Big Idea/ Topic

Informational Writing: What is social media, and how does it affect young people?

This ten lesson mini unit challenges students to think critically about social media through reading and composing informational text. Students will demonstrate what they have learned by creating a magazine or ‘zine’ about social media, a topic that they are familiar with. Students with access to technology may use Canva to create their zine and students who are unplugged may use images from magazines, white paper, plastic sheet covers, and a 1 inch. binder to create their zine.

For more information about teaching informational writing, The New York Times offers a video on Teaching Informational Writing as part of their writing webinar series.

NOTE: This learning plan uses specific texts (e.g., written, performed, illustrated) however, these texts are not endorsements. The selection of classroom texts is completely a local decision and subject to local approval processes.

Informational Writing: Spending Time with Mentor Texts

This second lesson continues to establish the foundation for informational writing by reviewing and engaging with a variety of mentor texts. Students can explore various genres, and then as a class, you can help make meaning with all the distinctive features.

NOTE: This learning plan uses specific texts (e.g., written, performed, illustrated) as concrete examples of standards-based learning activities. These texts are not endorsements. The selection of classroom texts is completely a local decision and subject to local approval processes.
## Learning Target

- I can **describe** the purpose of informational texts.
- I can **differentiate** between the characteristics of different informational genres.
- I can **identify** places in my world where I see informational text.
- I can **discuss** my insights about informational texts with peers.

## Lesson “Small Make(s)”

- Features analysis of informational genres

## Unit “Big Make”

Students will independently create their own multi-genre magazine article or ‘zine’ to distribute information about a topic of their choice.

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**Rubric**

**Exemplar**

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*adapted from Cris Tovani’s *Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage our Most Reluctant Readers* (2021)*

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### Standard Alignment

**ELAGSE9-10W2**: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.
c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

**WIDA English Language Development Standards for English learners (ELs):**

Teachers of ELs are encouraged to use the resources in the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, to design language expectations (p.28) specific to the GSE. Examples of the English language needed to support informational writing can be found on pp. 186-187.
Instructional Design

For more information regarding daily routine practices and/or additional information on the unit framework (including materials), please see the Informational Writing Unit Overview.

Various evidence-based practices (EBPs) are identified throughout the lesson below; however, we believe good teaching can be eclectic, “...thoughtfully, intentionally taking some of the best of different teaching methodologies, while always holding onto some research-based, core beliefs, we can help our students flourish in ways that teaching only one way will not” (Roberts, 2018, p. 6). Always feel free to adapt the lesson to meet your professional needs with your specific student population. Ideas for student supports and enrichments can be found in the “Student Learning Supports” section.

This mini unit is written for synchronous distance learning or face-to-face learning that utilizes various technology resources. Everything listed as synchronous can be utilized with little to no change in a face-to-face (f2f) environment. However, guidance is provided for modifications, including ideas for supporting students who are learning asynchronously and those with little or no access to technology (unplugged / offline).

Materials

**Teacher**—virtual whiteboard (shared document), Informational Writing Mentor Text List and Questions, Informational Writing Questions Presentation

**Students**—reader & writer’s notebooks, digital or physical annotation tools, unplugged handout version, mentor text.
**Engage**

Opening: Whole-group discussion about informational text [Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning [Moderate evidence] (Kamil, et al., 2008)].

**Synchronous and Asynchronous**

What genres can be considered informational text? Can you share any examples?

Ask questions to check their prior knowledge about composing informational text. [EBP: Help students build explanations by asking and answering deep questions [Strong evidence] (Pashler et al., 2007). To respond, students may unmute themselves, virtually raise their hands, or type their answers in the chat box or back channel. Record students’ ideas on a virtual whiteboard or shared document. The virtual whiteboard materials listed below can be utilized in asynchronous and synchronous sessions. Affirm their ideas and record them on the shared document. Keep your own commentary to a minimum.

Have students record their ideas on a shared virtual whiteboard (Jamboard or Whiteboard.).

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part I of the Informational Writing: Lesson Two Handout (Unplugged).
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

**Explore**

**Asynchronous & Synchronous**

EBP: Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features. [Moderate Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).

Below you will find various examples of different types of informational writing. Exposure to the mentor text below will help students familiarize themselves with the genres of informational writing. Students should click on and read at least four of the informational text from the resource list below. This may take some time, as the documentary alone is 15 minutes. You are always free to substitute any of these resources (or add more options) based on your students’ needs!

This lesson could also be done as a jigsaw, with students breaking into groups of three or four, and different group members dividing the genres among themselves so that they have exposure to all the genres. As a team, they could complete the analysis document in the next phase of the lesson.
The texts linked below are only examples of various informational genres. You can easily adapt this matrix by using possibilities with your own mentor texts for students to review. The selection of classroom texts is completely a local decision and subject to local approval processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine Article</th>
<th>How-to Guide</th>
<th>Brochure (Online)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBC News</td>
<td>HubSpot</td>
<td>Lift Up Atlanta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Naomi Osaka says she’s recharged and ready to return for Tokyo Olympics”</td>
<td>“How to Use TikTok: A Step-by-Step Guide”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memoir</strong></td>
<td><strong>Editorial</strong></td>
<td><strong>Email</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Teen Ink</em></td>
<td>“The School Kids are not Alright”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Silver Linings”</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Examples lower on page]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid Recipe/Article</td>
<td>Podcast</td>
<td>News Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read or Listen</td>
<td>Stuff You Should Know: “How Hoarding Works”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>NPR</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Passing the buck: Dollar Tree raises prices to $1.25”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documentary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Infographic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Product Description &amp; Comparison</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>National Geographic: Nobel Peace Prize Shorts</em></td>
<td>Federal Student Aid</td>
<td>Amazon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Still Human”</td>
<td>“The FAFSA Process”</td>
<td>Headphones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As another potential resource, here is a list of potential mentor texts for your consideration. Also, the questions have been added to a PowerPoint presentation for easy display/engagement with students both in-person or virtually.
**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part II of the [Informational Writing: Lesson Two Handout (Unplugged)](#).
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

**Apply**

**Synchronous & Asynchronous**

After allowing time for students to explore some different genres of informational writing, have students answer the following questions on a collaborative or independent document. After students have a chance to respond, engage in a discussion or an asynchronous chat.

You can use the document below that contains the matrix of informational texts and the questions. Students can directly type their notes into that document, or they could use it as a shared document.

1. **What is the difference between the different informational texts you read?**
2. **Have you written any of these different types of informational text?**
3. **Which of the texts you explored have you never written?**
4. **What features stood out in the different genres you reviewed?**
5. **Which of these informational text genres is something you would like to create?**
6. **Have you seen any of these informational text genres included in social media? How? Where?**

**Document for Engagement and Collaboration**

Provide some time for groups to engage in internal discussions if the jigsaw approach was used.

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part II of the [Informational Writing: Lesson Two Handout (Unplugged)](#).
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).
**Reflect**

**Synchronous and Asynchronous**

If students engaged in a jigsaw, have a time for each group to share their thoughts. Ask students to reflect on their thoughts related to the different genres. They should also use this time to jot down their lingering questions (there will be a handout accompanied with this assignment for unplugged students.)

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part III of the [Informational Writing: Lesson Two Handout (Unplugged)](https://example.com).
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

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**Evidence of Student Success**

Students will independently create their own magazine or ‘zine’ to distribute information about social media and its effects on young people. This will serve as the evidence-based deliverable.

**Formative Assessment:**

**Document for Engagement and Collaboration** Accuracy (features of informational text genres for comprehension and reflection questions to assess readiness)

**Formative Assessment**

"More of What’s Meaningful": Formative Assessments (Serravallo, 2013)

Formative assessment can occur in two ways:

- Conferring [Guidance: Tips for Conferring to Maximize Student Engage]
  “Supercharge your Conferring: Focus on Goals, Strategies, and Feedback” (Serravallo, 2018)
- Sharing ["How to Create an Inclusive Virtual Classroom"](https://example.com) (Kern, 2020]
  “8 Strategies to Improve Participation in Your Virtual Classroom” (Minero, 2020)

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**Student Learning Supports**

At all levels, the English Language Arts standards encourage students to become critical thinkers and communicators. The following strategies, though not exhaustive, are designed to support students who are either struggling to meet this lesson’s learning target and/or are exceeding and would benefit from enrichment.
Supports/Scaffolding

- **Conceptual Processing:** Allow additional processing time. Review this content prior to the lesson occurring so that the student will have additional time to formulate responses. Summarize each lesson segment and keep summary accessible for students. Implement scaffolds identified below for various circumstances.

- **Language:** Prior to beginning of the lesson, explicitly teach vocabulary required to engage with the content. \[EBP: Explicit vocabulary instruction [strong] (Kamil, et al., 2008)\].

- **Visual-spatial Processing:** Provide opportunities for students to engage with visual representations and/or manipulatives (virtual or concrete) as they explore topics for informational text.

- **Organization:** Maintain logical progression of big ideas/lesson segments in the course’s shared virtual space so that students can revisit lesson segments as necessary. Help students bookmark frequently utilized sites (such as Canva) or how to group tabs in Chrome to assist with organization.

- **Memory:** Maintain logical progression of big ideas/lesson segments in the course’s shared virtual space so that students can revisit lesson segments, as necessary.

Lesson-Specific Scaffolds

- If students struggle (especially in the virtual world), you could do a guided small group or one-on-one session in a break-out room to use your expertise and provide intensive supports (High-leverage practice).

- Incorporate positive feedback to recognize what students have done well with their writing (High-leverage practice).

- The number of genres to review can be easily modified, or what you ask them to do with the genres can also be manipulated. They may just focus on features. They may just focus on two genres. They may just look for genres they have seen in social media and work to make authentic connections that way.

- Strategic groups can be assembled for jigsawing, or partner work could also be done.
Supports for English learners:

- Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to: adapting matrix to include resources in student's first language (e.g. sample infographic in English and Spanish), providing students with talking stems and modeling of small group conversations, intentionally grouping students for collaborative conversations, etc.

- Educators may find it valuable to review WIDA’s Proficiency Level Descriptors (pp. 210-211) when planning for differentiation based on students’ levels of English proficiency.

- Teachers of ELs are encouraged to incorporate high leverage practices for teaching EL students and to utilize relevant evidence-based strategies such as those found in Project EXCELL’s downloadable GO TO Strategies (Levine et al., 2013).

Acceleration/Extension

Standard:

ELAGSE9-10W7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

ELAGSE9-10W8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Acceleration/Extension Activity:

- Students can be assigned genres to research and find examples to share. How do the examples they find differ from the ones shared in the matrix? A compare/contrast could be in order, or simply an expansion of a pre-conceived definition.
Engaging Families

Aligning with your district’s family engagement plan to facilitate the most meaningful way to work with your families. At the secondary level, much of the communication occurs with the student serving as a liaison.

- Have students ask their family members to engage in a scavenger hunt for informational text in their homes.
- Have students/families scroll through social media to see how many genres of informational text they can identify.
- Ask families of English learners to work together to add examples of informational texts in their first language to the matrix.

References


