

## Non-Fiction Genre Mini-Unit by KayDee Shaffer

Grade Level: First Grade

Resources:

- Whiteboard easel and dry-erase markers
- Chart paper
- Paper, pencils, crayons, and stapler for student use in producing books
- Several examples of high-quality non-fiction texts (enough for partner groups to choose 2 different texts to examine). The books I have selected are from National Geographic Windows on Literacy and can be found on their website (<http://www.ngsp.com/Products/ContentLiteracy/nbspnbspWindowsonLiteracy/tabid/139/Default.aspx>).
- Crops
- Weather Words by Gail Gibbons
- Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter
- Mud, Mud, Mud
- From Field to Florist
- Plants on My Plate
- The Sun
- Plants Concept Book
- Weather and Seasons
- Baby Birds

Standards and Objectives:

**Standard 8--Writing**-Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Objective 1

Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas (pre-writing).

1. Generate ideas for writing by reading, discussing literature and informational text, drawing, looking at books, being read to, and reflecting on personal experiences.

Objective 2

Compose a written draft.

1. Draft ideas on paper in an organized manner (e.g., beginning, middle, end) utilizing words and sentences.

Objective 3

Revise by elaborating and clarifying a written draft.

1. Revise draft to add details.
3. Write in complete sentences.

Objective 4

Edit written draft for conventions.

1. Edit writing for capitals in names, first word of a sentence, and the pronoun “I” and correct ending punctuation (i.e., periods, question marks).
2. Edit for spelling of grade level-appropriate words (e.g., would, down, made, write).
3. Edit for standard grammar (i.e., complete sentences).
4. Edit for appropriate formatting features (i.e., spacing, margins, titles).

#### Objective 5

Use fluent and legible handwriting to communicate.

1. Print all upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet and numerals 0-9 using proper form, proportions, and spacing.
3. Produce legible documents with manuscript handwriting.

#### Objective 6

Write in different forms and genres.

3. Produce functional text (e.g., ABC books, lists, labels, signs, how-to books, observations).
4. Share writing with others using illustrations to add meaning to publish works.
5. Publish group and individual products.

**Standard 6--Vocabulary**-Students learn and use grade level vocabulary to increase understanding and read fluently.

#### Objective 3

Recognize and use features of narrative and informational text.

2. Identify different genres: nursery rhymes, fairy tales, poems, realistic fiction, fantasy, and fables.
3. Identify information from pictures, captions, and diagrams.
4. Identify multiple facts in grade level informational text.
5. Locate facts from informational texts (e.g., picture books, grade level informational books).

Expected Outcome: Students will write their own non-fiction piece. Their non-fiction piece will include the text features of informational texts.

#### **Day 1:**

Time: Approximately 25-35 minutes

Objective: Students will be immersed in the genre of informational text/ non-fiction. This will prepare them to write this genre in later lessons. Students will examine and describe the text features of non-fiction books.

Mini-Lesson (15-20 min.): Introduce students to non-fiction text structure by reading Weather Words by Gail Gibbons and Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter National Geographic Windows on Literacy.

-Say, “This year we have read several different kinds of books. I have noticed that some of your favorite books to read from class library are found in the non-fiction

book tub. You may have noticed some of the differences between fiction and non-fiction books as you have read both this year. Today I am going to read two non-fiction books to you. I want you to notice how the authors write these books. We will use what we learn to write our own non-fiction books.”

-Read text, stopping to discuss different text features.

-After reading aloud group students with a partner.

-Say, “Now I am going to let you and your partner choose 2 non-fiction books. Once you have your books you will go to your seats and read the books together. As you are reading I want you to pay careful attention to how the author organizes their books.”

Assessment/lesson wrap-up (10-15 min): Have students gather back to our rug area. On the whiteboard easel I will have a large chart paper.

Say, “Today I have read a non-fiction book to you and you have read some with a partner too. What are some things you noticed about non-fiction that are different from fiction stories.”

As students share ideas and suggestions I will write down these different features on the chart paper under the title “Non-fiction”. Some of the features I want my students to recognize about nonfiction: provides information, true information, usually has really pictures with captions, there is an index, glossary, and/or table of contents etc. Finish today’s lesson by telling the students that tomorrow I am going to share a non-fiction story that I wrote. Then they will get the chance to brainstorm some ideas of what they want to write their non-fiction books about.

## **Day 2:**

Time: Approximately 30-40 minutes

Objective: Students will begin to generate and organize ideas for their own non-fiction piece.

Mini-Lesson (20-25 min.): I will begin the lesson by sharing my own nonfiction piece that I made for my nonfiction book assignment for this class. (Baseball: America’s Favorite Pastime).

Say, “This is a non-fiction book that I wrote. It is about something I am interested in and know a lot about. I had to use other books and the Internet to help make sure the information I shared was true. As I read my book to you I want you to see if it has some of the text features that we talked about yesterday.”

Read my book. When finished, review the chart paper we made together about text features of non-fiction books.

Say, “ I wrote my own non-fiction book, but to begin I had to decide what to write about. I knew that I wanted to write about something I am an expert on. I wanted to teach other people information about something I love.

Model using a think aloud/write aloud. Use a chart paper. Have some ideas already filled out. Model thinking aloud about what I could teach someone or what I am interested in. Say, “Well it is spring and I am really interested in my garden. Maybe I

could write a book about how to grow a garden. I know a lot about dogs, maybe I could write a book about that....

Say, "I have my list of ideas for a non-fiction book, now I want you to practice coming up with ideas on what you are experts on or are interested in. I am going to give you a lined sheet of paper that you can write down your ideas on.

Student writing/ assessment (10-15 min): Students are in their seats and writing down their ideas. During this time I will circulate the classroom and see how everyone is doing.

Share (5-10 min): - Students will meet back over in rug area. I will have 5 or 6 students share some of their ideas on what they would like to write about.

Once students are finished sharing I will explain that in order to make sure the information we share in our books is correct we need to do some researching. I will encourage them to do some researching at home and we will also do some over the next couple of days in class, by going to the school library and the computer lab. I will also gather non-fiction texts about the topics that students are interested in. (The note I send home today for parents will share with them what we are working on and how they can help their student "research" at home).

### **Day 3**

Time: 35-45 minutes

Objective: Students will use one of the ideas generated to begin collecting information about their idea. They will learn how to use a KWL to record information they will use in their books.

Mini-Lesson (15-20 min.): Use the chart paper of ideas I generated from yesterday. Select a new topic to write about. After making my selection use a new piece of chart paper with the title KWL at the top. (I have used this graphic organizer several times throughout the year for many topics and my students are familiar with the structure: What I KNOW, What I WANT to Know, and What I LEARNED.)

Say, "As you begin gathering information for your own books I want you to think about what you already know about your topic. What do you want to know? Then, as you are reading books we find in the library or information about your topic you found on the computer, what did you learn?"

Demonstrate using the KWL organizer to do this. Have students help with information that they already know about the selected topic. Say, "I want to write another non-fiction book. I am going to use a KWL to help me with the information I am going to use to write a non-fiction book about plants. So, I am going to start with what I already know. I know that there are many kinds of plants. What do you know about plants?" During this time we will do some interactive writing. I will have students share what they already know about plants, and have them come and write it up under the K. I will continue the process with the W, what do they want to know about plants. I will continue to let the students come up and do the writing. Then for the L section I will say, "Now, I need to

go to the library (or on the computer) and see what else I can find about plants. When I have gathered my new information I will write it under what I Learned.”

Student Writing/ Assessment (15-20min.): Give each student their own copy of a KWL chart to write their information on.

Say, “As I come around to conference with each of you I am going to talk with you about the topic you chose. I will check to see if you are writing information you already know about your topic, and what you want to know.”

Today I want to make it around to each student. I will be looking to see if they have selected their topic. I will compliment them on their lists and details of things they already know. If they are having difficulty with what they want to know I will help them to generate ideas about this to. I will show them and talk with them about things I notice that are going well and ask them what they are going to do next.

Sharing (5 min): I will have students share with a partner what they have written so far on their KWL. If their partners have any other ideas or information they can discuss this also.

For tomorrow: I will gather student KWL’s to pass out tomorrow. We will be spending some time in the library and computer lab doing a little more research. I have also asked students to bring any information that they have gathered at home. We will be working on finishing the L, what I learned section.

#### **Day 4:**

Time: Depending on how our “research” is going, I may extend day 4 to more than one day. I will just have to be flexible and observe how my students are doing with the use of the graphic organizer.

I will quickly review the instructions for the L on our KWL chart. Then, during our library time today (we have half an hour scheduled) we will spend time with the help of the librarian looking for books that are about the different topics my students chose. We will also spend our ½ hour allotted computer time looking up any other information we need. (Again, this may take us more than one day)

Using the resources that students have gathered, may be one other book on the topic, information their family helped to gather from home, students will complete their KWL chart.

**Day 5:** (or 6, 7, 8? Depending on how long the previous days actually take)

Time: 40-45 min.

Objective: Students will complete a written draft.

Mini-Lesson (5-10 min): Use the information we wrote down together on the KWL chart about plants to write a draft on this non-fiction book.

Model with thinking/writing aloud how to start my book. I will begin with a table of contents. I will select a sentence or two about each information fact I'm going to write on a page. I will also model that it is okay to make mistakes. Say, "This is just my first draft, if I make a mistake that is ok, I will come back and check my work tomorrow. I want to get my ideas written down first."

I will pass out the student KWL's and let students quickly tell a partner what their topic is. This will help them to remember what their topic is and they will start writing when they are excused to their seats.

Student writing/ assessment (20-30 min): As I circulate the room I will check and compliment student's use of the text features we have learned about. I will compliment also on the information they are sharing in their story as they use what they have written down on their KWL chart.

Share (10 min): I will allow several students to share their drafts. Other students can comment about what they liked or learned from the student's book.

### **Day 6:**

Time: 40-45 minutes

Objective: Students will reread their drafts and correct sentences for punctuation and check to see if they have included text features such as a table of context. Students will also illustrate their pages of their non-fiction book.

Mini-Lesson (5-10minutes): I will show the students the rough draft I started for yesterday's mini-lesson. I will begin at the start of my non-fiction book. I will model and think aloud as I read through my sentences (yesterday I made mistakes on purpose so that I could demonstrate how to revise today.) When I have checked my sentences I will review my text structure as I use the chart paper we made as a class at the beginning of this unit. I want to check to make sure I have included several of the features we discussed finding in non-fiction books.

Student Writing/ Assessment (20-25 minutes): I will continue conferencing with students and help them with the process of checking/revising their work. Once they have done this they can begin adding illustrations to their books.

Sharing: Depending on time and student attention I may have all students share today or do half today and the rest tomorrow.

Accommodations throughout the unit and reflections: As with any plan, this schedule would have to be tentative. Because I have never done this before I am not quite certain on the amount of time everything will really take. I think that this is part of being a teacher, being flexible with time. I will also be mindful of the differing abilities of my students. Some students may need more time conferencing with me, while others will not need as much. I will also have the non-fiction example texts left out in our classroom for students to refer to throughout this whole process.

Some considerations I am thinking about for future uses of this unit would be having parent volunteers come in and help us when we go to the library or computer lab to gather information. I also think it would be great to somehow have students use real photographs in their books instead of illustrations. Maybe sending home a disposable camera with students? I am excited to try this in my classroom and realize that by providing my students with more scaffolding and explicit instructions they will be able to successfully do this on their own.