

## Unit 9 – Readers Learn Information About the World Through Our Books in Theme-Based Reading Clubs

May

You may decide to continue to have reading clubs at the end of the year and we've discovered that theme-based book clubs work really well at this time. If you flip through your baskets of A-D books, you're likely to find many titles containing storylines about families, insects, friends, the lives of kids, birthdays, and so on. To implement theme-based book clubs, you need to decide if you have enough books to support a whole class theme during reading clubs or whether you have the materials that would support several different themes. In other words, do you have enough books so that your class can focus exclusively on the theme of friendships or might you need to create several different theme-based reading clubs, such as a couple of animal books reading clubs, a couple of family clubs, a birthday club, and so on? In general, we imagine that children will be reading a variety of topics.

Assuming this is the case, then, you'll start by gathering books related to a variety of topics; remember that a book may be called *Mom* or *Sundays* or *At the Zoo*, but all three books may in fact be about a family. Also, remember that a book on bears might involve bear families! Perhaps you'll choose books that will help your children gain content knowledge in your kindergarten social studies curriculum. Perhaps there is a community center, or a school center. Many of the books that children are reading at this time of year are Level C and above. Often these books fall into more than one category. For example, many are list books that give information about a topic yet tell stories through pictures. Each page of *A Party*, for example, lists one thing you need at a party: hats, plates, etc. While the picture tells a story, the words list information. Rather than trying to separate out these books into non-narrative and narrative for our youngest and newest readers, group them together into books, say, on parties.

Once you have books grouped around themes, partners in each club will select a theme they want to study for a week or so and will work within a basket of books gathered on that topic.

The purpose of these reading center units is to support thoughtful reading (and deep comprehension) of just right books. If the class is reading family books, the teacher might read aloud a book about families and perhaps show children that one way to talk about a family book is to name ways in which the family in the book is like, and unlike, their own families. The talk is of families, but you're spotlighting the reading skill of making connections. Another day, children could talk about how the family in one book is like or unlike the family in another book; this discussion highlights the reading skill of intertextuality. A child may begin, "These moms are the same because..." "I have a pile of books with families that live in the city and a pile with families that live in the country," or "All my families have a pet!" As children muse over ways the families in their books are like and unlike their own, they learn that readers grow ideas and then point to places in the text to support them.

In this way, you'll help children notice themes, concepts, and patterns within one book, to test these across other books, and to grow ideas in conversations with partners. As

children read alone and with each other, they'll begin to make connections across books, realize differences, notice characters, reread several times to find text evidence to support their ideas, and so on.

Your teaching might follow these bends in the road:

- Readers think about what they already know to help them gather information from the words and the pictures
- Readers read noticing and collecting new information
- Readers make connections between books looking for bigger ideas and understandings

Imagine, as you launch your reading clubs, that you decide to do a whole class study on animals. You could gather children and say to them, "Readers, you all are not only growing as readers, you are growing as teachers, too! So many of you are experts on topics that you have been teaching us about all year. Remember how when we went to the zoo this year, Franklin told us all about the python? And, remember when Sarah brought in the seashell and we learned that hermit crabs live inside them? Remember when Jin brought in the leaves from the park that had tiny little bugs on them? So this is our chance to be zoologists in books! We can study animals in the books that we read. We can gather up all our books and sort them into categories that will help us learn even more about something we love, ANIMALS!"

If, instead, you launch reading clubs in which children are studying different topics, you might say, "So many of you are experts on topics that you have been teaching us about all year. Remember how when we went to the zoo this year, Franklin told us all about the python? Remember when Darielis came back from the Dominican Republic and taught us all about the Island? And then Ali had a new baby sister this year and told us all about what it was like to have a new baby at home? Well, we are teachers! We are zoologists and anthropologists (people who study people). Today we are going to not only read, we are going to study a topic and become an expert on that topic! We are going to read stories and all-about books to learn more about little sisters, snakes, and maybe even islands. I have a few different baskets here and you can decide which one you would like to study. Maybe it will be birthdays and celebrations; maybe you will want to study insects and other bugs."

The first part of this unit is all about helping children access prior knowledge to learn from both pictures and words. In many ways, this harkens back to the work that your kindergarteners were doing at the beginning of the year. You will teach them how to both read the words and look closely at the pictures in their books about a topic. Because so much information in these early level books is embedded in the illustrations, we want to teach children how to use their growing oral language skills and vocabulary to learn from a picture. You might teach partners how to look together at a picture and talk out each part of it, leaning on what they already know to help them. So, if children are reading *Little Nino's Pizzeria*, they could look at a picture and say something like, "Here is where they make the pizza and here is where you order, and everyone seems to know each other."

As children pick the basket they will study for the week, remind them of the process of reading. Remind them to study the cover of the book and to think about what information it is telling them and to ask themselves, “What do I already know about this topic?” As a child begins to read a book he might pick it up and say, “*The Green Snake*. This is a green snake in the grass and I know that snakes are slippery and I know that snakes eat mice. I know that they live in the grass.” Using the picture and activating what a child knows about a topic helps him to get ready to find that information. Guide children to think not only about what they know and want to know, but about the particular books they are reading, making predictions about what these will teach. The child reading *The Green Snake* might say, “I think this book will teach me about how snakes live in the grass and what they look like.” Remind children to preview the pictures to confirm or revise what they think. “Hey! There is a bug! It is going to teach me what snakes eat!”

Many of these books will continue to give a pattern in the text. If, in one part of the book, the snake tries to eat a bug and doesn’t succeed because the bug is too small, and then the snake tried to eat a toad and doesn’t succeed because the toad is too large, your goal is for children to be able to use what they know about what has been happening in the book to predict what will happen when the snake encounters a butterfly.

As children are reading and learning information about a topic, nudge them to envision what is happening on the page. Teach children that it is our job as readers to make the pictures in books “move” as if we are seeing them in front of us. Demonstrate by using your hands to make gestures that reflect the activity you see in the picture. “I see the boat in the water and the fisherman. I am imagining that the boat is moving like this,” you might say,” as you move you hand up and down slowly. “The waves are bumping into the boat making it rock and bump a little like this.” Then show children what you see happening. “Must be hard to fish in a bobbing boat!” Using their bodies and faces helps kids understand what it means to make images move. Ultimately, though, we want kids doing this work inside their heads.

After they have read one book, and before they pick the next, it is important for kids to put together all the information they have learned. For example, *The Green Snake* teaches readers that some snakes eat katydids, which are insects that look like grasshoppers. The book teaches us that snakes look for food using their tongues. Finally, the book also tells us what food this kind of snake does *not* eat. An observant child might chime in, “Yeah and this kind of green snake, he didn’t give up. Cause he was hungry. If you’re hungry you keep searching for the food.”

In this next part of the unit, as in the previous one, you want kids to read to notice new things they have learned. Again, they may read their topic books asking themselves, “What new things am I learning in these books?” You could then have them list these things across their fingers, using their hands as portable graphic organizers. As they note what they’re learning, children can Post-it pages in their books. Children might look for information they find surprising, like the fact that sometimes whales jump out of the water. They might look for parts that are disgusting and gross that might even be deemed cool, like the page that shows ants eating a decomposing cricket. The goal is to create an

environment where kids are on the lookout for new, exciting information. You want your classroom buzzing as children react to their books, excited to share all the information they are learning. As children do this work, teach them ways of thinking about the new information: why is a bit of new information important? How does it fit or with the rest of the book or title? Show children how to take this new bit of information and think about how it goes with everything else they know and have learned about their topic.

After kids have marked up their new information you'll show them how to compare this information across books. Children can search for the same information in new books, think across pages, and find new connections between books. They could leave a page of the first book open as they move on to read the next one. This way, if a child finds a connection in another book, she can move between the two pages and talk about it. For example, one child read the book *I Am*. She came to an illustration of a girl climbing in the park and said, "That looks like fun. I don't do that though!" She moved on to read *I Am in the Park* and came across a page with the illustration of someone climbing a jungle gym. She laid these pages side by side and noticed what was similar and different between the two. She said, "They both look happy. They must be strong. I am too scared to try that! But in this one, if he falls it would hurt because there's no grass!" The girl marked the pages to remind her to talk about it with her partners during "club" time.

As children notice and collect particular moments in their texts, they are really working on the reading skill of synthesis. They are trying to take their reading and put it together in ways that make sense to them. As they do this, you might teach children how to lay new learning next to what they already know. It is only by doing this type of comparison that children begin to learn how to revise, and thus grow their thinking about a topic.

In this last part of the unit teach children that readers make connections between books looking for bigger ideas and understandings. Show children how to take books on a topic and lay them side-by-side to try to find connections. For instance, they could take two different books about school and they might say something like, "In this book about school, the kids are moving from class to class, but in this school book, the kids are staying in one class." You could model for children how you take your connections and you then try to say something that sounds like, "These two books together are making me think..." Once readers who are in the school reading club learn to use this prompt, they might say something like, "Schools don't all work the same way." This is really the beginning of interpretation, of having and making ideas from your reading.

### Read-Aloud

This is a great time to use the read-aloud to re-teach children how to extend conversation, by reminding them of phrases such as, "I agree because..." and "I disagree because..." You could also help children stay with one topic for longer periods by suggesting they bring in text evidence to support their claims. You can also teach (or re-teach) conversational moves that help partners stay on one topic, like, "I can add on to what you're saying," or "Another thing about this is..."

Because you've likely done some dramatization work by this point, you may want to read aloud a chapter book and spend many of the turn-and-talk times prompting children to dramatize the story. Have them envision how a character looks and sounds and moves, then act out their ideas for partners. Have them carry on dialogue exchanges in their partnerships by saying things like, "Keep thinking about what the family might be saying. How would they sound? What would the mom say back?"

### Shared Reading

As with the read-aloud, you'll want to read shared texts (Big Books, poems) that relate to the whole class topic you're studying. Continue the work of helping children learn how to monitor and use all the sources of information independently when they encounter difficulty, and nudge them to cross-check and self-correct. Also help them work on monitoring for meaning across the whole book, making sure the pages go together. You may also work on print strategies based on meaning and conversation moves.

### Interactive Writing

In this month, you may want to create texts about the topics your class is studying. You could focus on the particulars of the genre in which your children are writing. Once again, it is important to apply what children are learning in word study to interactive writing.

### Word Study/Phonics

You'll continue to do word work based on individual or group needs. Most of your work in word study can be small-group work at this time, to allow children to practice and solidify phonics concepts they need for first grade. Whole group instruction might be targeted on phonemic awareness work with a focus on hearing beginning, middle, and ending sounds and sounds in sequence; you could also introduce new spelling patterns and high frequency words. Your small groups might focus on specific concepts you've previously taught, such as beginning and ending sounds, high frequency words and letter formation.

If you decide to teach...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i> 4 <sup>th</sup> Edition	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons K –</i> Pinnell & Fountas
<p>Phonological Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing Middle Sounds</li> <li>• Hearing Sounds in Sequence</li> <li>• Syllables</li> </ul> <p>Letter-Sound Relationships: Beginning and Ending Sounds</p> <p>Spelling Patterns CVC</p> <p>High Frequency Words</p>	<p>4-14 (pg. 116)</p> <p>Adapt 4-28 to 4-31 (pgs. 123-125) 5-6 to 5-8 (pgs. 156-158)</p> <p>5-10 (pg. 159)</p> <p>5-12 to 5-14 (pgs. 160-161)</p> <p>Pgs. 182-183</p>	<p>Hearing Middle Sounds PA 22</p> <p>Hearing Sounds in Sequence PA 23</p> <p>Syllables PA16</p> <p>Beginning and Ending Sounds LS2-LS5</p> <p>Spelling Patterns SP 3 and SP 4</p> <p>High-Frequency Words HF 3 and HF 4</p>