

Unit 10 – Find Your Niche as a Reader: Readers Find a Series of Books to Read for a Stretch of Time (Series Book Clubs), Plan Our Own Reading Projects, and Make Plans for Our Summer Reading

June

At the end of the year, you will provide children with time to reflect on and celebrate their growth as readers, while at the same time getting them fired up about reading in a series and planning summer reading projects. At this point in the year, the readers in your classroom are the strongest they have been all year. Many of them are reading at or near level J. This unit is your chance to set them up to do some powerful reading over the summer. Finding a special series and getting hooked on it in June could last them into the summer months. Some of your children were captivated by the nonfiction science reading they did in the last unit. Whatever their interests and passions are, you will want to get kids excited to try some different reading projects in the class that they can then continue reading and studying in the summer.

To start the unit, you may tell your children that you have loved watching them change as readers all year and now is their time to think about and revel in how much they have grown. We imagine you have saved a variety of reading artifacts across the year – reading log pages that tallied the number of books children read in a day and a week, Post-it notes, class charts. Now you can use these to help children remember the kinds of readers they were and to compare this to the kinds of readers they’ve become over the course of the year. Sometimes teachers invite children to reread the books they read earlier in the year to see how their thinking has changed. You might ask children to consider their reading tastes (“What kinds of things do I like to read?”), their reading tendencies (“What kinds of things do I tend to do as a reader?”), and their reading needs (“What do I need to do to get better as a reader?”). Children might also think about the different reading partners they have had all year. They can think, “What did I learn from each of my partners? How did my partners help me?”

Possible directions for your teaching in this unit might be:

- Strong readers reflect on how much we’ve changed and grown
- Strong readers find a series of books we love and read, read, read
- Strong readers invent our own summer reading projects to keep on growing

Strong Readers Reflect on How Much We’ve Changed and Grown

For the first few days of this unit, you might gather the class in the meeting area and, in place of the usual minilesson, have a discussion that leads to reflection. For example, you might say something like, “Readers, one of the things grown-up readers do is reread books we’ve read before that have been important to us for some reason. Strong readers know that when we reread, we often have new thinking about the story. I was thinking that we could all look back over some old favorite books this week and reread trying to notice the new thinking that we’re having about the stories.” You could reread some old favorite read-alouds and ask your children to shop for old favorites of their own from the classroom library to reread for the next several days.

Strong Readers Find a Series of Books We Love and Read, Read, Read

To set up the class for series books, you might say, “Readers, it has been amazing for the past few days listening to you talk about how much you have changed as readers. Now that you are so grown-up as readers, I want to tell you something that really grown-up readers do. We find one kind of book and we read books in that category for a long time, and we get to know those books and those characters really well. You are the kinds of readers who can do this work. You are going to start reading series in the classroom, and then you will be able to keep reading all summer long.”

There are lots of reasons why you want to support the reading of series books. For one, if you do a book introduction of one book from the series, that introduction can support children’s work across the series. You might also use reading within a series as an opportunity to move some of your children up a level of difficulty. The introduction will act as a scaffold and thus support the child in reading the entire series. By teaching children to think across books, you are really setting them up for working with longer multi-chapter novels. But the best thing about series books is that they are designed to hook kids into characters. Your hope is that your readers will become fans of Little Bear, Poppleton, or Froggy. Falling in love with these characters in June will provide some direction and momentum for the summer reading of your first graders. Getting through a series will feel like a project to be completed by the end of the summer. You can say to your children, “I know that some of you are going to read the *Henry and Mudge* series, and some of you want to read *Iris and Walter*. Whichever series you read, try to read all of the books in that series!” We believe that first graders are ready for and can greatly benefit from this kind of challenge. You want to end the year with the children feeling proud of all they have learned this year and ready to continue reading all summer.

You may decide it is helpful for your strongest readers to read a series that is at or slightly below their independent reading level so that they have opportunities to work on fluency and to talk well about texts. They can also use these ‘comfortable reads’ to solidify their comprehension work, especially with regard to accumulating text across chapters. Depending on your books, you may also need to reconfigure some of your character study baskets, only *this* time, your children will read them with the lens of the texts as a series. In any case, you’ll want to create series book baskets for your classroom library. The D or E *Field Guides to Classroom Libraries* (Heinemann) can be crucial supports for you as these books give an overview of a series, identifying the easier and harder books within a series, as well as its main features and challenges.

Teach your readers that when they read lots of series books, they’ll find themselves predicting how the upcoming book will probably “go” based on their prior reading. These predictions will be based especially on their knowledge of characters. A child who is an avid reader of *Poppleton* books knows that Poppleton will encounter some sort of hurt feelings or frustrations with his friends, but that he will figure out a way to work them out. When that child reads the next book in the series, he’s likely to think, “Oh, here it comes again...This is just like the problem he had with Zacko.” Remind readers that these are significant realizations worth jotting on a Post-it. When a student accumulates

several of these sorts of Post-its, he is better able to organize the big idea and substantiate it with text evidence in his partner talk.

Readers at levels I and J are also beginning to work toward reading silently at a good rate. Look for evidence that they are self-correcting at the point of error or even before an overt error. The word solving of children at these levels demonstrates flexibility. Remind them to solve unknown words by taking words apart, using meaning, using letter sequence, or noticing endings and prefixes. Children at these levels should be breaking down longer words into syllables in order to decode manageable units. And children at levels I and J will need to begin to learn how to solve words of two or three syllables, many with inflectional endings and complex letter-sound relationships.

Strong Readers Invent Our Own Summer Reading Projects to Keep on Growing

After your children begin reading in a series, have them start thinking about their own reading projects and summer reading. Tell them that it is their turn to be in charge of what they want to read and why, and you know they will rise to the challenge. Connect the work you are doing in series books to having children come up with their own projects. If they started one series maybe they want to read all of the books in that series. Maybe they want to read a different series by the same author and compare the two. Maybe they want to track all the changes that one character goes through in one book and across the series.

Some children will choose to continue working on series for their projects. Other children will decide on other options. For example, one child may be fascinated with dinosaurs, and will want to gather and read everything possible about that topic. Another child may love acting, so will put together books with lots of dialogue that she can practice reading aloud. Have children begin these projects in school, with the express purpose of inspiring them to continue reading over the summer.

Dick Allington's research tells us that when children don't read over the summer, their reading level usually drops two entire levels. Therefore, you have a critical obligation to send children off to July and August wanting to read a lot! You may opt to have conferences with children to talk about what they hope to accomplish over the summer. In this way, children will make reading goals and look forward to their accomplishments. It is important to know who in your class came in at a lower level than when they left kindergarten. Knowing this information may alert you that some kids and families need more support to continue reading over the summer. You might plan a class trip to your local library (with library cards or to get library cards), and show children where they can find their just-right and favorite books. Have your kids check out at least 8 books that could go with their series or project.

You might want to invite parents in to the end-of-school/beginning-of-summer reading projects celebrations. Children could tell their parents about the series they read that month and share their plans for how they are going to continue that work over the summer.

Read-Aloud

Read-aloud is a wonderful way to introduce series to children. You may decide to pick a series in which you've already read a couple of the books so that your children have prior knowledge. Perhaps you'll read excerpts from favorite read-alouds from throughout the year. You might tell children that some readers love to go back and read parts of favorite books because these offer comfort and may sound different the second time around. Readers may also notice different things when we reread something. Picture books with strong characters and clear relationships are also great choices, whether or not the books are part of a series. Titles like *Recess Queen*, *Amos and Boris*, *Ruby the Copy Cat* and many Kevin Henkes' books work really well. Whatever you decide, pick a series at the I or J level and read two or three texts in that series within a week's time.

The format for the read-aloud will be typical, with think-alouds and turn-and-talks while you read the text, followed by whole group conversations. You may decide to steer these whole group talks toward what readers notice about the work of the series—perhaps children will notice that the author writes about the same sort of topic over and over or that she uses the same characters across books. The goal during read-aloud is to help your children begin to think like series book readers. One of the big things we hope our young readers think about is how the structure of series books allows for deeper thinking. You'll help children see how series books have some things that are constant. Likewise, Readers try to figure out what is different from book to book.

Shared Reading

During shared reading, you might want to complement the unit on series books by working on fluency and teaching children how to 'get into a character's head.' You might decide it makes sense to continue with the work on dramatization that you've begun because you notice pay-offs in terms of improved fluency and increased student engagement. When doing this work, you might have your readers try to choose the two or three scenes that are most important in getting to know the main character in the series or the two or three scenes that are most revealing of the series itself, and then have children dramatize those scenes. This is especially effective work at the end of the year as it is a reminder of what it feels like to really *read* a book. Children will recall that they need most of all to be affected by what they read. Reading a book means that it is fluent and filled with feeling for you. This work may also hook children into series they want to read over the summer.

It's also important to continue supporting readers with word-solving strategies and vocabulary building work. For example, you could cover words in a shared reading text and ask readers to think of a word that would make sense in that place. You could do work on synonyms by reading a text and then saying, "How else could we say that?" or "What other words would work here?" For example, when the hungry giant says, "I'll hit you with my bommyknocker!" you could say, "What other words could the author have used?" and then try out the other words through dramatizing that part. Your children will find that word choice matters because "I'll hit you with my bommyknocker!" is undoubtedly more effective than "I'll hit you with my mallet!"

Word Study/Phonics

As children move into reading new text levels, think about the types of texts they are reading. It's important that our word study time is carefully designed to help children meet the challenges of problem solving words in their texts. For example, you will help children moving into Group 6 work on recognizing syllables in words and using the strategies for solving longer words. Along with considering the levels your children are reading, you will also want to assess children's use of beginning and ending consonant blends, short and long vowel spelling patterns, contractions, inflectional endings, and high-frequency words. You may use the assessment in the *Phonics Lessons 2nd Grade* binder by Pinnell and Fountas.

Examine your children's writing as well to notice whether or not readers are transferring what has been taught to their own work. Notice their spelling attempts. For example, if a child writes *parkt* for *parked* you might work with -ed endings. Take this opportunity to assess children's knowledge of the words on the word wall, too. For example, if all of your children can read and write the word *through* consistently you can retire that word and replace it with words they need to learn. Continue adding 3-5 words a week, making sure that your children can read and write most of the words that are already there. Also, help children use word study charts as they read and write.

If you decide to teach...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way 4th Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons Grade 1 – Pinnell & Fountas</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diphthongs (oy and ai) and Ambiguous Vowel patterns• Complex Blends (str)	Adapt 5-19 (pg.164), 6-7 to 6-8 (pg.193), 6-11 to 6-13 (pgs.195-197) *Adapt blend activities that students already know: 4-27 to 4-31 (pgs. 123-125) 5-6 to 5-10 (pgs. 157-159), 5-15 (pg. 162)	LS9 (pgs. 103-106), LS21 (pgs.151-154), SP10 (pgs. 201-204) LS1 (pp. 71-74), LS5 (pgs. 87-90), LS6 (pgs. 91-94) adapt to teach different consonant blends
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contractions• High-Frequency Words	Pgs. 182-183	WS10 to WS12 (pgs. 339-350) HF1 to HF 9 (pgs. 235-270)

Celebrating the Work of this Unit

Because this unit of study is so closely connected to the writing unit of study at this time, you might want to consider a combination celebration during which children share their writing about their reading in some celebratory way. Perhaps you'll invite guests into the classroom or you'll have children share their writing with each other in small groups.

