Genre Mini Unit
Writing Informational Nonfiction
By Joyce Dunning

Grade Level: 2nd Grade

State Core Standards:
Standard 2, Objective 1: Demonstrate an understanding that print carries "the " message.
Standard 7, Objective 1: Identify purposes of text.
Standard 7, Objective 3: Recognize and use features of narrative and informational text.
Standard 8, Objective 1: Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas.
Standard 8, Objective 2: Compose a written draft.
Standard 8, Objective 3: Revise by elaborating and clarifying a written draft.
Standard 8, Objective 6: Write in different modes and genres.

Objectives:
Students will identify the features of informational nonfiction.
Students will use a graphic organizer to take notes.
Students will research about an animal in books and on the internet.
Students will write informative captions for illustrations.
Students will publish and share an informational nonfiction book they have written.

Materials:
Nonfiction books about animals (suggested literature listed at the end of unit)
Multiple copies of graphic organizer
Lined paper
Pencils
Projection unit (optional)

Day 1:

Mini-lesson: Analysis of nonfiction text

Immersion:

Show the students the nonfiction book you have selected to read. As you read the book out loud pause use think aloud. Say “I notice that there are words written underneath the picture on this page. As I read the caption I learned that ______.” Point out that captions to pictures and charts are important sources of information. “I notice that this book is divided into chapters according to the main idea.” Point out the features of nonfiction text such as the table of contents, bibliography, index, and glossary.
Discuss with students what the purpose of writing a nonfiction book about animals might be. Students should understand that the author is informing the reader about animals. Guide the discussion to include: the information should be true, information can come from books, internet, magazines, or observations, and pictures can convey information.

Tell students that they will be writing a nonfiction book about one animal of their choice. Give them a minute to share with the person next to them what animal they are interested in writing about.

Collaborative:

Gather various nonfiction books for students to examine. Select a variety of types of format in books i.e. informational, narrative, ABC, poetry, and magazines.

Divide students into small groups of 4-5. Instruct students that they will not read the entire book but only a couple of paragraphs. Students should focus their attention on how the book or magazine is formatted. Suggest that they notice any charts or picture captions.

After the students have had an opportunity to look at several books have the students tell what they noticed about the books. Guide the discussion by asking questions like “What did you notice about the pictures? What did you notice about the way the words were arranged on the page? How was the book organized?” Write the students observations on the board.

Accountability/Assessment: The teacher will listen to the individual group’s discussions of the books. Students who are not participating in the group discussions will be asked questions like “Why do you think the author gave each chapter a title instead of just numbers?” This will help the teacher assess the level of thinking involvement the student may have.

Day 2-3:

Mini-lesson: Using a graphic organizer

Immersion:

Choose an informational book about an animal. Read the book to the class.

Compare other nonfiction books they have read. Say “I noticed that in the book ___________ (choose another nonfiction book you have already read to the class that is similar) it answered questions about __________ just like this book.
Model:

Tell students that a graphic organizer is a tool that will help them to organize the information they learn before writing their book.

Brainstorm ideas of the kinds of information the students would like to learn about an animal. Use these ideas to create general categories for a graphic organizer or use the graphic organizer included in this unit.

Model a think aloud as you reread the animal book read at the beginning and demonstrate taking notes using the graphic organizer. Say, “I read that _______ so on the organizer I am only going to write a few words that will remind me of what I read. So I will write ____________.” Repeat this process a couple of times but do not completely finish the organizer.

Shared:

As you continue to reread the book have students raise their hands when they hear information that could be included on the graphic organizer. Ask which category the information belongs in. Add those notes to the organizer until you have finished the book.

Collaborative:

Using the computer and projection unit display the Children’s National Geographic website.

Divide the class into small groups of 2-3 students. Give each group a copy of the graphic organizer used in yesterday’s lesson. Students will work in groups and record notes about the topic on the graphic organizer. In order to make sure that all the students are participating, each student will have a job. Student 1 will read about the topic in a quiet voice for his group, student 2 will stop student 1 when he feels he has read something that should be included on the organizer, and student 3 will write notes. Then the jobs will shift among the students so each has a new job.

The teacher will roam around listening to the various groups and asking questions such as “why do think this information would be interesting to include in a book?” Also notice if the notes being written are brief but complete enough for the students to write their own sentences from later. Ask “Tell me in your own words what you wrote about ____________ (e.g. what this animal eats.)?

Independent:

Tell the students that they will be able to research the animal they have chosen by using the internet or books. In order to keep students safe while using the internet
on the teacher’s blog or webpage a list of safe children’s websites should be listed with a link to the page.

Accountability/Assessment: Have students turn in their graphic organizer to be reviewed by the teacher. The graphic organizer will indicate if the students are copying entire sentences or writing meaningful notes.

**Day 4:**

Mini-lesson: Turning notes into complete sentences.

**Model:**

- Using the graphic organizer, the class created at the beginning of the genre unit, tell the students that after the research has been done it is time to write the rough draft. Model how to use the notes you took and turn them into sentences of your own. Be sure to think aloud as you write and say, “I want my book to sound like me so I am going to tell about this animal like I would tell my best friend at recess what I learned.”

- Demonstrate how to expand your notes to create more than just a single sentence for each note on the graphic organizer. For instance, if the research topic was sea otters and included in the notes was ‘use tools to eat’ the sentence might be “Sea Otters like to eat clams. They are clever and use rocks as tools to hammer the shell open. The otter has to float on its back and put the clam on its stomach to pry it open.”

**Shared:**

- Model for the students the following activity before allowing them to work with a partner: taking turns each student will choose one of the notes on their graphic organizer and in their own words tell about it to the other person. Then they will write the sentence on paper. The listener should ask questions to help the speaker to expand the information to more than a single sentence. Ask for volunteers to share what they said and write it on the chart as they do.

**Independent:**

- Have students begin composing the rough draft of their book by expanding their notes to make sentences.

Accountability/Assessment: The teacher will conference with students about their writing. If the student is not able to write more than just one short sentence about each of the notes he/she has taken ask them to tell you about the animal. Ask questions to elicit more details from the student. Demonstrate how to record what was just said onto paper.
Day 5:

Mini-lesson: Sentence Fluency

Immersion:

Read a portion of a nonfiction book but add words repetitively that are typical for the students to use such as beginning sentences with ‘and’. Ask students if they notice anything about the writing that you read. They should indicate the overuse of the word.

Model:

Tell students that good writing flows and doesn’t sound repetitive. Use the rough draft made previously (it should have been written with errors to provide for opportunities to teach editing). Say, “As I read I am going to listen carefully to the words. If I hear the same word used more than 2 times I will make a tally mark on the side of my paper each time I read that same word.” After reading the passage say, “I used the word ‘and’ ____ times. I will reread the sentences one at a time and think ‘Can I say the same thing either leaving out the word and or using another word?”

Model the following activity. Write these sentences on the board:

Nat is a cat.
Nat is fat.
Nat sat on his hat.
He made the hat flat.

Read the sentences out loud. Then think/write aloud how to say the same thing in another way.

Shared:

Put students in small groups of 2-3. Have each group brainstorm another way of saying the above sentences by combining and rearranging them. Then write the sentence on paper. Allow each group the opportunity to share what they wrote.

Independent:

Students will read their passages over. After every couple of sentences they will pause and ask themselves if they hear a word repeated over and over. Then have them ask if there is another way to say the same thing.

Accountability/Assessment: Have students work with a partner. Each student will read the other’s paper looking for repetitive words. This is also a good time for the teacher to
conference with students about their writing. Students needing additional help in writing fluently can meet with the teacher in small group.

**Day 6:**

**Mini-lesson: Pictures and captions**

**Immersion:**

- Read a nonfiction picture book to the class. Only read the captions and show the pictures. Remind students that pictures can explain and inform as well as text.

**Shared:**

- Discuss what they learned about the animal just by reading the captions and looking at the pictures. Be certain that when a student says they see something in a picture that you ask “What does that teach us?” Discuss how the captions relate directly to the pictures. Write their responses on the board.

- Now show the students a picture of an animal without a caption. Have students work with a partner to write an informational caption for the picture. Allow the students to share what they wrote.

**Independent:**

- Allow students to choose from their notes something they want to illustrate. Provide time for them to draw their picture then instruct the students to write a caption to go with the picture. Each student should complete a minimum of 3 illustrations for their book.

**Accountability/Assessment:** The teacher will conference with students as they create their illustrations and captions. Additional instruction can be provided for students who do not demonstrate an understanding of writing an informative caption at this time. Each student will turn in their illustrations and captions to be reviewed by the teacher. Captions should inform the reader about the animal as illustrated.

**Publishing**

After editing and writing the final draft of their book, students can choose to either design a cover for their book or make a safari bag. See attached for instructions on making a safari bag. Students should review the nonfiction books that have been read in class to determine what features they will include such as: table of contents and about the author pages. The pages should be numbered and organized according to the format chosen.
Child Safe Websites:

http://www.kidsbiology.com/animals-for-children.php
http://kids.yahoo.com/animals
http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Animals/CreatureFeature
http://www.oaklandzoo.org/animals/

Recommended Books and Magazines:

Zoo Books
Eye Witness Books
National Geographic for Kids
Ranger Rick
Rubric for Nonfiction

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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Graphic Organizer</strong></td>
<td>The graphic organizer is incomplete.</td>
<td>Organizer is complete but the notes are not informative.</td>
<td>Organizer is complete with information that makes sense.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sentences</strong></td>
<td>Sentences do not Include details.</td>
<td>Sentences include details but are repetitive.</td>
<td>Sentences include detail using a variety of language.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Captions</strong></td>
<td>No captions were Included.</td>
<td>Captions do not Inform the reader about the picture.</td>
<td>Captions are informative and relate to the pictures.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pictures</strong></td>
<td>No pictures were included.</td>
<td>There were less than 3 pictures included.</td>
<td>A minimum of 3 pictures were included.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Final Published Book</strong></td>
<td>The book does not have a cover.</td>
<td>The cover or safari bag is incomplete.</td>
<td>The cover or bag is complete and neat.</td>
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Total points possible 15

Total points earned ________

The Safari Bag is taken from the following book and modified according to the unit.
Bags, Boxes, Buttons, and Beyond with The Bag Ladies

Cindy Guinn and Karen Simmons
Illustrated by Cindy Guinn

A Resource Book of Science and Social Studies Projects for K-6 Teachers, Parents, and Students
Tri-Folder

Materials needed:
- Brown paper grocery bag
- Wide, clear packaging tape
- Scissors
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Instructions:
1. Fold the bottom of the bag over its middle as shown in the diagram.
2. Cut the bottom layers away from the top of the bag above the top fold. This will leave one small piece that can be folded forward like a portfolio flap.
3. Cut down the top layer of the bag, stopping at the bottom flap. Then cut across the bag just above the bottom flap in the same manner.
4. Open the remaining part of the bag as if it were a regular paper bag.

5. Cut away the sides of the bag and unfold as shown in the diagram. You will find three equal pieces remaining at the bottom of the bag.

6. Fold the bottom piece up and tape the sides with the clear, wide packaging tape to create a pocket.

7. To close, fold the bottom pocket to the middle and then the middle to the top. Secure with the small flap.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Animal Name</th>
<th>Habitat</th>
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<th>Other Interesting Facts</th>
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