

PLANNING FOR THE BIG PICTURE

Title of Text: *Little Elephant's Trunk* by Hazel Lincoln. *Elephants* by Steve Bloom

Writing Type: Informational

Central Idea: *Students will understand that an elephant's trunk is used in many different ways. It is a necessary tool that helps the elephant survive.*

Reading Standards:

- Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.
- Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

Writing Standards:

- Write informative / explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.
- With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

Content Standards. Science

- All organisms have external parts. Different animals use their body. Parts to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and take in food, water, and air.

Focusing Question for Writing: How is the elephant's trunk useful?

Possible Focus Statement for Writing: The elephant's trunk is useful in many ways.

Definition: Test Drive: *The test drive is a piece of writing, written to a prompt that teacher is planning for a unit of study.... When it is complete, it shows what a student at that grade-level should be able to write. It is a tool to assure that the focusing question is a good one and will be one students can write about successfully.*

Teachers at Work: *Writing a test drive that students will never see is the first step. Even though students never see the test drive, it is a crucial step because it demonstrates whether or not the focusing question is a good one and will work for all students. It shows if students will be able to succeed with this task. Before I begin, however, I must know what the standards are for a first-grade student, so I will look at the first-grade benchmark, Chester's Way. (This was found at achievethecore.org. Others may be found at vermontwritingcollaborative.org.)*

Once I have a clear idea of what is expected of first grade students, I can write a test drive that will be similar in structure, length, and expectations.

Does my test drive reasonably match the proficient, grade 1 benchmark?	
Chester's Way (Proficient benchmark)	Little Elephant's Trunk test drive
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chester's Way</i></p> <p><u>Chester's Way</u> by Kevin Henkes is a story about two mice named Chester and Wilson. <u>They were best friends.</u> They played with each other. They reminded each other to wear sunscreen. They rode bikes with each other. They dressed the same way for Halloween. Chester and Wilson were probably best friends forever. I have a best friend his name is Chris we like to take trips paying at our house</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Little Elephant's Trunk</i></p> <p>An elephant's trunk is very useful. Elephants use their trunks to get water that they drink and use to shower. They use them to get leaves off trees for food. Elephants use their trunks to snorkel across rivers. They use their trunks to smell danger. They also use it to communicate with each other. They even hug each other with their trunks. The trunks help them survive.</p>
<p>This piece names a topic, supplies some facts about the topic, and provides a sense of closure.</p>	<p>This piece names a topic, supplies some facts about the topic, and provides a sense of closure.</p>

Teachers at Work: *Seeing the benchmark helped me understand what is expected from a first-grade student. The test drive also helped me see that there is enough evidence that all students can identify and use. This assures me that this is a good focus statement. I now know that all my students can be successful with this writing.*

[Click here to download "Test Drive Tools"](#)

Lesson Sequence: *Little Elephant's Trunk* by Hazel Lincoln

SESSION ONE:

Using a Model to Teach the Structure of An Informational Piece of Writing

- How will students know what good writing looks like?
- How will they know how to build it?

Definition: Model: A model is a piece of writing that is very similar to the piece the students will be writing, but it uses different content. It gives students a clear idea of the parameters of the writing task before them. A model is one of the most important writing strategies that we can use with students to show them (or make with them) a good, specific, well-structured piece of writing looks like.

Teachers At Work: *I know that students have little understanding of what a piece of informational writing looks like. I also know they must have this knowledge before they can write. I definitely need to teach them both structure and content before I can ask them to do the task. The easiest way is to teach the structure is to show them a model. But I have a ton of questions. Where will I get this model? Where are models that I can use? How will I get students to understand the parts of an informational piece? What can I do to make this assignment a success for all my students?*

I know there are benchmarks on the Vermont Writing Collaborative and Achieve the Core websites. I could use one I found called Chester's Way, but I think I would like one that uses the same focus. I will write one myself about a different animal using a body part. Hmmmm... What animal uses a body part in different ways? I know, a dog. A dog uses his tail for a lot of things. I will write one about a dog. Then I can show the students the different parts of an informational piece - the title, focus, evidence, and conclusion.

Will I teach them how to write an introduction now or will I wait? It is not part of the standard, but I would like them to do introductions eventually. I think I will wait until a little later in the year for this.

How will I introduce the parts of an essay? I will give each student a blank outline of a piece of writing like the one I found on the Vermont Collaborative website. I will change it a little, leaving out the introductions. I will do that later in the year. I will, however, make a box for each part of an essay. Students can cut up the model I make and glue each part of the essay into the right box. We will do this together as a class. I will do it at the front of the class as they do it simultaneously, and I will use this form to introduce the structure of a piece of informational writing.

Model: Focus Question: How do dogs use their tails?

Model Written by the teacher:

Dogs' Tails

A dog's tail is very useful. When they wag their tails, they show they are happy. When they put their tails between their legs, it means they are afraid. Their tails help them not tip over when they are running fast or on uneven rocks. Their tails also help spread their odor when it is held straight up. Finally, some dogs use their tails to warm their noses in very cold weather. Their tails are very useful, so useful they can't do without it. They need it.

Students At Work:

Title (*Names the piece of writing*)

Focus (*Tells about the topic*)

Evidence (*Reasons from the text that supports the claim.*)

Conclusion (*Provides a sense of closure that relates to the focus*)

1. Give each student the writing structure paper. (This can be found in the Tools Folder linked below.) Explain to students that this is the structure of a piece of writing like the one they are going to do and explain each part of the essay. (You will repeat this instruction over and over throughout the year.)

2. Then give each students a copy of the model, Dogs' Tails. (This can be found in the Tools Folder linked below. Note the large spaces between each part of the essay. This gives students room to cut each piece.)

3. Read the model to students and explain each part. Then ask students what the title is to make sure they know it. Display the blank essay format some place where students can see it. Cut out the title on your copy of the model and paste it onto your blank outline. Have students point to the title on their copy of the Dogs' Tails. They then cut it out and paste it onto their blank outline paper under the word title.

4. Explain that a focusing statement is the most important sentence in this piece. Tell them that when you focus on something, you are concentrating on something specific, the central about the topic. It is the eat mint that they will prove true with evidence from the text. The focusing sentence of Dog's Tails is: A dog's tail is very useful. This essay will be only about how useful their tails are. Cut out the focus on your model and paste it onto your blank essay form. Students do the same.

5. When they are ready, point out that the writer of Dogs' Tails has lots of evidence to prove that they use their tails in many ways. Read the next five sentences. (When they wag their tails, they show that they are happy. When they put their tails between their legs, it means they are afraid. Dogs also use their tails for balance. Their tails also help spread their odor when it is held straight up. Finally, dogs use their tails to warm their noses in very cold weather.) After reading each sentence, ask if the sentence proves the focus a way that a dog uses his tail. Cut this section out and paste it onto your blank essay form. Have students do the same.

6. Tell students that the last sentence is the conclusion. The job of the conclusion is to wrap up the piece. It repeats the focus and then comes to an "aha" moment that tells the

reader why this is important. Look at the last sentence of A Dog's Tail. Ask why is the dog's tail important? Let student give you some answers. Ask why they need their tails? (Examples: Their tails are very useful, so useful they can't do without it. They need it.) Cut your conclusion out and paste it onto the blank essay form. Students do the same.

7. Explain that when they write their piece, they will have all these parts of an informational writing piece - title, introduction, focus, evidence to support the focus, and a conclusion.

Post the model where they can refer to it often. It will look like this:

<p>Title <i>(Names the piece of writing.)</i> <i>A Dog's Tail</i></p> <p>Focus <i>Tells about the topic.</i> <i>A dog's tail is very useful.</i></p> <p>Evidence <i>(Reasons from the text that supports the claim.)</i> <i>When they wag their tails, they show that they are happy. When they put their tails between their legs, it means they are afraid. Dogs also use their tails for balance. Their tails also help spread their odor when it is held straight up. Finally, dogs use their tails to warm their noses in very cold weather.</i></p> <p>Conclusion <i>(Provides a sense of closure that related to the topic.)</i></p>

[Click here to download "Step 1: Class Model Tools"](#)

The point of this lesson: *Showing a good, specific well-structured model is the single most important writing strategy we can use with kids.*

SESSION TWO:

Build Knowledge Through Deep/Close Reading and Discussion

- How will I help students navigate this text?
- What else will I need to plan for so that students will have the knowledge and understanding they need for writing?

Definition: Build Knowledge Through Deep/Close Reading and Discussion: The purpose of building knowledge is to make the text truly accessible for all students through multiple readings. Close reading is an approach to reading that helps student successfully navigate the text that they might otherwise find too challenging. Using carefully sequenced text-dependent questions, close reading drives students back into the text over and over again to answer those questions. As students reread to think about the answer, they are constructing deeper and deeper meaning from the text. (Making it Work, pg. 72).

Teachers at Work: *Composing text dependent questions that help students understand the text and answer the focusing question effectively in a piece of work takes thought and multiple close reads that go deeper and deeper into the text. Reading the same text for different purposes is helpful in building knowledge of the text in relation to the focusing question. In preparation for the task, I have to begin by reading the text myself several times. Then I must number the pages starting on the title page. My next step will be to create a lesson plan for three close reads: one so they get the gist of the book and enjoy the story; a second read to assure they comprehend the story since I have some struggling students, and a third read to gather evidence to support the focus. If I have extra time, I can reread the story again, and I will put the story book where it is easily accessible to my students.*

Students at Work: First Read: Show students the book *Elephants* by Steve Bloom. Tell them that elephants are unique animals, and they are going to learn about a special part of the elephant that is unique to elephants. Go quickly through some of the pictures talking about what is happening in the pictures. Then turn to page 12 and read the two pages on trunks. Explain that elephants have unique trunks.

Then read the book, *Little Elephant's Trunk* by Hazel Lincoln. Read it first without stopping so the students get the gist of the story and enjoy the book.

Students at Work: Second Read: Reading for Comprehension: Tell students that you are going to read the book again, but this time you are going to stop along the way to discuss what is happening. Reread the book with students interacting with the text. This reading is to make sure that all students understand the text. Check for comprehension with the questions below.

Page	Text Dependent Questions	Answers/Comments
Title Page 1	Name and discuss the job of the author, illustrator, and the title.	Explain the word topic and inform students that the topic of this book is found in the title. This book will be about the trunk of a little elephant.
Pages 2 - 3	What animals do you see on these pages? What happens with the animals in the spring?	Chimpanzee, giraffe, tortoise, hippo, zebra, springbok They are all having babies.
Page 4-5	What animal has just had a baby here? When elephants have a new baby, who looks after the baby? What shows you they love the new baby.	An elephant The whole family They gaze lovingly and stroke the baby with their trunks.
Pages 6- 7	What happens to the little elephant when he tries to walk? What trips him up? What do they call a group of elephants? Where is the herd going?	He is wobbly and he trips on his trunk. A herd To the river
Pages 8- 9	What happens when he gets to the riverbank? Who does he see in the river?	He falls into the river. He sees his reflection in the river.
Pages 10-11	What does the little elephant wonder about? What animal does he see in the river? What is that animal doing? Why can't he drink like the zebra? How does the little elephant learn to drink? How does this help the little elephant to survive?	He wonders what his trunk is for. He sees a zebra drinking water with his mouth. His trunk gets in the way. He sees the big elephants using their trunks to drink. He imitates them. Elephants need water to live.
Pages 12-13	The turtle has a shell to protect him from the hot sun. How do the elephants use the water to help with the heat and hot sun?	They spray water with their trunks over their backs to cool themselves down.
Pages 14-15	How does the little elephant use his trunk? What are the big elephants doing?	He imitates the big elephants and sprays water on his back. They are moving to the place where they can get food on the far side of the river.
Pages 16-17	Why is the little elephant afraid?	The water is deep and keeps getting in his trunk.

	What does he see the big elephants doing?	Using their trunks as a snorkel. (Show the students a picture of a scuba snorkel to explain the word.)
Pages 18-19	What did the little elephant learn to do? How did he learn this? How does this help him to survive?	He learned to snorkel by watching the big elephants. He doesn't drown.
Pages 20-21	What do the elephants do with the mud? What other animal is with the elephants. How do they get along with each other? Reread the sentence: <i>They picked up large dollops of mud with their trunks and threw them over their backs.</i> What do you think a dollop is?	The spray it on their backs to keep cool. There's a hippopotamus and its baby. The baby hippo and elephant seem to like each other. A dollop is a clump of something.
Pages 22-23	Why is the little elephant having trouble going with the big elephants? What is he afraid of	The grass is too high and he couldn't see where the big elephants were going. He is afraid of losing his mother.
Pages 24-25	How do the elephants walk? What do the elephants hold? What does little elephant do? How does this make him feel? How does this help him to survive?	They walk in a line. They use their trunk to hold the tail of the elephant in front of them. He holds his mother's tail. Safe. He doesn't get lost. If he is alone, predators may get him.
Pages 26-27	Where do they stop? Why? How do the big elephants get food? What does little elephant do? Does this help him survive?	At the feeding ground to get food. They use their trunks. He imitates them but with the lower branches. Yes, he has to eat to survive.
Pages 28-29	What time of day is it? How do you know? What does the little elephant feel his mother doing? How does she do this?	Sunset/evening The illustration shows a sunset. She strokes him with her trunk.
Page 27	What does the little elephant do with his trunk? How is this like what humans do?	He wraps it around his mother's trunk. It's like holding hands/hugging.

[Click here to download "Step 2: Build Knowledge Tools"](#)

The point of this lesson: The purpose of Building Knowledge is to make the text truly accessible for all students.

SESSION THREE:

Gather and Work with Evidence to Support the Focusing Question

- How will students gather and record the specific evidence they need to write this piece?
- How will we record this information?

Definition: Gather and Work With Evidence: "... meaning does not spring from nothing, out of thin air - it comes from (accurate) knowledge about a topic. The very act of thinking and writing is part of that meaning making from knowledge, so that knowledge grows into deep understanding - and successful writing at any grade level reflects that understanding. (*Making It Work*, pg. 108)

Teachers at Work: Gather and Work with Evidence. *I know that now students understand the text, I want them to think about the focus: How the elephant's trunk is useful. I am going to reread the text, stopping every one or two pages so students can process the information in a way that leads them to understand the usefulness of the trunk and how it really is a vital part of the elephant's survival. I will use pictures to help those who cannot read yet. I think I will do this as a whole class and record the information gathered on a note-catcher chart. They have done this before, so I think it will go well.*

Students at Work: Gather and Work with Evidence: Ask students if they remember what the little elephant said at the very end of the story about his trunk. (It is very useful.) Tell students that you are going to read the story about the little elephant one more time, but this time, they are going to become detectives and look for evidence that the little elephant is right about his trunk being very useful. Explain that every page may or may not have evidence, but most will. (Example - pages 1-3, 14,15 do not have any evidence.)

Reread the story, stopping after a page or two to have the students tell you if there is evidence on those pages that the elephant's trunk is useful. Using clip-art pictures from the internet or hand-drawn pictures, (Due to copyright restrictions pictures from the text were not used for this lesson.) record their answers on a note-catcher chart as they give answers.

Have them give their answers in complete sentences, but do not write on the chart in complete sentences. Explain to the students that you are taking notes, and you use a word or two as a reminder of the evidence, but when they write their essay, they will write in complete sentences. It may look similar to the recording, note-taking chart below:

How is the little elephant's trunk useful?	
The little elephant's trunk is very useful.	Does this help him survive?
 <p>pat/touch new baby</p>	
 <p>drinks</p>	Yes need water
 <p>showers. Cools down touch turtle</p>	
 <p>snorkle</p>	Yes Doesn't drown
 <p>mud</p>	
 <p>hold tails</p>	Yes, won't get lost. Predators
 <p>eat</p>	Yes. Needs food.

NOTE: Keep the chart where student can refer to it often.

[Click here to download "Step 3: Gather Evidence Tools"](#)

The point of this lesson: Students using accurate evidence from the text to support their thinking is essential for writing with understanding.

[Click here to download "Step 4: Understanding Structure Tools"](#)

Point of this lesson: Mental structures are now recognized to be a critical feature of cognitive growth - in short, of learning, of constructing meaning.

Students at Work:

1. **Day 1:** Remind students that a title tells the reader what the writing is going to be about. Have them look at the title *Dogs' Tails*. Ask them why this is a good title. Ask if there are other titles this might have? Brainstorm with the students some titles they might use for an informational piece about how elephants use their trunks. Have students work with a partner. Each student tells a partner what their title is going to be. Have them write their title on the first line.

2. Remind students that the focus is the most important sentence in writing because it tells the reader what the essay is all about. Read the focus of *Dogs' Tails*: There are many reasons dogs use their tails. Tell students that their focus is going to be: "*The elephant's trunk is very useful.*" Have them think of other ways of saying this. (Ex: There are many ways elephants use their trunks; Elephant's trunks are useful in many ways.) Have students orally rehearse their focus statement with a partner before they write this on the first lines of the second page. Check each student as they write.

3. **Day 2:** Read the evidence in *Dogs' Tails* (When they wag their tails, they show they are happy. When they put their tails between their legs, it means they are afraid. Their tails help them not tip over when they are running fast or on uneven rocks. Their tails also help spread their odor when it is held straight up. Finally, some dogs use their tails to warm their noses in very cold weather.) Discuss the amount of evidence and tell students the more evidence they give, the more they have proved the point.

4. Then refer to their individual note-taking chart, asking students to give a sentence that tells a piece of evidence that the elephant's trunk is very useful. After you have reviewed the evidences, put students in pairs and have them practice making sentences of evidence. Ask them to take turns acting out one of the evidences and the partner must say what the evidence is in a complete sentence. When you feel that students have had plenty of oral practice, ask students to write their evidence on the same page as the focus. They can write as many evidences as possible. After each evidence sentence, they write, they check it off on their note-catcher. They can illustrate in the box at the top of the page. They may go on to the next page if needed.

5. **Day 3:** Tell students that they will have more time to write more evidence in their essay. When students feel they are done, they may illustrate their work. Walk around the classroom, encouraging those who have not written much to add one or more evidences. Have struggling students practice orally with you before they write.

6. **Day 4:** Tell students that the final part of any essay is the conclusion. The job of the conclusion is to wrap up the piece. Read the concluding sentences of *Dogs' Tails*: *Their tails are very useful. They need them.*

Tell students to think about why what you said in your paper is important. Why is the elephant's trunk important? Discuss why an elephant's trunk is important or useful. Have them give ideas for a concluding sentence. Students turn and talk about their conclusion before they write one.

[Click here to download "Step 5: Planning and Composing Tools"](#)

The point of this lesson: *Mental structures, oral processing and practice are now recognized to be a critical feature of cognitive growth - in short, of learning, of understanding, of constructing meaning. Writing in chunks is one way of making the writing process manageable and successful.*

SESSION SIX:

Assessment: Looking At and Learning From Student Work

- How will I assess this work?
- How will I use this assessment information to drive individualized instructional next steps?

Definition: Assessment: *The whole purpose of looking at student work is to learn what student strengths and needs are so we can do something about them.*

Teachers at Work: *As I walked around the classroom while student wrote, I was pleased with the overall results. There were some, however, that needed more instruction. Some needed less. How was I going to give instruction that met the needs of each student? I didn't want to bore those who were better writers, but I needed to go over some of the skills already taught to others. I had noticed on The Vermont Writing Collaborative website a section on assessment and a tool called Class Instructional Analysis Data Sheet. It looked like an easy way to organize my instruction. I downloaded it and noted the benefits of this type of assessment:*

Class Instructional/Independent Analysis Data Sheet: GRADE 1 Opinion /Argument		
<small>Please make sure to use the box that best describes the evidence of proficiency you see. Use the published score from our Benchmarks to check each dimension. NOTE: For the purpose of this sheet, the student will attempt to describe the use of the specific skill/strategy.</small>		
Not Present	Developing	Proficient
		Shows a solid understanding of content
		Introduces a topic
		States an opinion /claim/Focus about the topic
		Supplies a reason for the opinion
		Provides some sense of closure
		Conventions, syntax are grade appropriate
Observations:		
Next Steps:		

1. It begins with an emphasis on showing understanding
2. The emphasis is also on problem solving. "What's next instructionally?"
3. The process relies on benchmarks drawn from the student work and one from published Benchmarks on the Vermont Writing Collaborative Website
4. The checklist efficiently shows the whole class "at a glance."
5. The checklist allows for identification of small and whole class patterns of strengths and needs.
6. It derives from the standard for that type of writing at that specific grade level.
7. It supports realistic teacher expectations.

[Click here to download "Step 6: Learning from Student Work Tools"](#)

The point of this lesson: *The purpose of assessment is to gather information to inform future instruction for each student.*