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| **Grade 3**  **Unit Overview**  ***Writing Gripping Fictional Stories with Meaning and Significance*** | |
| **Focus Teaching Points** | * Generating ideas for Small Moment fictional stories—fictional *episodes*—in which a character encounters trouble and resolves it * Structuring stories to follow a story arc * Using story language, including language to illustrate the passage of time * Focusing stories on one or two realistic characters * Telling stories aloud in preparation for writing * Telling and writing stories bit-by-bit to build tension * Writing sequenced stories that unfold through “reliving or envisioning events” * Using action, dialogue, thoughts and feelings * Showing not Telling, particularly related to character development * Creating tension by including obstacles, problems and challenging situations * Revising for leads and endings that send a message (reveal a lesson) * Editing * Publishing and Celebrating |
| **Key CCSS Standards** | ***Writing Standards******(W)***   * *3, 3a-d, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10*   ***Language Standards (L)***   * *1,1a-I, 2, 2a-g, 3, 3a-b, 4, 4a-d, 5, 5a-c, 6* |
| **Bends in the Road** | * Thinking of a character and of small moment stories for that character: generating and writing several short fiction books * Revising with intention: pulling readers to the edges of their seats * Repeating the process and accumulating lessons along the way |
| **Recommended Professional Resource(s) to Guide Instruction** | * “Writing Gripping Fictional Stories with Meaning and Significance” from the *If. . .Then. . .Curriculum, Grade 3* in *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing (2013)* by Lucy Calkins and Julia Mooney*.* |
| **Recommended Anchor/Mentor Texts** | * Suggestions of mentor texts that keep readers on the edge of their seats include: *Shortcut* by Donald Crews; *The Ghost-Eye Tree*, by Bill Martin; *Koala Lou*, by Mem Fox and *Too Many Tamales*, by Gary Soto. * Picture books can illustrate qualities of fiction writing in an easily accessible way for all students. Some other suggested examples of realistic fiction are:   + *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant   + *The Leaving Morning* by Angela Johnson. * Collections of short stories such as:   + *Hey World, Here I Am* by Jean Little * You may want to reference specific passages in any fiction books students are reading for literature discussions as well. * One of the most powerful mentor texts for your students is often your own writing. Use your own writing as well as a class piece of writing (written on chart paper or an overhead) throughout the unit to teach writing strategies. Let these pieces build over time as the focus of your teaching shifts and you incorporate new techniques. |
| **Tips to Consider** | *“This unit prioritizes story structure, spotlighting the plotting work that a short story writer does, emphasizing especially that a good story contains a scene (or small moment) or two and is told to build* ***gripping tension****. The character wants something and encounters trouble en route to that something. For your children, you capture this combination of motivations and obstacles by characterizing the stories they’ll be writing as “edge-of-the-seat stories” or “trouble stories” . . .Tension can turn a sequential chain of events into something that feels like a story. To do this, teach your students how to develop characters in a way that builds tension, giving them dreams, desires, fears, and frustrations.” (p. 3)*   * We encourage you to read the *Rationale/Introduction* and *A Summary of the Bends in the Road* (pages 2-5), although you will likely find it essential to read this unit in full as it describes in greater detail the important teaching within each bend. * This unit provides students with an opportunity to return to narrative writing. It builds on *Crafting True Stories* from the fall and also the fiction writing units children experienced in previous grades. We encourage you to consider this a time to return to this earlier teaching—pull out old anchor charts and even previous writing—remind students that fiction writing is simply a TYPE of narrative writing, a genre they know well. * Support students in developing stories that build from their own lives and what they already know--this unit is not intended as fantasy writing or science fiction! * Use what the students already know about writing narratives as resources for lifting the quality of students’ writing, such as planning with timelines and story mountains, experimenting with leads, zooming in on important moments, and using revising and editing strategies. * Depending on the recent writing you have on hand to assess students’ strengths/needs in regard to fiction writing, you may decide to begin this unit by administering the [on-demand fiction writing assessment](http://ppsgrade3.weebly.com/assessment.html). * **Bend I (pages 5-9):** During this bend, children will write several short Small Moment edge-of-your-seat stories in booklets. Prepare booklets of 5-7 pages and think of these stories as containing two small moments or scenes at most.   + An important goal of this unit is for children to write as storytellers, *not* as summarizers, using detail to build tension and stretching out the most gripping parts.   + This bend reminds students of two important strategies for generating fiction stories (described on pages 6-7), and both involve students drawing ideas from strong emotions:     - Think of “one time when” a character in a familiar book experienced a strong emotion (e.g. embarrassment) and then write another similar moment for a new fictional character (e.g. think of the time when Pinky wet his pants during a spelling bee and then write a similar story for a different character)     - Consider small moments from one’s own life instead of from literature; turn these small moments into fiction, perhaps by creating more tension, or writing from a different perspective.   + When generating, children should spend at the most ten minutes generating story ideas and then writing for the remainder of the workshop block. Some teachers have had success by asking students to write the first few pages of a *few* stories and then decide which one to complete, leaving the remaining ideas as “books-in-waiting” (p. 7). * **Bend II (pages 10-12):** During this bend children will return to some of their earlier stories in order to revise. Revision will focus on deepening the meaning of their stories, building greater tension, creating and unfolding drama, and stretching out the heart of their stories. * **Bend III (pages 12-14):** During this bend children repeat the process (generate Small Moment stories, revise and elaborate by building tension) and continue to lift the quality of their own work by using checklists and learning progressions to self-assess and set goals for themselves (see [Narrative Learning Progression, Checklists, Rubric](http://ppsgrade3.weebly.com/narrative.html)). This third bend also encourages children to write beginnings and endings that send a message or reveal a lesson. *We encourage you to use these checklists and learning progressions throughout the unit rather than wait for Bend III.* * Writing partnerships continue to play an important role in this unit, particularly as an audience for your writers as they learn how to write with clarity, build tension and elaborate on important parts.See pages 8-9 on tips for partnerships. * **MCAS Connection:** This unit engages children in a type of writing they naturally love; it is also the perfect preparation for the narrative writing they can expect on MCAS. This unit gives children lots of practice in storytelling vs. summarizing, as well as stretching out the important parts of their stories using elaboration techniques. By writing multiple Small Moments Fiction “episodes,” this unit also allows for the volume and repeated practice children need to internalize narrative writing skills.   + To help students prepare for the particular type of narrative writing they can expect on MCAS (narrative writing that is text-based) we encourage you to occasionally offer children experiences in writing narratives in response to texts (e.g. writing a new ending, writing from a different perspective, imagining another challenge the characters from a familiar story might experience). |
| **Materials and Resources** | Each child:   * Writer’s Notebook (preferably hard bound composition book that students personalize) divided into sections, such as: *Writing Ideas* (e.g. lists for generating seed ideas); *Try It!* (for minilesson exercises), *Writing* (this section can be labeled by genre or unit to house all entries students write in a particular unit and from which students can select ideas to draft longer outside of the notebook) * Writing folder for drafts and any reference materials (e.g. high frequency words) * Booklets of 5-7 pages.   Teacher:   * Writer’s Notebook for modeling * Teacher-generated writing for modeling   Anchor charts, co-constructed with students, that support brainstorming, generating seed ideas, revision and editing strategies |
| **Assessment** | * Use narrative writing rubrics and Learning Progressions to assess progress of students’ drafts and to identify next steps for instruction: [Narrative Learning Progression, Checklists and Rubrics](http://ppsgrade3.weebly.com/narrative.html) * Conference Notes * Student notebooks and folders |
| **Celebrations** | * Provide an opportunity for children to share one published piece during a Writer’s Celebration or Publishing Party. This celebration can be very informal, even simply sharing with a few other peers (from within the classroom or in partnership with another classroom) shows students that they are writing for an authentic audience. This is an important lesson to convey from the beginning! |