

Unit 2: Using Writing to Inform

Common Core State Standards addressed: RI.4.1, RI.4.2, RI.4.9, W.4.2, W.4.4, W.4.7, W.4.8, W.4.9, L.4.2, L.4.3



Guiding Questions and Big Ideas

How do animals' bodies and behaviors help them survive?

- *To protect themselves from predators, animals use different defense mechanisms.*

How can writers use knowledge from their research to inform and entertain?

- *To entertain and inform, writers must become researchers.*

What will your child be doing at school?

In this unit, students work in groups to research the defense mechanisms of a specific animal and become an “expert” on that animal. They closely read complex texts as well as web pages and answer questions about the texts to gain a deeper understanding. They categorize their research so they can use it to write an informative piece about their expert group animal and its defense mechanisms for the end of unit assessment.

The Language standard that students will focus on in this unit (L.4.2c) requires them to use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence. For this, we use the acronym FANBOYS, which helps students to remember that the comma goes before the words *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so* when joining two independent clauses. For example:

- I am ready, but you are not.
- He wanted to go, so we did.

How can you support your child at home?

- Talk to your child about his or her expert group animal and its defense mechanisms.
- Encourage your child to do further research on the expert group animal at the library or on the internet.
- Watch documentaries about animals and animal defenses on television.
- Invite your child to tell you about the use of the acronym FANBOYS to determine when to use a comma before a coordinating conjunction.
- Play online games on IXL to practice coordinating conjunctions:
 - ‘Identify Coordinating Conjunctions.’ IXL Learning. Web. 9 Apr, 2015. <http://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/identify-coordinating-conjunctions>
 - ‘Use Coordinating Conjunctions.’ IXL Learning. Web. 9 Apr, 2015. <http://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/use-coordinating-conjunctions>

Unit 2: Homework

In Lessons 1–6, homework focuses on research reading and categorizing information. Pictures of the expert group animals are provided in this pack for students to talk about their research with you.

In Lessons 7–12, homework focuses on grammar and writing. Students write short informational paragraphs in response to prompts, as well as practice the grammar skill explicitly taught in this part of the unit.

Research reading: Your child is expected to independently research the topic by reading topic-related books of his/her choice for approximately 20 minutes **each day** and responding to a prompt of choice in the **front** of the independent reading journal. These are usually books your child will bring home from school; however, they may be topic-related books chosen by the child at the public or home library. Prompts for independent reading can be found in the homework materials provided.

Choice reading: If your child would also like to independently read and respond to a book of free choice, he/she may use the **back** of the independent reading journal. Prompts for independent reading can be found in the homework materials provided.

Homework Resources (for Families)

Lesson	Lesson Content	Homework Practice	Due In	Anticipated Date*
1	Students are grouped and given their expert group animal.	1. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
2	Students closely read a text about animal defenses, specifically the defense mechanisms of their expert group animal.	1. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
3	Students read their expert group animal web page for gist and to determine unfamiliar vocabulary.	1. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
4	Students closely read their expert group animal web page.	1. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
5	Students categorize their research in preparation for writing.	1. Categorizing research reading. 2. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Lesson 7. 2. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
6	Students demonstrate their learning by taking the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment.	1. Categorizing research reading 2. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Lesson 7. 2. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
7	Students plan their informational piece about their expert group animal	1. Informative QuickWrite 2. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Lesson 9. 2. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
8	Students draft a focus statement and introduction paragraph for their informational piece about their expert group animal	1. Research reading and answering prompt 2. For ELLs: Language Dive Practice Part II	1. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically. 2. Lesson 9	
9	Students draft proof paragraphs and a concluding statement for their informational piece about their expert group animal	1. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
10	Students revise their informational piece about their expert group animal for supporting details and word choice	1. Informative QuickWrite 2. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Lesson 11. 2. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically	
11	Students edit their informational piece about their expert group animal for correct capitalization, spelling, and use of a comma before a coordinating conjunction	1. Coordinating Conjunctions I 2. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Lesson 12. 2. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically.	
12	Students demonstrate their learning by taking the End of Unit 2 Assessment	1. Coordinating Conjunctions II 2. Research reading and answering prompt	1. Unit 3, Lesson 1. 2. Teacher will check independent reading journals strategically	

*Teacher note: Please complete the Anticipated Date column according to your schedule.

Independent Reading

Independent Reading Prompts

Directions: Remember to record responses to **research reading in the front** of your independent reading journal, and responses to **choice reading in the back**. Try to choose a different prompt each time.

Record any new vocabulary in your vocabulary log. Remember, academic vocabulary is recorded in the front and domain-specific vocabulary (about the topic) is recorded in the back. Mark vocabulary found during independent reading with a symbol—an asterisk (*), for example.

Record:

- Date
- Title and author of your reading book
- Pages you have read
- Prompt
- Response

Example:

Date: 04/08/2015

Book Title and Author: *Animal Behavior: Animal Defenses* by Christina Wilsdon

Pages Read: 63–84

Prompt: What questions do you have about animals or animal defenses after reading?

Response: What are some animals in my local area that emit scent as a defense?

Independent Reading Prompts

- **Record 2–3 facts in your own words about animals or animal defenses that you found out in your research reading today.**
- **What questions do you have about animals or animal defenses after reading?**
- **What would you like to research further after reading? Why?**
- **Summarize your research reading today in no more than 4 sentences.**

- **How would you describe the setting of the particular part of the text you read?**
 - Hint: What did you picture in your mind as you were reading it? Why?
 - Hint: What did it say in the text to make you think that?
- **What do you think is going to happen next? Why?**
 - Hint: What has the author written so far to make you think that?
- **Summarize the pages you just read in no more than 4 sentences.**
- **What is the main idea of the part of the text you just read?**
 - Hint: The main idea is the point the author wants you to understand.
- **Think about the title of your text. Why do you think the author chose this title?**
 - Hint: Explain how the title fits the book.
 - Hint: Start out: “The title of my book is. . . . The author chose this title because. . . .”
- **What are two new words you learned in this text? Tell about the words.**
- **Choose a picture, chart, graph, or diagram from your text. Explain how the information you learned from the image helped you understand the text.**
 - Hint: First, think about the main idea of what you just read. Then, think about how the picture, chart, graph, or diagram supports the main idea.

Homework: Expert Group Animal Discussion

Consider discussing the following questions to prompt conversation:

- What does your animal look like?
- What is its habitat?
- What are its predators?
- What defense mechanisms does your animal have?
- How do those defense mechanisms help it to survive?

Homework: Categorizing information

Directions: In the classroom, you have been categorizing your research from a text and from a web page. Throughout this module, you have been research reading topic-related books at home to build your knowledge of animals and animal defense mechanisms. How would you categorize your research from your research reading?

1. Think about what you have been reading about in your research reading. How would you categorize that information if you were going to organize it in order to write about it?
 - Consider the research questions for this unit (What does your expert group animal look like? What is its habitat? What are its predators? How does it use its body and behaviors to help it survive?)
 - Do those questions apply to the research reading you have been doing? Could you use the same categories you chose to organize your expert group animal research?
2. You can choose to use the graphic organizer below and label the columns or draw your own and label the columns. Remember that it is important to record the source so you know how to find it again if you need more information.
3. Categorize the research from your current research reading book. Remember to cite evidence—copied word for word—in quotation marks.

Homework: Categorizing Information

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Homework: Quick Write Prompts**Name:** _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: Choose a prompt to respond to, using your expert group animal as the main topic in your response. For each response, be sure to use the informative writing techniques discussed in class and choose accurate and relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, and examples to explain your thinking. Try to choose a different prompt each time.

- Describe your expert group animal's habitat. Where does it live? What is the climate like? What other kinds of animals live there? What kinds of plants grow there?
- Describe how an animal's defense mechanisms can help it to survive.
- Tell about a typical day in your expert group animal's life.
- Compare and contrast your expert group animal and the millipede

Homework: Language Dive Practice Part II

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. **Paraphrase the underlined part of the sentence in your own words:**

Over many generations, they have developed both physical and behavioral defense mechanisms that allow them to survive.

- 2.

Sketch your expert animal using a <i>physical</i> defense mechanism.	Sketch your expert animal using a <i>behavioral</i> defense mechanism.
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3. Write a sentence describing how your expert group animal uses its body and behaviors to protect itself. If you want help, use the frame below.

Over many generations, _____ [animal]

has developed _____

_____ that allows it to survive.

Homework: Coordinating Conjunctions I

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. **Read the sentences below. For each sentence, circle the subject, underline the verb, and put a box around the coordinating conjunction (L.4.2c).**

The millipede has many segments, and it has two pairs of legs on each segment.

A monarch butterfly is poisonous, but the monarch caterpillar is not.

A lion attacked an ostrich, so the ostrich used its strong legs to kick it.

2. **Read the sentences below. Identify which are simple sentences by writing an "S" and which are compound sentences by writing a "C" (L.4.2c).**

_____ Armadillos have leathery shells.

_____ The spiny pufferfish inflates by swallowing water.

_____ Springbok gazelles graze on grass, and they sometimes eat flowers.

3. **Write a compound sentence about your expert group animal. Be sure to use a coordinating conjunction and correct punctuation (L.4.2c).**

Homework: Coordinating Conjunctions II

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. **Underline the sentence that is punctuated correctly (L.4.2c).**
 - a. Most millipedes are black in color but some are red, yellow, or brown.
 - b. Some millipedes are nocturnal, so they are active at night.
 - c. Millipedes have many legs yet they do not move very fast.
 - d. Millipedes like to live in dark moist places so some can be found under logs or dead leaves.

2. **Rewrite the incorrect sentences above with correct punctuation (L.4.2c).**

3. **Combine these two simple sentences into a compound sentence using a coordinating conjunction and correct punctuation (L.4.2c).**

A millipede's hard exoskeleton protects its body.
It rolls into a ball if it feels threatened.
