

**Planning for the Test Preparation Unit**

*Grade 3*

The PARCC PBA (Performance-Based Assessment) will include three different tasks: Literary Analysis, Research Simulation, and Narrative. The best preparation for these tasks are our Units of Study and the suggested Unit Assessments. Within these units are teaching points that align directly to the Common Core State Standards and ultimately with PARCC. The accompanying unit assessments were also created to align with the language and demands of PARCC.

With that said, we recommend that you plan for a unit that helps students transfer skills and knowledge to the specific genre of test-taking. Planning for this unit will depend on the needs of your students and an assessment of areas in which you’ve already focused and those that need more attention. Below are our suggestions to help you in planning:

**Suggestions Across the Unit:**

* Maintain students’ stamina for reading and thinking by providing longer periods of time for reading and responding. The “test prep” activities should not replace independent reading and writing, but rather be integrated into minilessons and independent reading and writing. If you are finding your workshop times to be shortened or broken up by test prep activities, consider the once-a-week “reading marathon” day suggested in Calkins’ Test Preparation Unit of Study.
* Co-create a genre chart with your students (See *Blank Genre Chart Template*). The more your students “get their minds ready” for reading in a particular genre, and planning for writing depending on the text type, the more strategic they will be as test takers.
  + Provide brief immersion into genres not yet explored yet in your grade (e.g. poetry, scripts, biography).
* Give students the opportunity to read and write online (See *Using Digital Resources for Test Prep*).
* Provide opportunities for children to write in response to texts (See *Preparing for Constructed Responses*).
* Engage children in Close Reading. Through Close Reading experiences you can model and scaffold how to deepen comprehension and support ideas with evidence. Also use Close Reading to help students consider the author’s craft (such as word choice, use of visual images).
* Give children practice with PARCC itself. Use the practice as an opportunity to teach and work through questions together, in addition to giving students independent practice. http://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/english/
* Familiarize yourself with the language of the test and make sure your students are familiar too. [See *Language from PARCC Practice Test-Multiple Choice*]

**Preparing specifically for responding to nonfiction texts (Research Simulation Task)**:

* Provide students with practice in determining the main idea and identifying supporting evidence. The nonfiction units of study help students determine main idea and supporting details through “boxes and bullets”. Return to both expository nonfiction and narrative nonfiction while modeling and scaffolding the thinking required of boxes and bullets. If you have not yet used the text, *Cactus Hotel* (one of the books in the Reading Workshop mentor text pack provided to schools last year), track it down! It’s a great one for teaching narrative nonfiction and main idea.
* Use the short texts found on our website in the nonfiction unit (<http://ppsgrade3.weebly.com/nonfiction-resources-for-students.html>) and also in *The Comprehension Toolkit* and in *Toolkit Texts* to pair with PARCC-like questions (See *Language from PARCC Practice Test-Multiple Choice*). You may want to focus on one type of question that is unfamiliar or tricky for your students across one week, using several different short texts. You may also find useful short texts from the resources you received a couple of years ago accompanying the Calkins Test Prep Unit of Study.
* See *Preparing for Constructed Responses* for suggestions on teaching students to write in response to informational texts (a key component of the Research Simulation Task).

**Preparing specifically for responding to narrative texts (Literary Analysis and Narrative Tasks)**:

* Provide students with practice in determining the central message (life lesson, big idea) of a narrative text and identifying supporting evidence. Each of the units of study at the beginning of the year (i.e. *Character, Series Book Clubs, Mystery, Biography*) build toward helping students develop theories and determine lessons from the texts they read. Return to the later sections of any of these units for specific teaching points that help students look beyond the plot toward the central message. Engage students in these teaching points through read-alouds, short passages, or familiar texts.
* If you have not yet conducted the pre- and post-assessments suggested for these units, you can also use these assessments as teaching opportunities and opportunities for practice. In particular, you will see that the Biography pre- and post-assessment is available in a digital format. This assessment gives students the chance to read and compose a response online and will help you to focus on particular areas in which students may need support.
* Help children understand point of view. Return to a scene from familiar read-alouds and ask students to turn-and-talk from different perspectives. For example, “Trisha is the narrator of this story. What if Ritchie was the one describing this scene? How might it go?”
* Teach the *Biography* unit as the foundation for test prep if you opted for *Mysteries* during the last unit. This unit is a great foundation for PARCC preparation (as long as you intersperse it with other genres). Through the context of biographies, your students can become more familiar with understanding character, identifying central message, and using text evidence. Just be sure to intersperse the unit with review and immersion of other genres, and ideally the creation of the genre chart.
* Use short narrative texts (or excerpts from past read alouds) to pair with PARCC-like questions (See *Language from PARCC Practice Test-Multiple Choice*). You may want to focus on one type of question that is unfamiliar or tricky for your students across one week, using several different short texts. You may find useful short texts from the resources you received a couple of years ago accompanying the Calkins Test Prep Unit of Study. Jean Little’s *Hey World, Here I Am* is a resource found in several buildings that would be great for this work as well.
* See *Preparing for Constructed Responses* for suggestions on teaching students to write in response to narrative texts (key components of the Literary Analysis and Narrative Tasks).