

CHAPTER 2

Kindergarten: Introducing Essential Skills

Kindergarten is a time of wonder and excitement for young learners, mainly because for many students this is their first school experience, and formal learning is fresh and new for them. However, if teachers have responsibility for moving kindergartners toward mastery of essential skills required by state standards and achieving success on state-mandated assessments, the question is “How do these essential skills lessons look at the kindergarten level?”

The balanced literacy model and essential literacy skills outlined in chapter 1 will be introduced in kindergarten. Then, following a cyclical approach to teaching and learning, these same skills will be reintroduced and expanded upon in grades 1, 2, and 3, because these skills serve as the backbone of literacy learning and mastery of these skills is required by state learning standards and state-mandated assessments.

In these units, kindergarten students will learn to make decisions about what form to choose (either in writing, pictorially, or orally) in order to give or get information from their writing. They will create invitations and thank-you cards. They will learn how to label important items and create lists to keep track of important information. They will tell stories from their own lives when they write personal narratives, and they will learn how to write letters in order to give and get information. They will learn that because different types of writing take on different forms, they will need to write in different ways for different purposes. To help them with this learning, the writing units of study will focus on the following concepts and skills: functional writing (writing that informs), letter writing (writing that goes out into the world), and personal narrative (stories from personal life written in a narrative structure).

Each of the minilessons during the immersion stage of the units should take approximately 10–15 minutes. Drafting should also take about 15 minutes during the early studies but can expand to about 20 minutes later in the school year. The time allowed for revising and editing will depend on the needs of your classroom, but on average 10–15 minutes for revising and 10–15 minutes for editing should be sufficient in each unit.

The reading lessons introduce kindergarten students to the notion that reading is more than recognizing words on a page. They will learn that the essence of reading is making meaning. The reading units of study will focus on how a story's structure and its elements help it to make sense; how to recognize the characteristics of various genres in order to increase comprehension when reading in that genre; how to compare, contrast, and draw conclusions about text; how to recognize character or story changes that open a window into key plot development; and how to recognize the main idea of a text in order to increase comprehension.

Although many kindergarten students may not be actually reading text, they can and should be included in all the sessions outlined in the units of study. These experiences will move students toward becoming members of the literacy community. For example guided reading practice in kindergarten can be replaced by guided experience for students who are not yet ready to access print but can gain other literacy strategies and skills by sharing and discussing a common text in a small group. For example, during a guided experience with scaffolding from the teacher, kindergartners can look at a common text and then practice retelling stories using the picture clues, they can learn to clarify comprehension by asking questions, and they can learn to critique text by pointing to evidence from the story to back up an opinion. Likewise, during an independent experience, students can learn to independently choose a text at an appropriate level, examine the text, and then discuss the text with other members of the class.

At the kindergarten level the minilessons in the immersion stage of the reading units should take approximately 15 minutes. Earlier in the school year, guided reading should be about 10–15 minutes but should expand to 15–20 minutes later in the school year. Likewise, independent reading should be about 10–15 minutes expanding to about 15–20 minutes later in the year.

The lessons that follow should help kindergarten teachers establish the literacy learning foundation necessary to help students reach mastery of essential skills in later grades.

Kindergarten Writing Units

Functional Writing

Essential Skill

Students will recognize, understand, and become familiar with some of the different forms functional writing—or writing from which a reader gets practical information—can take.

Materials

- Samples of functional writing, such as invitations, business cards, thank-you notes
- Chart paper with *Writing That We Get Information From* written at top
- Assorted blank paper, blank notecards, and list paper (see Appendix A)
- Books centered on functional writing (see Suggested Texts)
- Kindergarten High-Frequency Word List (see Appendix B)

Procedure

Immersion

1. Bring in some samples of functional writing—invitations, menus, recipes, business cards, advertisements, posters, certificates, shopping lists, cereal boxes, clothing labels, food labels, driving directions, and so on—to show to the students.
2. Ask students to bring in samples of functional writing from home that they either wrote or received.
3. Share the samples and then place them in baskets according to various categories, such as Invitations, Directions, etc. Place the baskets in a writing center or on a table for viewing.
4. Read books during minilessons that highlight functional writing (see Suggested Texts).

Collecting

5. Ask students to explore the classroom looking for functional writing.
6. Follow up with a school walk pointing out functional writing or environmental print, such as exit signs and lavatory door labels, in the school building. (Leave one area of the building unexplored, and as a follow-up activity on another day have students act as print detectives, exploring and then sharing the print they find.)
7. Create a chart titled *Writing That We Get Information From* and ask students to paste their examples on the chart. Students can label the type of writing themselves or ask for assistance.
8. After completing the chart, discuss the information gathered from each type of writing and discuss why each type of writing is important.

9. Place various types of paper, blank notecards, blank postcards, and so forth in the writing center and allow students to experiment making posters and writing lists, notes, and invitations.

Choosing and Developing an Idea

10. As a whole class create an occasion such as a Celebrity Reader Day. Before writing an invitation to a celebrity reader such as the principal or school nurse, brainstorm with students about the type of information that should be included in the invitation.

Drafting

11. On chart paper, interactively write an invitation to the principal or another staff member, asking him or her to read to the class. This interactive experience is a whole-group shared writing experience—the students help compose the text; then they “share the pen,” which means you write some of the text; then with help from you and other students several volunteers write some of the text. The goals are to practice using sound–symbol correspondence when writing words, to reinforce knowledge of high-frequency words, and to increase competency in the use of punctuation and capitalization.

Revising

12. During minilessons select certain samples and explain that in order for the reader to learn from these types of functional writing, specific information must be included. For example, show an invitation and explain that it must include the date, time, and location of the event in order for the reader to get all of the necessary information.
13. Have students select a piece of their own writing from when they were collecting pieces or experimenting in the writing center, then add important information that they think is missing.

Editing

14. Interactively write a thank-you note to one of the celebrity readers. “Share the pen” with students, stressing the use of capital letters at the beginning of each sentence.
15. Introduce the use of a period at the end of a sentence.

Follow-Up Activities

- During a whole-class minilesson, explain that paper and writing implements will be placed in each of the classroom learning centers. Explain that this is happening because writing is an important part of all we do and doesn’t just happen

in the writing center. Brainstorm and chart the types of writing that can occur in the different learning centers, for example

Block Center: Make signs for block structures or directions on how to build a structure.

Family Living Center: Write a menu, a grocery list, a bill, or an invitation to a party.

Writing Center: Make cards for other students in the class or family members.

- Ask students to create posters (with your assistance) advertising a school or classroom event, such as a bake sale or writing celebration. They can also write invitations to the same event.

Assessment

Students will understand that writing comes in different forms and that these forms can contain important and helpful information.

- During writing time or learning center time ask students to create an invitation or poster inviting people to an event. Confer with individual students and ask them what type of information should be included in their writing to make sure people will have enough information to attend the event.
- Follow up by asking students to write in other learning centers—create a menu in a restaurant center or signs for a construction site in the block center. Individually or in small groups ask students what type of information would be helpful to write down.

Suggested Texts

Canizares, S., & Chanko, P. (1999). *Signs*. New York: Scholastic.

Fanelli, S. (1995). *My map book*. New York: HarperCollins.

Hoban, T. (1987). *I read signs*. New York: Greenwillow.

Hoban, T. (1997). *Construction zone*. New York: Greenwillow.

Letter Writing

Essential Skill

Students will recognize and become familiar with the structure of a friendly letter (opening, body, closing) and understand that this structure helps the letter make sense.

Materials

- Several friendly letters (donated from teacher and students)
- Two-column chart with column 1 labeled People to Write To and column 2 labeled Reason for Writing
- Three-column chart with column 1 labeled Student Name, column 2 labeled Who I Am Writing To, and column 3 labeled Reason For Writing
- Sample Letter (one for each student; see Appendix A)
- Sticky notes (three different colors)
- One Sample Letter for Assessment (see Appendix A)
- Books centered on letter writing (see Suggested Texts)
- Word wall posted with Kindergarten High-Frequency Word List (see Appendix B)

Procedure

Immersion

1. Read and discuss a variety of friendly letters written to and by various people.
2. Point out the main components of each letter: The opening (or salutation) states who the letter is written to; the body is what the writer wants to say; and the closing states who the letter is from.
3. Read trade books associated with letter writing (see Suggested Texts).

Collecting

4. Ask students to bring in letters from home that they have either written or received.

Choosing and Developing an Idea

5. Along with the students, generate a two-column chart of people with whom the whole class might have a reason to correspond. The first column will list recipients, and the second column will list the reasons for writing to each recipient (see Figure 1).
6. On a subsequent day generate a three-column chart. Ask each student to choose a person with whom they would like to personally correspond. Fill in student names in the first column, the person with whom they'd like to correspond in the second column, and their reason for writing in the third column (see Figure 2). Allow students time to discuss their personal reasons for writing to each person.

Figure 1. Friendly Letter Chart

People to Write To	Reason for Writing
Principal	Invite her to read to us
Custodian	Fix our shelf

Figure 2. Student Correspondence Chart

Student Name	Whom I Am Writing To	Reason for Writing
Kyle	Amy	Invite her to a party
Zachary	Grandma	Invite her to come and visit

Drafting

7. **Shared**—Together with students select a recipient for a class letter from the two-column chart generated previously. Discuss the three major components of a friendly letter (opening, body, closing). Also discuss how these components help the letter make sense. Then interactively draft the letter.
8. **Guided**—Give each student a sample friendly letter (see Appendix A) to read, and give them each three different colored sticky notes. Assign each color to indicate a component of the letter (for instance, pink = opening, green = body, yellow = closing), and ask students to attach the sticky notes to the appropriate components in the sample friendly letter.
9. **Independent**—Ask students to write a friendly letter to the person they named when generating the three-column chart. Make sure students know why they are writing the letter and that they include the three major components of a friendly letter.

Revising

10. Have students reread their letters and either add more information or remove unnecessary information.
11. Ask students to read their letters to a partner. Have the partners use the color-coded sticky notes to check for the three major components of the letter.

Editing

12. Post high-frequency words on a word wall (see Appendix B). Ask students to check their letters to see if familiar high-frequency words are spelled correctly.

Follow-Up Activities

- Create a chart-size, color-coded letter in the writing center labeled with the three major parts of a friendly letter. Have students continue to independently

write letters to outside recipients or to one another when they visit the classroom writing center

- Continue to interactively write letters with oral input from students.
- Ask parents, grandparents, or other relatives to become pen pals with the students, providing them with authentic opportunities to write.

Assessment

Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize the parts of a friendly letter. At the conclusion of the introductory letter-writing unit, schedule individual conferences with each student during learning center time.

- Have a sample letter available. Read the letter, then ask the student to point out specific parts of the letter. Check for the student's understanding that these parts are necessary because they help the letter make sense.
- If students have written their own letters, have them read the letter and point out the three components. Kindergarten students may elect to draw the entire contents of their letters or add a few words and orally retell it. This is acceptable at this level.

Suggested Texts

Ahlberg, J., & Ahlberg, A. (2001). *The jolly postman or other people's letters*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Campbell, R. (1982). *Dear zoo*. New York: Four Winds Press.

Caseley, J. (1991). *Dear Annie*. New York: Greenwillow.

James, S. (1996). *Dear Mr. Blueberry*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Keats, E.J. (1998). *A letter to Amy*. New York: Penguin.

Pak, S. (2001). *Dear Juno*. New York: Penguin.

Personal Narrative

Essential Skill

Students will recognize that a personal narrative is a story from or about your own life.

Materials

- Writing Ideas sheet (one for each student; see Appendix A)
- Personal Narrative Writing Rubric (see Appendix B)

Procedure

Immersion

1. Introduce the idea that authors use their own lives to get writing ideas. Follow up by introducing the term *personal narrative* and define it as a story from or about one's own life. Continue by telling an interesting story from your own life.
2. Read trade books with stories that may have come from an author's life (see Suggested Texts).
3. During the next several days have the students share personal stories in large or small groups.
4. The following week tell another personal story leaving out a lot of details. Discuss with the class how to make the story more interesting. Introduce the term *details* and define it as the pieces of information we add to a story to make it more interesting.

Collecting

5. Along with students, develop a list of topics that would make good stories (such as trips, parties, holiday gatherings, and playing with friends).
6. Using the Writing Ideas sheet, have the students write or draw one or two stories from their lives that they would like to share (see Appendix A). This can be done on different days using the same sheet or additional sheets.

Choosing and Developing an Idea

7. After using the Writing Ideas sheet several different times, have students look over their sheets to decide on an idea for a personal narrative.
8. Retell the personal story that you shared with the class previously, and model writing (drawing) it on paper. During a subsequent minilesson add words to the story.

Drafting

9. Have students use the idea they have chosen to write or draw a personal narrative.

Revising

10. Model how to add more details by inserting words into your story, enhancing your drawing, or labeling the pictures. Do this by retelling your original story and asking the students if there is other information missing from the original story that they are curious about. Select one or two suggested details to include in the story.
11. Ask the students to reread their personal narratives and add more detail; if they have drawn their stories, they can label the story with a few words.

Editing

12. Have students use the high-frequency word list to correct their stories.

Follow-Up Activities

- Have students make a cover for their personal narrative, making sure the cover matches the focus of their personal narrative. Refer to the covers of the texts used for this unit as examples. Point out how the cover reflects the focus of the story inside the book. Tell students that the cover of a book is generally designed after the story is completed.
- Have a publishing party to celebrate the completion of the personal narratives. Students can read their stories to one another or to invited guests.
- Repeat this series of lessons. However, during Revising, focus on eliminating unnecessary information from a piece of writing rather than adding information to a piece of writing.
- Create an ongoing chart of possible life events that could be used to write a personal narrative.
- Repeat this series of lessons focusing on adding words or sentences to a story.

Assessment

Students will demonstrate the ability to tell a personal narrative (orally or in written form) that is based on a story from their own life.

- During the Editing and the Follow-Up phases of the study, take notes or use a rubric to see how well a student can stay focused and tell a personal narrative with relevant details (see Appendix B for the Personal Narrative Writing Rubric).

Suggested Texts

Carle, E. (1994). *My apron*. New York: Philomel Books.

Curtis, J.L. (1995). *When I was little: A four-year-old's memoir of her youth*. New York: HarperCollins.

Haskins, F. (1994). *Things I like about Grandma*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Howard, A. (1999). *When I was five*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.

Rockwell, A. (2004). *Welcome to kindergarten*. New York: Walker & Company.

Rockwell, A. (2005). *Apples and pumpkins*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Tarpley, N.A. (2001). *I love my hair!* Boston: Little, Brown.

Kindergarten Reading and Response to Reading Units

Story Structure

Essential Skill

Students will understand that a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end and that this structure allows the story to make sense.

Materials

- Two familiar texts (recommended text *The Little Red Hen* [Barton, 1993] and the other is optional; see Suggested Texts)
- Retelling Rubric (see Appendix B)
- A large story web drawn on chart paper
- Three-column chart with column 1 labeled Beginning, column 2 labeled Middle, and column 3 labeled End

Procedure

Modeling

1. During a shared reading experience explain to the students that most stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Further explain that these parts make up the story's structure and that the structure holds the story together. The order of the parts (beginning, middle, and end) is important, because this order allows the story to make sense.
2. Follow the explanation of story structure by reading a familiar story, stopping to call attention to the beginning, middle, and end of the story. After reading say, "I wonder what would happen if I read the middle of the story first." Proceed to read the middle and then say, "This story doesn't make sense. I have to read the beginning first, the middle next, and the end last—otherwise the story won't make sense."
3. The following day read another familiar story and create a story web, placing the title of the story in the center cell and labeling the other three cells Beginning, Middle, and End. Then say, "We can't put all the information from each part of the story into the cells, so we need to think about the most important parts of the story to put in the cells." Retell each section of the story out loud, choosing and summarizing the most important parts to write in the cells.

Guided Reading

4. In small groups repeat creating story webs for other stories, encouraging the students to retell and then summarize the information necessary to complete each cell. Ask several group members to retell the story to the whole group, or have the partners retell the story to each other.

Independent Reading

5. Read a new story to the class. Follow up the reading by drawing a three-column chart. Use the title of the story for the heading at the top of the chart, and label column 1 Beginning, column 2 Middle, and column 3 End. Ask students to draw what happened in each section of the story (do one section per day). Paste their illustrations in the corresponding columns on the chart.
6. Place students in small groups and repeat this process again. Read a different story to each group. After the reading, place the students within the small groups into pairs. Assign a different section of the story to each of the pairs. Ask each group to retell their story to the class by having the pairs within the groups retell their part of the story.

Follow-Up Activities

- On a flannel board or chart create a complete story web for a familiar story (cell pieces must be movable). Place the cells in incorrect order. Read the web to the class and, with student help, reassemble the web in the correct order. Emphasize the idea that the structure must be sequenced correctly for the story to make sense.
- Write sections of a story on cards. Then read each section randomly to a small group. Together put the story in an order that makes sense. Then reread the story to the group.
- Interactively write the beginning, the middle, and the end of an original class story or a retelling of a familiar story.

Assessment

Students will demonstrate the ability to retell a story sequentially.

- During learning center time or small-group work, have students sequence stories on a flannel board and retell the story to the group.
- During the small-group retellings, take notes or use the Retelling Rubric (see Appendix B) to assess a student's retelling ability. Check for correct sequence of events and if the story makes sense.

Suggested Texts

Barton, B. (1993). *The little red hen*. New York: HarperCollins.

Hutchins, P. (1992). *You'll soon grow into them, Titch*. New York: Mulberry Books.

Krauss, R. (1945). *The carrot seed*. New York: HarperCollins.

Lionni, L. (1973). *Frederick*. New York: Random House.

Story Elements

Essential Skill

Students will understand that a story is centered on important parts that help it make sense.

Materials

- Several familiar texts (see Suggested Texts for suggestions)
- Three pieces of chart paper, individually labeled Character, Setting, and Events
- Drawing paper

Procedure

Modeling

1. Select a familiar story and say, “When authors think about a story they want to tell, they think about the structure of the story—what will happen in the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. Then they think about other parts of the story that will help it make sense. If you compare a story to our body, the story structure is like our skeleton, which holds everything together, and the story elements are like our muscles, skin, eyes, hair, and all the things that make us unique.”
2. Read a familiar story and then say, “This story had some people in it who helped to tell the story. These people are called the characters. Sometimes the characters are people, and sometimes they are animals or other things. Characters are important to help a story make sense.”
3. Over subsequent days repeat this process using both familiar and new stories. Focus on introducing one story element (such as characters, setting, or events) with each story.

Guided Reading

4. Revisit the texts used to introduce story structure, such as *The Little Red Hen* (Barton, 1993). Label three different pages of chart paper with a story

element: Characters, Setting, Events. After reading the story ask students to identify the characters, then write the names of the characters on the chart. Have students select a character to illustrate and glue the illustrations on the chart. Repeat this process for each story element on a separate piece of chart paper. The charts should be hung up for future reference.

Independent Reading

5. Have the students choose a favorite book for independent reading. After students look at the book, distribute paper folded in two columns. Ask students to draw their favorite character from the story in column 1 and their favorite event in column 2. After the activity is complete have students share their sheets with a partner. Expand the number of story elements included on the sheet later in the year (for example, add settings).

Follow-Up Activities

- During small-group guided reading, read a variety of Big Books, trade books, and texts used for prior guided reading sessions. Model how to identify the story elements and use them as a guide for retelling the story, explaining how the elements help the listener to make sense of the story. Follow up by reading a new story, then have the students identify the story elements and retell the story focusing on the elements as a guide.
- During writing time, ask students to write or draw a story using paper folded in four boxes. Ask students to write or draw different events in each of the boxes. After the stories are complete, students can share their stories by introducing the characters, the setting, and the events as they happened in their stories. For example, a student would say, “The characters in my story are.... My story takes place in...and this is my story....” Ask the students to point to the events in each box as they tell the story.
- Choose a new familiar story. Create a chart divided in three columns. Label the columns Characters, Settings, and Events. On index cards write the character names, setting descriptions, and certain events from the story. Before reading the story aloud, read the cards and ask some students to place the cards in the correct columns. After reading, check to see if the cards were placed in the correct columns. (Figure 3 shows an example using the story of Little Red Riding Hood.)

Figure 3. Story Elements Chart

Characters	Settings	Events
Little Red Riding Hood	Forest	Little Red Riding Hood meets the wolf
Wolf	Grandma's house	The wolf tries to fool Little Red Riding Hood
Woodsman		Woodsman rescues Little Red Riding Hood

Assessment

The students will be able to retell and recognize the characters, the settings, and the events in a story.

- Use students' four-box stories and the oral retells to determine if the students can recognize and retell a story using the story elements.
- Repeat using the three-column chart and cards during small-group guided reading.

Suggested Texts

Barton, B. (1993). *The little red hen*. New York: HarperCollins.
Bottner, B. (1992). *Bootsie Barker bites*. New York: Penguin.
Cannon, J. (1993). *Stellaluna*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
Fox, M. (1990). *Shoes from Grandpa*. Danbury, CT: Orchard Books.
Henkes, K. (1996). *Chrysanthemum*. New York: Mulberry Books.
Krauss, R. (1945). *The carrot seed*. New York: HarperCollins.

Change Over Time

Essential Skills

Students will understand that a story and characters can change from the beginning to the end of the story and that precipitous events in the story can cause or support the change.

Materials

- Familiar Big Book
- Chart paper
- Drawing paper folded in half (one per student)

Procedure

Modeling

1. During shared reading time, read a familiar Big Book, such as *The Little Red Hen*, and revisit the web that was used to teach story structure. Retell the story using the web as a guide, calling specific attention to the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. After the retell, say to the students, “I noticed while I was retelling the story that something else was happening that I needed to pay attention to. As the story went along, the Little Red Hen started to change how she acted. At first she thought her friends would help her make the bread and she was willing to share, but by the end of the story she realized they would not help so she decided to keep the bread for herself. I realized that many times a character’s actions or feelings change from the beginning to the end.”
2. The following day draw a timeline on chart paper marking the far-left point of the timeline with a Beginning and the far-right point of the timeline with an End. Write, under Beginning, “The Little Red Hen wanted to share.” Then, under End, write “The Little Red Hen did not want to share.” Ask the students what made her change. Write the causes as points on the timeline.

Guided Reading

3. In a small group, repeat the above lesson several times using familiar stories. Elicit character changes and precipitous events from the students.
4. Using multiple copies of the same text, read a story to the group. Then create a timeline eliciting from the group how a character acted at the beginning, and then how the character acted at the end, and what made the character change.

Independent Reading

5. In a small group after a read-aloud, give each student a paper folded in half. Label one half Beginning and the other half End. Ask the students to draw a picture of how the character acted at the beginning and then at the end. After the drawing discuss what made the character change.

Follow-Up Activities

- Repeat this process throughout the year with follow-up discussions and activities that focus on how a characters’ feelings can change from the beginning to the end. For example, a character can start out sad and end up happy.

- Read familiar stories and ask the question “What lesson did the character learn at the end of this story?” Point out that many times when a character changes at the end of a story it is accompanied by learning a lesson. Good examples are stories such as *The Three Bears* (Galdone, 1986) or *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* (Galdone, 1981).

Assessment

The students will be able to recognize and explain the changes characters may experience during the course of a story.

- Using the drawings demonstrating character change, confer with students individually, asking them to explain why or how the character changed in the story.

Suggested Texts

Fox, M. (1989). *Koala Lou*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.

Galdone, P. (1981). *The three billy goats Gruff*. New York: Clarion Books.

Galdone, P. (1986). *The three bears*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Hutchins, P. (1992). *You’ll soon grow into them, Titch*. New York: Mulberry Books.

Teague, M. (2004). *Pigsty*. New York: Scholastic.

Characteristics of Genre

Essential Skill

Students will understand that text can be fiction, nonfiction, or poetry.

Materials

- Basket of books from each genre—fiction, nonfiction, and poetry (see Suggested Texts)
- Chart paper

Procedure

Modeling

1. During a shared reading experience, gather together a basket of familiar books in various genres. Explain to students that there are many different types or categories of books and that sometimes we use the word *genre* to talk about a type of book. Hold up several fiction stories and say, “I was thinking that we have read a lot of stories like these. This genre or type of book is called fiction. Today I thought we would read another genre or type of book. This genre

is called nonfiction.” Hold up a nonfiction book (such as *Chickens Aren’t the Only Ones* [Heller, 1999]) and say, “After I read this book, I’m going to tell you what I was thinking about as I was reading.” Read the book aloud and, when you’re done reading, focus on some of the characteristics of nonfiction. For example, point out that the book is written to give us information about a topic rather than telling a story, the book has captions that contain information, and the book has detailed drawings that are labeled. Explain that because these types of books are different than the ones already displayed in the room, it would be a good idea to sort the books by their topics. After this discussion say, “I think it would be easier to find and choose books we like if we group some of our classroom books together and give them a category. The books that have stories the author made up are called fiction books, and the books that have real information about a topic are called nonfiction books.”

Guided Reading

2. During a shared reading experience, create a chart with three columns and label two of the columns Fiction and Nonfiction; leave the last column blank. Over the course of several days read a few new books from the fiction and nonfiction genres, eliciting characteristics of each genre from the students. For example, nonfiction books usually contain many photographs and captions. With student input, place the books in baskets by genre, and decide on names for the categories created. Label the baskets with the names that students created for the categories. Students may label the baskets by classifying the books into different types of fiction and different topics in nonfiction; however the chart should contain broad characteristics of each genre.
3. Hold up a poetry book and say, “Now that we know a lot about fiction and nonfiction books, we need to learn about another genre or type of book: poetry. Books in this genre are different from fiction and nonfiction books, and as I read, you’ll see how.” Label the last column on the chart Poetry and, after you read the poetry book, elicit from the class several characteristics of poetry. (Figure 4 shows an example of the three-column characteristics of genre

Figure 4. Characteristics of Genre Chart

Fiction	Nonfiction	Poetry
Made-up stories	About real topics	Sometimes rhymes
Animals and objects can talk	Pictures and photographs Captions	Words can be in different places on the page

chart.) For example, some characteristics of poetry include rhyme, rhythm, an unusual use of white space, and unique placement of words on the page.

4. Over the next few days, read several poems from different books and ask students to help you add characteristics of poetry to the chart.

Independent Reading

5. During independent reading, ask students to read or look at books from different genres. Make sure fiction, nonfiction, and poetry books are in the “just-right” books baskets. (Although “just-right” book baskets generally contain books at the students’ individual reading levels, for this study it is fine to include some higher-level fiction, nonfiction, and poetry books for the students to review.) Familiar poems can be written on cards and included in the baskets as well.

Follow-Up Activities

- Create a class chart that lists and classifies titles read throughout the year during read-aloud and shared reading sessions.
- Give the students a book to look at and read with a partner. During shared reading time, the partners can tell the class what genre the book is and what characteristics helped them to recognize it as part of that genre.
- Throughout the year have the students continue to sort the classroom library by classifying books and creating baskets.
- Later in the year each student may keep a simple log that lists fiction, nonfiction, or poetry books they have read or examined independently.
- Create a fiction piece with input from the class. Review the need for the story to have a structure and contain story elements. On a subsequent day write a nonfiction piece with input from the class (for instance, instructions on caring for a pet). Ask students to create illustrations to accompany both pieces. Glue some of the illustrations on the story chart. On the nonfiction piece, label the drawings or create captions to go under the illustrations.
- Create a class Big Book containing favorite poems. As poems are added ask the students what they notice about each poem. Include these observations in the poetry column on the three-column genre characteristics chart. For example, write “This poem has a lot of space between each line” or “This poem has the words written in a circle.”
- During writing workshop ask students to try out some of the techniques or characteristics of nonfiction or poetry in their own writing (introduce only one or two techniques at a time).

Assessment

Students will demonstrate an understanding of some of the unique characteristics of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.

- After a read-aloud session, ask several students to identify the genre of the book. After they make a choice of genre type, ask them how they know it belongs to the genre they are choosing. Also ask them what it would have to contain if it were from a different genre.
- During writers' workshop conferences, ask the students what genre they are writing in, then ask them to point to or explain some of the genre's characteristics that they have included in their writing. Look for evidence of story structure, captions, creative use of white space, unique placement of words on the page, and so forth.

Suggested Texts

Nonfiction

- Aliki. (1989). *My five senses*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Asch, F. (2000). *The sun is my favorite star*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Ehlert, L. (2000). *Waiting for wings*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Heller, R. (1999). *Chickens aren't the only ones*. New York: Penguin.
- Marzollo, J. (1996). *I am water*. New York: Scholastic.
- Onyefulu, I. (1997). *A is for Africa*. New York: Penguin.
- Riley, L.C. (1999). *Elephants swim*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rockwell, A. (1982). *Boats*. New York: Puffin.

Fiction

- Crews, D. (1998). *Night at the fair*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Fox, M. (1989). *Koala Lou*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Henkes, K. (1997). *Chester's way*. New York: Mulberry Books.
- Rylant, C. (1996). *The bookshop dog*. New York: Scholastic.
- Wiesner, D. (2001). *The three pigs*. New York: Clarion Books.

Poetry

- Florian, D. (1998). *Beast feast*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Prelutsky, J. (1984). *The new kid on the block*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Stevenson, J. (2000). *Cornflake poems*. New York: Greenwillow.

Compare/Contrast/Conclude

Essential Skill

Students will understand that similarities and differences occur between texts and that we draw conclusions about text based on these similarities and differences.

Materials

- Several books with variations of the same story (for instance, two versions of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*; see Suggested Texts)
- Chart paper for T-charts
- Drawing paper folded in four boxes (one sheet per student)

Procedure

Modeling

1. During shared reading time, read a familiar text such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* (Asbjornsen & Moe, 1991). After reading the text say, “I was thinking that this book reminds me of another book called *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, but it was written by someone else. Let’s read it and see if the story is the same.” Read the second version of the story and say, “This book is almost the same as the first one, but this author made some changes. I’m going to write down the things that are the same and the things that are different in the two stories.” Create a compare–contrast T-chart and write down the similarities and differences between the two books (see Figure 5). After completing the chart say, “I learned authors can reuse ideas when they write stories. I came to the conclusion that sometimes they keep things the same and sometimes they change a few things. I’m also thinking that when books or characters are familiar to us and we know most of the characters and most of what is going to happen, it helps us to understand the book better.”
2. In the next two shared reading sessions, read two different versions of another familiar story and continue to compare, contrast, and draw a conclusion about the similarities or differences between the two texts.

Figure 5. Compare–Contrast T-Chart

<i>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</i>	
Story 1 retold by P.C. Asbjornsen and J.E. Moe (1991)	
Story 2 retold by J. Stevens (1990)	
Things That Were the Same	Things That Were Different
There were three goats and one troll.	In story 1 the goats didn’t wear clothes.
The goats were hungry.	In story 2 the goats wore clothes.
The troll lived under the bridge.	
The goats had to cross the bridge to get to the grass.	
The goats tricked the troll.	
The big goat kicked the troll into the water.	
Conclusion: Authors can reuse the same story by making some changes to the characters.	

Guided Reading

3. Begin the session by reminding students that when they looked at the two versions of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, they were looking for similarities and differences between the two books. Also remind them that the class came to the conclusion that different authors can use the same storyline, but they can decide to keep or change some of the details or characters. Hold up two versions of *The Three Bears* (Galdone, 1986; Marshall, 1998), and explain to students that today, instead of comparing and contrasting the two books, you are going to look at how the authors presented the main character, Goldilocks, in the two books. After either reading or looking through the books, ask students what they think about Goldilocks’s behavior in the two books. Then say, “I think Goldilocks was being very naughty when she went into the bears’ house. I think we need to look back inside these two books and see what the two different authors did to show us that Goldilocks was naughty.” Create an Evidence of Inquiry T-chart and at the top write “Goldilocks was Naughty.” With student input, list the evidence from both of the books to prove Goldilocks was naughty (see Figure 6). After completing the chart, explain to the students that although two versions of the same story may have different elements, the major elements will remain the same in each.

Independent Reading

4. Distribute drawing paper, and ask students to fold it into four boxes. After reading two versions of the same story, ask students to draw pictures in the top two boxes of something that is the same in both stories. The following day review the stories and then ask students to draw something in the bottom two boxes that is different in the two stories. Share drawings during a whole-class meeting.

Figure 6. Goldilocks Evidence of Inquiry T-Chart

Goldilocks Was Naughty	
Story 1 retold by P. Galdone (1996)	
Story 2 retold by J. Marshall (1998)	
Story 1	Story 2
Goldilocks went into the bears’ house uninvited.	Goldilocks went in the bears’ house uninvited.
Goldilocks ate the bears’ porridge.	Goldilocks ate the bears’ porridge.
Goldilocks broke baby bear’s chair.	Goldilocks broke baby bear’s chair.
Goldilocks slept in baby bear’s bed.	Goldilocks slept in baby bear’s bed.
Goldilocks ran away and didn’t say thank you.	Goldilocks ran away and didn’t say thank you.

Figure 7. Mean Sisters Evidence of Inquiry T-Chart

How Were the Sisters Mean to Cinderella?	
Story 1 retold by B. Karlin (2001)	
Story 2 retold by F. Minters (1997)	
Story 1	Story 2
The sisters made her do all the work.	They didn't let her watch television or play video games.
They made her sleep in the ashes.	Cinder-Elly couldn't go shopping.
They called her names.	Cinder-Elly had to mop.
They didn't let her go to the ball.	

Follow-Up Activities

- During large-group shared reading sessions or small-group guided reading sessions, read different versions of the same story or different stories with similar story lines, such as *The Enormous Potato* (Davis, 1997) and *The Enormous Turnip* (Holmes, 1998). Continue to use the compare and contrast T-chart to examine texts. Also, make sure to draw conclusions about the two texts, such as authors can retell the same story using different characters.
- Draw an evidence of inquiry T-chart and create a focus question that can be proved with examples from two versions of a text. Emphasize the importance of looking back in the book for evidence to answer the question. For example, using two versions of *Cinderella* a focus question can be “How were the sisters mean to Cinderella in each of the stories?” Then ask students to look back in both texts to find examples. Write the evidence on the T-chart. (See Figure 7.)
- Introduce a Venn diagram or a Y-chart to plot similarities and differences between texts (see Appendix A for a reproducible Venn diagram and a reproducible Y-chart).
- Rewrite a familiar story with class input, making minor character or plot changes.

Assessment

Students will recognize and discuss similarities and differences between texts and will return to the text for evidence of their thinking.

- During independent or small-group reading, read two similar stories on two separate days to the students. Ask students to discuss the similarities and differences between the texts. Write their responses on a chart, making sure each student responds. Take note of the appropriateness of the responses.

- Using the two similar stories you have chosen, fashion a set of questions relevant to either the story line or characters in the texts. Ask students for answers, then ask them to show you how they know their responses are correct. Check to see if students can find the appropriate places in the texts to back up their thinking. For example, ask “How did Cinderella get to the ball?” or “What happened to Cinderella when she left the ball?”

Suggested Texts

- Asbjornsen, P.C., & Moe, J.E. (1991). *The three billy goats Gruff*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Davis, A. (1998). *The enormous potato*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.
- Galdone, P. (1983). *The gingerbread boy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Galdone, P. (1986). *The three bears*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Holmes, S. (1998). *The enormous turnip*. New York: Penguin.
- Karlin, B. (1989). *Cinderella*. New York: Scholastic.
- Marshall, J. (1998). *The three bears*. New York: Penguin.
- Minters, F. (1997). *Cinder-Elly*. New York: Penguin.
- Stevens, J. (1990). *The three billy goats Gruff*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Ziefert, H. (1995). *The gingerbread boy*. New York: Viking Press.

Main Idea

Essential Skill

Students will understand that a story has a main idea. The main idea is what the story is mostly about.

Materials

- *The Carrot Seed* (Krauss, 1945)
- Two-column chart with column 1 labeled Title and column 2 labeled Main Idea

Procedure

Modeling

1. During a shared reading session before reading a new book, introduce the book by saying, “Today we are going to read *The Carrot Seed*. This book is about a little boy who wants to grow carrots, but no one thinks he can do it.” Read the book aloud. Then say, “When I introduced the book to you and told you what it was about, I was sharing the main idea. That is the idea I thought the author had when he decided to write this story. The main idea is what the

story is mostly about. Usually before someone writes a story they think about what the book is going to be about. Then, as they write, they add details to help us figure out the main idea. We need to pay attention to the details and we need to know most of the story before we can recognize the main idea.”

2. After sharing information about main idea, create a two-column chart and write down several familiar book titles (see Figure 8). Next to each title, write the book’s main idea. Then suggest that the students think about stories they know to add to the chart.
3. Reread a familiar text pointing out how the title, the opening thought, and the closing thoughts are details that an author uses to help us recognize the main idea. Emphasize how we need to pay attention to the title because the author chose it to help us know what the book will be about. We need to pay attention to the opening thoughts because usually something that is placed first is put there because it is important. We need to pay attention to the closing thoughts because those ideas are what the author left with us to remember the book.

Guided Reading

4. Ask the class for titles that have been read during the year. Then ask what the main idea of each story is. Add these titles to the two-column chart you started in the Modeling session.
5. During small-group guided and shared reading, continue introducing new books by saying, “The story we are going to read is about.... This is the story’s main idea.”
6. After completing a guided reading book elicit the main idea of the book from the students. If a student is unsure, reword the question to ask what the book is mostly about.

Figure 8. Main Idea Chart

Title	Main Idea
<i>Corduroy</i> (Freeman, 1968)	This story is about a bear who lives in a toy shop for a long time and wishes he had friends and a home.
<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?</i> (Martin & Carle, 1992)	This story describes things that different animals and children see.
<i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> (Carle, 1986)	This story describes the many things a caterpillar has to do before it turns into a butterfly.
<i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i> (Martin & Archambault, 1992)	It is about some tricky alphabet letters.

Independent Reading

7. After looking at a self-selected text ask students to draw the story's main idea. Pair students with partners and have them retell the story around the main idea, using the drawing as a guide.

Follow-Up Activities

- Introduce the connection between the main idea and supporting details and how adding a few important details can help when retelling a story around the main idea. Model how to retell a read-aloud by first saying, "The main idea in this story is...and some of the important things that happened in the story are..."
- Ask students to organize several book baskets, using similar main idea as the criterion for placement in a basket
- Use a story web to graphically represent the main idea and supporting details.

Assessment

Students will be able to use supporting details to identify the main idea of a text.

- Using the drawings previously done after a read-aloud, confer with the students individually and ask them to share their drawings and explain the story's main idea and supporting details.

Suggested Texts

Carle, E. (1986). *The very hungry caterpillar*. New York: Philomel Books.

Fox, M. (1991). *Possum magic*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.

Freeman, D. (1968). *Corduroy*. New York: Viking Press.

Gordon, S. (1989). *Mike's first haircut*. New York: Troll.

Henkes, K. (1996). *Sheila Rae, the brave*. New York: Mulberry Books.

Hutchins, P. (1992). *You'll soon grow into them, Titch*. New York: Mulberry Books.

Krauss, R. (1945). *The carrot seed*. New York: HarperCollins.

Martin, B., Jr. & Archambault, J. (1992). *Chicka chicka boom boom*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Martin, B., Jr. & Carle, E. (1992). *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

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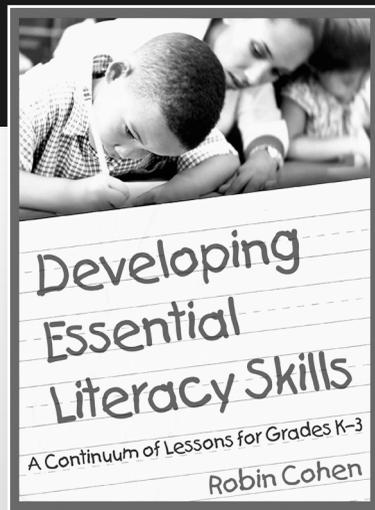
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