

TCRWP Unit 1-- 6th: Personal Narratives: Crafting Powerful Life Stories

Big Ideas/Overview:

- This unit helps students draw on their lives, learning strategies to generate meaningful story ideas, manage pace, elaborate on important scenes, and deepen insights. This unit especially emphasizes the importance of setting goals, practicing strategically, and aiming for high productivity.
- This unit is a cornerstone launch for writing workshop. It helps to set the tone for kids' writing life in middle school – ideally a tone that says, "Your stories, and therefore your lives, matter here. This is a place where we write a lot, but we do it together, and we celebrate all the growth that happens along the way."

Skills/Standards

Narrative Writing Checklist

Grade 6	
Structure	
Overall	I wrote a story that has tension, resolution, realistic characters, and also conveys an idea, lesson, or theme.
Lead	I wrote a beginning that not only set the plot/story in motion, but also hinted at the larger meaning the story would convey. It introduced the problem, set the stage for the lesson that would be learned, or showed how the character relates to the setting in a way that matters in the story.
Transitions	I not only used transitional phrases and clauses to signal complicated changes in time, I also used them to alert my reader to changes in the setting, tone, mood, point of view, or the time in the story (such as <i>suddenly</i> , <i>unlike before</i> , <i>if only she had known</i>).
Ending	I wrote an ending that connected to what the story is really about. I gave the reader a sense of closure by showing a new realization or insight, or a change in the character/narrator. I might have shown this through dialogue, action, inner thinking, or small actions the character takes.
Organization	I used paragraphs purposefully, perhaps to show time and setting changes, new parts of the story, or to create suspense for readers. I created a logical, clear sequence of events.

Development	
Elaboration	I developed realistic characters, and developed the details, action, dialogue, and internal thinking that contribute to the deeper meaning of the story.
Craft	I developed some relationship between characters to show <i>why</i> they act and speak as they do. I told the internal, as well as the external story.
	I wove together precise descriptions, figurative language, and some symbolism to help readers picture the setting and actions, and to bring forth meaning.
	I used language that fit my story's meaning and context (for example, different characters use different kinds of language).
Conventions	
Spelling	I used resources to be sure the words in my writing are spelled correctly.
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	I used punctuation such as dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons to help me include extra detail and explanation in some of my sentences.
	I used commas and quotation marks or italics or other ways to make clear when characters are speaking.

BEND I Launching Independent Writing Lives and Generating Personal Narratives

In the first bend of this unit, you will ask students to generate ideas for personal narratives based on meaningful places or moments in their lives. Students will practice stretching out key episodes, choosing meaningful details and exact dialogue, and writing from a consistent point of view. You'll ask students to write at least one two-page flashdraft personal narrative each day, and more for homework.

Next, you'll teach students ways to learn writing techniques from a close reading of a mentor text—for example, "Everything Will Be Okay" by James Howe. You will teach them that writers read texts not only to experience the story, but also to admire, study, and select writing moves to emulate.

1. Setting Up to Write

2. Calling On All Strategies to Write Up a Storm

3. Starting from Moments that Really Matter

4. Telling the Story from the Narrator's Point of View

5. Reading Closely to Learn from Other Authors

6. Taking Stock: Pausing to Assess and Set Goals

BEND II Moving through the Writing Process and toward Our Goals

In Bend II, after you've asked students to select one of their stories to revise for publication, your emphasis will be on teaching students that revision is driven by the writer's effort to communicate meaning. For example, when students plan their leads, you will teach them that writers think, "What is my story really about, and how can I hint at that from the very beginning?" In the same way, you will teach students that a story can be told in different ways, depending on the theme the writer wants to explore.

You'll remind students that flash-drafting an entire personal narrative in one sitting can help writers create cohesion and bring voice to their pieces. As students revise, you will teach them to use their writer's notebooks to deliberately practice writing techniques and skills. They might practice elaborating on certain parts or incorporating meaningful flashbacks. By the end of Bend II, students will have revised one piece of writing extensively, and in doing so, they will have gained the sense of self-efficacy that comes with trying out strategies and working toward clear goals.

7. Experimenting with Beginnings

8. Flash-Drafting: Get the Whole Story on the Page

9. Using Writer's Notebooks for Mindful, Goal-Driven Work

10. Re-Angling and Rewriting to Convey What a Story Is Really About

11. Elaborating on Important Scenes and Adding New Ones from the Past

12. Using All Available Resources to Aid with Final Touches

BEND III Writing a Second Personal Narrative with New Independence

Bend III emphasizes increased initiative and independence as sixth graders begin writing new personal narratives. You'll rally students to take charge of their writing processes and plans, reminding them to draw on everything they know how to do, yet keeping their eyes on their goals. You'll continue to support students as they develop their skills at emulating the craft moves of a published author—perhaps drawing attention to ways writers pace their stories, build tension, or create resolutions that connect to the hearts of their stories. At the end of the unit, students will publish their work by reading aloud their final personal narratives to groups of students and invited guests.

13. Taking Charge of the Writing Process: Deciding Where to Begin and How to Revise

from the Get-Go

14. Slowing Down and Stretching Out the Story's Problem

15. Ending Stories in Meaningful Ways

16. Editing Sentences for Rhythm and Meaning

17. Publishing and Celebrating as a Community of Writers

TCRWP Unit 2-- 6th: The Literary Essay

Big Ideas/Overview:

- Sixth graders learn ways essayists generate ideas based on close readings of a text, learning strategies essayists use to gather, analyze, and explain evidence from the text to support their claims

Skills/Standards

Argument Writing Checklist

Grade 6	
Structure	
Overall	I explained the topic/text and staked out a position that can be supported by a variety of trustworthy sources. Each part of my text helped build my argument, and led to a conclusion.
Lead	I wrote an introduction to interest readers and help them understand and care about a topic or text. I thought backwards between the piece and the introduction to make sure that the introduction fit with the whole. Not only did I clearly state my claim, I also told my readers how my text would unfold.
Transitions	I used transitions to help readers understand how the different parts of my piece fit together to explain and support my argument. I used transitions to help connect claim(s), reasons, and evidence, and to imply relationships such as when material exemplifies, adds on to, is similar to, explains, is a result of, or contrasts. I use transitions such as <i>for instance</i> , <i>in addition</i> , <i>one reason</i> , <i>furthermore</i> , <i>according to</i> , <i>this evidence suggests</i> , and <i>thus we can say that</i> .
Ending	In my conclusion, I restated the important points and offered a final insight or implication for readers to consider. The ending strengthened the overall argument.
Organization	I organized my argument into sections: I arranged reasons and evidence purposefully, leading readers from one claim or reason to another. The order of the sections and the internal structure of each section made sense.

Development	
Elaboration	I included and arranged a variety of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. I used trusted sources and information from experts and gave the sources credit. I worked to explain how the reasons and evidence I gave supported my claim(s) and strengthened my argument. To do this I may have referred to earlier parts of my text, summarized background information, raised questions, or highlighted possible implications.
Craft	I chose my words carefully to support my argument and to have an effect on my reader. I worked to include concrete details, comparisons, and/or images to convey my ideas, build my argument, and keep my reader engaged. When necessary, I explained terms to readers, providing definitions, context clues, or parenthetical explanations. I made my piece sound serious.

Conventions	
Spelling	I used resources to be sure the words in my writing were spelled correctly, including returning to sources to check spelling.
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	I used punctuation such as dashes, colons, parentheses, and semicolons to help me include or connect information in some of my sentences. I punctuated quotes and citations accurately.

BEND I Writing Strong Literary Essays

Bend I of this unit begins as you coach your writers through the intense process of drafting an entire essay in one day. This writing "boot camp" will reveal to you some of what your students already know about essay writing and will also allow you to introduce your students to some key essay-writing moves.

As you move through this bend in the unit, you will help students revise their initial drafts, teaching them first ways writers read closely and develop claims about characters—by finding the details that illuminate those characters and by considering their motivations and desires. You will also teach students ways essayists develop claims and articulate them, ways they plan an essay's structure and analyze evidence from a text. Then, you will show your students ways to explain how their evidence supports their thinking, a move essential to essay writing and one of the more exciting and challenging sessions in this bend. By the end of this bend, your students will have learned the skills to draft and revise an essay about character.

1. Essay Boot Camp
2. Growing Big Ideas from Details about Characters
3. Writing to Discover What a Character Really Wants
4. Crafting Claims
5. Summarizing, Storytelling, and Quoting
6. Studying a Mentor Text to Construct Literary Essays
7. Revising Essays to Be Sure You Analyze as Well as Cite Text Evidence

BEND II Elevating the Complexity of Literary Essays

In Bend II, you will ask students to repeat this cycle, this time angling their essays to consider a theme of a text. Although in the unit it suggests students will write about the same story with a new lens, it may be that for some students, reading and writing about anew story will allow for a fresh start and added engagement.

Along the way, you will be teaching them new essay-writing skills—from crafting powerful introductions and conclusions to incorporating quotes smoothly and accurately. You will also be supporting students in writing their second essays with greater independence and ease. You will ask them to reflect on their writing throughout, using assessment checklists as well as mentor essays.

8. Looking for Themes in the Trouble of a Text
9. Drafting Using All that You Know
10. First Impressions and Closing Remarks
11. Quoting Texts
12. Editing Inquiry Centers

BEND III Writing Compare-and-Contrast Essays

Finally, in Bend III, you will teach your students ways to consider the similarities and differences in how two texts deal with an issue and to write a comparative essay about what they find. You will help your writers apply all they have learned so far in this unit—and in others—to their current work, and you will help them to write with even more independence than before, setting their own writing goals and using their skills strategically to revise and edit their writing. At the end of the unit, your writers will publish and celebrate their completed essays— you might hold a character dress-up party in which characters discuss problems they've faced or you might publish essays on a literary blog or wiki

13. Building the Muscles to Compare and Contrast
14. Comparing and Contrasting Themes across Texts
15. Applying What You Have Learned in the Past to Today's Revision Work
16. Identifying Run-Ons
17. Celebrating Literary Essays

TCRWP Unit 3-- 6th: Research-Based Information Writing

Big Ideas/Overview:

- This unit calls students to explore the broad topic of teen activism in order to teach their readers about a topic, asking them to use increasingly sophisticated ways to draw on and structure information to explain a position or make a call to action.

	Structure
Overall	I conveyed ideas and information about a subject in a well-structured text. Sometimes I incorporated arguments, explanations, stories, or procedural passages.
Lead	I wrote an introduction in which I interested readers, perhaps with a quote or significant fact. I let readers know the subtopics that I would develop later and how my text would unfold.
Transitions	I used transitions to help readers understand how different bits of information and different parts of my writing fit together. I used transitions to help connect ideas, information, and examples, and to imply relationships such as when material exemplifies, adds on to, is similar to, explains, is a result of, or contrasts. I used transitions such as <i>for instance, such as, similarly, therefore, as a result, in contrast to, and on the other hand.</i>
Ending	I wrote a conclusion in which I restated the important ideas and offered a final insight or implication for the reader to consider.
Organization	I chose a focused subject. I used subheadings and/or clear introductory transitions to separate sections. I made deliberate choices about how to order sections and about the sequence of information and ideas within sections. I chose structures such as compare-and-contrast, categories, and claim-and-support to organize information and ideas. Some sections are written as argument, explanation, stories, or procedural passages.

	Development
Elaboration	I included varied kinds of information such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. I used trusted sources and information from authorities on the topic and gave the sources credit. I worked to make my information understandable and interesting. To do this, I may have referred to earlier parts of my text, summarized background information, raised questions, and considered possible implications.
Craft	I chose my words carefully to explain my information and ideas and to have an effect on my reader. I worked to include concrete details, comparisons, and/or images to explain information and concepts, and to keep my reader engaged. I incorporated domain-specific vocabulary and when necessary I explained terms to readers, providing context clues, parenthetical explanations, text boxes, or similar support. I supported readers' learning by using a teaching tone and a formal style, as appropriate.
	Conventions
Spelling	I used resources to be sure the words in my writing are spelled correctly, including technical vocabulary.
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	I used punctuation such as dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons to help me include extra information and explanation in some of my sentences. I accurately cited my references, using appropriate punctuation.

BEND I Writing Research-Based Informational Essays

In Bend I of this unit, you will teach students to write research-based informational essays on a whole-class topic, such as teen activism.

You'll begin by teaching students how writers present big, important ideas and how they organize and structure parts of their writing. You will teach students that writers read and analyze a wide variety of sources in order to develop a big-picture view of a topic, and you'll teach them that writers analyze information in order to discover key points and ideas. At the end of the bend, you'll ask students to flash-draft an entire informational essay, relying on the plan they've created with your coaching.

1. Becoming Engaged with a Topic
2. Reading for a Wide View of a Topic: Teen Activism
3. Preparing to Write Informational Essays: Finding and Supporting Key Points
4. Structure Sets You Free—Using Prior Knowledge to Flash-Draft Essays

BEND II Drafting and Revising Information Books on More Focused Topics

In this bend, students will choose a social issue that they found compelling and branch off to do another round of research and writing, with more focus. The end result of this bend will be a published informational book.

Next you'll coach them that writers envision several possible tables of contents before they select the right structure for their topic. Throughout this bend, you'll teach students that writers strengthen their credibility by incorporating solid evidence into their writing, including accurate quotes, supportable facts, and clear statistics. In addition, you'll teach students how to elaborate on their key points with emblematic, concrete details to create an accurate picture of the topic for readers. You'll help students refine their writing by teaching them ways writers employ complex sentences and incorporate useful text features.

5. The Trail of Research: Pursuing Information and Focusing In on Topics
6. Envisioning Structures to Plan an Information Book
7. Constructing Texts with Solid Bricks of Information
8. Research: Gathering Specific Information and Creating Meaning
9. Writing with Detail
10. Lifting the Level of Sentence Complexity
11. Using Text Features to Strengthen Writing
12. Planning Ready to Go Chapters
13. Quoting with a Purpose in Mind
14. Celebrating with a Book Exhibit Tour

BEND III Digital Writing Projects: Sharing Expertise Online

In Bend III, you'll teach students how to use the writing expertise they've developed to create websites and digital presentations. You will teach them that writers decide which information is most important in order to hone it and shape it for digital formats. You will coach students how to frame and reframe their work for delivery in multiple ways, including visually. Students will practice revising as they work, with your coaching, correcting errors with an editor's speed and accuracy. Finally, students will unveil their work to a select online community, promoting awareness and activism for the issues they've chosen.

15. Studying Digital Mentor Texts
16. Revising to Fit Digital Formats: Determining Importance
17. Pouring into Digital Forms...and Publishing
18. Celebration: Presentations, Feedback, Reflection