

Informational Text Lessons in First Grade



In the previous chapter, we presented an informational text lesson using a read-aloud format. The general guidelines of the kindergarten example, presented on pages 69–75, and the lesson structure itself also apply to first-grade read-aloud lessons, so adapt the structure to your needs.

In this chapter, we look at how to use the lesson template to plan and teach in a guided reading format for beginning readers. The guided reading lesson will differ from a read-aloud lesson in significant ways. First and most obvious, the lesson will be done in a small group setting. Because of that, teachers need to deeply understand the makeup of the group; they will group students together based on their current abilities and needs as readers; these are considered “skills-based groups.” For example, you might group

students who need support with decoding, or fluency, or comprehension. Second, guided reading lessons are customized to meet those needs. As you plan any guided reading lesson, you choose the instructional focus that will help all the members of the group. Doing so requires the careful integration of the foundational skills with the goals for informational text reading.

What's Different About First Grade?

In first grade, we want to develop children's independence as readers, their identity as readers who can read and enjoy books on their own. From the child who is still cementing a concept of words to the child who is already reading, our orientation is to have all children reading on or above grade level by the end of the year. The Common Core State Standards for Grade 1 reflect this push for independent reading of grade-level texts. Whereas almost all the standards in kindergarten begin with the phrase "with prompting and support," in Grade 1 only one standard includes this phrase: "With prompting and support, read informational texts appropriately complex for grade 1" (NGA/CCSSO, 2010b, p. 3, CCSS for Informational Text, Grade 1 Standard 10).

The way we interpret Standard 10 is that *all* first graders need to be utilizing grade-level informational text; the teacher then differentiates the amount of support (instruction) needed to help each reader access the text. Standards 1–9 define specific tasks students need to be able to do with that text; for example, according to the Informational Text Standards within the Key Ideas and Details (NGA/CCSSO, 2010b, p. 13) category, first graders should be able to

- ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
- describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

Again, notice the CCSS language and the distinction these expectations draw between kindergarten and first grade: While in kindergarten the focus was "engaging in group activities," the focus in first grade really shifts to students being sufficiently able to read texts independently.

As discussed in Chapter 6, complex text in kindergarten is provided in the form of read-alouds. In first grade, the challenge is not only to provide complex text through read-alouds, but also to choose text that is "appropriately complex for grade 1." This emphasis on grade-appropriate text is one of the most critical shifts teachers are asked to make with the adoption of the Common Core.

Mrs. Stocker's First Graders: A Sample Informational Text Guided Reading Lesson

Setting the Stage

Mrs. Stocker's class is made up of 22 eager first graders, the vast majority of whom are English language learners. She teaches in an urban setting with a transient population.

The range of preparedness for first grade is wide; she has students who are reading, others “on their way,” and still others without a solid foundation of sounds and letters. She has many students who do not have a strong oral language foundation in either English or their native language, so she is always operating with deliberate intention to build language and vocabulary. She welcomes the increased use of informational text in her classroom as a vehicle for developing content knowledge and vocabulary and as a highly motivating context for teaching children to read.

With the adoption of the Common Core in her state, Mrs. Stocker has increased the use of informational text in her classroom. During her regularly scheduled read-aloud time, she utilizes informational text about 40% of the time. She sees this as a tremendous advantage, because she chooses read-alouds that fit her science and social studies themes, saving her instructional time as she meets multiple goals for both reading and content studies. While she is developing children’s listening comprehension and content knowledge through read-alouds, she is also providing the core instruction in the foundational skills in whole group, with practice in decodable text in small groups. In small group **guided reading**, she strives for a 50/50 balance of narrative and informational text.

While complex informational text (above grade level, appropriate for listening comprehension) is used during read-aloud time, both phonetically decodable text and grade-level informational text are utilized in small groups. Phonetically decodable text is used in small groups until students have a firm grasp of decoding. Informational text is used in small groups as well, with one common text used for all students. Mrs. Stocker adheres to the “grouping without tracking” approach to informational text as explained in the beginning of this book. She utilizes a common, grade-level text with all of her students so that they all have exposure to grade-appropriate content; however, she groups them according to where they are in their development as readers, providing a bridge from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. The big ideas or essential information are the same for all her first graders, but she uses the text in different ways with different small groups to make that information accessible for all students.

To help you set a context for the lesson examples in this chapter, you may wish to reread pages 24–26 in Chapter 2, which discuss how to differentiate instruction while using a common text with below-level, on-level, and above-level readers. Figure 7.1 is a quick summary of this differentiated instruction model.

When we refer to *below level*, *on level*, and *above level* we do so to provide you with a general outline of how instruction may be differentiated by skill need. We do not suggest any particular system of readability measures; how you assess to make these determinations we leave to you. Generally speaking, we encourage teachers to utilize formal and informal assessments, benchmarks, and observation of children’s reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This daily knowing and observing of your readers is crucial. So much can be learned from listening to our students read aloud to us, too. Taken together, we use all these forms of assessment to inform our decisions about exactly where a child is along the spectrum of reading development.

TIP

Be sure to use multiple texts in your classroom for multiple purposes, for example, read-aloud texts that can be above grade level for developing listening comprehension, instructional text (such as phonetically decodable text for beginning readers), and grade-level literature and informational text for guided reading.

Readers	Characteristics in First Grade	Tips and Considerations for Informational Text
Below grade level	Focus: decoding and word recognition skills, language development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend additional time building concepts and vocabulary before reading; frontload through discussion, additional reading, and use of media. • Consider reading the selection to students first, so they have a model of fluent reading and can learn concepts through listening comprehension. • Chunk the text into manageable units based on the essential information in the text. (Often, informational text is already divided by text features such as headings or chapters.) • After focusing on the essential information, utilize the text as a forum for teaching the decoding and word recognition skills students are working on in their core reading instructional time. • Remember to balance the time in small group utilizing grade-level informational text with using other texts more accessible to their independent reading, such as phonetically decodable text, as they are building their skills as readers.
On grade level	Focus: consolidation of foundational skills. As decoding and word recognition skills become solid, the emphasis shifts to building fluency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually assess students by listening to them read aloud; ensure they are using appropriate word recognition strategies and not guessing. • Even if they are decoding accurately, pay particular attention to vocabulary, as they will likely still need you to teach and support their conceptual development. • Encourage students to monitor for meaning, and use fix-up strategies when their understanding falters. • Provide ample opportunities for rereading and guided oral reading.
Above grade level	Focus: development of independent reading capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of ways to elicit vocabulary and prior knowledge from students rather than teaching it explicitly. • Move to silent reading, but still continue to check in by listening to them read orally, to ensure they are indeed “really reading.” • Look for opportunities to scaffold students’ higher level comprehension skills, modeling inferring, identifying main idea/theme, connecting information to other texts, and so on. • Continue to focus on the essential understandings of the core text, but provide additional, more challenging text to supplement it.

FIGURE 7.1 Summary of Differentiating Instruction in Reading

Phased-In Classroom Management to Prepare for Differentiated Instruction

As you read in Chapter 6, establishing routines early in the year, explicitly teaching children these expected routines, and continually expecting and reinforcing the routines is a critical part of the success of the reading instruction time. Mrs. Stocker has general “productive behaviors” that are taught with great detail and explicitness right from the start of the year. Here are her “three R’s of the classroom”:

- Respect everyone’s right to learn.
- Respect Mrs. Stocker’s right to teach.
- Respect each other’s property and this classroom.

Because first graders don’t necessarily know what any of this means, it is futile to just post rules and expect compliance. These behaviors are modeled, and students participate in defining “what our classroom looks like” when all of the members are adhering to these behaviors. The amount of explicit detail the students can generate in defining these behaviors is directly related to their understanding of what is expected.

In order to effectively work with students in small groups, Mrs. Stocker has to ensure that students can operate within these expectations so that she is not interrupted while with a group of students. It is essential at the beginning of the year that time is taken to carefully build these expectations and practice them in whole group during core instruction time; this is Phase 1 of establish the classroom management. Once children can follow the guidelines during whole group instruction and articulate the behaviors, they practice them in small groups, with Mrs. Stocker monitoring. During this Phase 2 of classroom management, Mrs. Stocker gives small groups of children specific tasks, but she herself does not meet with a group; instead she circulates and ensures that children can enact the expected behaviors in a small group setting. In Phase 3 of classroom management, children are given independent tasks as seatwork or in small groups (centers), while Mrs. Stocker begins to meet with small groups for teacher-led instruction. At first these are short segments, gradually lengthening until children can carry out tasks independently or in centers for a long enough period of time for Mrs. Stocker to meet with her small groups, typically 45–60 minutes total time (15–20 minutes per group). It is helpful at the end of the small group time to have a short class meeting to discuss how things went and set goals for additional improvements that might be necessary in the future to make sure everyone can be productive.

So what kinds of tasks does she teach children to do so that they are productively engaged during the times they are not with her? While a detailed explanation of all of the options goes beyond the scope of the book, here are some suggestions:

- Complete any skill work that has been previously assigned
- Partner reading of previously read text
- Listen to recordings of text, either as a follow-up or a frontloading (important for ELLs or children who come less prepared in the area of language and vocabulary)
- Practice handwriting or editing exercises
- Practice spelling words with a partner

- Journal writing or reading response
- Online or computer-based skill games,
- Center activities such as alphabet games, word work, or other previously taught manipulative activities that can now be done independently

One key concept to remember about these independent activities is that once children know the routine, you can infuse these activities with different content, so the concepts and content grow with the students' maturing understandings, but the routines are just that—known and routine—so that students can focus on productive learning, undistracted by “What do I do?”

It is also important to keep in mind that students need some explicit guidance and practice on anything you eventually decide will be an independent task. For example, during Phase 1 you are modeling these tasks and doing these tasks together. During Phase 2 children are completing these tasks in small groups while you circulate and monitor. By Phase 3, students will be prepared to carry out these tasks independently.

Although phasing in classroom management appears time consuming, it indeed saves countless hours of instructional time that is sometimes spent redirecting children or attending to repeated interruptions that characterize a classroom where children do not know, understand, or adhere to the expected behaviors.

Once the classroom is set for small guided-reading groups, and Mrs. Stocker has utilized her formal assessments as well as informal observations and oral reading, she can start to pull groups for guided reading.

TIP

Phasing in your classroom management, setting up consistent expectations, and providing lots of guided practice will help ensure your system will work.

The sample lesson in this chapter is from the *National Geographic Kids* series of nonfiction texts. This book is a Level 1 book. There are no specific guidelines for the leveling, but the publisher describes the level this way: “Level 1 books are just right for kids who are beginning to read on their own.” (To determine if this book is suitable for her students and to meet the demands of the CCSS, a teacher would need to factor in the qualitative factors and the reader and task considerations discussed briefly in Chapter 2.) What follows is not the entire lesson but excerpts from certain pages of the book.

Although the bulk of the lesson is taking place in small, differentiated, guided reading groups, one advantage in utilizing core text is that some of the lesson steps can be done in whole group. For example, in this lesson, Mrs. Stocker is going to start a K-W-L (know, wonder, learn) chart. Because all students will be reading this selection, this step could be done in the whole class setting. After all students have read the text, the chart can be revisited to wrap up the reading.

To prepare for the lesson, Mrs. Stocker has **read the text thoroughly** and identified the **essential information** she wants the children to know after reading the text. She has also thought about her students' background knowledge and what schema and vocabulary she might need to elicit or build to give them access to the text. Utilizing the lesson plan template (see Appendix C), she developed her action steps for the lesson.

Finally, she considered the Common Core State Standards and how she would work toward meeting the standards within this guided reading experience. You will see the steps of the lesson plan template, the guiding questions she asked herself in developing

her action steps (Lesson Step 1 in Figure 7.2, Lesson Step 2 in Figure 7.6, Lesson Step 3 in Figure 7.12, and Lesson Step 4 in Figure 7.13), and the script of her lesson plan below.

This is her on-level group lesson; modifications for her other groups will adhere to guidelines in Figure 7.1.

Before the Lesson

Big ideas (essential information) I want the students to know:

- Spiders live in many habitats and can look very different from one another.
- Spiders all share some features: eight legs, two body parts, the ability to spin silk, meat eating, egg laying.
- Spiders can be helpful.

Step in the Lesson	Action Steps
Prepare to read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is my students' background knowledge in content? Which concepts and vocabulary need to be elicited or developed before the reading?• Which text features will be taught before the reading?• What is our overall purpose for the reading, and how can I state this for the students?• How can I preview the text to build excitement for the reading (using the cover, illustrations, or other features)?

FIGURE 7.2 Lesson Step 1: Prepare to Read

MY LESSON PLAN

USE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE



Before Reading (in Whole Group): (See Figure 7.3). [Chart with the class what they currently know about spiders. Add a second column, charting the questions they have about spiders that they hope will be answered in the reading.]

What do we KNOW?	What do we WONDER?	What did we LEARN?
Spiders are scary.	Why do we have spiders?	
Spiders are black.	How many eggs do they lay?	
Spiders lay eggs.	Do spiders have teeth?	
Spiders bite.	How do they make webs?	
Spiders eat bugs.		
Spiders make webs.		

FIGURE 7.3 Know-Wonder-Learn Chart 1

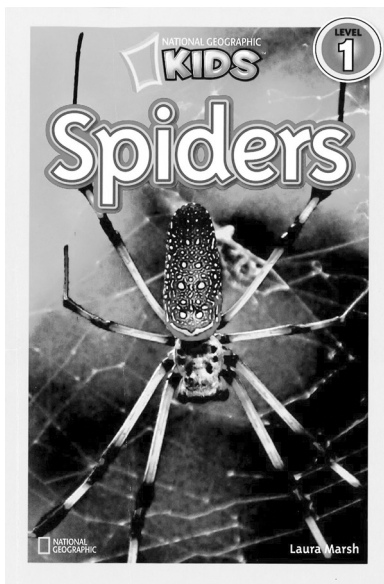


FIGURE 7.4 Spiders Cover

Source: Marsh (2011)

[After doing the K-W columns of the chart in whole group, assign students to work independently in order to pull small groups for guided reading.]

Cover, Set Purpose, Preview (in Small Group): Boys and girls, welcome to the reading group. I want you to sit in your chairs with both feet on the ground and face me. I want your book flat in front of you and closed. Please put your hand on the cover of your book so I know you are ready to begin. Eyes on me for now.

Today we will be learning a lot about an animal that sometimes people are very afraid of, but we'll learn what makes spiders special and important. Look at the cover (see Figure 7.4). This is nonfiction, or true information. Sometime we call this "real life" reading that will provide information as we read. How do we know? What clues to you have already that this is nonfiction?

Let's read the title together. [Read title.]

Let's look at the picture on the cover. Are there any notes we put on our chart that the cover picture confirms?

Table of Contents	
It's a Spider!	4
Spiders, Spiders Everywhere!	6
A Spider's Body	8
Spider Food	10
Senses	14
Web Builders	16
Spinning Silk	18
Super Spiders!	20
Baby Spiders.	24
Helpful Spiders.	28
What in the World?.	30
Glossary	32

FIGURE 7.5 *Spiders* Table of Contents

Source: Marsh (2011)

Now I want you to use your pointing finger to find the author. Who remembers what *author* means? That's right; the author is the person who wrote this book. I'll read it to you. The author is Laura Marsh. There is one other item on the cover. It is the name of the publisher. The publisher is National Geographic.

Preview Table of Contents: (See Figure 7.5.) Boys and girls, remember that this is called a *table of contents*. This lists all the contents, or the information, included in this book. [Read through the table of contents, either having students take turns or reading it to them while they follow along.] What are you most excited to read about? Turn to your neighbor and share. Where will we read if we want to learn about what spiders eat? Where will we read if we want to learn about spider babies?

Guided Reading: (See Figure 7.6). [Continue with Lesson Step 2, Guide Reading.]

USE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
MAKE INFERENCES
COMPARE AND CONTRAST TEXT AND PICTURES
DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

USE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

USE REFERENCES AND RESOURCES
ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS
DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Step in the Lesson	Action Steps
<p>Guide reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What vocabulary or concepts should be taught during the reading so that my students can understand the text? • What text features and illustrations need to be taught or pointed out in order to make the text accessible? • What are the big, important ideas of this text I want my students to understand? • What strategies can I teach or model that are appropriate for this text? • What questions can I ask students to check their understanding? • What reteaching will I need to do if they do not demonstrate understanding?

FIGURE 7.6 Lesson Step 2: Guide Reading

Students Take Turns Reading Page 4: (See Figure 7.7.) Now look at the picture. What does that look like? Why doesn't it look like a spider? How do you think the photographer took that picture?

Sometimes photographers can use cameras that can take pictures very close up. These special cameras have telephoto lenses—say that with me—that allow photographers taking a picture to magnify, or make larger, whatever it is they are taking a picture of.

Students Take Turns Reading Page 5: Can spiders hurt people? How do you know? Read where you learned that in the text. It is important to know that *most* does not mean *all*. In our class today, if I say, "Most of the students are wearing jeans," it means almost all of you but not everyone. So, thumbs up if this is true: All spiders are harmless. [Reteach as necessary.]

I'm going to read the first question for you. [Read aloud.] Sometimes when we come across a word we don't know, we can look at the picture. Sometimes we can figure out the

COMPARE AND CONTRAST TEXT AND PICTURES
MAKE INFERENCES

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

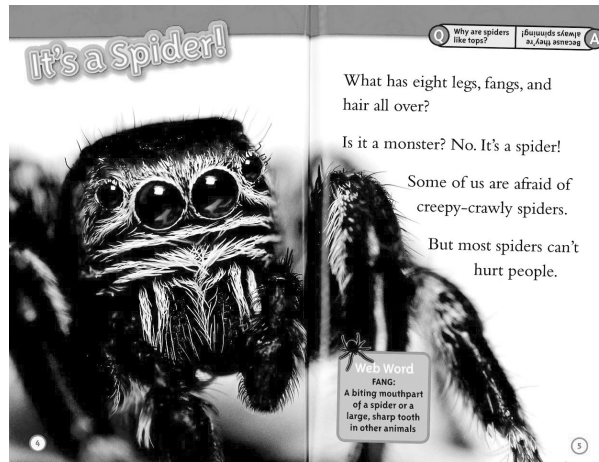


FIGURE 7.7 Spiders, Pages 4 and 5

Source: Marsh (2011)

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

word by reading the sentence or more sentences. In this case, if I don't know what *fang* means, I can look at the Web Word that the author included on the page. [Read or have a student read the definition.] Show me the fang on the photo of the spider.

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

So I learned that spiders have fangs, and most are harmless. What other facts did we learn about spiders? That's right. They have eight legs and are hairy, which means they have a lot of hair on their bodies. Point to the text that told me those facts, and let's read together. Let's examine, or look closely at the picture to see that they are hairy.

The last thing to notice. Did you see the "Q and A"? [Have students read or read to them.]

VISUALIZE INFORMATION

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Pages 8 and 9: (See Figure 7.8.) I'm going to read these pages, and then pause and let you visualize each of the spiders I am describing. *Visualize* means to close your eyes and picture in your mind what I am describing. [Read aloud this page, and pause after each sentence.] Before you open your eyes, hold up the number of fingers to show me how many body parts they have. Hold up your fingers to show me how many legs spiders have.

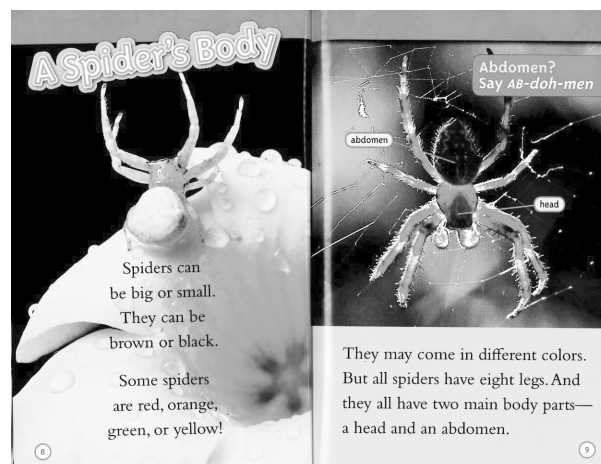


FIGURE 7.8 Spiders, Pages 8 and 9

Source: Marsh (2011)

Now I want you to take turns reading these sentences on page 8 to me. [Have students read.]

How are spiders the same? How are they different? How do you know from the text?

Now I want you to take turns reading the sentences on page 9 to me. What are the spiders' main body parts? Show me on the picture.

There was one tricky word I think we need to talk about today. It is the last word on page 9. You read *abdomen*, and maybe you remember that is how I pronounced it. But if you had read this by yourself it might have been tricky for some of you. Let me use my white board to show you how we can chunk this word to make it easier to read. [Show and slash ab/do/men.] Now I think I can read the first chunk: *ab*. And the last one is easy: *men*. The second one is a little harder. *Do* usually spells /doo/, but here it is pronounced "doh." If I look up at the top of the page I see a pronunciation guide. Let's read the word parts together. [Read.] If I come across a word that tricks me up, I remember to chunk it and look for help if the author has provided it for me.

Also, the author gives us some tools to use to figure out what that tricky word means. What do you see on the page that helps us know the meaning? That's right, we see labels. Let's read the labels together. [Read.]

Is this picture a good picture of a spider for this page? Why or why not? [Take ideas.] I think it is a good picture for this page, because it shows the eight legs and the two body parts.

Because we are part way through the reading and have already learned a lot, let's go back to our chart to see if we have confirmed any of the things we wrote down that we know about spiders, and if we have answered any of our questions. [Answers will vary based on the chart. Just do this orally, as you want to use this same chart with other small groups as well.]

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
SUMMARIZE AND SYNTHESIZE

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
SUMMARIZE AND SYNTHESIZE

MONITOR COMPREHENSION AND USE FIX-UP TIPS

COMPARE AND CONTRAST TEXT AND PICTURES

INTERPRET INFORMATION FROM GRAPHS, CHARTS, AND DIAGRAMS

SUMMARIZE AND SYNTHESIZE

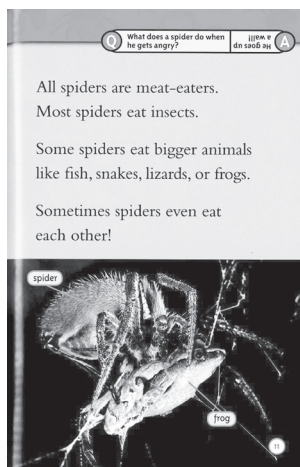


FIGURE 7.9 *Spiders*, Page 11

Source: Marsh (2011)

Page 11: (See Figure 7.9.) Before you read this page, I want you to cover up the words and just look at the picture. Read the labels to yourself, and raise your hand if you can describe what is happening in that picture. [Take responses.] So is it a fact to say that spiders eat frogs? Do ALL spiders eat frogs? Let's read to find out. [Students take turns reading.] Thumbs up if it is a fact that all spiders eat frogs. Let's read again where it says that SOME spiders eat frogs. [Read.] Is there one thing that ALL spiders eat? [Have students read the first sentence again.] That's right. All spiders eat meat. What else do spiders eat? [Take responses.]

When I read this page, I had a bit of trouble with the first two sentences. When I read "All spiders are meat eaters," I visualized, or pictured in my mind, a spider actually eating meat, like we do. And I knew that couldn't be right. Then I read, "Most spiders eat insects." So then I had to draw the conclusion that insects are considered "meat" for the spider to eat. If a spider eats a frog, he is eating meat. Maybe not the kind of meat we eat, but a frog is meat, not a plant. And of course that makes sense, because frogs certainly are not

COMPARE AND CONTRAST TEXT AND PICTURES

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS.

plants! So I had to reread the sentences and then pause and think about how they fit together. That was my fix-up strategy. When you read this page, did you find any words or sentences tricky? [Take responses and model a fix-up tip as necessary.]

MONITOR COMPREHENSION AND USE FIX-UP TIPS

Have Students Take Turns Reading Page 25: (See Figure 7.10.) Okay, when you were reading, what were all the ways the author and photographs taught you the meaning of the phrase *egg sac*? That's right. We have three pictures and we have the blue Web Word box.

I'm going to read this page again for you, and as I read where the spider keeps her egg sac, I want you to point to the right picture.

DETERMINE KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS.

ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

COMPARE AND CONTRAST TEXT AND PICTURES

Glossary: (See Figure 7.11.) Look at the top of this page, and let's sound out the word. Read *glossary*. A glossary in a text lists words that are interesting and maybe unfamiliar to us, and it gives the meanings of the words. [Have students partner up, and have each child read one definition to another child.] Okay, now, were any of these words tricky for you? [Answers will vary; use strategies to help students with words and meanings as appropriate.] Now I'm going to ask you some questions, and I want you to point to the correct box. Sometimes I will ask you to read or answer a question. Make sure your book is flat on your table in front of you and your pointing finger is ready. Where will I look to find the meaning of *prey*? Read the definition of *venom*. Find the picture of the spider eggs. Where are spider eggs held?

Now I'll have you each create a sentence using these terms. [Answers will vary; assist students as necessary.]

SUMMARIZE AND SYNTHESIZE



FIGURE 7.10 Spiders, Page 25

Source: Marsh (2011)

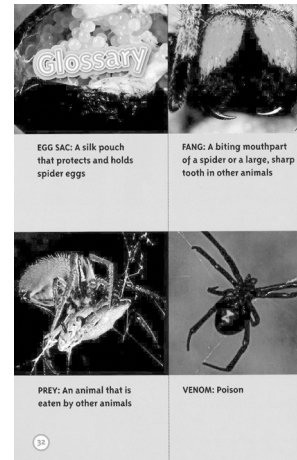


FIGURE 7.11 Spiders Glossary

Source: Marsh (2011)

PAUSE & REFLECT

At this point, you have read about Mrs. Stocker's classroom management, some of the preparation she has done for determining her groups, and the selected scripts from her Lesson Steps 1 and 2 from the lesson plan template. Before we go on to Lesson Steps 3 and 4, pause and jot down your thoughts about these concepts:

What steps have you taken or will you take to provide a classroom environment conducive to small group instruction?

How do you phase in your management system?

Why is reading the text ahead of time so critical?

What parts of the lesson are whole group? Which are small group?

Mrs. Stocker has many ELLs in her classroom. Look back at the lesson and notice the ways she pays particular attention to building vocabulary and concepts, explicitly teaching word meanings and leaving nothing to chance. How do you utilize some of these strategies for your ELLs?

Moving to Lesson Steps 3 and 4

What does Mrs. Stocker think about the first two lesson steps? Where does Mrs. Stocker go with this lesson after the reading? Here is her thinking, reflecting on where she has been and where she is going:

MY LESSON PLAN

For Lesson Steps 1 and 2, my focus was making sure all my students, regardless of their reading abilities, had access to the essential information. So doing the K-W-L in whole group made sense, and I'll return to that at the end, after all my students have read the text, in order to bring closure to the lesson.

As I guided students through the text (Lesson Step 2) it made sense to keep essentially the same questions and prompts for all groups, because again my focus was on comprehending the big ideas.

When I reflect on how my lesson plan script really reflects what I do with each group, it is pretty accurate. With my below-level readers I will tweak the lesson to do more of the reading to them before I ask them to read themselves. My above-level readers do more independent reading. But for the most part the prompts and questions are applicable for all groups, because my content goals are the same for all students.

For Lesson Step 3 (explicitly teach from the text; see Figure 7.12), I need now to really think about the different types of readers in my class. This is where the differentiation really comes in. I've scripted out how I differentiate the instruction in each group for this lesson step.

In this sample lesson, I would do all of Lesson Step 4 (facilitate connections; see Figure 7.13) in whole group. I would return to our K-W-L chart, and we would do this together, because we have all taken away the same content. This informational text provided many verbs, so I am going to begin to lay the groundwork for that particular part of speech, but in an age-appropriate way, through movement and discovery. For other extension activities, I have chosen two of my favorites, art and writing.

For Students Who Are Still Working on Decoding: Now that we have read the text and learned some facts about spiders, let's use this book to practice our reading skills. Please return

Step in the Lesson

Explicitly teach from the text.

(Choose one focus area for each group of students.)

Action Steps

- Are my students able to decode this text? If not, what phonetic elements and decoding strategies do they need to work on? How can I utilize words or passages from this text to practice decoding?
- Are my students fluent readers? How can I model fluency in this text? Can I follow up the reading with shared and unison reading for practicing fluency? Are there other ways for students to utilize this text for fluency-building (assisted reading with CD, partner reading, choral reading)?
- Which comprehension skills and strategies are needed to comprehend this text? How can I teach one of those skills or strategies explicitly? What practice opportunities can I follow up with to allow my students to apply that skill or strategy?
- What fix-up tips can I teach based on the reading of the text that will allow students to learn self-help skills in their independent reading?

FIGURE 7.12 Lesson Step 3: Explicitly Teach From the Text

TIP

If we differentiate only by levels of text, our below-level students may never get to grade level. Differentiating instruction is about providing different levels of support and instruction to ensure all students have access to grade-level text and content.

to page 25. [On the white board, write the words *she, keep, safe*.] Let's look at these words and read them together. What do you notice about all the vowel sounds? They are long. How do we know these are long vowels when we read?

How do we know to say the long *e* in *she*? This is called an *open vowel pattern*; the vowel is at the end of the word and not “fenced in on both sides” by consonants. When you have an open vowel at the end of a word or syllable, it is usually the long sound. [List on the white board and read: *he, me, hi, no*.] There are some words that don't follow that pattern, but try the long sound when the vowel is open, and if it doesn't sound right you can adjust. Let me give you an example. [Write “I went to school” on the white board. Read it aloud.] Let's look at the word *to*. If this is an open vowel, I would read this: “I went toe school.” Does this sound right? Sometimes you have to try it out and adjust.

How do we know to say the long *e* in *keep*? *ee* is a vowel pair. When we have two vowels together, one is telling the other its name, so we remember to use the long sound (or the name sound) of the vowel. [Write and read these words: *sleep, deep, feet*, any others you wish to practice.]

How do we know to say the long *a* in *safe*? I know you all know the “silent *e*” rule—if we have an *e* at the end of the word, the *e* is signaling the first vowel to say its long sound or its name. Let's practice with some words we know. [Write and read: *take, tame, lone, lane*, any others you wish to practice.]

[Return to page 25 for reading; have each student practice reading for fluency.]

For Students Who Can Decode But Are Working on Building Fluency: Let's turn back to page 5. [Read aloud the selection as if it had no punctuation. Then read aloud with expression.] What did you notice? That's right, the first time I read this I didn't pay any attention to the punctuation. And it was hard to understand the meaning of the sentences! It is important to remember that punctuation gives us signals on how to read, and how we read helps us understand what we are reading. [Have students practice reading page 5 with expression and attending to the punctuation chorally (all together), then with partners. Make the recorded reading available in the listening center.]

For Students Who Are Reading Well, Use This Text for Building Ability to Monitor Comprehension and Use Fix-Up Tips: In this text the author provided us with several ways to make sure we understood our reading. One was the vocabulary boxes. Let's go back and look at those. How is this helpful to me? If I'm reading and don't understand, I can read this explanation of what the word means and then put it into my sentence. For example, on page 5, if I read that first sentence and don't know what *fang* means, I can look at the Web Word box. I read that a fang is a “biting mouthpart.” So I can go back to the first sentence and put “biting mouthpart” in place of the word *fang*. That helps me make sense of the sentence. The author and illustrator were also very helpful in providing good pictures with labels. I learned in reading page 9 that spiders “all have two main body parts—a head and an abdomen.” But I don't know where they are. Notice the labels tell me where they are

on a spider's body. There are often these features in a nonfiction text that I can use when I am reading and don't understand what I'm reading. Let's practice using the Web Word on page 25. [Have students practice thinking out loud using this strategy.]

Wrapping Up the Reading: [In whole group, after each small group has read the text, return to the opening chart. Reread the first column.] Were any of our "knows" disproven or proven? [Go through and strike out any the class cannot prove (see Figure 7.14).]

TIP

Fix-up tips include reread, look at pictures and illustrations, think about what makes sense, read ahead, sequence events or steps, recall details, summarize.

Step in the Lesson

Facilitate connections.

(Choose one focus area for each group of students)

Action Steps

- Does this text experience authentically lend itself to making connections in writing, technology, additional text reading, content areas, or the fine arts? How can I formulate a meaningful follow-up activity to make these connections?

FIGURE 7.13 Lesson Step 4: Facilitate Connections

What do we KNOW?	What do we WONDER?	What did we LEARN?
Spiders are scary.	Why do we have spiders?	Spiders have eight legs, fangs, and hair.
Spiders are black.	How many eggs do they lay?	Spiders live everywhere.
Spiders lay eggs.	Do spiders have teeth?	Most spiders can't hurt people.
Spiders bite. Some spiders bite.	How do they make webs?	Spiders have two body parts.
Spiders eat bugs. Most spiders eat insects.	Do spiders make good pets?	Spiders can be all different colors.
Spiders make webs.		Spiders can eat meat like animals and each other.
		Spiders help us by eating pests.

FIGURE 7.14 Know-Wonder-Learn Chart 2

[Reread the "wonder" column.] Which of our questions were answered? [Strike out any for which an answer was not found.]

Now boys and girls, let's write in our final column, which is an L for "What we learned." [Chart the children's responses to "What did we learn?" Be sure to add any that you know were in the book. Have the children return to the text to show where they found the facts.]

Connections

- **Art:** To illustrate the physical characteristics of spiders (two body parts and eight legs), create spider models from Styrofoam balls and pipe cleaners.
- **Writing:** Read *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown. Following the pattern of each page of the original text, create *The Important Book About Spiders*.

Learn more about spiders: www.kids.nationalgeographic.com

First Grade Informational Text Standards Included

As Mrs. Stocker prepares her guided reading lessons, she considers the Common Core State Standards and how she will work toward meeting the standards within her guided reading experiences. She finds it helpful to always return to the end-of-year standards and check off how she is progressing as she formulates her lessons. An example of how this lesson included first-grade Informational Text Standards is included in Figure 7.15. A copy of this checklist is included in Appendix B of this volume.

Key Ideas and Details	
Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.	✓
Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.	✓
Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.	
Craft and Structure	
Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.	✓
Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text.	✓
Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.	✓
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.	✓
Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.	✓
Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic.	
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	
With prompting and support, read informational texts appropriately complex for grade 1.	✓

FIGURE 7.15 First Grade Standards for Informational Text

Source: NGA/CCSSO (2010b). Copyright © 2010 National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.

Other Standards Addressed

In addition to the Informational Text Standards checked off on the chart in Figure 7.15, these standards from other areas were included in this lesson plan:

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS STANDARDS (NGA/CCSSO, 2010B, P. 15)

- Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS (NGA/CCSSO, 2010B, P. 23)

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about Grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

LANGUAGE STANDARDS (NGA/CCSSO, 2010B, P. 27)

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on Grade 1 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

In Summary

This chapter tackled two challenging tasks we have as primary teachers. The first is setting up and maintaining a classroom management system that will allow us to meet productively in small, teacher-led groups while the rest of the students are also productively engaged. This is not an easy thing to do, but remember that young children can learn and adhere to systems of expected behavior if those behaviors have been explicitly taught and modeled, sufficiently practiced, and consistently reinforced. Children want to be a part of an orderly and systematic classroom, where they can know what to expect and they feel safe. A positive and productive climate is crucial for real teaching and learning to take place.

The second challenge we face is embracing and employing a system of differentiated instruction that puts instruction at the forefront: modifying and changing our instructional approach based on the needs of the reader, not based on levels of books. If our goals are to have all children at grade level and to give all children equal access to important and motivating nonfiction content, we need to consider how we can use grade-level informational text for all students. This requires us to understand how children progress and develop as readers, and how critical our instruction is to that process. The lesson template provides an effective roadmap for working within this paradigm.

In conclusion, a first grade guided reading lesson utilizing informational text requires careful planning. A teacher must consider the needs of the different levels of readers in the lesson design, paying particular attention to modifying the lesson to adapt to their unique stages of development. She must also set up a classroom environment conducive to providing those lessons in small group. Overall, the goal is to provide a reading experience in which all students are stretched to meet the demands of reading grade-level, complex text, so that they can all benefit from the important content that informational text presents.

TIP

Keeping a chart of the CCSS for your grade, and checking off standards as you address them throughout the year, is a great way to stay grounded in the standards as you develop lesson plans.

PAUSE & REFLECT

How do you utilize your understanding of different readers' needs to determine your groupings? How do you adjust your use of text and your guided reading for your different groups?

How can you use the ideas presented in this sample lesson in your classroom?
