



Simplify  
Writing®

# Informational Writing

## Sample Lesson Plans

6<sup>th</sup> Grade

# Simplify Writing

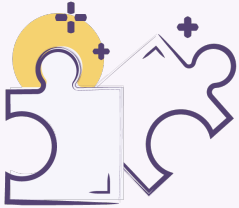
Thank you for downloading this sample. This is meant to give you an example of how our lesson plans are formatted, in order to make sure that this program is a good fit for your classroom.

Please keep in mind that:

- The complete lesson plans members get are fully editable, available in a PowerPoint format.
- Each unit includes:
  - pacing guide
  - mentor text
  - reference texts (if applicable)
  - teacher lesson plans
  - student pages (available in print + digital formats)
  - conference goals
  - rubrics (teacher + student-friendly)
  - exemplars
- Our members also have access to our full Grammar Library, Intervention Library, and ELL Modification Library.
- We provide training to our teachers on how to use these lessons, so anything you don't understand about the process will be easy to understand after our full, self-paced 8-hour writing training, *Success with Simplify Writing*®.

Have questions? We'd love to answer them! Just send an email to [April@simplifywriting.com](mailto:April@simplifywriting.com).

# The Simplify Writing<sup>®</sup> Method



**Bite-Sized Instruction.** Students learn best when the writing standards are broken down into short, clear lessons that they can then apply in their own writing. Each of our lessons takes about 10-15 minutes and keeps students engaged and active in the learning experience.



**Fluid Grammar.** Grammar instruction should naturally flow into student writing. We show teachers how to use our library of grammar tools to better develop the written language skills of their students.



**Differentiation.** We know firsthand that each classroom is made up of a diverse group of students. Our resources provide the flexibility teachers need to reach students with varying experiences, background knowledge, and ability levels.



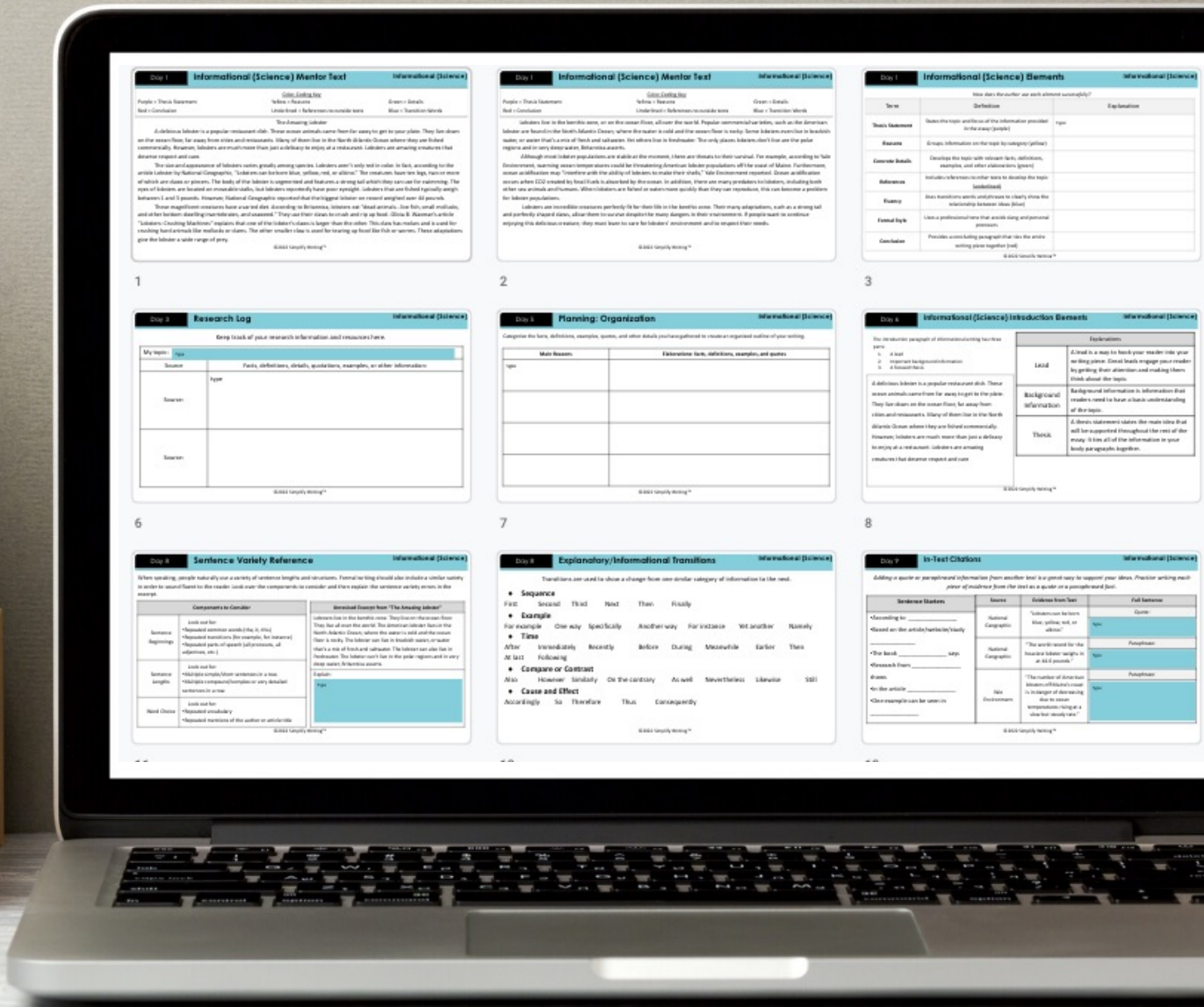
**Support.** Teachers are more successful when they receive adequate training on a new curriculum. We walk teachers through using the Simplify Writing<sup>®</sup> materials in every step of their writing instruction, and we provide ongoing email support to address any questions or issues they have in their writing block.

# Digital Student Organizers

# Google Slides™ Files

Share in units or easily split into daily files!

Files can be exported for Microsoft OneDrive, SeeSaw, Nearpod, and more!



# Pacing Guide

Day 1	Elements of Informational Writing
Day 2	Planning: Brainstorming
Day 3	Research Day One <i>Focus on Credible Sources</i>
Day 4	Research Day Two
Day 5	Planning: Organization
Day 6	Draft: Introduction
Day 7	Draft: Body Paragraphs <i>Focus on Organization &amp; Formal Style</i>
Day 8	Draft: Body Paragraphs <i>Focus on Sentence Variety</i>
Day 9	Draft: Body Paragraphs <i>Focus on Citing Sources</i>
Day 10	Draft: Conclusion
Day 11	Formal Revision and Editing
Day 12	Publishing Planning and Final Proofread
Day 13	Publishing Day One <i>Focus on Multimedia Presentation</i>
Day 14	Publishing Day Two
Day 15	Presentations

# Informational Reference Text

Oceanography Online  
www.oceanographyonline.com

April 2020

The World's Oceans  
By Kyle Thompson

Have you ever been to the beach? If so, then you've seen how the ocean goes on and on into the horizon. The world's oceans are more than a pretty place to visit. They are also a very important part of our planet. In addition, the oceans are also home to many animals.

## Ocean Names

The world's oceans are all one big ocean that covers over 70% of our planet. However, we give different areas of the ocean different names so that it's easy to talk about certain regions of the ocean. For example, between North America and Europe and South America and Africa lies the Atlantic Ocean. The Pacific Ocean is the ocean between Asia and North America. Close to Antarctica is the Southern Ocean, and around the North Pole region is the Arctic Ocean. Other parts of the ocean also have special names, such as the Gulf of Mexico, which is in the curved area along the Southern United States and Mexico.

## Benthic and Pelagic Zones

The oceans are divided into two main zones: the benthic zone and the pelagic zone. The area on the ocean floor is known as the benthic zone, and the water where fish can swim freely is the pelagic zone. Animals that live on the ocean floor, such as crabs and lobsters, are known as benthos. Animals that swim and live in the open ocean, such as fish or whales, are called nekton. Animals that drift with the ocean currents are called plankton.

## Parts of the Ocean

It is also important to note that the areas close to continents feature a continental shelf. Here, the sand slopes down gradually until it eventually drops off. On some areas of the beach, the water only reaches during high tide. This is known as the tidal zone. Some animals that live in the tidal zone include crabs, lobsters, starfish, mussels, barnacles, snails, and more. The area outside of the coastal tidal zone is considered the open ocean.

## The Three Ocean Layers

As you go down into the open ocean, there are three main layers: the euphotic zone, the disphotic zone, and the aphotic zone. The top layer, where sunlight can reach well, is called the euphotic zone or surface zone. Thanks to the sunlight and generally warmer temperatures, many plants and animals live here. In fact, it is the only zone of the ocean where plants such as phytoplankton and seagrasses can grow. In addition, many algae grow in this layer. Animals that live in this layer include most ocean fish, sharks, sea turtles, stingrays, coral, jellyfish, and more.

# Informational Reference Text

The disphotic zone is also known as the twilight zone. Here, little sunlight reaches. Typically, this zone begins at about 200 meters below the surface and ends at 1,000 meters below the surface. Here, the ocean waters are typically colder, have higher pressure, and are much darker than in the surface zone. Some animals that live in this zone include octopuses, squid, hatchet fish, viper fish, lobsters, sperm whales, and sea cucumbers.

The aphotic zone is the water greater than 1,000 meters deep. No sunlight can reach this far down into the water, giving this layer the nickname of “the midnight zone.” This zone is cold and very dark. Many animals in this layer have bioluminescence. Some examples of animals that live in this layer include anglerfish, some squid, cuttlefish, some jellyfish, and crustaceans.

## Threats to Ocean Life

Unfortunately, there are many threats to the ocean and the creatures that live there. Humans are responsible for many of these threats that harm ocean life. Some examples are plastic pollution, fertilizers, and climate change.

The ocean is full of plastic waste including tiny pieces of plastic called micro plastics. Every year, about 8 million tons of plastics make their way into the ocean. Some of these plastics can take up to 400 years to break down. Many sea animals such as seals and sea turtles eat plastic bags, mistaking them for jelly fish. When an animal swallows plastic, it can clog up their digestive system. Some animals also die because they become caught and strangled by plastic netting and bags.

Fertilizers are another big problem for ocean life. Every year, fertilizers from empty fields erode and wash into rivers, which carry them to the ocean. There, they cause excessive algae growth. The algae grow so much that they use up all of the oxygen in the water. So, animals, such as fish, that swim in the water die. A large area is found each summer in the Gulf of Mexico.

Finally, climate change also damages ocean habitats. In particular, warming ocean waters can damage coral reefs, causing a phenomenon known as coral bleaching. This means that the corals expel the algae living on them. Although reefs can recover, many do not, as the waters may take too long to cool again. Plus, coral bleaching can also make corals more vulnerable to disease.

We can all help the oceans in many ways on a daily basis. For instance, you can avoid using plastics or reuse and recycle the plastics you do use. In addition, you can choose to buy organic produce. You can also write to lawmakers to urge them to make laws that encourage farmers to plant cover crops, which help stop fertilizers from reaching the ocean. Finally, we can encourage lawmakers to fund green energy products to reduce the use of fossil fuels for energy purposes. Together, we can all save the oceans.

# Informational Mentor Text

## The Amazing Lobster

A delicious lobster is a popular restaurant dish. These ocean animals came from far away to get to the plate. They live down on the ocean floor, far away from cities and restaurants. Many of them live in the North Atlantic Ocean where they are fished commercially. However, lobsters are much more than just a delicacy to enjoy at a restaurant. Lobsters are amazing creatures that deserve respect and care.

The size and appearance of lobsters varies greatly among species. Lobsters aren't only red in color. In fact, according to the article *Lobster* by National Geographic, "lobsters can be born blue, yellow, red, or albino." The creatures have ten legs, two of which are claws or pincers. The body of the lobster is segmented and features a strong tail which they can use for swimming. The eyes of lobsters are located on movable stalks, but lobsters reportedly have poor eyesight. Lobsters that are fished typically weigh between 1 and 3 pounds. However, National Geographic reported that the biggest lobster on record weighed over 44 pounds.

These magnificent creatures have a varied diet. According to Britannica, lobsters eat "dead animals...live fish, small mollusks, and other bottom-dwelling invertebrates, and seaweed." They use their claws to crush and rip up food. Olivia B. Waxman's article "Lobsters: Crushing Machines" explains that one of the lobster's claws is larger than the other. This claw has molars and is used for crushing hard animals like mollusks or clams. The other smaller claw is used for tearing up food like fish or worms. These adaptations give the lobster a wide range of prey.

Lobsters live in the benthic zone, or on the ocean floor, all over the world. Popular commercial varieties, such as the American lobster are found in the North Atlantic Ocean, where the water is cold and the ocean floor is rocky. Some lobsters even live in brackish water, or water that's a mix of fresh and saltwater. Yet others live in freshwater. The only places lobsters don't live are the polar regions and in very deep water, Britannica asserts.



# Informational Mentor Text

Although most lobster populations are stable at the moment, there are threats to their survival. For example, according to Yale Environment, warming ocean temperatures could be threatening American lobster populations off the coast of Maine. Furthermore, ocean acidification may “interfere with the ability of lobsters to make their shells,” Yale Environment reported. Ocean acidification occurs when CO<sub>2</sub> created by fossil fuels is absorbed by the ocean. In addition, there are many predators to lobsters, including both other sea animals and humans. When lobsters are fished or eaten more quickly than they can reproduce, this can become a problem for lobster populations.

Lobsters are incredible creatures perfectly fit for their life in the ocean zone. Their many adaptations, such as a strong tail and perfectly shaped claws, allow them to survive despite the many dangers in their environment. If people want to be enjoying this delicious creature, they must learn to care for lobster environment and to respect their needs.

## Bibliography

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“Lobster”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1999, <https://www.britannica.com/animal/lobster>. Accessed 30 August 2020.

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Waxman, Olivia. “Lobsters: Crushing Machines”. *Time*, 2015, <https://time.com/3184569/11-lobster-facts-that-will-leave-you-shell-shocked>. Accessed 30 August 2020.

# Informational Writing

**Purpose:** I can identify and explain the elements of informational writing.

**Standard(s):**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**Materials**

*Print*

- Teacher models (pgs. 13-14, 17)
- Student pages (pgs. 15-16, 18)

*Digital*

- Student Pages

**Learning Goal**

The student will be able to identify the elements of informational writing and explain how an author uses them.

**Success Criteria**

- **Criteria 1-** The student is able to locate one or more examples of each element of informational text in the mentor text.
- **Criteria 2-** The student is able to explain how the author uses each element of informational text in an example.

**Mini-Lesson Steps (15 min.):**

1. Activate prior knowledge by asking students what they already know about the elements of informational writing. Remind them of the previous explanatory unit and help them make the connection between explanatory and informational by pointing out similarities.
2. Provide students with a copy of the mentor text “The Amazing Lobster” (pgs. 15-16). Read the text out loud to students, stopping to discuss as needed.
3. Display and distribute the “Elements of Informational” chart (pg. 18). Review the definition of a thesis. Ask for volunteers to identify the thesis in the mentor text. Using page 13-14 as a guide, model using the color-coding system to highlight the thesis. Write a brief explanation of how the author illustrated the element in the chart using pg. 17 as a guide.
4. Invite students to continue using the color-coding system to highlight the text and fill in the rest of the chart. Release students to work in partners.

**Student Portion (15-30 min.):**

1. Allow students to continue working through the mentor text, using the color-coding checklist system to identify examples of how the author successfully uses informational elements and justifying them on the chart provided.
2. Provide individual conferencing to students as needed to check for understanding or provide support for students who are struggling.

**Closure (5-7 min.):**

1. As a whole group, ask for volunteers to share their answers. Provide feedback so students can check the accuracy of their work, using pg. 17 as a guide.

## Mini-Lesson Overview

### How it sounds:

- “Today, we are going to learn about the elements of informational writing. What do you already know about the elements of informational writing? Here’s a hint: they are very similar to the elements of explanatory writing.” *[Give students 1-minute to share with a partner or ask for volunteers.]* “Informational writing is nonfiction text that is written with the purpose of informing the reader about a specific topic.”
- “Let’s look at an example of an informational text titled ‘The Amazing Lobster.’” *[Display and distribute the mentor text pages 15-16. Read aloud as a class, stopping to discuss as needed.]*
- “Now that we have looked at an example text, let’s use a checklist so that we can identify the elements of an informational text and make sure we understand what each element means. You will use and refer back to this checklist when you are writing your own informational essay.” *[Display and distribute “Elements of Informational” page 18.]*
- “Let’s use the color purple to identify the first element. As we were reading, did you notice that the author summarized the topic in one sentence, called this statement? Can you find this sentence in the introduction?” *[Model how to highlight this sentence purple, using pages 13-14 as a guide.]* “Now, let’s use the chart to explain or justify how the author accomplished this informational element.” *[Use the first section of the chart as a class with student input, using page 17 as a guide.]*
- “Now, it is your turn. I want you to use the color-coding system to identify examples of the ways the author successfully illustrates each informational element and explain each element in the chart.” *[Release students to work in partners.]*

Note: Remind students throughout the unit that they should refer back to this checklist when writing their drafts.

Check and highlight any **modifications** you will make for this particular lesson:

Strategies for Gifted & Talented Learners	Strategies for Students with Disabilities or ELL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunity for further research on a related topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for the production of a multimedia or visual presentation to accompany the writing piece</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of advanced supplementary/reading materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for flexible grouping or collaborative writing opportunities based on ability or interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Teach/Re-Teach concepts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide additional examples</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide additional work time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for differentiated product</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chunk Tasks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for Student Dictation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Language Scaffolds (i.e.: sentence frames)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mentor</li> </ul>

# Informational Mentor Text

Teacher Model

## The Amazing Lobster

A delicious lobster is a popular restaurant dish. These ocean animals came from far away to get to your plate. They live down on the ocean floor, far away from cities and restaurants. Many of them live in the North Atlantic Ocean where they are fished commercially. **However**, lobsters are much more than just a delicacy to enjoy at a restaurant. **Lobsters are amazing creatures that deserve respect and care.**

**The size and appearance of lobsters varies greatly among species.** Lobsters aren't only red in color. **In fact**, according to the article written by National Geographic, "Lobsters can be born blue, yellow, red or almost any color." The creatures have ten legs, two or more of which are claws for pinching. The body of the lobster is segmented and features a strong tail which they can use for swimming. The eyes of lobsters are located on the top of their heads, but lobsters reportedly have poor eyesight. Lobsters that are fished typically weigh between 1 and 3 pounds. **However**, National Geographic reported that the biggest lobster on record weighed over 44 pounds.

**These magnificent creatures have a varied diet.** According to Britannica, lobsters eat "dead animals...live fish, small mollusks, and other bottom-dwelling invertebrates and seaweed." They use their claws to crush and rip up food. As via B. Waxman's article "Lobsters: Crushing Machines" explains that one of the lobsters' claws is larger than the other. This claw has molars and is used for crushing hard animals like mollusks or clams. The other smaller claw is used for tearing up food like fish or worms. These adaptations give the lobster a wide range of prey.

### Color-Coding Key

**Purple** = Thesis Statement

**Yellow** = Reasons

**Green** = Details

**Red** = Conclusion

Underlined = References to outside texts

**Blue** = Transition Words

# Informational Mentor Text

Teacher Model

Lobsters live in the benthic zone, or on the ocean floor, all over the world. Popular commercial varieties, such as the American lobster are found in the North Atlantic Ocean, where the water is cold and the ocean floor is rocky. Some lobsters even live in brackish water, or water that's a mix of fresh and saltwater. Yet others live in freshwater. The only places lobsters don't live are the polar regions and in very deep water, Britannica asserts.

Although most lobster populations are stable at the moment, there are threats to their survival. For example, according to Yale Environment, warming ocean temperatures could be threatening American lobster populations off the coast of Maine. Furthermore, ocean acidification may interfere with the ability of lobsters to make their shells," Yale Environment reported. Ocean acidification occurs when CO2 created by fossil fuels is absorbed by the ocean. In addition, there are many predators to lobsters, including both other sea animals and humans. When lobsters are fished for, they can't reproduce as quickly as they can reproduce, this can become a problem for lobster populations.

Lobsters are incredible creatures perfectly fit for their life in the benthic zone. Their many adaptations, such as a strong tail and perfectly shaped claws, allow them to survive despite the many dangers in their environment. If people want to continue enjoying this delicious creature, they must learn to care for lobsters' environment and to respect their needs.

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The size and appearance of lobsters varies greatly among species. Lobsters aren't only red in color. In fact, according to the article written by National Geographic, "Lobsters can be born blue, yellow, red or purple." The creatures have ten legs, two or more of which are claws or pincers. The body of the lobster is segmented and features a strong tail which they can use for swimming. The eyes of lobsters are located on movable stalks, but lobsters reportedly have poor eyesight. Lobsters that are fished typically weigh between 1 and 3 pounds. However, National Geographic reported that the biggest lobster on record weighed over 44 pounds.

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# Elements of Informational Writing

## Teacher Model

Term	Definition	Explanation
<b>Thesis Statement</b>	States the topic and focus of the information provided in the essay (purple)	The author is giving information about lobsters. The thesis states, "Lobsters are amazing creatures that deserve respect and care."
<b>Reasons</b>	Groups information on the topic by category (yellow)	There are four main categories of information: appearance, diet, habitat, and threats to survival.
<b>Concrete Details</b>	Develops the topic with relevant facts, definitions, examples, and other elaborations (green)	The author uses facts and definitions to elaborate on each category, such as "Ocean acidification occurs when CO2 created by fossil fuels is absorbed by the ocean."
<b>References</b>	Includes references to other texts to develop the topic (underline)	Research from outside sources like Encyclopedia Britannica and National Geographic help develop the topic.
<b>Fluency</b>	Uses transitional words and phrases to clearly show the relationship between ideas (blue)	The author uses transitional words and phrases like "however", "in addition", and "furthermore" to connect ideas.
<b>Formal Style</b>	Uses a professional tone that avoids slang and personal pronouns	The author uses a professional tone that avoids slang or casual language.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Provides a concluding paragraph that ties the entire writing piece together (red)	The author restates the main idea and reviews some main details about the lobster's appearance, habitat, and the dangers it faces. A "call to action" is used to engage the reader.



# Elements of Informational Writing

Term	Definition	Explanation
<b>Thesis Statement</b>	States the topic and focus of the information provided in the essay (purple)	
<b>Reasons</b>	Groups information on the topic by category (yellow)	
<b>Concrete Details</b>	Develops the topic with relevant facts, definitions, examples, and other elaborations (green)	
<b>References</b>	Includes references to other texts to develop the topic (underline)	
<b>Fluency</b>	Uses transition words and phrases to clearly show the relationship between ideas (blue)	
<b>Formal Style</b>	Uses a professional tone that avoids slang and personal pronouns	
<b>Conclusion</b>	Provides a concluding paragraph that ties the entire writing piece together (red)	

Sample

**Purpose:** I can brainstorm ideas for my own informational writing piece.

**Standard(s):**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**Materials**

*Print*

- Teacher model (pg. 21)
- Student page (pg. 22)

*Digital*

- Student Pages

**Learning Goal**

The student will be able to brainstorm ideas for their own informational writing piece about an ocean animal of their choosing.

**Success Criteria**

- **Criteria 1-** The student is able to brainstorm about their chosen animal by completing the organizer with what they already know, questions, and resources they will use.

**Mini-Lesson Steps (15 min.):**

1. Display the writing prompt: *The ocean is full of interesting and unique creatures. Choose an ocean animal to research. Write an informational essay describing this animal's features, diet, habitat, and threats to its survival.*
2. Explain that students will read a reference text to get an overview of life in the ocean. Display and distribute the "World's Oceans" (pgs. 7-8) to read as a whole group. Individually, students will read the reference text to get an overview of life in the ocean.
3. Model how to choose a topic to think aloud about ocean animals in the reference text. Display the "Planning: Brainstorming" chart (pg. 22). Model how to begin the brainstorming process by thinking aloud as you add ideas to the chart from page 21. Refer back to the prompt, modeling how to ask specific questions that will answer the prompt.
4. Explain that students may pick an ocean animal mentioned in the reference text or a different animal not listed. Release students to work independently to select their topic and brainstorm about it.

*Not necessary to limit the number of students who research each animal. You may choose to keep a master list of each animal each student has chosen.*

**Student Portion (15-30 min.):**

1. Students will work independently to select a topic and brainstorm about it by completing the "Planning: Brainstorming" chart (pg. 22).
2. As students work, circulate and conference as needed. Ensure that there is a wide variety of animals selected by the students, and guide students toward selecting animals for which research material is available.

**Closure (5-7 min.):**

1. With a partner, students will share their topic and all of the ideas that they brainstormed. Peers may provide feedback or offer more research questions to add to the chart.

## Mini-Lesson Overview

### How it sounds:

- “Yesterday, we discussed all the elements we need in an informational essay. Today, we’ll look at an informational prompt and begin brainstorming.” *[Display prompt and review as necessary.]* **“The ocean is full of interesting and unique creatures. Choose on ocean animal to research. Write an informational essay describing this animal’s features, diet, habitat, and threats to its survival.”**
- “We will read a reference text to get an overview of what life in the ocean is like. This will give us some ideas as we choose a topic to begin brainstorming, but we will also add facts that we already know and information from other sources.” *[Display and distribute the reference text “The World’s Oceans” (pages 7-8) and read aloud, or have students read it independently or in partners.]*
- “Now, I need to choose a topic for my essay. I am going to think about what I already know about different ocean animals from reading the reference text. I’m thinking of an animal I might be interested in learning more about. I’ll write about a lobster.” *[Display the “Planning: Brainstorming” chart (pg. 22) and fill in the topic.]*
- “First, I’ll think about some facts I already know about lobsters or information I found in the reference text about them.” *[Model filling in facts in the first column, using pg. 21 as a guide.]*
- “Next, I am going to think of questions I have about lobsters. These are questions that I will research and answer before I start writing. I want to make sure these questions align to what the prompt asked me to write about.” *[Write student input, complete the second column.]*
- “Last, I am going to write a list of resources that I can use to learn more about lobsters. I can use books from the school or public library, credible online sources like National Geographic, and an encyclopedia.” *(When student input, complete the third column.)*
- “Now, it’s your turn. First, you need to select your topic. Your topic should be an ocean animal you like to learn about. Then, you will brainstorm about your topic by completing pg. 22.”

Check and highlight any **modifications** you will make for this particular lesson:

Strategies for Gifted & Talented Learners	Strategies for Students with Disabilities or ELL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunity for further research on a related topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for the production of a multimedia or visual presentation to accompany the writing piece</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of advanced supplementary/reading materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for flexible grouping or collaborative writing opportunities based on ability or interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Teach/Re-Teach concepts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide additional examples</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide additional work time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for differentiated product</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chunk Tasks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for Student Dictation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Language Scaffolds (i.e.: sentence frames)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mentor</li> </ul>

# Planning: Brainstorming

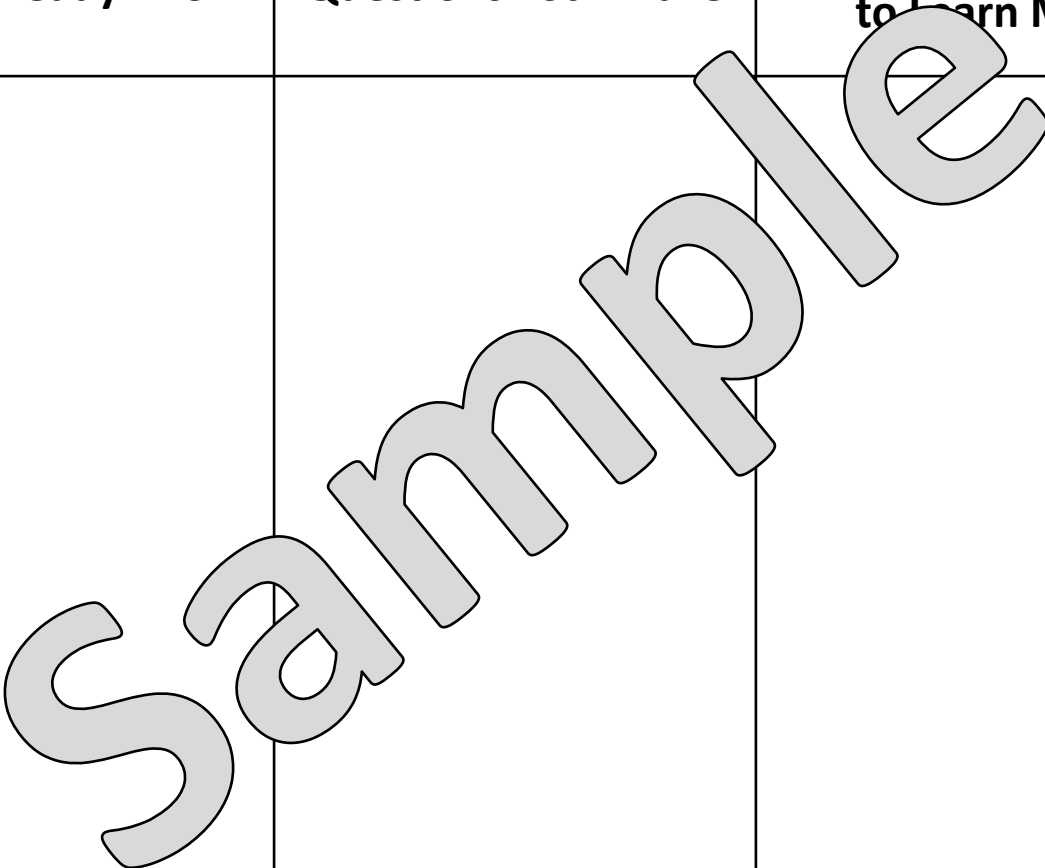
Teacher Model

**Prompt:** The ocean is full of interesting and unique creatures.  
Choose an ocean animal to research. Write an informational essay describing this animal's features, diet, habitat, and threats to its survival.

My Topic: Lobsters		
What I Already Know	Questions I Still Have	Resources I Can Use to Learn More
<p>They are red and have big claws.</p> <p>Lobsters use their claws to crush their prey.</p> <p>People enjoy eating them.</p> <p>Lobsters crawl around the floor of the ocean.</p>	<p>Can lobsters be other colors?</p> <p>What do lobsters eat?</p> <p>What animals eat lobsters?</p> <p>In which parts of the ocean do lobsters live?</p> <p>What are some dangers that lobsters face?</p>	<p>Books from the school &amp; library</p> <p>Credible online resources like encyclopedias and National Geographic</p> <p>Ask an expert at the aquarium</p>

# Planning: Brainstorming

**Prompt: The ocean is full of interesting and unique creatures.  
Choose on ocean animal to research. Write an informational essay  
describing this animal's features, diet, habitat, and threats to its survival.**

My Topic:		
What I Already Know	Questions I Still Have	Resources I Can Use to Learn More
		

**Purpose:** I can develop the topic of my informational essay by quoting or paraphrasing facts from credible sources.

**Standard(s):**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.7:** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.8:** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

**Materials**

*Print*

- Teacher model (pg. 26)
- Student pages (pgs. 25,27)

*Digital*

- Student Pages

**Learning Goal**

The student will use a variety of credible sources to research their topic.

**Success Criteria**

- **Criteria 1-** The student will use at least 3 credible sources to research their animal (including the reference text if applicable).
- **Criteria 2-** The student will accurately quote or paraphrase the outside texts as they record their research.

**Mini-Lesson Steps (15 min.):**

1. Review the prompt and the brainstorming chart from Day 2. These questions will help to guide the research.
2. Explain that there are a variety of resources available. When searching for sources on the internet, there is a mass amount of information, and not all of it is credible, or trustworthy. It is important to know how to assess the credibility of a source.
3. Display and distribute “Credible Sources Reference” (pg. 25) and read through the items together as needed.
4. Display the Research Log (pg. 27) and review the difference between paraphrasing (writing what you’ve found in your own words) and direct quotation (writing exact words from a text). Students will record much of the research as paraphrased facts but should look for 2-3 direct quotes that can be used as well.
5. Using the 27 as a guide, model how to complete the research log using the reference text as a source. Emphasize that notes should be written in bullet points (not complete sentences), unless it is a direct quote. Provide more than one copy of the Research Log to students so they have enough room for up to 4 sources. *Note: Teacher may differentiate the required number of sources depending on student ability.*

**Student Portion (60-90 min.):**

1. For the remainder of day 3 and all of day 4, students will work independently to complete their research log about the animal they chose. They should use a combination of paraphrasing facts and direct quotations.
2. Scaffold as needed to assist students as they use their sources. Circulate and/or conference as needed. Confirm that students are correctly quoting their sources and accurately paraphrasing.

**Closure (5-7 min.):**

1. Students will share their research with a partner, small group, or whole class by using the sentence starter, “The most interesting thing I learned about my animal today was...”

## Mini-Lesson Overview

### How it sounds:

- “Today, we will begin researching the ocean animal you chose for your informational essay. Let’s think about what the prompt asked us to research.” *[Call on students to review the categories from the prompt, as well as the questions from the brainstorming chart from Day 2.]*
- “Remember that this essay is about informing the reader rather than explaining or giving our opinion to the reader, so having interesting and accurate facts is very important.” *[Display and distribute “Credible Sources Reference” (pg. 25).] “There are many different places that people might access factual information, like books, magazines, encyclopedias, news outlets, and more. The problem is, when there are so many sources, it can become hard to tell which ones to trust. So, before we research, let’s talk about how to determine which sources are the most credible, or trustworthy.” [Go over the reference sheet, stopping to clarify or give examples as needed.]*
- “Here is our Research Log.” *[Display page 27.] “The topic goes at the top and the name of each source I use will go on the right side. I want to make sure that each source is credible. As I go through my research, I’ll add facts from each source in the box. I can paraphrase what I read, which means writing the facts in my own words. Most of my facts will be paraphrased. However, I don’t want to be sure I have 2-3 direct quotations to use for my essay, so I’ll be sure to look for those as well. [Review reference between paraphrasing and quoting as necessary.] “I want to avoid plagiarizing the facts I find today, so I’ll be sure to keep track of my sources and use quotations for any facts I copy exactly.”*
- *[Display reference text.] “Paragraph 3 of the reference text says, ‘Animals that live on the ocean floor, such as crabs and lobsters, are known as benthos.’ Instead of writing the whole sentence, I am going to paraphrase it by writing they ‘live on the ocean floor.’ I will write my information as shortened facts, using bullet points. I don’t want to write complete sentences unless I am copying a quote from the research exactly.” [Continue to model pulling facts from the reference text, using pg. 26 as a guide.] “Our reference text is a load, you are not required to use it as one of your sources.”*
- “I also used some other sources like National Geographic, which is a well-known, trusted source. During this research, I found more than one source that I paraphrased and also a direct quotation that I thought was really interesting. I am going to copy the quotation exactly as I saw it on the website with quotation marks around it.” *[Fill in the organizer as shown on page 27.]*
- “Now, it is your turn. You will have the rest of today and all of tomorrow’s lesson to complete your research. If you use the reference text as one of your sources, be sure to record it on the organizer. You should use at least 3 sources in all to find facts about your animal, so you will need more than one copy of the organizer.”

Check and highlight any **modifications** you will make for this particular lesson:

Strategies for Gifted & Talented Learners	Strategies for Students with Disabilities or ELL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunity for further research on a related topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for the production of a multimedia or visual presentation to accompany the writing piece</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of advanced supplementary/reading materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for flexible grouping or collaborative writing opportunities based on ability or interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Teach/Re-Teach concepts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide additional examples</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide additional work time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for differentiated product</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chunk Tasks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for Student Dictation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Language Scaffolds (i.e.: sentence frames)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mentor</li> </ul>

# Credible Sources Reference

Strong writers make sure their sources are credible, or trustworthy. There are certain guidelines to help ensure your information is from high quality sources.

Category	Explanation
<b>URL Extension</b>	Certain websites are more heavily monitored and fact-checked than others. Websites that end in .gov and .edu can typically be relied on for factual information. This does not mean that .com or .org sites cannot be trusted, but they should be looked at further.
<b>Author</b>	Looking into the author of a piece can help determine if a source is credible. If the author has a trustworthy reputation in journalism and has been published with reputable publications, the source is more likely to be credible.
<b>Date</b>	The date a resource was published can show how up-to-date the information is. In certain fields, like technology, information can change very quickly, and an old publication could be inaccurate.
<b>Publisher</b>	Some publications are very well-known and have a long history of reputable publishing. They are generally considered trustworthy, i.e. <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> .



# Research Log

Teacher Model

Keep track of your research information and sources here.

My topic: <a href="#">Lobsters</a>	
Source	Facts, definitions, details, quotations, examples, or other information:
Source: The World's Oceans (Reference Text)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Live on the ocean floor (benthic zone)</li><li>• Live in the tidal zone, near continental shelf</li><li>• Climate change threatens sea habitats</li></ul>
Source: National Geographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Usually weigh 1-3 pounds</li><li>• 44 pounds: biggest lobster on record</li><li>• Segmented body</li><li>• Live in salt and fresh water</li><li>• Predators include humans</li><li>• "Lobsters can be born blue, yellow, red, or albino."</li></ul>

# Research Log

Keep track of your research information and resources here.

My topic:	
Source	Facts, definitions, details, quotations, examples, or other information:
Source:	
Source:	

Sample

**Purpose:** I can plan my informational essay by categorizing my research.

**Standard(s):**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.B:** Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

**Materials**

*Print*

- Teacher model (pg. 30)
- Student page (pg. 31)

*Digital*

- Student Pages

**Learning Goal**

Students will create a plan for their informational essay by sorting their research into categories.

**Success Criteria**

- **Criteria 1-** The student will be able to sort their 3-4 categories and accurately sort their research into each category.

**Mini-Lesson Steps (15 min.):**

1. Review the prompt, brainstorming chart from Day 2, and the research log from Days 3-4. Explain that now that students have all their facts, it is time to arrange them into similar groups by category.
2. Display and distribute “Planning Organization” chart (pg. 31). With student input, model how to sort the categories for each paragraph, using pg. 30 as a guide. For the most part, students will use these same categories as a guide for their essay because they align with the prompt.
3. Using the brainstorming chart from Day 2, record facts from the first column into the appropriate category box. Then use the research log from Days 3-4 to continue sorting facts into their appropriate category box.
4. Model how to record the source in parenthesis for each direct quotation. This will make it easier to cite the sources later in the essay.

**Student Portion (15-30 min.):**

1. Students should use their brainstorming chart from Day 2 and their research log to sort their elaborations into each category by completing the planning outline independently.
2. Conference as needed to assist students with seeing the relationships between all of their elaborations. Ensure students are sorting their elaborations correctly into their categories.

**Closure (5-7 min.):**

1. Students will review each category box to ensure there are enough facts for that category to write a complete paragraph that fully addresses that category. If more research is needed for a category, students should complete this prior to beginning their informational draft.

## Mini-Lesson Overview

### How it sounds:

- “We have gathered a lot of facts about our topic so far. We also brainstormed information we already knew. Let’s review the prompt to remember what it asked us to write about.” *[Read prompt aloud.]*
- *[Display the brainstorming chart from Day 2 and the research log from Day 3.]* “Let’s look at all my notes. Are any of my facts related? Which ones seem to go together?” *[Call on students to share ideas.]* “Several of my notes are related to what lobsters look like. That was also one thing the prompt asked me to write about.”
- *[Display and distribute “Planning: Organization” chart (pg. 31).]* “This chart will help us organize our ideas. I’ll call this category ‘Key Features’ or ‘Appearance’. Now, I’ll list all the elaborations that related to the lobster’s appearance in this box.” *[Model how to pull the facts and rewrite them on the chart, using pg. 30 as a guide.]*
- “Since some of my elaborations are direct quotes, I’m going to write the source they came from in parenthesis. That will help me cite my sources correctly later.”
- “Let’s think of some other categories I can use to group facts.” *[With student input, list the remaining categories on the chart.]* “I will continue to do my research into these categories by listing them as bullet points.”
- “Now, it is your turn to plan your essay. Use your research log and the ‘What I Already Know’ column from our brainstorming lesson to complete your planning outline. Since the prompt asked us for some specific categories of information, most of you will use these same categories as you plan your essay.” *[Please students to complete their planning outline independently by sorting their elaborations into categories. Give students 15-30 minutes to work. When most students are done working, continue.]*
- “I want you to review your chart. Remember, each category will become a paragraph in our essay. You need to ensure that you have enough facts, details, quotes, and other information to write a complete paragraph about that topic. Look over each box to decide if you have enough information about that category. If not, you may need to do some additional research before you begin to write.”

Check and highlight any **modifications** you will make for this particular lesson:

Strategies for Gifted & Talented Learners	Strategies for Students with Disabilities or ELL
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# Planning: Organization

Teacher Model

Categorize the facts, definitions, examples, quotes, and other details you have gathered to create an organized outline of your writing.

Category	Elaborations: facts, definitions, examples, and quotes
<b>Key Features (Appearance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Red in color</li> <li>- “Lobsters can be born blue, yellow, red, or albino.” (National Geographic)</li> <li>- 10 legs</li> <li>- Segmented body/strong tail</li> <li>- Normally 1-3 pounds, biggest lobster on record was 44 pounds (National Geographic)</li> </ul>
<b>Diet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Dead animals...live fish, small mollusks, and other bottom-dwelling invertebrates and seaweed.” (Encyclopedia Britannica)</li> <li>- Use claws to crush food</li> <li>- 2 different sized claws (Olivia B. Waxman)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Larger claw has 12 spines, used for crushing mollusks/clams</li> <li>- smaller claw: used for tearing up worms/fish</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Habitat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ocean floor: benthic zone (The World’s Oceans)</li> <li>- North Atlantic Ocean: cold water</li> <li>- Live in fresh and salt water</li> <li>- Don’t live in polar regions</li> </ul>
<b>Threats to Survival</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Warming ocean temperatures threaten habitat (Yale Environment)</li> <li>- Ocean acidification may “interfere with the ability of lobsters to make their shells.” (Yale Environment)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CO2 from fossil fuels is absorbed by ocean</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Predators: other sea animals and humans</li> </ul>

Sample

# Planning: Organization

Categorize the facts, definitions, examples, quotes, and other details you have gathered to create an organized outline of your writing.

Category	Elaborations: facts, definitions, examples, and quotes

Sample