

Informational Research and Writing in the Primary Grades

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For additional informational text experiences see:

[The Literacy Workshop \(Walther & Biggs-Tucker, 2020\)](#) (Chapter 9)

[The Ramped-Up Read Aloud \(Walther, 2019\)](#) (Chapter 4 & 6)

[Transforming Literacy Instruction in the Era of Higher Standards \(Walther, 2015\)](#) (Chapters 6 & 7)

[Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom \(Walther & Phillips, 2012\)](#) (Chapter 8)

[Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing \(Walther & Phillips, 2009\)](#) (Chapter 8)

Standards Addressed During Learning Experiences:

CCSS W7.1/2: Participate in shared research and writing projects.

CCSS W8.1/2/3: Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided (**print and digital**) sources to answer a question. **Take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.**

CCSS W2.1/2: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, supply some facts, definitions, and details about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

Preparation: Collect nonfiction texts, images, digital resources, magazines, and/or other information sources about a topic of interest to your students. [ZOOBOOKS](#) magazines work well for studying animals.

Materials:

- Chart paper or interactive whiteboard document for demonstrating the process
- Lined paper for brainstorming research questions
- Unlined paper divided into fourths for collecting “dash facts”
- [Nonfiction Book Pages](#) for writing completed informative piece or poster paper (18 x 24 White Drawing Paper)

Shared Research Experience/Creating a Class Informational Piece:

Mini-Lesson 1: Collaborate with your students to brainstorm a list of possible topics. From that list, come to consensus to select a topic of interest.

Mini-Lesson 2: Create a list of research questions about the chosen topic (See Sample Questions on Page 2).

Mini-Lesson 3: If possible, sort the questions into categories.

Mini-Lessons 4-7: Research and collect “dash facts.” As the term suggests, “dash facts” are key research findings written in short phrases (rather than sentences). Each fact is preceded by a dash. When young researchers get in the habit of writing “dash facts,” they are less likely to copy information straight from the text.

Collect “dash facts” for each category (See Sample “Dash Facts” on Page 2) over a few days.

- Fold a piece of chart paper into four sections or create an interactive whiteboard document with four sections.
- Label each section with the categories you created during Mini-Lesson 3.
- Use a text set of multiple sources, print and digital, to find the answers to your research questions.
- Demonstrate how you take the key ideas from the sources to write a dash fact in your own words.

“Dash facts” Idea Source: Portalupi, J. & Fletcher, R. (2001). [Nonfiction Craft Lessons](#). Portland, ME: Stenhouse. (p. 24)

Sample Research Questions about Owls

Are owls different colors?

Do owls have teeth?

When do owls hunt?

How do owls get their food?

What do owls eat?

Can owls turn their heads all the way around?

Can I have a pet owl?

Sample Dash Facts about Owls

Owls

Look Like -feathers -pointy beak -4 talons -2 legs -long wings -round eyes	Things They Do -hoot -hunt -fly
Favorite Foods -mice -small rodents	Fun Facts -heads turn almost all the way around -owl pellets -unfriendly animals

Mini-Lesson 8-11: Demonstrate the steps to writing an informational piece by turning dash facts into complete sentences. One category at a time, purposefully demonstrate how to introduce the topic, develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details, use linking words and phrases, and create a concluding statement or section. Remember to revise as you reread and continue writing, thinking about organization, word choice, sentences fluency, and voice.

Mini-Lesson 12: Edit for conventions and fix up/fancy up to place in the classroom library, if you choose!

Release Responsibility to Students: Writing an Informational Piece or Creating an Infographic Poster

Mini-Lesson 1: Invite students to identify a topic of interest (I usually have students write down the three animals they want to study and tell them that they will get to study one of their three choices.) Based on topic of interest and ability, strategically place students in research teams.

Mini-Lesson 2: In their research team, brainstorm a list of research questions and categorize.

Mini-Lesson 3: Collect a text set of resources.

Mini-Lesson 4-7: Collect dash facts for each category.

Mini-Lesson 8-11: Write informational book or create an infographic poster (See Page 3)

Mini-Lesson 12: Edit for conventions and fix up/fancy up.

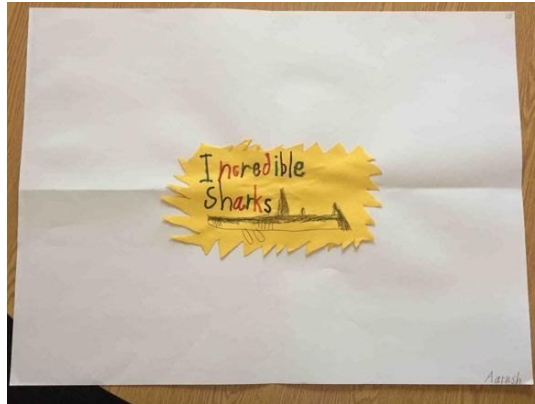
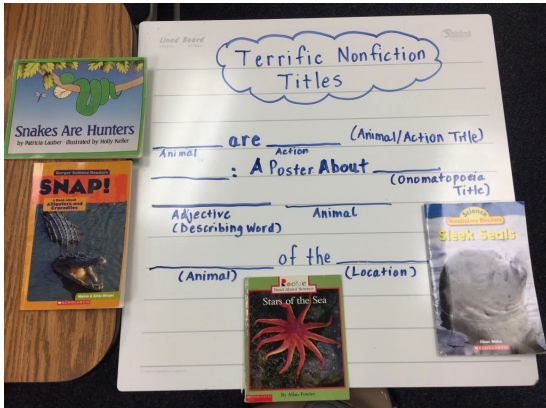
Creating an Infographic Poster

*Note each of these mini-lessons/writing experiences may take multiple days to complete. Each infographic describes one category of the research. In the example that follows, the children were doing animal research based on the following categories: Looks Like, Things They Do, Favorite Foods, and Fun Facts.

Mini-Lesson 8: What Do Nonfiction Titles Have in Common?

Notice and discuss characteristics of nonfiction titles

- Students create a title for their poster



Mini-Lesson 9: What is Diagram? (Looks Like)

Notice and discuss characteristics of diagrams with labels

- Students create diagram showing what the animal looks like
- Students write “looks like” page and staple it to poster



Mini-Lesson 10: What is a Caption? (Things They Do)

Notice and discuss characteristics of captions

Using information from dash facts,

create illustration and caption showing something the animal does.

- Students write "things they do" page and staple it to poster



Mini-Lesson 11: What is a Pie Chart? (Favorite Foods)

Notice and discuss characteristics of pie charts

Using information from dash facts, students figure out

how many things the animal eats

Create a pie chart showing the different foods the animal eats

