic, and high-level reading work. For example, while children are role-playing scenes from *Piggie* and *Elephant*, they're actually doing sophisticated inferring work as their role playing enables them to better understand how the characters might be feeling and what they could be thinking. They'll intuit the setting in their texts, whether or not the text explicitly names it, and incorporate this story element into their role playing. As they act out one scene, they'll learn how, say, *Elephant's* reaction in one scene is the catalyst that sets off the action in the next. While offering an outlet for their children's propensity for role playing and creating pretend worlds, this unit's instruction also supports young readers' abilities to identify characters, settings, and the major events in a story, which is part of the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten.

This unit provides a fun and rigorous backdrop for helping children to do the work that the kindergarten Common Core State Standards state, which is that teachers should have discussions about characters' adventures and experiences with students, while prompting students to compare and contrast the experiences of new characters they meet with those of familiar ones they know. For example, when you read aloud *The Curious Garden*, you might facilitate a conversation that begins with children sharing their understanding of Liam, the young gardener. The conversation will deepen as children bat around ideas about the traits and characteristics of Liam, using the text and illustrations as proof for their inferences. You might nudge the talk toward intertext character connections by saying something like, "You know, when I listen to your understandings of Liam, I'm reminded so much of another character we met. Remember when we read the book, *The Gardener* . . . I'm trying to remember the little girl's name . . ." As you sit with a pondering expression, you might invite children to turn and talk to see if they can help jog each other's memories. Whether or not they remember that the character's name was Lydia Grace, students will likely recall story details that reveal the connection between characters—some that might skim the surface ("Lydia Grace and Liam both like gardens and planting stuff") and some connections that go deeper ("Lydia Grace planted a garden in a not-so-beautiful place, too, just like Liam did, and both of their gardens changed people's worlds. Kids can do things like that.").

In order to address some of the kindergarten Common Core State Standards, we've designed this unit on character so that it focuses on comprehension skills such as inferring, activating prior knowledge, and synthesizing deeper understandings of characters by making connections and empathizing with a character's situations, experiences, and relationships. Your children will move on from this unit with a finely developed sense of three story elements (character, setting, and story events), but also with a richer understanding of how these three elements, when considered alongside each other, can help readers understand characters more deeply.

Of course, while doing this big work with characters, it's equally important to support your beginning readers' progression through reading levels and reading strategy instruction. You will want to use conferences and small-group time to continue teaching the skills your children need as they become more proficient decoders, more fluent readers, and engaged meaning-makers. You will also want to make sure to rely on the other components of balanced literacy, such as read-alouds and shared reading, because they offer bountiful opportunities for multilevel support for a vast range of readers, from children who may still be working on one-to-one matching and recognizing basic sight words to those readers who may be reading early chapter books.

To prepare for this unit, you will want to search your leveled library for books that feature people or animals and other things that act like people. *PM Reading* by Rigby has some engaging titles for B–E readers, as does Candlewick Press's series *Brand New Readers*. Remember that even in the lowest-level books, with relatively undeveloped and mostly unnamed characters, children can use illustrations, the plot, and any relevant background knowledge to help them get to know their characters better. For example, as children read a book that features a dad who is cooking, a child might say, "This dad likes to cook. I can tell 'cause he's smiling," even though the text on the page says, "My dad cooks chicken." This is an example of inferring, in which the child integrated the text (a dad is cooking) with the illustration (a dad is smiling, therefore, he's enjoying himself) with schema (my dad smiles when he likes something). Another child might look at the same page and say, "This dad is so different from my dad. He looks happy on these pages. I think he likes to cook. My dad gets so annoyed if he has to cook. He complains and just makes us cereal." That's an example of making connections, using illustrations to infer a character's feelings and connect them to personal experience. This sophisticated reading work and the orchestration of several comprehension strategies can take place in even the simplest books. In fact, this sort of high-level reading of low-level text is not a surprise or the exception in many classrooms. It's the norm.

Once you have gathered your character books into various baskets, you will want to use your shared reading and your read-aloud to scaffold this reading work. You might gather your class around a big book or a read-aloud you've already read several times. Set the children to take on roles, that of the narrator and the characters in the familiar stories. You can ask, "So right now, while you are sitting here, will each of you guys be Mrs. Wishy-Washy? You just washed the animals and now they're back out in the mud. What would you say to them if you were Mrs. Wishy-Washy? And remember to say it with feeling!" You'll find this works really well, especially if you model a time or two, reading with campy expression and exaggerated facial expressions and gestures. In parts where there is dialogue, have children repeat the lines after you, mimicking your dramatic interpretation. In parts where there are no lines of dialogue, you'll show children how they can imagine lines for their characters based on the inferences they made from illustration details and the story.

During these read-alouds, you might shift this pretending work from whole class to children sharing in partnerships. Partner A may play one role and partner B can play another. As your children work with partners, remember to coach into their

performances. Encourage energy, feeling, and expression in their pretending. You may listen in on these enactments and notice that some children think about a character one way, and other children think about that same character in a completely different way. Whether you decide to do this type of interpretive work today or another day, you could reread, suggesting children try out the two contrasting interpretations of the main character, first one and then the other. Sharing multiple interpretations of a character is a great way for children to understand that even the simplest characters can be surprisingly complex.

As for the rhythm of the unit, your parts will begin with one that teaches reading strategies to help students get to know a character well and to name what that character does in their stories. Then, you will want to push your readers to think and talk more about characters in their partnerships, growing big and little ideas about them as they make them “talk” and “think.” Finally, the last part will take kids into character reading clubs, during which readers will dramatize what’s happening in their stories as a way to further grow their thinking about characters.

Part One: Readers Have Strategies for Getting to Know a Character

During the first part of the unit, you will teach children the important work of getting to know characters in books in meaningful ways. In other words, you will teach a few specific strategies that children can use to make sure they are being resourceful as they learn about characters in ways that yield deeper comprehension.

You might start by briefly revisiting the book walk, concentrating on how important the title and cover are in helping readers to get ready for the story. You teach your students how to use the title, the cover illustration, and the title page to acquaint themselves with their characters. As they look at these parts of the text, they’ll want to ask themselves, “What does this tell me about the character(s)?” For example, the cover of *The Go-Carts* features a bunch of go-carts lined up behind a starting line. “This tells me the characters are in a race. I can tell because there’s the starting line,” a student might say. On the title page, there’s a picture of one of those go-carts riding off the road a little into the grass. “Hmm, this tells me that the character went off the road. Maybe this driver isn’t very good,” a child might say, while his partner might look on and say, “Maybe he never raced before.” Looking closely at these parts of the book while asking themselves, “What is this telling me about the character(s)?” helps readers understand the book’s characters as they get ready to read.

In these early-level books, it is also important to pay attention to the ending. We can teach children to ask themselves, “How might the character feel now?” or “What might the character be thinking now?” On *The Go-Carts’* last page, the text reads, “Here comes the winner!” and it shows a picture of the yellow car crossing under the checkered flag. If children pay special attention to this part, they will understand that this book is really all about winning a race. They might say, “I think this yellow driver is so happy ‘cause he won,” or “The yellow driver must be proud because she won the race.” Then readers

may decide to make their racers talk and think like people who really wanted to win. They might choose a go-cart and imagine what the driver might be thinking or feeling.

You may also want to teach children how to focus on the illustrations and photographs while paying close attention to the characters' facial expressions, body language, and gestures because these can reveal quite a bit about characters' moods, personality, and feelings. For example, they might notice that their character keeps making googly eyes, and they might conclude, "Piggie always makes funny faces, and this tells me that Piggie is a silly pig." This kind of text analysis is included as part of the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten readers.

Another helpful thing to revisit with children is that they can accumulate text across pages so they're able to say not just what they learned about a character on each page, but also what all the pages together can teach us about a character. For example, if the students were to just focus on the cover picture of *The Go-Carts*, they might say, "The yellow car is way in the back. He'll never win this race." Yet if they accumulated the story across pages, they'd be more likely to say, "Wow, the yellow guy was way in the back, but he ended up winning. This tells me that he's really fast and a good racer."

In this part, during partner time, children have the option of talking with their partners about what they have noticed about the characters in their books, in addition to all the choices that you have already taught them as partners. They can describe how the characters look and what this says about the characters; how the characters might be feeling at the beginning, middle, and end of a book; and they might use the illustrations and/or photographs to describe the setting in which the book takes place.

When children reread their texts during partner reading time, they can stop and talk about what the characters might be saying and *how* the characters might be talking in specific parts. Then kids could name the feelings that they imagine the characters have. When they study the faces and the actions of characters, children can come to understand the feelings of those characters better. Many teachers find it helpful to create charts that display a variety of vocabulary words for talking about character feelings, with picture clues from familiar books to help children use precise language when they describe their characters with their partners. Instead of saying, "She's sad," they might say, "She's feeling very frustrated right now!"

Because so many of the books your children are reading have very little text per page, you will want them to practice imagining (inferring) what their character might be saying or might be thinking. You may have already taught your children how to do this by having them use blank speech bubbles and blank thought bubbles while they are reading. As they are reading these books, children can literally be putting words and thoughts into the mouths and minds of the characters in their books. They could do this by writing a speech or thought bubble on a Post-it over a character in their books and then saying that character's thought or talking his talk.

Part Two: Readers Can Work with Partners to Pretend We Are the Characters in Our Books

In the first part, you were teaching your students to use clues in the text and illustrations to infer and to better understand their characters' traits and to begin imagining what a character might be thinking and feeling. Now, in the second part of this unit, you'll push this further by teaching students how to pretend to be the characters in their books. At this point, you've likely taught specific ways to get to know characters, and you've likely engaged the class in a dramatic read-aloud, one where you've provided scaffolded opportunities for children to act like the characters. For example, as you read aloud *Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers, you may have invited students to "be" the boy. You might pause as you read to say, "Imagine this situation: you open your door and a penguin is standing there. What must that boy be thinking? What might he say? Let's be that boy, right now. If you were that boy, what would you be thinking? What would you say to that penguin? Turn and tell your partner." You'll support them with prompts like, "Say it like he's saying it!" or "Show us how he feels, don't *tell* us how he feels!"

After a number of these kinds of experiences, you might say to your students, "Oh my goodness, you all are so good at becoming the character as you read! I'm just wondering if you'd be willing to spend this week really working on reading every book as if you were the characters. I'm thinking that what we just did with the read-aloud book could be something that we do with our reading partners! It's like you and your partner will put on mini-plays every day, and the books you read together will be like your scripts! With your partners, you can take parts, be the characters, and read the books together just like we did with our read-aloud. Are you willing to try? It would mean reading and trying to become the character as you read, thinking to yourself, 'I bet she's really mad now,' and then giving the character's words an angry tone. And it would mean noticing when the character's feelings might be changing, and making sure that the voice in our head changes with the character's feelings." This work ties in beautifully with the Common Core State Standards' call for teaching children how to make inferential interpretations of characters, noting the importance of drawing logical understandings from the text's explicit descriptions. Additionally, these role-playing exercises will teach children to use specific text-based examples when writing or speaking.

As you begin your minilessons for this unit, you want to model how partners might act out scenes from texts together. You might find it helpful to include a few children in your demonstration as you show kids that one child could be the character(s) while the other child narrates the story. The narrator's job is to read the text that is not a "talking part." Your students will develop a more sophisticated notion about dialogue, quickly identifying the talking parts through the unique punctuation.

You'll want to show children how it looks when partners read the book together, each pretending to be a character or the narrator and then making the character or narrator come alive with expressive voices and dramatic gestures as they read. In early-level books with characters that don't talk, you will want to teach children to infer what the character would say. For example, in a list book about a school day, if the text says,

“We draw/We write/We play/and so on,” you’ll teach children to imagine what the kids on those pages might be saying. For example, on the “We draw” page, you might say, in an expressive child’s voice, “Ooooh, I love to draw. I’m drawing a picture of a unicorn to give to my mommy when I get home. Where’s the yellow crayon?”

As you near the end of this part, you may want to shift your emphasis during read-aloud time toward whole-class conversations in which children learn how to talk back to texts and make connections between the characters of different books. You’ll probably want to study what is similar or different about characters in some of the books that you’ve read aloud, as mentioned earlier via *The Curious Gardener* and *The Gardener*. In addition to reading aloud picture books, you might consider choosing to read aloud books from our children’s baskets, and then read aloud a different book from another basket, modeling this comparison work in any kind of text.

By the end of this part, your students will likely be able to look at a character across the pages of the book and be able to say, “I can tell my character is [feeling X/thinking Y/saying Z] because [text evidence].” They’ll also be able to act out a page or a few pages in a book while pretending to be the character (or taking on the role of narrator), using their voices, expressions, and gestures in ways that match what they know and think about the character.

Part Three: Readers Perform Books in Reading Clubs to Become Experts about Characters and Stories

During the first part of this unit, you taught your children a variety of strategies for getting to know their characters well, and in the second part you modeled how to pretend to be a character from a book, using all the clues the text gives you. You likely provided opportunities and guidance so that children could do this work of pretending to be characters and narrators in the company of their partners. Now in this part, you’ll up the ante for the work and play of getting to know characters well.

In this part, your readers will learn how to use performance to help them understand their characters in deeper ways, while also orchestrating all the strategies for getting to know characters well. In many ways, these mini-performances simply give children the opportunity to lift the act of pretending to the next level. In other words, your readers might try out different ways to sound like and act like their characters, and then, in partnerships, decide on a particular way that seems to best match the various clues the text provides. Children will negotiate their varied interpretations of character with each other, saying things like, “You said that with a silly-like voice. Look at her face on this page. She doesn’t like it when Ruby kisses her. She’s frowning. I think she’s mad. She said, ‘Yuck,’ in a mad way. Can you say it more mad-like?” On the surface, children are simply acting out parts of the story, but it’s never quite that simple. The children are playing with text, making meaning, using a wide variety of reading strategies, negotiating interpretations, and “publishing” their understandings through these micro-performances.

In this part, the students' work and play with text will take place within the structure of reading clubs. With their partners, students will choose a character reading club, which is actually just a basket of books, usually centered around a particular character. You may decide to arrange the character reading clubs so that they each feature a particular character along a continuum of difficulty. In other words, no matter the level of your readers, they'll be able to participate in a reading club containing texts they can read with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Some teachers decide to create character-specific reading clubs, such as *Puppy Mudge*, *Biscuit*, *Mrs. Wishy-Washy*, *Worm* (Candlewick Press), *Piggie* and *Elephant*, and so on, while other teachers may decide that it makes sense to create baskets around archetypes of characters, such as *Characters Who Are Dogs*, *Characters Who Are Pigs*, *Girl Characters*, *Boy Characters*, *Characters Who Have Trouble*, and so on. Teachers may find that this latter method works better, especially if texts are limited. Once each set of partners selects their reading club (and you approve of the choice—which usually is contingent upon whether the children can read the books in the reading club), you're set to begin by inviting partners to select a character they'd like to study.

As you start this part, you'll want to be sure that you tell your students that the big secret to becoming a character expert is to know the story of the character very well. "You'll want to reread the books, and really study the pictures, really study what your character does and says, so that you can make the character your own," you might say. You'll teach students that reading and rereading their books will be an important part of the work they will do in order to perform their books and to understand their characters better. Practicing a book for a performance builds fluency, which is a major element of the Common Core State Standards. This part will feature instruction around the many purposes for rereading, from rereading to make it sound like the character, to rereading to discover something new in the pictures, from rereading to make the text sound smooth, to rereading particular parts that seem significant. Even in the shortest little books, children will reread with engagement when they have specific intentions for doing so.

As children get to know their books and characters well, you might teach them how to perform different versions of the same book. One way kids might do this is by asking themselves, "What could go differently?" They might think, "The feelings of the characters could be different from what we thought they were in our first performance. Let's act the book with different feelings." For example, in the simple book, *I Am*, the text reads, "I am jumping/I am climbing/and so on," and the illustration on each page includes the same character doing the action mentioned in the text. One child might interpret this girl as being a tomboy and having fun while playing in her backyard, while another child might say, "She's so lonely. She's all by herself. I think she got in trouble and couldn't have a play date." These two interpretations of the same story would lead kids to act the story out differently, with different intonations, expressions, and gestures.

Alternatively, during this part, we might teach children to extend the "script" for their mini-performances to act out scenes that are beyond what's on the pages. We might suggest that readers can imagine their character in other settings, and say to

themselves, “Given what I know about her already, what could I expect in a new situation?” For example, in the Characters Who Are Girls reading club, the children are reading *I Am*. The last page includes the words “I am sleeping,” with an illustration of the girl on a hammock. You might say, “Readers, imagine when this little girl wakes up. Given what you know about her, what do you think she would say? What might she want to do?” For the children who think she’s having fun in her backyard, they might imagine the girl saying, “That was a good nap. Now it’s time to play again. What should I do?” The kids who think she must have gotten in trouble and has to play by herself might imagine the girl saying, “This is so boring. I wish I could have a friend over. I can’t believe I have to play alone again. I can’t wait until tomorrow when my friends can play here!”

It’s vital that we honor multiple interpretations of text while also holding kids accountable for grounding their interpretations in what the text and their own experience offer. We can model this during read-aloud. We might read aloud a book like *Two of a Kind* by Jacqui Robbins and show children how they can have different ideas about a character’s intentions, behaviors, and actions. For example, the conventional wisdom is that Kaylie and Melanie are mean girls, teasing others and acting exclusive. You might offer up an interpretation that Kaylie and Melanie may simply be jealous of Anna and Julisa. Then you’ll want to model how to pull evidence from the text to substantiate your points.

You’ll want to empower children to honor multiple-interpretations work in their clubs. As children act out the books with the changes they decide to make, they can understand their characters in more complex ways. These types of activities support the Common Core State Standards’ call for role playing as a method of character comprehension. Children need to then make decisions about which version of the book is more compelling. This will be the version they can perform for the celebration. While you will want to schedule celebration performances throughout Weeks One and Two, you may want to also have one final giant celebration. When children do this final version for the performance celebration, you should be asking them to say what they learned by performing the book in several different ways. For instance, in *The Go-Carts*, children might decide to try performing the book with the kids being more friendly. But, in the end, the illustrations and the ending might make the performers of this book decide that their original version was better. Once the clubs have practiced and chosen their favorite way of performing their texts, you can give them the stage and let them show off their new performing and thinking skills for each other!

Word Study/Shared Reading/Interactive Writing

At this time in the year, many teachers reassess their children on letter/sound relationships as well as reading and writing high-frequency words. You might find that some children still need to learn some of those first few high-frequency words and letter sounds introduced at the beginning of the year, while others are ready for more

sophisticated work with letters and words. Many teachers form small groups around specific word study needs. For example, one group might be working on high-frequency words, another on beginning sounds, and another on ending sounds. These small groups convened for word study can also meet at other times of the day to support their reading and writing. Continue to work with words in explicit ways during word study as well as within the contexts of shared reading and interactive writing.

During shared reading, you'll emphasize high-frequency words, cross-checking meaning with letter/sound relationships, inferring, and character work. You will draw on texts that are at children's level (D and E) and some of the higher-level texts that you used at the beginning of the year (traditional tales, big books with compelling stories, and so on). Continue helping children learn how to monitor and use all the sources of information independently when they encounter difficulty, nudging them to cross-check meaning with images, meaning with syntax, and to self-correct. You will continue to use the prompts used in guided reading to help children learn how to question themselves while they are problem-solving through tricky parts. For example, you may prompt children by saying, "Think about what is happening in the story, look at the picture, and make a guess. Does it make sense and look right on the page?" Make sure that children are checking one source against another when working on a tricky word and checking to see if they are right. Teach them that it is important to fix up tricky words, to stay with a word until you know it makes sense in the story.

You will also want to read texts and have children identify and talk about the characters. These could be familiar shared reading books from across the year and/or new books. Have them follow a character through a book, noting how that may help you understand what is happening in the book. You might talk to them about getting to know the character, making friends with characters, noticing how they are feeling, and how all of that can help you know what is happening in the book. Finally, you will want to teach them how to find parts in the book that can support what they are learning about the character.

You may want to adjust the kinds of text that you are writing with the children to match the leveled books that they are reading. It is important to apply what children are learning in word study to the texts they are creating in interactive writing. When possible, try to add words into interactive writing pieces that use the spelling patterns the children are learning as well as any new high-frequency words. Support students with transferring what they have learned by providing them with anchor pictures/words that they can use to help them write new words. For example, if the students are writing the word *cheese*, you might say "which word can help us write the word *cheese*, *chin*, or *ship*?" As always, the whole interactive writing time will be only about seven to ten minutes at the most, knowing how long our young readers and writers can sustain at this time of the year.

If you decide to teach ...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K— Pinnell & Fountas</i>
Phonological Awareness: Hearing Middle Sounds Hearing Sounds in Sequence Syllables	4-14 (p. 116) Adapt 4-28 to 4-31 (pp. 123–125)	PA22 (p. 189), Hearing Middle Sounds PA23, (p. 193) Hearing Sounds in Sequence PA16 (p. 165) , Syllables
Letter/Sound Relationships: Beginning and Ending Sounds	5-6 to 5-8 (pp. 157–158) 5-10 (p. 159)	LS2–LS5 (pp. 313–328)
Spelling Patterns CVC	5-12 to 5-14 (pp. 160–162)	SP3 and SP4 (pp. 351–358)
High-Frequency Words	pp. 182–183	HF3 and HF4 (pp. 381–388)

Celebration

For the celebration, each reading club could perform its favorite book from a center for each other, for other classes in the grade, or for parents. Encourage children to really get into the roles, using facial expressions and gestures to express feelings and to convey actions. Have fun with this! Perhaps kids could dress in costume for the performance, or you could set aside a day for kids to come to school dressed up as their favorite character.



UNIT NINE

Giving the Gift of Reading

Reading across Genres

MAY/JUNE

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: D/E)

This is a unit about the gift of reading. The lives of your children have been filled with people who have given *them* the gift of reading. For the next month, your children will be working to give that gift back. This is exactly what you will tell your kindergarten students. You may want to say something like, “Kids, we have come to a very special time of the year. So far, a lot of our reading lives have been about what other people have given us. Many of you have been given books that you love. Some of you have been pulled onto laps and into chairs to snuggle around stories. You might have unwrapped books on birthdays, and we’ve all been grossed out by cool bug books together here on the rug. Here in school, you’ve been read to, and you’ve read along with others. You have read by yourself and with your partners. This month, however, we are going to give our beautiful gift of reading back to all of the people who matter to us. We will be choosing books carefully by asking ourselves what kinds of books different people might want to hear. We will be reading those books again and again, trying to figure them out. We will think about how those books should sound so the listener can really appreciate the full beauty of this gift of reading. This month, we will be using reading to reach out and make connections with others. That is what gifts are about. During this unit, we want the whole world to remember that reading is really a gift. Our class is going to be filled with beautiful reading that we will share generously with each other, with the school, and with our families. For a little while, we will transform our reading workshop into a gift workshop. So, let’s get to work making our gifts!”

The teaching you do to kick off this unit will largely focus on reading and rereading with fluency and expression. The purpose is to make our reading beautiful enough to give as a gift. The Common Core State Standards devote an entire standard in every grade to fluency, with particular attention paid to reading with purpose and understanding in kindergarten. This is what this unit is all about. In addition, this unit is designed to help students think carefully about the craft and structure of texts, also an area emphasized in the Common Core State Standards. You'll teach your kindergartners to think carefully about stories, informational texts, poems, and other types of texts. They'll also use the craft and structure of the text to guide their understanding of the text so as to know how to read it aloud well.

We suggest your students consider informational texts as well as stories in this unit. The Common Core State Standards state that if students cannot read challenging texts with understanding—if they have not developed the skill, concentration, and stamina to read such texts—they will read less in general. In particular, if students cannot read complex expository texts to gain information, they will likely turn to text-free or text-light sources, such as video, podcasts, and tweets. These sources, while not without value, cannot capture the nuance, subtlety, depth, or breadth of ideas developed through complex text. As Adams (2009) puts it, "There may one day be modes and methods of information delivery that are as efficient and powerful as text, but for now there is no contest. To grow, our students must read lots, and more specifically they must read lots of 'complex' texts—texts that offer them new language, new knowledge, and new modes of thought" (p. 182). Turning away from complex texts is likely to lead to a general impoverishment of knowledge. Knowledge is intimately linked with reading comprehension ability, which if weakened can accelerate a decline in the richness of text itself.

When you tell the children about the goals of the unit, you may also want to tell them how their work will proceed. You probably will not want the children to pick up books, read them once to themselves, and then yell, "I'm ready to give my gift now!" This is a unit about reading and practicing *all* of those books to perfection. As such, you might want to organize your unit around a gift-giving day that happens once a week. It could be that every Friday, during the last fifteen minutes of reading workshop, children present their reading gifts. That way the first four-and-a-half days of reading workshop are about the work that goes into reading something beautifully.

Of course, it helps if you approach the month anticipating the bends in the road. In the first week, children read aloud to a classmate. You'll emphasize that to read aloud well, a reader takes cues from the craft and structure of the book itself. The second week is the first time the children prepare to give the gift of reading to someone at home, and you'll highlight choosing from different text types. Your teaching then emphasizes that when we want to read something really well, readers self-assess, set goals, and ask others to help us meet those goals. Week Three introduces a new emphasis on how readers can also talk about books and teach information from books as part of their gift-giving to others. In Week Three, children practice by talking about books with their reading buddies from an older grade. Finally, in Week Four they again give the gift of reading to someone from home—hopefully in a reader's celebration that

happens in the classroom. This final gift-giving involves not only reading itself, but also some conversation about why the text matters and what lessons could be learned from the text. The final celebration can include some choral reading of a poem, with emphasis on letting the text show us how to read it.

To Read a Book Like It Is a Gift, We Let the Book Show Us How It Should Be Read

You will likely want to launch the unit by suggesting that the children think of a list of other kids in the class to whom they want to give the gift of reading. Perhaps you'll have a name-drawing, with each child drawing the names of a few classmates. Of course, you will want to make sure no child pulls his or her reading partner's name, because partners will help each other prepare.

As children dive into their book baggies and the classroom library, they are likely to scour the shelves looking for everyone on their list. You'll remind them to not only consider topics, but also types of books—stories, information, poems, and more. With so many choices to consider, you might want to have them pick one person from the list and search for them before moving on to the next.

On the second day of the unit you will want to delve into the deeper work of reading. You can teach that reading a book well requires using the overall craft and structure to let the book show them how to read it. This is also emphasized in the Common Core State Standards. In a minilesson, you might demonstrate using a book with a very specific tone—take a familiar scary story—and read a page of it in a sweet and lovely voice. If the page says, “He slammed the door and shouted, ‘Go away!’” you read it as if it says, “Butterflies drifted in the gentle breeze, their wings opening and closing ever so softly.” When you ask the children how you did, they'll probably complain a bit, especially if you read it in an outrageous fashion. With their coaching, you can read the sentence with the proper intonation that matches the meaning. Then you can read a familiar book with a softer tone, for example, “Butterflies drifted in the gentle breeze . . .” This time read it with the door-slamming intonation. Again, the kids will protest, and by now you will be ready to make your point, that the way to read a book well is to let the book show us how it should be read.

You could demonstrate that sometimes it helps to try the first sentences a few times, working to get them to sound right. Are they silly? Sad? Do they rhyme? Many of the books that your kindergartners are reading at this time of the year are pattern books. You can remind your children to use the pattern in the book to make their reading more musical, building off the work they did earlier this year. Just like music, there are slow parts and fast parts. The readers might think about which pages are slow and which pages are fast.

You may show the kids that one big way books guide readers is through genre. Readers can glance over a book, realize it is an information book, and thus read it in a “teaching” voice. Perhaps they can point to parts of the pictures to help teach the

information. If the book is a story, we switch on our best storyteller's voice and use gestures to dramatize the story. For songs and poems we can sing, chant, and even move our bodies to a rhythm or beat.

The idea behind this work is that the children will focus on making all of the books their best book by rereading again and again. You will want to invent ways to make this as engaging and purposeful as possible. Your kindergartners will practice their gift-giving reading with partners, on their own, or even by reading with a stuffed animal or special object. Some of our teachers even use the stuffed animal as a child's reading partner when their regular partner is absent.

You can also teach the children to think about ways to read their books even more beautifully. If Henry knows that his Aunt Julia loves trucks (even if it's really Henry who loves them and Aunt Julia just loves Henry), then Henry can read the pages in the book *Trucks* in a way that savors each thing it teaches. He can read a page that says, "Some trucks have big wheels and some trucks have fancy cabs," like this: "Some trucks, haaaave *big wheels*, and some trucks, haaaave *fancy cabs*." If a child is reading a book that contains gross facts about snakes, she should be making sure to show off that grossness in her reading of the book. You want to get your kindergarten readers to understand that meaning drives reading, and this ultimately leads to more beautiful reading gifts. Model this kind of reading for children in conferences and small groups, coach them to try it on their own, and circulate the classroom reminding children to practice again and again. "I can't hear you practicing!" you might say. "Don't forget to use your voice! Use gestures!" Hold them to doing the work—don't let them off the hook by letting them go back to just reading the way they always have.

Your first week will end with a mini-reading celebration. During this event, each child will read the book once to him or herself, letting the book help them know how to read it. Then each child will give the gift of reading to another in the class by rereading it aloud.

Readers Set and Work toward Goals That Will Make Us Better Reading Gift-Givers

In the second week of this unit, children will again be thinking about choosing books to give as reading gifts to specific people—this time to people outside the classroom, perhaps at home. You will want to encourage your children to pick many new books to put in their baggies. Of course, there may be some books that carry over from a previous week. For instance, if you have already said to children that the last celebration of the unit will be the grandest, children may hold onto a book or two to practice throughout the entire unit.

The big work of this week will be to set goals to grow as readers. You will want your children to use their gift-giving experience from the first week to help them do better reading work this week. You might say, "This week we are going to think about how we can make our gifts even more beautiful. We are going to think about the gift of reading celebration we had on Friday, and we are going to think about what we liked best

and what felt tricky. Then, we are going to set goals and work toward those goals for this Friday.” You might encourage your children to turn toward their partners for support, sharing the good parts and the tricky parts, then setting goals together. During the week, children can meet with their partners to work on these goals. For example, some groups may decide that they will work on picturing the characters better and using more gestures as they read. Other groups might focus on volume and stamina, making goals for how many times they plan to read each book, and how many books they plan to rehearse each day. They can tally up how many times they’ve read each book on a Post-it in the back of the book.

To support the partner work, you might teach children a routine for how to help each other with their reading goals. You can tell them that when partners get together, they decide who will go first. Then the partner who goes first can say the goal she is working on and read several of her books. When she is done reading, her partner can give feedback on the goal. One partner could say to another, “When it comes to stopping and thinking during reading, you did that best in the second book.” Then partners switch roles.

You can extend the idea that partners help each other by also suggesting that readers can be their own partners, helping themselves. One way readers do this is by self-monitoring and using fix-up strategies. Once you have reminded children to self-monitor, they also need to self-correct. You might say to your kindergartners, “When you are presenting your gift-reading, you need to make sure that it is as beautiful as possible. Sometimes though, it will not be perfect. You will mess up. But, that’s okay because you can use rereading to fix it. Your listener will understand. Messing up happens to everyone. You will just need to say, ‘Oops, let me try that again,’ then reread that whole sentence or page.” Children could be taught that if they are stuck on a word, they might back up and get a running start toward that word. The running start can involve remembering what they read so far, or getting the language structure going again to help them jump the tricky word hurdle. You might even tell your readers that self-corrections are one of the most important signs that they are growing as readers. That’s not an exaggeration. Self-correcting, whether it is successful or not, is a sign that children are self-monitoring.

The second part of the unit will of course end with another gift of reading celebration. This time children will give the gift of reading to someone outside the classroom (most likely at home, but perhaps in the school building or elsewhere)—two or three people, perhaps. We suggest you use role play to allow children to bring a bit of that celebration to school. A child can ask someone in the class—not the child’s reading partner—to pretend to be the chosen recipient. The child can tell the impostor what he or she will probably be doing when the child asks the question, “Can I read to you?” Then, the child can read to the classmate as if the classmate is the reader’s mother, grandmother, sister, or whoever. Don’t forget to give your readers the opportunity to then bring those books home and read them to the intended recipients. You might even draft a note as a class, explaining the gift, so that family members understand the importance of this reading. You may even have children report back about how their gift-giving went, and how their loved ones reacted.

Reading Is Best When We Not Only Read, We Also Talk About the Book

This part focuses on sharing books and leading book talks with someone in the building—an older child who is a book buddy or an adult within the school. (This week will serve as a sort of rehearsal for next week's grand celebration where guests from outside the school are invited in.) One way to teach children to not only read the wonderful texts they've chosen but also engage in conversations about those texts is to create a book dedication. A child might say something like, "This book is about a pig that tries over and over to do something. I thought you would like this because you keep trying over and over to help me make good things in art." When authors write dedications at the front of a book, the dedication is often a sentence in length, and your children might do that.

During this part of the unit, you could highlight some of the differences between nonfiction and fiction books—how nonfiction books lend themselves to different kinds of conversations, as well as how our voices change when we read them. You might show children how they can give their gift recipient a little book introduction by teaching some of the key vocabulary in the book—maybe placing Post-its on the pages that fit with the key words. Or perhaps they'll introduce the content of a nonfiction book by teaching their gift recipient a few important facts or pieces of information about the topic, then reading the book. As a class, you can create a chart for children to refer to with reminders for sharing nonfiction books on one side and reminders for fiction on the other.

You could teach children to practice giving the gift of reading to someone as a two-part project. It could start with a discussion about what kinds of texts the person likes, and end with reading. A child could make an initial appointment with the recipient (another child in the school, another teacher or staff member) to ask them what kinds of books they like. Then the child could schedule a time at the end of the week to give the gift of reading to that person. In one school, children made written announcements that let their people know a gift of reading was on its way. Whatever you do, you will want to make sure that this last week gathers up all of your teaching from the first three weeks and nudges children to use all that they have learned this year about book talk to share with the recipient of their reading gift.

Getting Ready for the Biggest Celebration of All—Reading and Talking about Books with Special Guests

The final part of this unit focuses on sharing books and leading book talks with special guests, ideally people that the children have chosen to invite from outside the classroom—parents, caregivers, or friends. You will have already laid the groundwork throughout the unit, rehearsing for this week, sending out invitations, tracking down responses from attendees. As you help the children prepare for the grand finale, you

will of course remind them of all that they have learned. Taking cues from books can be a very detailed process—children can think about each word, considering why the author chose that word and how it should be read. You could show them how they might reread a specific line on a page, trying out different ways it might sound. They might make a line or a word louder or softer; they might try a line or a word slower or faster. You could have your gift-givers think about taking big breaths or little breaths in between words as they read. (This work could happen in the writing workshop too. Children could be doing the same kind of rereading work to practice their written pieces for a celebration.) Finally, some children might choose to give the gift of reading to several different people using the same gift book. Each gift recipient will undoubtedly leave your kindergarten student with another way to think about and appreciate that same book. In this way, your students will learn that multiple reads lead to deeper understanding.

You might also teach the children to plan for turn and talks. They can use Post-its to mark places where they can stop reading and do some sort of interaction with their gift recipient. They might point out details in their pictures, make sound effects or facial expressions to communicate meaning, or read certain pages more than once. They might choose to go back to previously read pages, especially when the current page connects with the prior ones in some important way. Your kindergarten students could stop to say what they are thinking about at a certain part, and they could ask their listener for what he or she is thinking too. This is an effective way to teach the crucial concept that readers can think while they are reading, thereby discovering meaning.

This unit ends with a bigger-than-usual celebration. All year you've kept celebrations for reading and writing workshop fairly low-key—inviting another class to come visit, or displaying student work in important places. As long as your children had the opportunity to step back and really see the work that they've done in the unit, celebrations need not be elaborate affairs. This celebration will hopefully feel different from all the others you've had before. With guests coming in, your children's gift-giving will hopefully leave an impression on them that is sure to last long past the last day of school, carrying the gift of reading with them into summer.

As you think about sending your kindergarten children off into the summer, you will want to be sure that they keep reading and giving gifts to their loved ones all summer long. Kindergarten children reading Levels D and E usually do not go back in reading levels, because they have cracked the code and understand what reading is. Regardless, it is important that the children read all summer long. Send them home with bags full of books, poems, charts, interactive writing pieces, copies of their "gifts," keep books (<http://www.keepbooks.org/>), and shared reading materials that you have read together. Send your children and their families off feeling strong and proud about their achievements so that they read even more on their own.

Word Study/Phonics

At this time, you'll administer your final assessments to pass along to next year's teacher. You might include information about your children's knowledge of letter identification, letter/sound relationships, high-frequency words (both in reading and writing), and their ability to rhyme and use spelling patterns to generate new words for writing and figure out new words in reading.

If you decide to teach ...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way, 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K—</i> Pinnell & Fountas
Phonological Awareness: Hearing Middle Sounds Hearing Sounds in Sequence Syllables	4-14 (p. 116) Adapt 4-28 to 4-31 (pp. 123–125)	PA22 (p. 189), Hearing Middle Sounds PA23 (p. 193), Hearing Sounds in Sequence PA16 (p. 165), Syllables
Letter/Sound Relationships: Beginning and Ending Sounds	5-6 to 5-8 (pp. 157–158) 5-10 (p. 159)	LS2 to LS5 (pp. 313–328)
Spelling Patterns CVC	5-12 to 5-14 (pp. 160–162)	SP to SP5 (pp. 351–362)
High-Frequency Words	pp. 182–183	HF3 to HF7 (pp. 381–400)

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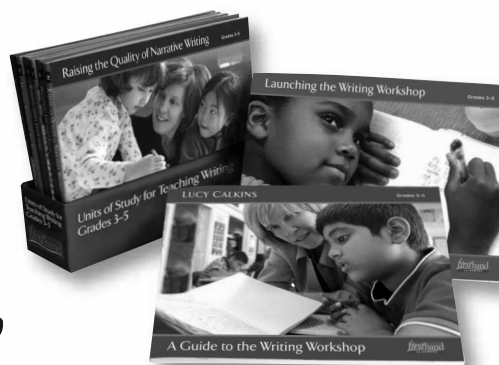
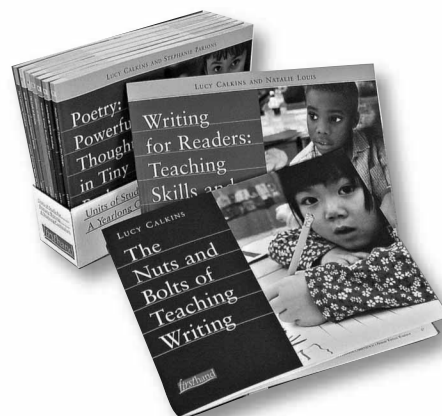
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