Teaching the Common Core and English Language Proficiency Standards:
Lesson Frameworks for Integrated Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening Lessons
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Handouts adapted from ***Teaching Common Core ELA Standards 20 Lesson Frameworks for Elementary Grades*** by Patricia and James Cunningham, Solution Tree Press, 2014

Chapter 6

Main Idea Trees

CCS Standards in a Main Idea Trees Lesson

Main Idea Trees is a lesson framework you can use to teach students how to organize information when they are reading descriptive informational text and how to write summaries of what they have read. When you lead students through this lesson, you are helping them learn to do the type of reading and communicating required in these standards.

Reading Standard 2 Informational: Identify the main idea and retell key details in a text (**1st**). Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs in a text (2nd). Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea (3rd) (and summarize the text, 4th). Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text (5th).

Writing Standard 2: Write informative/explanatory texts

- in which they name a topic--supply some facts about the topic and provide some sense of closure–use facts and definitions to develop points and provide a concluding statement or section (1st).
- in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points and provide a concluding statement or section (2nd).
- to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly (3rd, 4th, 5th).

(The major focus of this lesson framework is on helping students determine main ideas in informational text while reading and write summaries that include details to support main ideas.)

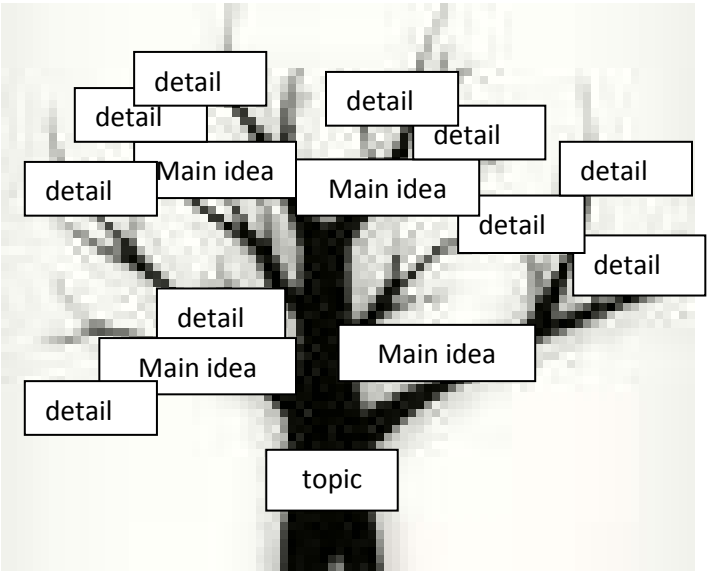
Speaking and Listening Standard 1:

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups (K, 1st, 2nd).
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) on grade level topics and texts building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly (3rd, 4th, 5th).

(When taught using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, the *Guess Yes or No* lesson framework uses a combination of small-group (trio) and teacher-led collaborative conversations with diverse partners to discuss various aspects of the content of the text.)

We often talk about main ideas with children as if there is only one. This is sometimes true when we are reading stories but informational text often includes several main ideas about a single topic. A tree can help children visualize and organize information. The topic you are learning about is the trunk of the tree. The main ideas about that topic are the large main branches and the details that relate to each main idea are the small branches that go off the large branches.

Art 5.1Insert tree graphic here

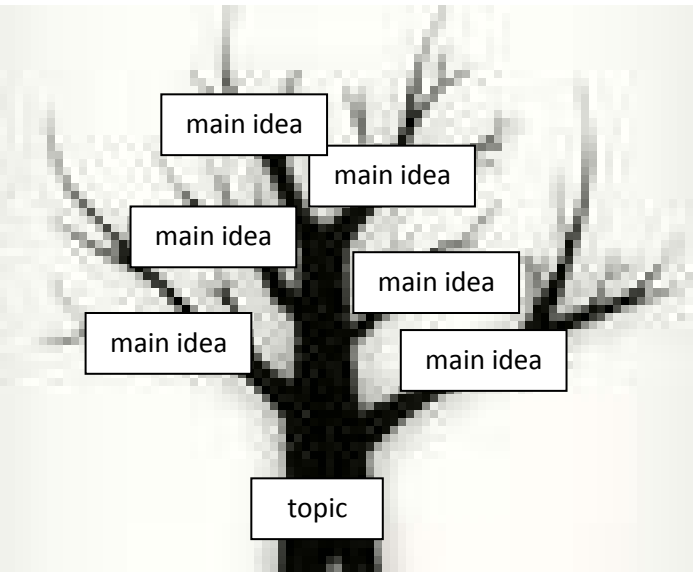


A Sample Lesson

Mr. S's class is going to read an informational article about snakes. He realizes that this piece of descriptive text has several main ideas about snakes with details to support each idea. He decides to help students visualize the main ideas and details by having them draw a tree and put main ideas on the main branches of the tree and details on small branches going off each main branch.

Explain Lesson Purpose

Mr. S puts a large sheet of paper on the board and draws a large tree with six big branches. He labels the trunk with the word *topic* and the branches with *main idea*.



"Often when we are reading informational text, we are learning a lot of big ideas about one topic. We call these big, important ideas main ideas. Today, we are going to be reading about snakes. We are going to create trees and write the big ideas we learn about snakes on the big branches. Then we are going to draw some smaller branches and write details that tell more about the main ideas."

Mr. S gives everyone a large piece of drawing paper.

"Put your paper the tall way and use the whole paper so that you will have lots of space to draw smaller branches and write the details. Instead of the word topic, write snakes on the trunk. "

Students eagerly draw their trees and it is apparent they are intrigued with the idea of creating "snake trees." [TIP: Have students draw their tree rather than handing out a copy with an already drawn tree. Your goal is that when students are reading descriptive text with several main ideas about one topic they construct this tree in their minds. Many kids like to draw and thus will be more engaged in the lesson!]

I Do and You Watch

When students all have their trees drawn and have written the word snakes on the trunk, Mr. S reads to them the first section of the text which describes snakes' bodies. When he finishes reading this section, he thinks aloud.

"I learned a lot of facts about snakes on this page. I learned that they don't have any arms or legs. They have eyes on the sides of their heads and really long bellies. Their skin is scaly and dry. I think this section is all about snakes' bodies so I am going to write that on one of my tree

branches. Then I am going to draw some smaller branches off the main branch and write the details I learned about their bodies."

Mr. S writes this main idea and its details on one branch of the tree. His students copy this information on one of their tree branches.

Art 5.3 Tree here with *snakes' bodies* on main branch and *no arms, no legs, eyes on side of head, long bellies* and *dry scaly skin* on smaller branches.

I Do and You Help

Now we are going to read the next section together. Get in your trios and I will give you one copy of the article. Remember that the person I hand the article to needs to sit in the middle and hold the text so that everyone can read it. [TIP Students work together and interact more when they have just one copy of the text. Handing the text to a struggling reader increases the chance that that student will actively participate and holding the text confers status on that student!] After we read it, we will talk about what we learned and come up with a main idea that relates to all the details.

Mr. S and students read the section chorally. When they finish, he asks them what they learned and they respond:

> "Snakes shed their skins two or three times every year."
>
> "The old skin wears out and just peels off."
>
> "There is a new skin that grew under the old skin."

Mr. S then leads students to determine the main idea of this section.

"So these details are all about one idea. Who can tell us what all these details are about? What is the main idea of this section?"

The class decides that this section is all about how snakes shed their skins. Mr. S and students all writes this on a branch and they draw smaller branches to write the details about how snakes shed their skins. [TIP: Notice how many of your students are participating during the "I Do and You Help" part of the lesson. If five or six of your students are giving all the responses, encourage other students to participate. You may want to make a list of your students and check off the ones who responded for several lessons. If this formative assessment tells you that some students are consistently not engaged, call on them first in subsequent lessons.]

Art 5.4 Tree visual from above with *shed their skins* on main branch and *2 or 3 times a year, old skin wears out and peels off, new skin grows under old skin* added to second branch.

You Do it Together and I Help

"Now it is time to you to work with your friends and finish the snake tree. You will start reading on this page where we left off. I have put these small sticky notes at each stopping point. When you get to the sticky note, stop and tell each other what you learned. Then come up with a main idea that all the details relate to. Write the main idea and details on your tree before going on to the next section.

As his students work together, Mr. S circulates and observes the interactions of the groups. The students are all able to tell the details but some groups have difficulty coming up with the main idea and Mr. S helps them to formulate this.

"You learned that a thread snake size of worm and an anaconda can be as long as a bus, cobras can be 8-18 feet and garter snakes are usually 1-4 feet. What's the big idea about snakes we learn from thinking about those sizes?"

One student smiles and respond in a questioning tone of voice:

"Snakes are different sizes?"

Mr. S says, "exactly" and everyone writes this main idea and the details on a branch of their tree.

The trios finish at different times and Mr. S encourages students to turn their papers over and draw some of what they learned about snakes. When the slower groups see the others drawing, they pick up the pace and quickly complete their trees.

Art 5.6 Completed tree here

Summary Writing

On the following day, Mr. S extends the main idea lesson to help students learn to write summaries. He brings out his tree which has only two branches complete. Students share what they have written on the other four branches and he completes his tree. The wording of the main ideas and details vary slightly from group to group. Mr. S assures the students that there are different ways to word these ideas and that all their main ideas and details are correct.

I Do and You Watch

"Now, we are going to write summaries telling everything we learned about snakes. Our snake tree has six big branches and we are going to write a paragraph for each branch. I am going to write the first one and you are going to help me write the second one. Then you are going to get in your trios and write one together. That will leave three main ideas that need to be

summarized. Each of you will write a paragraph summarizing one of the remaining three branches."

Mr. S looks at all six branches and then writes:

Snakes are reptiles.

"Which main idea branch have I chosen to write about? That's right. The main idea is reptiles so I just turned that into a sentence to start my paragraph. Now I will add the details about reptiles."

Mr. S then reads all the details on the reptiles branch:

"cold blooded, hibernate in winter, crocodiles, turtles and lizards"

"I am going to add these details to my paragraph but I need to turn them into sentences and explain a little more about each. I am going to tell that reptiles are cold-blooded and explain what that means."

Mr. S adds two sentences to the paragraph.

Snakes are reptiles. Reptiles are cold-blooded animals. The body temperature of cold-blooded animals stays the same as the air temperature.

Mr. S completes the paragraph with sentences explaining the other two details.

Snakes are reptiles. Reptiles are cold-blooded animals. The body temperature of cold-blooded animals stays the same as the air temperature. If they live in cold places, they hibernate in the winter to stay warm. Other reptiles include crocodiles, lizards and turtles.

I Do and You Help

"Now, we are going to construct the next paragraph together. I want to write the next paragraph about this main idea."

Mr. S points to the "different sizes" branch. Who can help me put this idea into a sentence? The class decides that the first sentence should be:

Snakes are many different sizes.

They then help him put the details into sentences and jointly, the class constructs this paragraph.

Snakes are many different sizes. A thread snake size is only as big as a worm. Garter snakes are usually 1-4 feet long but cobras can be 8-18 feet long. An anaconda can be as long as a bus.

You Do it Together and I Help

Having watched and then helped Mr. S construct two paragraphs, the students are eager to construct their own paragraphs. They quickly assemble into their trios and choose one of the main ideas to work on together. Mr. S circulates and assists but most trios have no difficulty constructing the paragraphs. Finally they divide the remaining three paragraphs among themselves and each student writes a paragraph. One trio has trouble deciding who will write which one. Mr. S says "If you can't decide, I will decide for you." As Mr. S suspected, they quickly make the decision themselves. Mr. S knows who is apt to have trouble getting started on the individual paragraphs and moves around helping them formulate a first sentence if they need this help.

Planning a Main Idea Trees Lesson

The crucial part of planning a main idea tree lesson is selecting the right text. Look for an informational piece about one topic that has several big ideas about that topic. This kind of text is often called descriptive text. (Two other text structures which you will commonly find in elementary grade informational texts are sequential/causal and comparative. Lesson frameworks for these informational text structures will be described in the next chapters.)

Once you have chosen the text, decide how many main ideas about the topic the text includes and determine where in the text you will have them stop reading so that you can focus their attention on one main idea at a time. Put sticky notes on the texts the trios will read to designate stopping points for each main idea.

Teaching a Main Idea Trees Lesson

1. Set the purpose for the lesson. On a large piece of paper, draw a tree with five or six branches. Label the trunk with the word *topic* and the big branches with the word, *main idea*. Explain to students that when you are reading informational topic, you are often learning many important ideas about one topic. Tell students that when you are reading information that describes one topic, you can organize that information like a tree. Tell them that they are going to learn to construct trees and put the main ideas on big branches and the details that support that main idea on smaller branches.

2. Give students a large sheet of paper and have them draw a tree with five or six branches. Have them label the trunk with the topic they are reading about.

3. Model how to formulate a main idea by reading the first section of the text aloud to the students and talking about what the details you learned. Formulate and write a main idea on one of the big branches and draw smaller branches on which you can write the details. Let everyone copy this main idea and details on their trees.

4. Arrange students into trios, including an advanced and struggling reader in each trio. Give one student a copy of the text and ask that student to sit between the other two. Have students read the second section with you and have the class tell you what details they learned in this section. Have them help you construct the main idea. Write this main idea and details on a second branch and have students record this information on their trees.

5. Tell students that they are going to read together to complete their trees. Have them identify stopping points which you have marked with sticky notes. Circulate and give help as needed. Make sure that students are stopping at the appropriate places and completing each main branch of the tree before they continue reading.

6. In part two of the lesson, teach students how to write summary paragraphs. Model turning one of the main idea branches into a paragraph with a main idea sentence and supporting details. Let students help you construct a paragraph for a second branch. Have students work together and then individually write paragraphs for one of the remaining branches.

Main Idea Trees **Lessons Across the Year**

In subsequent lessons as students demonstrate their ability to determine main ideas and details, gradually fade out the modeling and helping steps and let the trios construct trees for the entire text. Similarly, as students learn how to construct summary paragraphs based on main ideas, fade out the modeling and helping steps in writing the paragraphs. When your formative assessments of the students working together in their trios indicates that most of your students can determine main ideas and associated details, have them construct a main idea tree and write a summary paragraph independently (You Do and I Watch). Don't be surprised if students require lots of work with this lesson framework before they achieve this independent level. Recording details is a fairly simple process but formulating a main idea requires a high level of thinking and lots of practice.

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Chapter 7

Sequence/Cause-Effect

CCSS Standards in Sequence/Cause-Effect Lessons

Sequence/Cause- Effect lessens help students organize information when they are reading texts in which order is important. Once they have recorded the order of events, they decide if any of the events caused other events. Constructing time lines and step maps helps them focus on these important relationships.

Reading Standard 3, Informational Text:

- Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text (2nd).
- Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect (3rd).
- Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text (4th).

Reading Standard 8, Informational Text: Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e. g. comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence. (3rd)

Writing Standard 2: Write informative/explanatory texts

- in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic and provide some sense of closure (1st).
- in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points and provide a concluding statement or section ((2nd).
- to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly (3rd, 4th, 5th).

(The major focus of this lesson framework is on helping students determine sequence and causal effects while reading and write summaries that specify sequence/causal relationships.)

Speaking and Listening Standard 1:

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups (K, 1st, 2nd).
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) on grade level topics and texts building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly (3rd, 4th, 5th).

(Sequence/Cause-Effect Lessons engage students in collaborative conversations on grade level topics and texts with peers in their trios as well as their teacher and peers during whole-class instruction.)

There are three common text structures found in informational text read by children. Many texts are descriptive. These texts focus on a single topic and present important facts about that topic. The Main Idea Tree lesson framework described in Chapter 6 helps readers organize ideas when they are reading text that describes one idea or topic. Other informational texts compare and contrast various members of a category. Double bubbles and data charts (Chapter 8) help students organize information when the text they are reading compares and contrasts two or more things. The third common text structure organizes ideas or events according to the sequence in which they occurred. Sometimes one event causes another event and there is not only a sequential relationship between events but also a cause/effect relationship.

Standard Three of the Common Core requires students to understand these sequence and cause-effect relationships. Standard Three for 3rd grade captures this most clearly: "Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect." Time lines and step maps are organizing framework that help students think about and describe these relationships.

A Sample Sequence/Cause-Effect Lesson

In their daily life, most elementary-aged children understand sequence and cause-effect relationships. In this example, Mr. T and students chart their daily activities in the classroom on a timeline. For homework, students chart their individual activities from the time they leave school for the rest of the day.

Mr. T begins the day by gathering the students and drawing a long vertical line on the board. He labels the timeline with the date and adds the first entry, 8:43 Read-aloud.

"Today we are going to record every activity we do and the time we begin that activity. We will be creating a time line of our school day. For homework tonight, I am going to give you all a copy of our class time line and you are going to finish it by adding the times and activities you do things once you leave the classroom for the rest of the day."

Mr. T then reads to the class from a biography of Neil Armstrong. When he finishes the read-aloud, he asks students what they will be doing next and they add 9:03 Math Stations to the timeline and proceed to this activity. Throughout the day, Mr. T and students record both scheduled (lunch, computer lab, pack up) and unexpected events (fire drill, rain shower, indoor recess). At the end of the day, Mr. T and students review the events and then Mr. T asks if any of the events caused any of the other events. It takes some prompting but the students soon see that the sudden rain shower caused them to have indoor recess. Mr. T draws an arrow from rain shower to indoor recess and explains,

"Many of the events in our day just follow one another. Sometimes, an event happens that causes another event to happen. That happened today when it started to rain just as we were

heading to the playground and we had recess indoors instead of outdoors. I drew this arrow to show that one event caused another event. We had indoor recess because of the rain. The rain was the cause and indoor recess was the effect and we use an arrow to show that. You are going to complete this timeline for yourself once you leave the classroom. If anything that happens causes another thing to happen, draw an arrow from the cause to the effect."

Art 7.1 Time line here showing school day

The next morning, the children eagerly shared their time lines. Most had recorded every event and precise times and it was clear that they had enjoyed charting their activities. Several students had arrows between events and everyone listened intently as one student explained that yelling at his little brother caused him to have to have 15 minutes of time out and another explained that missing the soccer kick caused their team to lose the game.

Establish the Purpose for the Lesson

"We can make timelines to document sequence and cause-effect relationships in things we read about. Today we are going to read about the history of space exploration. We are going to record important dates and events on our time line. If we decide that any event caused another event to happen, we will draw an arrow just like we did to show cause-effect relationships in our day."

Mr. T draws a long vertical line and labels the time line, Space Exploration.

Space Exploration

I Do and You Watch

"I am going to read the first part of this article to you and show you what I think are important dates and events."

After reading the first three paragraphs, Mr. T begins the timeline with these dates and events.

Space Exploration

event event

1947 1949

1947 Fruit flies were first animals ever launched into space.

1949 Albert, a Rhesus monkey, was launched into space.

The students are all amazed that fruit flies were the first animals and a lively discussion ensues about why fruit flies were chosen. Mr. T tells them that that would be a good question for someone to research and see if they could find an explanation. He then explains that the reason he chose to put these two events on the timeline was that before these events, no living creatures had ever gone into space.

I Do and You Help

Before reading the next section to them, Mr. T tells them that they are going to help him record the next few events on the time line. He reads four paragraphs and students decide to add these events:

> 1957 Russia launched Sputnik 1, the first satellite ever to orbit the earth.
>
> 1957 Russia launched Sputnik 2 with a dog named Laika, the first animal ever to orbit the earth.
>
> 1961 Russian astronaut Yuri Gararin was the first human to orbit the earth.
>
> 1963 President John F Kennedy declared America would be first to get to the moon and the space race began.

When Mr. T records this 1963 entry, he asks the students what they think caused President Kennedy to say America would be first and the space race to begin. Someone suggests that it was because the Russians had been first to orbit the earth and we wanted to beat the Russians to the moon. Mr. T helps the students see that the cause-effect relationship between the Russians being first to orbit and the president's desire for America to be first to the moon and an arrow is drawn between these two events.

Art 7.4 timeline with events and arrow

You Do it Together and I Help

"Now it's your turn to finish the timeline," Mr. T announces.

The prearranged trios assemble and Mr. T gives one person in each trio a copy of the article and designates another person to be the scribe and do the writing." [TIP Include in each trio one of your struggling readers. Hand the book to that struggling reader and she will have an important role in the group. Choose the most fluent writer to do the writing so that it doesn't slow down the reading too much.] The students eagerly read and complete the time line. One trio realizes that the explosion of the Challenger in 1986 and the death of all seven astronauts was the cause for all space shuttle exploration being halted for three years. After checking this inference out with Mr. T, they proudly drew an arrow between these events to show this cause-effect

relationship. Mr. T and the rest of the class were quite impressed and Mr. T knew they would all be thinking harder to find possible causal relationships the next time they constructed a time line.

Writing a Summary

Once the information is organized on the time line, creating a class summary of space exploration seems the natural next step. Mr. T models this by writing an initial paragraph elaborating on the first two entries.

In 1947, the first animals were launched into space. These animals were fruit flies. When they returned from their quick trip, scientists studied the effects of the flight on their bodies. The next animal to make the trip was a Rhesus monkey named Albert. Russia launched him into space in 1949. He flew 83 miles from the earth.

The remaining events are parceled out to the trios and a class summary of space exploration was quickly constructed. [TIP: When the trios are working together is the perfect time to use formative assessment and listen in on their thinking.}

A Sample Step Maps Lesson

In addition to following the sequence of events, students need to learn to pay attention to sequence when reading text that explains how to do something. In this sample lesson, Mr. T and students work together in the **"**I Do and You Watch" and "I Do and You Help" phases of the lesson and the students work in trios to read the bicycle tire repair text and complete a step map for it.

Purpose Setting

Mr. T draws a simple step map and labels it, "Making A PBJ Sandwich for Lunch."

"When we are learning to do something and reading about how to do something, we have to pay attention to all the steps and get them in the right order. Most of you know that many days, I bring a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch. I have liked PBJ sandwiches since I was a little kid and I still do. I am going to show you how I make the sandwich and then we are going to record all the steps on this step map."

I Do and You Watch

Mr. T takes out from a bag a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter, a jar of jelly, a knife and a box of sandwich bags. Without saying a word, Mr. T proceeds to make the sandwich as if he is at home preparing it to take to school. The students watch intently and when he finishes he says,

“I am going to write the first two steps on the map and you are going to help me write the rest of them.”

He writes these two steps on the map

Art 7.5 Step Map with these two steps

1. Get out the bread, peanut butter, jelly, a knife and the sandwich bags.
2. Open the bread, peanut butter and jelly.

Before I can start putting the sandwich together, I like to make sure I have everything ready so these are the first two steps I do.

I Do and You Help

He then asks the students what he did next and students help him complete the step map for this simple task.

You Do it Together and I Help

“Now I have a short story for you to read. In this story a boy is riding his bike and gets a flat tire. A girl comes out of the house and sees the boy and repairs the tire for him. Your job is to record all the steps you would need to do to repair a flat tire on a bike.”

The students quickly get into their assigned trios, read the text and complete the step map. Mr. T circulates, watches and coaches. When he sees several trios forgetting important steps, he reminds them of what he had to do before starting to make the sandwich.

Art 7.6 Repairing a bike tire step map here

1. Gather what you need to fix it—patch, sanding paper, cement, bicycle pump.
2. Remove the wheel and take the tire off the rim.
3. Pull out the tube.
4. Squeeze the tube and listen for the hiss of air to find the hole.
5. Sand the area around the hole.
6. Put cement around the hole and let it dry a little until it gets sticky.
7. Press the patch over the hole and wait for it to stick.
8. Put the tire back on the wheel.

9. Fill the tire with air.

Planning a Sequence/Cause-Effect Lesson

The most important consideration in planning a sequence/cause-effect lesson is to choose text in which sequence is important. When possible, for a lesson in which you are going to have students organize them on a time line, choose text in which some of the events cause other events to happen. Students need to learn that sometimes events just follow one another but other times, an event causes one or more of the following events. When organizing events on a time line, decide what the designated divisions should be. The daily schedule example was organized according to time. Students used the year to show the sequence of events in space exploration. Sometimes, *first*, *second*, *third* and *finally* are appropriate headings along which to organize events to show the sequence.

Teaching a Sequence/Cause-Effect Lesson

1. For the first time line or steps map lesson, use a real-life example that shows the importance of sequence and cause-effect relationships in the lives of your students.

2. Once students understand how a time line or step map helps them show sequence and cause-effect relationships in the real world, help them transfer this ability to text. Set the purpose for the lesson by telling students that when they are reading they often need to pay attention to the order in which things happen and to decide if some events caused other events.

3. Use the "I Do and You Watch" and I Do and You Help" Procedures to demonstrate how you can use time lines or step maps to show sequence/cause-effect relationships.

4. Organize trios with students of different reading and writing abilities. Give trios one copy of the text and designate who will do the writing and who will sit in the middle and hold the text.

5. Have students work together to complete a time line or step map.

6. Circulate, coach and do formative assessments of how the groups are interacting and how well they are able to determine sequence and cause-effect relationships.

7. Teach students to write summaries in which they use sequence and cause-effect words (first, next, last, finally, therefore, because, etc.) to show sequence and cause/effect relationships.

Sequence/Cause-Effect Lessons Across the Year

In subsequent lessons as students demonstrate their ability to determine sequence and causal relations, gradually fade out the modeling and helping steps and let the trios construct time

lines or step maps for the entire text. Similarly, as students learn how to construct summary paragraphs based on sequence, fade out the modeling and helping steps in writing the paragraphs. When your formative assessments of the students working together in their trios indicates that most of your students can determine sequence and causal relationships, have them construct a time line or step map and write a summary paragraph independently (You Do and I Watch).

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Chapter 8

Compare/Contrast

CCSS Standards in Compare/Contrast Lessons

Compare/Contrast is a lesson framework you can use to teach students how to organize information when they are reading texts that describe similarities and differences. Students record information in double bubbles or data charts and write compare/contrast summaries based on the information in their diagrams.

Reading Standard 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take (anchor).

Reading Standard 3 (Literature): Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (5th).

(The Compare/Contrast lesson framework helps students learn to compare and contrast ideas in one text or multiple texts.)

Writing Standard 2: Write informative/explanatory texts

- in which they name a topic--supply some facts about the topic and provide some sense of closure–use facts and definitions to develop points and provide a concluding statement or section (1st).
- in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points and provide a concluding statement or section (2nd).
- to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly (3rd, 4th, 5th).

(The major focus of the compare/contrast lesson framework is on helping students learn to compare and contrast various elements while reading and write summaries that compare and contrast the specified elements.)

Speaking and Listening Standard 1:

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups (K, 1st, 2nd).
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) on grade level topics and texts building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly (3rd, 4th, 5th).

(The *Compare/Contrast* lesson framework uses a combination of small-group (trio) and teacher-led collaborative conversations with diverse partners to discuss various aspects of the content of the text.)

Most informational text read by elementary students follows one of three structures—descriptive, sequential/causal or comparative. Main idea trees help readers organize ideas when the text describes one idea or topic. Timelines and step maps help students organize ideas in which sequence or causation is important. Another common type of informational text in elementary grades compares and contrasts two or more things. Venn Diagrams (which many teachers call "double bubbles") and data charts help students organize information when the text is comparing and contrasting two or more members of a category. This chapter describes a lesson framework for teaching students to compare and contrast.

A Sample Compare/Contrast Lesson

To teach her students how to construct double bubbles to compare and contrast ideas, Mrs. H decides to begin with a topic that most of her students know a lot about—dogs and cats.

"Boys and girls, today we are going to talk about pets—and specifically dogs and cats as pets. Raise your hand if you have a pet. Good, now raise your right hand if your pet is a dog and your left hand if your pet is a cat. If you have both pets, raise both hands."

"We have lots of pets in this room but some of you don't have pets. I want everyone to put their hands down and this time raise your right hand if someone you know well—a relative or friend or neighbor—has a dog and your left hand it someone you know well has a cat."

"Good, I see all your hands so I know you all know a lot about dogs and cats as pets even if you don't have one. Turn to your partner and talk about the dogs and cats you have or know about. Tell them things like the pet's names, what the dogs and cats look like, what you have to do to take care of them and other important things you know about dogs and cats as pets." [TIP: Mrs. H has her students seated in talking partners. She often uses the "turn and talk" prompt to get lots of ideas flowing and engage her students in productive talk.]

As all the partners talk eagerly to one another, Mrs. H draws a double bubble on the board and labels it.

Art 8. 1 Double bubble here with sides labeled *dogs* and *cats* and intersection labeled *both*.

"I can tell you have a lot of ideas about dogs and cats as pets. We are going to organize our ideas using these two big intersecting circles I call a double bubble. On this side, we are going to write ideas that only apply to dogs and on the other side, we are going to write ideas that only apply to cats. What are we going to write in this middle part?"

The children instantly understand that characteristics that apply to both dogs and cats will go in the middle.

"Good, now we are going to start by putting some things in the middle. Remember that these will be features that both cats and dogs share."

The children suggest that they are both good pets, they both have four legs, two eyes, two ears, one tail and someone suggests they are both mammals. This information gets written in the middle. When the students have run out of similarities, Mrs. H leads them to brainstorm some differences and writes them on the appropriate side. When children think of more similarities, she adds them to the middle. The children eagerly share ideas and the finished double bubble looks like this.

Art 8.2 Dogs/cats finished double bubble here

Writing a Compare/Contrast Summary

On the following day, Mrs. H teaches students how to write a summary comparing and contrasting the information recorded about dogs and cats. She and the children reviewed all the information they had recorded on the double bubble. As they reviewed the information, Mrs. H introduced the words *similarities*, *differences compare* and *contrast*.

"Let's look at our double bubble. What characteristics of dogs and cats did we put in the middle? Right. We labeled this "both" and we put things that are the same about both. We call things that are the same *similarities* (writes *similarities* above both) and we say we are comparing cats and dogs (writes *compare*) above *both* and *similarities.* When we are deciding things that are the same or alike about two things, we are comparing those two things and coming up with the similarities. If we have the similarities in the middle, what do we have on either side?"

Mrs. H leads the students to see that the things on either side are the differences between cats and dogs and writes the word *differences* about *cats* and *dogs*. Next she explains that when we list things that are the same, we are comparing them and when we list differences, we are contrasting them and writes *contrast* above *differences* on each side of the diagram. [TIP: While we try not to confuse children with a lot of jargon, it is important that they understand the meaning of terms such as *compare*, *contrast*, *similarities* and *differences.* These terms are often used in directions for test items and if they don't understand the meanings of these terms, they won't be able to show what they know!]

"Now we are going to write a summary of what we know about cats and dogs. I want everyone to start their summary by writing the sentence I am writing on the board on your paper. This sentence will begin the paragraph that compares cats and dogs so please indent your sentence as I am indenting mine."

Cats and dogs are alike in many ways.

"This first sentence lets your reader know that you are going to compare cats and dogs and tell about some of their similarities. Now I am going to add a second sentence that tells about some ways they are similar."

Cats and dogs are alike in many ways. The bodies of cats and dogs have four legs, two ears, two eyes and tails.

"Now, you add three or four sentences that tell about some of the similarities. You can include my sentence or change it or just add your own ideas.

Children finish their paragraph comparing cats and dogs by writing three or four sentences with similarities. Teacher circulates, monitoring, coaching and encouraging.

"Good now we are going to write a paragraph that compares cats and dogs. Start your second paragraph like this. It's a new paragraph so don't forget to indent."

There are many differences between cats and dogs.

"Good. Now we are going to add sentences that tell about some of the differences. Again, I will write one sentence and you will add three or four sentences comparing cats and dogs. We have way too many differences for you to include all of them, so decide which differences you think are most important."

There are many differences between cats and dogs. Cats groom themselves but you have to give your dog a bath.

The students eagerly write a second paragraph picking and choosing the differences that matter to them.

"Now we need a short paragraph to complete our summary. So far we have included facts but I am going to end my summary with my opinion. I am going to tell you which animal I think makes the best pet and give you my reasons for thinking that. Remember that we have learned to do persuasive writing in which we give reasons for our opinion to try to convince people we are right. As you watch me write my opinion and reasons, think about your own opinion and reasons."

I think cats make the best pets because they can mostly take care of themselves. You don't have to walk them or give them baths. You can leave them on their own for a few days as long as they have food, water and a litter box. Cats are independent creatures!

Mrs. H's students are always eager to express their opinions and they quickly write their concluding paragraph. Mrs. H. circulates and provides help and encouragement. When they have finished writing, she lets a few students who chose cats and a few who chose dogs share their paragraphs. Mrs. H's class is also quite competitive and someone asks, "Who won?" Mrs. H asks everyone who chose cats and then dogs to raise their hands and gets a quick count. It was

close but dogs got one more vote than cats. Mrs. H was about to declare dogs the winner when someone pointed out that Mrs. H—who chose cats—hadn't voted! The class decided it was a tie and everyone was happy with this result.

A Sample Compare/Contrast Lesson with Text

Once her class understood how to organize compare/contrast information in a double bubble, Mrs. H helped them transfer this skill to comparing and contrasting information while reading.

Establish the Purpose for the Lesson

Mrs. H begins the lesson by referring to the double bubble they constructed when they compared and contrasted cats and dogs as pets.

"Sometimes when you read, you need to focus on similarities and differences between the things you are reading about. Today we are going to construct a double bubble showing the similarities and differences between two countries, China and Japan."

I Do and You Watch

Mrs. H begins the lesson by having students join their trios and hands one copy of each article to each trio. [TIP: Three is the magic number for small-group work in elementary classrooms. If the group size is too large, some students spend time vying for control of the group and other students just sit and let the bossy ones do the work! Students work together and interact more when they have just one copy of the text.]

"Here are two articles from your student magazines on China and Japan. In a few minutes you are going to read these articles in your trios and organize the information you read in a giant double bubble."

Teacher puts a large piece of paper on the board and draws two intersecting circles and labels them *China*, *Both* and *Japan*.

"You know that when you are reading informational text, you always study all the visuals first to see what you can learn from them. I am going to see if I can figure out some similarities and differences by looking at the visuals. I see a map of China at the beginning of the China article and a map of Japan at the beginning of the Japan article. I notice that both countries are in Asia, so I am going to write Asia here in the middle to show that both China and Japan are on the continent of Asia."

"I see that both countries have a * next to one city and I know that the * symbol on a map tells us which city is the capital. The star on the Japan Map is next to Tokyo and the star on the China map is next to Beijing. I can put that information on the Japan and China parts of my circles."

I Do and You Help

"Now, everyone look at the other visuals and see if you can find things that are the same or different between China and Japan."

One student notices the mountains symbols on both maps and concludes that both countries have mountains. Mrs. H adds this to the Both part of the circles.

Another student notices that there is a picture of Chinese children playing basketball and a picture of Japanese children playing baseball. This information is added to the Japan and China parts of the circles. [TIP: Be on the lookout for children who don't "help" during this phase of the lesson. Some children are just quicker to raise their hands. If a few children are doing all the thinking, have children think for 30 seconds before letting anyone give an answer. Think time has been shown to increase both the quantity and quality of student responses.]

Art 8.3 Beginning Double bubble China/ Japan here

You Do it Together and I Help

By now the students all understand what they are going to do so Mrs. H hands each trio a large sheet of paper and a marker. She gives this sheet to the most fluent writer in each group so and appoints that child to be the recorder. [TIP: Create trios that contain a variety of abilities. Designate the struggling reader to sit in the middle and hold the book. Have the most fluent writer be the recorder.] She asks the recorder to draw and label the double bubble using the whole sheet of paper so that they have lots of room to record information. She also instructs the recorder to copy the information from the class double bubble to get them started.

"Once the information from our class double bubble is recorded, your trio should study the visuals and add any information you can get from them. Then read the text and stop whenever you have a similarity or difference to record."

As the trios work together, Mrs. H circulates encouraging the trios to talk about what they are reading and decide where to put information. [TIP: In addition to helping and encouraging, do formative assessment of your students ability to compare and contrast by listening in on their discussions.]

As each trio finishes, they sign their China/Japan bubbles and tape them up around the room. The students go around and read what other trios have posted and realize that they have all found many of the same similarities and differences.

Art 8.4 completed China/Japan bubble here

Writing Compare/Contrast Summaries

On the following day, Mrs. H. helps them write summaries comparing and contrasting China and Japan. She has them take out their writing journals and reread their dog/cat summaries. She helps them notice that their first paragraph summarized some similarities and the second paragraph summarized some differences. In the final paragraph they shared their opinion and gave reasons for that opinion.

"That is exactly the structure we are going to use to write our summaries comparing China and Japan," she explains as she writes this starter sentence on the board.

There are many similarities between China and Japan.

She invites students to suggest a second sentence based on the information in the intersection of the circles. She gets several suggestions and then adds a second sentence to her paragraph.

There are many similarities between China and Japan. They are both on the continent of Asia and they both have forests and mountains.

"Copy the introductory sentence and then add three sentences of your own stating similarities. You can use the second sentence in my paragraph and then write two more of your own or you can write all three of your own."

As children write, she circulates among them, coaching and encouraging and making formative assessments of how well different students can construct this paragraph. As most children are finishing their paragraphs, she goes to the board and writes a starter sentence for the second paragraph.

There are also many differences between China and Japan.

"Now we are going to write a paragraph that compares China and Japan. Start your second paragraph like this. It's a new paragraph so don't forget to indent. Who can give me some ideas for my second sentence?"

Mrs. H listens to their suggestions and adds a second sentence. Again she reminds them that they can use her second sentence and add two more of their own or just construct three sentences of their own.

There are also many differences between China and Japan. China is much bigger than Japan and has almost ten times as many people.

The children eagerly write second paragraphs picking and choosing the differences that matter to them.

“Now we need a short paragraph to complete our summary. So far we have included facts but I am going to end my summary with my opinion. I am going to tell you which country I would most like to visit and give you my reasons for this choice. Remember that we have learned to do persuasive writing in which we give reasons for our opinion to try to convince people we are right. As you watch me write my opinion and reasons, think about your own opinion and reasons.”

I would like to visit both China and Japan but if I could only visit one I would go to Japan. I like baseball and would love to go to a baseball game in Japan. I also like water and would love to visit a country made up of over 6,000 islands. Japan is much smaller than China and I think I could travel through lots of Japan in a week but I could only see a small part of China.

The children watch as she writes and then quickly settle in to share their opinions. As they did when they chose cats or dogs, they wanted to tally up the choices. They reminded the teacher that she had to vote too. In spite of her Japan vote, China won by two votes!

Comparing and Contrasting Multiple Things

You can use the same process you used with double bubbles to help students learn to organize information when three or more members of a category are being compared. Here is the data chart Mrs. H’s class began when studying about the planets. Mrs. H and the class completed this part of the chart using the “I Do and You Watch” and “I Do and You Help” steps of the lesson. The class worked in trios to complete the chart.

Planets in Our Solar System				
Name	Size (1=biggest)	Distance from sun	Earth days in year	Other characteristics
Earth	5	93,000 ,000 mi (3rd)	365	Plants, animals, people gravity
Jupiter	1	484,000,000 mi (5th)	1 Jupiter year = 12 earth years	Mostly gases 62 moons very hot
Mars				
Mercury				

Saturn				
Venus				
Uranus				
Neptune				

Planning a *Compare/Contrast* Lesson

There is not a lot of planning you need to do to teach a compare/contrast bubble or data chart lesson. For the double bubble, make sure that the texts students are reading compare and contrast two things. Draw and label the bubbles so that students know that they are reading to compare and contrast by looking for similarities and differences. When students are comfortable with double bubbles, teach them how to use data charts to compare and contrast multiple members of a category.

Teaching a *Compare/Contrast* Lesson

1. Help students understand what compare and contrast mean and how to organize this information by having them use a double bubble to compare and contrast something in their world they know a lot about such as dogs and cats as pets.

2. Once students understand how to organize information comparing and contrasting two things in the real world, help them transfer this ability to text. Set the purpose for the lesson by telling students that when they are reading they often need to compare and contrast two things, looking for similarities and differences. Creating a double bubble will help them organize the information they are learning.

3. Organize trios with students of different reading and writing abilities. Give trios one copy of the text you have chosen and a large sheet of paper. Have the recorder draw and label two large intersecting circles.

4. Model for students how you compare and contrast and where you write the similarities and differences by recording one similarity and one difference on your double bubble (I Do and You Watch).

5. Let students help you add a few more similarities and differences to the class double bubble (I Do and You Help).

6. Have students read the text, stopping to add similarities and differences to their bubble. If the piece is informational, encourage them to find out all they can from the visuals before they read the text. Circulate, coach and do formative assessments of how the groups are

interacting and how well they are able to compare and contrast various features of text (You Do it Together and I Help).

7. Teach students to write compare/contrast summaries in which they write one paragraph summarizing similarities and another summarizing differences. Have them add a concluding paragraph if appropriate.

8. When students are comfortable comparing and contrasting two things, introduce data charts to help them compare and contrast three or more objects, ideas or characters. Use the same procedures you used for double bubbles to teach data charts.

Compare/Contrast **Lessons Across the Year**

You will find many opportunities to help your students compare and contrast information in all areas of your curriculum throughout the school year. As students demonstrate their ability to compare and contrast, gradually fade out the modeling and helping steps and let the trios construct double bubbles or data charts for the entire text. Similarly, as students learn how to construct compare/contrast paragraphs, fade out the modeling and helping steps in writing the paragraphs. When your formative assessments of the students working together in their trios indicates that most of your students can compare and contrast, have them construct a double bubble or data chart and write a summary paragraph independently (You Do and I Watch).

Handouts adapted from ***Teaching Common Core ELA Standards 20 Lesson Frameworks for Elementary Grades*** by Patricia and James Cunningham, Solution Tree Press, 2014