

Third Grade Unit Descriptions

Unit 1: Getting Ready for Core Writing

Students brainstorm "Topics I Can Write About" as a class and independently using pictures, words or both. Students are introduced to the 6 Traits of Quality Writing using a poster entitled "How Pizza is like the 6 Traits." Through class discussions students examine a student writing sample and identify how the sample exemplifies 1 of the 6 Traits. Throughout the course of the unit, each trait is addressed. The class engages in daily independent writing activities where they can apply what they have learned about each trait. The class studies the 3 main purposes for writing (inform, entertain, persuade). They practice determining the purpose of various types of writing. There is also an opportunity for the teacher to collect a pre-assessment writing piece.

Unit 2: Real Narrative

Students learn strategies, known as focus skills, that authors use to develop strong narrative pieces of writing including the incorporation of adjectives, adverbs, dialogue and linking words. Other focus skills include learning techniques for interesting beginnings, strong endings, revising and editing. Student writing samples and authentic text excerpts give the class the opportunity to locate various features related to these strategies. They also serve as a tool for teacher modeling/thinking aloud and guided practice of these skills. Various visual aids serve as references for students as they begin to use these strategies. Students plan their writing using a B/M/E organizer, which was introduced in first grade, and incorporate the strategies they have learned during independent practice. They later use a more detailed Story Elements Planning Sheet after the teacher models completing one. During independent practice, the teacher conducts individual or small group writing conferences. Students write to various prompts or engage in free choice narrative writing. Students practice scoring a student writing sample using a 6-Traits rubric. A formal narrative writing piece is created. Students score their own writing using the 6-Traits rubric. The piece is also assessed by the teacher using the rubric. Students reflect on their unique "glows," strengths, and "grows," areas for improvement. The unit concludes with students being introduced to various narrative reading response activities and text-dependent questions.

Unit 3a: 5 Square Paragraphs- Informational Writing

Students learn the elements of expository/informational writing. They review the 3 main purposes for writing (inform, entertain, persuade) and practice determining the purpose of various types of writing. In their discussion of informational writing, students examine the 5 square paragraph graphic organizer, as well as student samples of writing and planning. They learn about organization, and the use of paragraphs along with other focus skills that authors use to develop strong informational pieces of writing, such as: focus on a topic, adding supporting details, using voice, incorporating linking/transition word, and using

techniques for baiting a reader and writing a strong conclusion. The teacher also models completing his/her own graphic organizer and creating a 5-paragraph informative essay. During independent practice, students plan their writing using a 5-paragraph graphic organizer and incorporate the strategies they have learned. The teacher conducts individual or small group writing conferences while the class writes independently. Students practice scoring a student writing sample using a 6-Traits rubric. The unit concludes with the creation of a formal informational writing piece. Students have the opportunity to revise and edit this writing using checklists. Students score their own writing using the 6-Traits rubric. The piece is also assessed by the teacher using the rubric.

Unit 3b: Informative/Explanatory Writing

Students review the elements of explanatory/informational writing and create a list of topics they are an “authority” on. Students learn strategies, known as focus skills, that authors use to develop strong informational pieces of writing. Focus skills include using definitions; creating an interesting lead, writing in organized paragraphs, including supporting details; adding linking/transition words; using sensory details; effective word choice, and voice; including a strong ending; and incorporating adverbs, adjectives and verbs. Students examine student writing samples to identify “glows,” strengths and “grows,” areas for improvement. The student writing samples are also used by the teacher to model revising and editing; and to demonstrate various focus skills using the think aloud strategy. The teacher also models completing his/her own graphic organizer and creating a 5-paragraph informative essay. The teacher conducts individual or small group writing conferences whenever the students have independent practice. Students practice scoring a student writing sample using a 6-Traits rubric. Then, students create a formal informational assessment piece. They plan their writing using a 5-paragraph graphic organizer; they write and have the opportunity to revise and edit this writing using checklists. Students score their own writing using the 6-Traits rubric. They reflect on their unique “glows,” strengths, and “grows,” areas for improvement. The piece is also assessed by the teacher using the rubric. The unit concludes with a study of non-fiction text features and students engage in several informational reading response activities.

Unit 4: Opinion Writing

Students review the purpose for opinion writing as well as the difference between a fact and opinion. They are introduced to the elements of opinion writing as they examine various advertisements. Students learn strategies, known as focus skills, that authors use to develop strong opinion pieces of writing. Focus skills include stating your opinion clearly in the introduction, creating an interesting lead, supporting with reasons and details, organizing with paragraphs, incorporating linking/transition words, using voice, and including a strong conclusion. Students examine student writing samples to identify “glows,” strengths and “grows,” areas for improvement. The student writing samples are also used by the teacher to model revising and editing and to demonstrate various focus skills using the think aloud strategy. The teacher also

models completing his/her own graphic organizer and creating a 5-paragraph opinion essay. Students plan their writing using a 5-paragraph graphic organizer and incorporate the strategies they have learned while drafting their piece. The teacher conducts individual or small group writing conferences while the class writes independently. Students practice scoring a student writing sample using a 6-Traits rubric. They create a formal opinion writing piece. Students have the opportunity to revise and edit this writing using checklists. Students score their own writing using the 6-Traits rubric. The piece is also assessed by the teacher using the rubric. The unit concludes with an opinion reading response project where students write a letter to the school's food service director.

Unit 5: Imagined Narrative

Students read about Aesop and work in groups to read a fable and report back on what they noticed about the writing style. Students learn the elements of fables. The class plans and writes a fable together using a Fable Planning Wheel and a Story Elements Planning Sheet. Students learn strategies, known as focus skills, that authors use to develop strong fables. Focus skills include beginning with an interesting lead, using personification to give animals human characteristics, using voice; incorporating dialogue, adverbs, adjectives, strong verbs and linking/transition words; and adding a creative conclusion. Students examine student writing samples to identify "glows," strengths and "grows," areas for improvement. Student writing samples are also used by the teacher to model revising and editing and to demonstrate various focus skills using the think-aloud strategy. Students plan their writing using the same graphic organizers and incorporate the strategies they have learned during independent practice. The teacher conducts individual or small group writing conferences while the students work independently. Students practice scoring a student writing sample using a 6-Traits rubric. Students create a formal fable/imagined narrative writing piece. Students have the opportunity to revise and edit this writing using checklists. Students score their own writing using the 6-Traits rubric. The piece is also assessed by the teacher using the rubric. The unit concludes with students reading and actively thinking about pieces of traditional literature and writing a response to text piece.

Unit 6: Research Writing

Students learn the purpose and elements of research writing as well as the difference between topics and subtopics. Students learn to select their own research materials, develop BIG Questions to answer through their research and list their sources. Students learn strategies, known as focus skills, that authors use to develop strong research pieces. Focus skills include introducing a topic; grouping related information; developing the topic with facts, definitions and details; recalling information from sources; taking brief notes from sources; sorting evidence into categories; and using dictionaries to clarify meaning. The teacher models every step of the research process and the focus skills using the think-aloud strategy. Students plan their 5-paragraph research writing using various graphic organizers and incorporate the strategies they

have learned during independent practice. The teacher conducts individual or small group writing conferences while the class writes independently. Students examine student writing samples to identify “glows,” strengths and “grows,” areas for improvement. Student writing samples are also used by the teacher to model revising and editing; and to demonstrate various focus skills using the think aloud strategy. They also practice scoring a student writing sample using a 6-Traits rubric. Students have the opportunity to revise and edit this writing using checklists and publish it using technology. Students score their own writing using the 6-Traits rubric. They reflect on their unique “glows,” strengths, and “grows,” areas for improvement. The research piece is also assessed by the teacher using the rubric.