With this unit you’ll be retraveling the now familiar ground of narrative writing with the goal of raising the level of student work to new, highly sophisticated levels. You will emphasize that writers make decisions based on their plans for a piece of writing, their assessment of the draft, and everything they know about life and the world. Most of all, you will emphasize the importance of meaning, of significance, in writing.

In an effort to help students write stories that have significance and that are shaped like true stories, not chronicles, you’ll start this unit by teaching some new strategies for generating a personal narrative, as well as reminding students of strategies they already know. For example, you may teach your students that when we want to write a powerful personal narrative, we might write about the first (or last) time we did something or about a time we learned something or about a turning point of some kind.

In Bend II students will choose a seed idea to develop into a full piece of writing. You’ll help students draw on all the narrative crafting techniques they have ever learned, and your emphasis will be on teaching students that craft and revision are always driven by an effort to communicate meaning. Deciding on a good lead, for example, requires the writer to think, “What is my story really about?” As part of this teaching, you will help students learn that the same story can be told differently, depending on the theme the writer wants to bring out. By the end of Bend II students will have written two entire drafts (and been reminded that it usually helps to draft quickly, letting velocity create cohesion and bring voice to the piece) and will have revised their best draft extensively.

In Bend III students will begin anew with a second personal narrative. This time, you’ll help them progress with more independence. You’ll also encourage them to learn from a close reading of a mentor text, the narrative section of Sandra Cisneros’s “Eleven.” Students will develop their skills at analyzing and annotating mentor texts and emulating the craft moves of a published author. As children do so, you will remind them of the importance of dramatizing a scene in order to capture the unfolding experience on the page. You’ll help writers relive the experience so as to recapture its truth. Children will have much to draw on from their first round of writing and will continue to evaluate their work and set goals for moving forward.

Welcome to Unit 1

BEND I  Generating Personal Narratives

1. Starting with Turning Points
   In this session, you’ll teach students that to come up with ideas for personal narratives, it can help to think of turning point moments.

2. Determining the Dream of the Story
   In this session, you’ll teach students that narrative writers sometimes generate story ideas by thinking of places that matter to them and the episodes that occurred in those places. You’ll then teach students that in order to write effective narratives, writers re-experience the episode before writing it, reliving it so that readers will be able to experience it, too.

3. Letting Other Authors’ Words Awaken Our Own
   In this session you will teach students that writers read great stories in order to write great stories. That is, writers allow another author’s words to spark ideas of their own.

4. Telling the Story from Inside It
   This session builds upon the one before it, again teaching students to experience the moment as they write about it so that readers, too, can experience that moment. In particular, the session teaches writers that to do this, it is important to write from inside the skin of the character—which in a personal narrative is himself, herself, at another time, in another place.

5. Taking Stock and Setting Goals
   In this session, you’ll teach children that writers sometimes pause to take stock, using a rubric to assess their own growth and set new goals.
BEND II  ➤  Moving Through the Writing Process: Rehearsing, Drafting, Revising and Editing

6. Flash Drafting: Putting Our Stories on the Page
   In this session, you’ll remind students that writers draft by writing fast and furious, working to capture the experience on the page.

7. What’s This Story Really About?: Redrafting to Bring Out Meaning
   In this session, you will teach children that the most important question they can ask, as a writer, is “What’s my story really about?” You’ll channel writers to expect to engage in large-scale, whole-new-draft revisions.

8. Bringing Forth the Story Arc
   In this session you will teach students that one powerful way to revise their narratives is to bring out the story structure.

9. Elaborating on Important Parts
   In this session, you’ll teach students that after writers have determined what their stories are really about, they use writing techniques to elaborate on the parts that show that meaning.

10. Adding Scenes from the Past and Future
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers use scenes from the past or future to bring out the internal story and add power to their narratives.

11. Ending Stories
    In this session, you will teach children a final revision strategy: that writers don’t just end stories; they resolve problems, learn lessons, and make changes to end them in a way that ties back to the big meaning of their story.

12. Putting the Final Touches on Our Writing
    In this session, you could teach students that writers draw on all they know about editing, including using checklists and charts, to put the final touches on their writing.

BEND III  ➤  Writing a Second Piece

13. Reading with a Writer’s Eye
    In this session, you’ll teach students that one way writers make writing powerful is by emulating narrative writing they admire.

14. Taking Writing to the Workbench
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers don’t just use their writer’s notebooks to gather entries; they also use their writer’s notebooks as a place to try new things and to work hard at the writing goals they’ve set for themselves.

15. Stretching Out the Tension
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers think carefully about how to structure their stories. One way they think about structure is to stretch out the problem, telling it bit by bit.

16. Catching the Action or Image that Produced an Emotion
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers think about which actions or images happened before they felt or thought something, and then the write those exact actions or images on the page, to evoke the same emotions or thoughts in readers.

17. Every Character Plays a Role
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers make sure every character has a role that connects to—and furthers—the larger meaning of their story.

BEND IV  ➤  Revising and Editing for Publication

18. Editing: The Power of Commas
    In this session, you will teach students that writers learn about punctuation—commas in particular—from writing they admire, to make their writing more exact.

19. Mechanics
    In this session, you could assess your students’ writing and create a minilesson on mechanics tailored to their needs, using mentor texts as your guide.

20. Reading Aloud Our Writing
    In this session, students will have an opportunity to share their writing with an audience, as writers strive to do. Children will hear their pieces aloud, adding a chorus to give the occasion appropriate ceremony.

21. Transferring Learning: Applying Narrative Writing Skills across the Curriculum
    In this session, you could teach students that writers take and apply everything they have learned in one genre to other writing tasks and other genres.
In the first part, or bend, of this unit you’ll ask your students to write a full draft of a research report very quickly, organizing information in subsections and using all they have already learned about informational writing. These are often called “flash drafts” because they are written so quickly. Next you will lead students through a series of lessons on how to revise their flash draft by looking at it through various lenses. Writers might look for patterns, questions, and surprises, or consider the way historians think about geography or timelines, or hypothesize. After several lessons that teach students to reconsider and revise their flash-draft thinking and writing, students write a new and improved draft of their research report. Their aim in this second draft is to use the revision approaches you’ve taught. It can be quite exciting to see how much students have progressed in a relatively short time. You’ll see, for instance, that this second draft is much more elaborated than the first. The celebration of these revised reports marks the end of the first bend.

In the second bend you will teach your students to turn their attention to writing more focused research reports. This means that instead of writing about all of westward expansion as they did in the first bend of the unit, they will write about a more focused topic, such as the Pony Express or the Oregon Trail or the Erie Canal. In addition, you will teach students to focus their attention on writing these reports well. That is, you will teach your students to write reports with an attention to the qualities of good information writing, qualities aimed at delivering information and engaging readers. Bend II focuses on learning from other informational texts and then teaching others this information in engaging ways. Students will learn to use primary sources in their informational writing. By setting students up to write a second draft, you give them opportunities to transfer and apply what they have learned in Bend I about developing and revising their reports.

Welcome to Unit 2

BEND I  •  Writing Flash-Drafts about Westward Expansion

1. Organizing for the Journey Ahead
   In this session, you’ll teach students that research writers organize the information that they know about their topic, which helps them to write about their topic.

2. Writing Flash-Drafts
   In this session, you’ll remind students that before writers write, they recall all they know about the kind of writing they are about to do.

3. Note-Taking and Idea-Making for Revision
   In this session, you’ll teach students that researchers shift between reading to collect and record information, and writing to grow ideas. When reflecting, researchers think, talk, and jot about patterns, surprises, and points of comparison or contrast, and they entertain questions.

4. Writers of History Pay Attention to Geography
   In this session, you’ll teach students that as historians write and revise, they keep in mind the qualities of good writing as well as the qualities of good history. One of the qualities of good history is taking into account the impact that geography has on the ways events unfold.

5. Writing to Think
   In this session, you’ll teach students that when writers are researching, they think about the information they are learning and come up with new ideas. One of the ways writers do this is by asking questions and then figuring out answers to those questions.
6. Writers of History Draw on an Awareness of Timelines
   In this session, you’ll teach students that as historians write and revise, they need to keep in mind the qualities of good writing as well as the qualities of good history. One of the qualities of good history to keep in mind is the relationship between events in history.

7. Assembling and Thinking about Information
   In this session, you could teach students that researchers take stock of all the information they have collected so far and make a plan to do quick research to fill in any gaps.

8. Redrafting Our Research Reports
   In this session, you’ll teach students that informational writers look back over their research and use this to come up with an image of what they hope to write. They can do this by sketching an outline and then writing fast off of their outline.

9. Celebrating and Reaching Toward New Goals
   In this session, you could teach students that writers celebrate the accomplishments they’ve made so far as historians and researchers and then set new goals for future work.

Bend II  Writing Research Well

10. Drawing Inspiration from Mentor Texts
    In this session, you’ll teach students that to write research reports that are compelling to readers, writers need to write in a way that draws readers in. Once writers have figured out how to do this, they can angle their research appropriately.

11. Primary Source Documents
    In this session, you’ll teach students that it is very important for research writers to study primary sources. However, it takes careful close reading to be able to make sense of the primary source document.

12. Organizing Information for Drafting
    In this session, you could teach students that writers organize their research by categorizing facts and analysis they’ve collected, so they’re prepared to use their organized information to flash-draft a report.

13. Finding a Structure to Let Writing Grow Into
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers think and rethink the structure of their writing to make it the best it can be. They can study the work of mentor authors for possibilities.

14. Finding Multiple Points of View
    In this session, you’ll teach students that every single story, every fact, has multiple points of view from which it can be seen, and that writers ask themselves “What are some other ways to see this?”

15. Creating Cohesion
    In this session, you’ll teach students that to make writing accessible and easier for readers to take in, writers rely on patterning in words, structures, and meanings.

16. Using Text Features to Write Well
    In this session, you’ll teach students that informational writers include text features to support a reader’s navigation through the text.

17. Crafting Introductions and Conclusions
    In this session, you’ll teach students that research writers craft introductions that both explain the structure of their writing and lure writers in. You’ll also offer students a few ways writers craft conclusions.

18. Mentor Texts Help Writers Revise
    In this session, you could remind students that writers study mentor texts for strategies and techniques they can try in their own writing, and teach them that writers also study mentor texts for revision ideas.

19. Adding Information Inside Sentences
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers use punctuation to pack facts and information into the sentences that they have already written.

20. Celebration Letter
    In this session, you could teach students that information writers share their writing with an audience and they teach their audience all they have learned about their topics.
Welcome to Unit 3

BEND I  Generating Ideas about Our Lives and Finding Depth in the Moments We Choose

1. What Makes a Memoir?
   In this session, you’ll invite students to take part in an inquiry about memoir: “What makes a memoir?” and “What are some ways memoirs are structured?”

2. Interpreting the Comings and Goings of Your Life
   In this session, you’ll teach students that writers usually have issues or themes that surface in their writing again and again. You’ll invite children to uncover these by rereading their notebooks, looking for connections, and asking, “What’s this really about?”

3. Writing Small about Big Topics
   In this session, you’ll teach students that writers often shift between abstract ideas and concrete specifics, between themes and stories, between big meanings and small moments.

4. Reading Literature to Inspire Writing
   In this session, you’ll teach students another strategy writers use to write with depth: letting literature influence their own writing.

5. Choosing a Seed Idea
   In this session, you’ll remind students of the ways they have chosen seed ideas or the material that will become seed ideas during previous cycles through the writing process. You’ll help students draw on and improve off from these strategies to devise a process that works for them.

6. Expecting Depth from Our Writing: Developing Our Seed Ideas
   In this session, you’ll teach students that writers of memoir dive deep into their topics by studying how other authors write with depth.

In the first bend of this unit you will teach children to use their notebook to collect both focused entries and idea-based writing. That is, they will learn that writers write both “big” and “small,” writing about broad ideas or theories and then zooming in to write about one time when that idea was true. Students could be familiar with this sort of work from the fourth-grade unit, and we recommend pulling out charts and mentor texts from that unit to support this one. After a bit of collecting, children will be ready to select one of these entries as a seed idea to be cultivated into a fully grown memoir.

Bend II begins with a study of memoir structures, exposing children to the variety of forms a memoir can take: narrative with reflection, essaylike structure, listlike structure, and more. Then you will prompt students to choose the form that best suits the idea they wish to put forth. After a day of rehearsal and flash-drafting, students will spend time revising their first drafts. This revision will focus on ways to strengthen both the expository and the narrative portions of their writing. Opportunities to reflect, assess, and set goals using writing checklists will help students write in more interpretive and purposeful ways.

In Bend III children will briefly return to their notebook to collect ideas, then quickly choose a new seed idea for a second memoir. Some children will choose an entirely different topic, while others will try the same topic (a brother leaving for middle school, say), this time using a different structure. The important thing is that students to transfer all they have learned from working on their first piece of writing to this second piece. Be sure they revise this text in very significant ways, embarking on more ambitious, large-scale revisions.
BEND II  ✦ Structuring, Drafting, and Revising a Memoir

7. Studying Texts and Planning Structures
   In this session, you’ll teach students that writers study published texts to get ideas for ways to structure their own texts. You’ll demonstrate how to study the structure of a text in order to help students learn to do this. Students, meanwhile, will rehearse for the rough draft writing they will do tomorrow.

8. The Inspiration to Drafting
   In this session, you’ll teach students some ways that writers inspire themselves to write better than ever as a way to support drafting.

9. Being Your Own Teacher: Coaching Your Own Drafting and Revision
   In this session, you could teach students that writers confer with themselves as they revise. You’ll teach students a few questions to ask to assess themselves, plan their goals, and choose their paths to those goals.

10. Revising the Internal Story in Your Narratives
    In this session, you’ll teach students to remember that if their memoir contains narratives, those stories need to carry meanings. One monolithic feeling can be combed throughout, but it works best if there is a journey of conflict and resolution that carries this meaning.

11. Editing for Voice in Developed Notebook Entries
    In this session, you’ll remind students that editing is something writers do as they write, drawing on all they’ve learned in previous units and writing in a way that allows their voice to come through.

BEND III  ✦ Transferring and Extending Knowledge: Planning a Second Memoir

12. Seeing Again, with New Lenses: Interpreting Your Own Story
    In this session, students learn to study themselves as they would characters in a book, uncovering ideas and theories that can lead to new memoir ideas.

13. Flash-Drafting
    In this session, you could teach students that writers often draft their second memoirs in one sitting, conjuring an image of how the piece will be structured and then writing quickly to capture their ideas.

14. Revising the Expository Sections of Your Memoir
    In this session, you’ll teach students that when writers write about ideas, just as when they write about events, it is important to find or create a structure that allows them to say what they want to say.

15. Reconsidering the Finer Points
    In this session, you’ll teach students that the best details are the truest.

16. Rereading Your Draft and Drawing on All You Know to Revise
    In this session, you’ll teach students ways that writers reread their writing intently, to learn from it how they need to revise.

17. Metaphors Can Convey Big Ideas
    In this session, you’ll teach students that writers take a tiny detail from their lives—often something that could be very ordinary—and let that one detail represent the whole big message of their writing.

18. Editing to Match Sound to Meaning
    In this session, you’ll teach students to listen to their writing carefully, then to choose words, structures, and punctuation that help them to convey the content, mood, tone, and feelings of the piece.

19. An Author’s Final Celebration: Placing Our Writing in the Company of Others
    In this session, students will read aloud their memoir to their friends and family.
The Research-Based Argument Essay

Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Annie Taranto

At the start of the unit students investigate and write an argument essay about whether or not chocolate milk should be served in schools. As students explore this issue, they read texts, both digital and print (included on the CD-ROM). You will teach them that in order to develop a solid argument, they need to research both sides of an issue, postponing a conclusion until the evidence is accumulated and reviewed. Once students have studied texts that advance different perspectives on the issue, you will teach them to consider the warrant behind the arguments in those texts, reading critically. Students then begin to plan and write their own arguments and draft a letter to the principal on this topic. As part of this work, coach students to make decisions about which information to quote, which information to paraphrase, and ways to present the context for the evidence they ultimately decide to include in their letter.

The second bend begins with a response from the principal in which she invites students to craft a position paper, or argument essay, to be presented to panels of administrators, parents, and cafeteria workers. Their charge set, students return to research, thinking about possible note-taking systems they might employ and selecting the one that works best for them. They also look at the research with a more critical eye. They are more knowledgeable about the topic, more adept at noticing the author’s perspective.

As students move toward drafting, they will evaluate the data they have gathered, deciding which evidence they will use to bolster their claims. They’ll look for flaws in their logic and revise their work to make their arguments more sound. Students will also entertain counterclaims, stating and debunking the other side’s arguments, and will attend carefully to the perspectives of their audience.

For the final bend of the unit writers draw on all they know about writing to take a stand in the world. They write another argument essay, this time about a topic of their choosing, in order to contribute to a public conversation. Students think about what they want to change in the world or what they want people to think differently about and embark on their research, uncovering new texts and perhaps conducting interviews or surveys of their own. With their deadline in mind, students outline the work they need to do and how they intend to get it done. They apply all they have learned about writing an argument essay. They also carry their knowledge of narrative writing into argument, using anecdotes to make their points where necessary. They learn to portray the data accurately to make an effective case.

Welcome to Unit 4

BEND I  ♦  Building Arguments

1. Investigating to Understand an Argument
   In this session, you will teach students that when argument writers begin to research a topic, they investigate and collect information about both sides of the issue.

2. Flash-Drafting Arguments
   In this session, you will remind children that writers often use what they know about structuring an essay to help them quickly write a full, rough draft of their argument.

3. Incorporating Evidence Into Arguments
   In this session, you will teach students that argument writers conduct research in order to provide evidence that supports their claim.

4. Inquiry Into Using Quotations to Bolster an Argument
   In this session, you will teach students that argument writers add relevant to make their arguments more potent, and you will set them up to conduct an inquiry into what makes a quote powerful.

5. Adding More Evidence to Arguments
   In this session, you could teach students that writers draft and draft again, setting them up to write a new draft which incorporates additional evidence and thinking.

6. Balancing Evidence with Analysis
   In this session, you’ll teach students that writers analyze their evidence and explain their thinking, so that their own voice is powerful throughout their writing.

7. Signed, Sealed, Delivered
   In this session, you could teach students that writers carefully consider a variety of formats and choose which most effectively convey their message.
BEND II ✦ Building Powerful Positions

8. Taking Arguments Up a Notch
   In this session, you’ll teach students that when starting a research project, writers think about how to capture the information they need, setting up systems to collect their knowledge and research, thus setting themselves up to write a lot.

9. Taking a Critical Perspective to Writing
   In this session, you will teach students that writers bring all that they know about reading critically into writing critically.

10. Rehearsing the Whole, Refining a Part
    In this session, you will teach students that writers often plan for and rehearse the entirety of a draft and then choose a tricky place to focus on as they work.

11. Rebuttals, Responses, and Counterclaims
    In this session, you will teach students that argument writers strengthen their claims by including evidence supporting the opposing viewpoint and then offering a rebuttal.

12. Evaluating Evidence
    In this session, you will teach students that argument writers evaluate evidence to ensure that their own arguments are solid.

13. Appealing to the Audience
    In this session, you will teach students that writers think carefully about their audience and then tailor their arguments to particularly appeal to that audience, conducting an inquiry into how this might be done.

    In this session, you could guide students to present their arguments in panels, noting that argument writers aim to share their arguments in real life situations in order to sway audience opinion and enact positive change.

15. Argument across the Curriculum
    In this session, you could teach students that writers use argument skills in a variety of ways, in a variety of contexts.

BEND III ✦ Writing for Real-Life Purposes and Audiences

16. Taking Opportunities to Stand and Be Counted
    In this session, you will teach children that argument writers stand up for what they believe in, drawing on all they have learned in order to build a strong case.

17. Everyday Research
    In this session, you’ll teach children that argument writers find some of the most persuasive evidence in everyday life.

18. Taking Stock and Setting Writing Tasks
    In this session, you could teach students that writers stop, take stock of their progress, and use a variety of tools to help them set goals and move forward.

19. Using All You Know From Other Types of Writing to Make Your Argument More Powerful
    In this session, you could teach students that argument writers strengthen their arguments when they use all that they have learned about other types of writing.

20. Evaluating the Validity of One’s Argument
    In this session, you will teach students that argument writers strengthen their claims by making sure their evidence doesn’t depend on flawed reasoning.

21. Paragraphing Choices
    In this session, you’ll remind students of editing strategies they know, as well as teach them strategies writers use to make decisions about nonfiction paragraphs.

22. Celebration: Taking Positions, Developing Stances
    In this session, you could teach students that argument writers share and discuss their writing, and make plans for how and where it will live in the world.

For additional information and sample sessions, visit www.UnitsofStudy.com