COURSE OVERVIEW
3rd Grade English Language Arts

BUILDING CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Our English Language Arts units focus on building content knowledge. The Essential Questions of each unit, listed below, highlight the key understandings students learn across the 3rd grade course. In-depth answers to the Essential Questions can be found in the Unit Launch for each unit.

	LITERATURE	SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES
UNIT 1	• Why do people seek retaliation? • Is seeking retaliation an effective way to solve a problem? • How does Roald Dahl capture a reader's attention?	• How did the city of Rome expand and grow? • What was life like in the Roman Empire? What did the Romans value? • What led to the decline and fall of the Roman Empire? • What were some of the key contributions of ancient Roman civilization? How have they influenced the present?
UNIT 2	• What lessons can we learn from folktales? • Why are Brer Rabbit tales important? What can we learn from them?	• Why did the Pilgrims leave England? What challenges did they face when they reached the "New World"? • Who were the first people to live in present day New England? How were their lives and communities impacted by the Europeans? • What parts of the Thanksgiving story are true? What parts are myths? • Why is it important to look at history from multiple perspectives?
UNIT 3	• What messages do Roman myths convey about retaliation? • What messages do Roman myths convey about the power of generosity? • Who were the twelve major gods and goddesses who were honored and worshiped in ancient Rome? What role do they play in different myths?	• What is the animal kingdom? What types of animals make up the animal kingdom? • Why are life cycles important? Are all animal life cycles the same? • What happens to animals in an ecosystem when the environment changes? How have animals adapted to meet changes in the environment?
UNIT 4	• What different roles do people play in bullying? • What does it mean to be accepting of ourselves? • What does it mean to be accepting of others?	• In what ways are Indigenous cultures in the United States similar and different? • How did the arrival of European explorers and settlers impact Indigenous societies? How is this impact still seen today? • Who are some Indigenous heroes, and how have they changed the world?
UNIT 5	• What are the characteristics of a strong friendship? • What can death teach us about how to live?	• What is religion? Why is it important to learn about other religions? • What are the key beliefs of the major world religions?

READING STANDARDS KEY UNDERSTANDINGS

Understanding the core text(s) and building content knowledge are the most important goals of any Fishtank ELA unit. For each Literature and Science and Social Studies unit, we have identified a few reading standards and key understandings that help readers fully understand the core text(s) and content. The key understandings build from unit to unit, often matching the increase in text complexity. These understandings should not be taught in isolation, rather they should be used to help students unpack and explore the different features of complexity found in the core text(s). The key reading standards and understandings work in conjunction with the unit's spiral reading standards, standards that students use every time they read and interact with a text, and the additional unit reading standards, standards that are new to the particular unit but are not key standards. Guidance on the key understandings can be found in the Unit Launch and Enhanced Lesson Plans for each unit.

	LITERATURE	SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES
UNIT 1	• A character's full personality is made up of a combination of traits. (RL.3.3) • Character feelings help a reader understand why decisions are made in a particular moment. (RL.3.3) • Characters are developed through details that reveal their actions, thoughts, feelings, and relationships with others. (RL.3.3) • (Spiral: RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.3.7, RL.3.10)	• Text features and graphic elements help readers locate and make sense of information. (RI.3.5, RI.3.7) • To understand key events in a historical text, readers need to think about what happened and why. (RI.3.3) • The main idea is the central point or big picture understanding that the reader should get from the text. (RI.3.2) • Authors include different types of details in a text. (RI.3.2) • (Spiral: RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.5, RI.3.7, RI.3.10)
UNIT 2	• When readers recount events in a story, they tell or write events from the story using a clearly sequenced order of events. (RL.3.2) • To understand how a character influences the sequence of events, readers think about what he or she did to cause key events in the story. (RL.3.3) • Authors reveal the central message of a story by using predictable patterns and pathways. (RL.3.2) • (Spiral: RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.3.7, RL.3.10)	• Events in historical texts are often described chronologically (in the order they happen). Readers use chronology to explain the connection between events. (RI.3.3) • To describe key events in a historical text, readers need to think about what happened and why. (RI.3.3) • Comparing and contrasting details from multiple texts on the same topic helps readers understand multiple perspectives of a historical event. (RI.3.9) • (Spiral: RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.5, RI.3.7, RI.3.10)
UNIT 3	• Characters' actions and feelings directly contribute to the sequence of events. (RL.3.3) • Authors reveal the central message of a story by using predictable patterns and pathways. (RL.3.2) • (Spiral: RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.3.7, RL.3.10)	• Authors use different text structures to help readers understand and describe scientific ideas or concepts. (RI.3.3, RI.3.8) • Graphic features, such as illustrations and diagrams, help readers make sense of key events in an informational text. (RI.3.7) • (Spiral: RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.5, RI.3.10

UNIT 4	• Stories in prose use predictable structures to help readers understand the story. (RL.3.5)	• Readers use chronology and cause and effect to explain the connection between historical events. (RI.3.3)
	• Stories written in verse use predictable structures to help readers understand the story. (RL.3.5)	• Analyzing the relationship between the text and illustrations helps a reader determine the full meaning of a text. (RI.3.7)
	• Character relationships can directly impact the sequence of events and development of the central message. (RL.3.2, RL.3.3)	• (Spiral: RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.5, RI.3.10)
	• (Spiral: RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.3.7, RL.3.10)	
UNIT 5	• To describe a character, readers must notice a character's thoughts, actions, relationships, perspectives, and conflicts. (RL.3.3)	• To determine the main idea of a text, readers think about which details best support the main idea. (RI.3.2)
	• Characters change based on their relationships with others. (RL.3.3)	• Authors use different text structures to help readers understand and describe ideas or concepts. (RI.3.3, RI.3.8)
	• Authors use precise words and phrases to help readers understand the characters and setting. (RL.3.4)	• (Spiral: RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.5, RI.3.7, RI.3.10)
	• (Spiral: RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.3.7, RL.3.10)	

SENTENCE-LEVEL AND PARAGRAPH-LEVEL FOCUS AREAS

Fishtank ELA units focus on teaching students how to write coherent sentences and cohesive paragraphs and essays. In both Literature and Science and Social Studies units, students learn how to construct coherent sentences in order to show a deeper understanding of texts and content. As the year progresses, students learn how to use more complex and nuanced types of sentences to write opinion and informational paragraphs and essays. These Writing Focus Areas work in conjunction with the unit's spiral writing standards, standards that students use every time they write paragraphs and essays, and the additional unit language standards, language standards that are new to the particular unit but are not key standards. Guidance on how to teach sentence-level and paragraph-level writing is included in the Enhanced Lesson Plans of each unit.

	LITERATURE		SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES	
	Sentence-Level Focus Areas	Paragraph-Level Focus Areas	Sentence-Level Focus Areas	Paragraph-Level Focus Areas
UNIT 1	• Write complete sentences. (L.3.1.i, L.3.3.b) • Edit for complete sentences. (L.3.1.i) • Determine sentence types. (L.3.1.i) • Expand sentences by adding details that tell when, who, and why. (L.3.3.a) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	N/A	• Expand sentences by adding details that tell when, where, and why. (L.3.3.a) • Use coordinating conjunctions "because," "but," and "so." (L.3.1.h) • Edit for complete sentences. (L.3.1.i) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	N/A
UNIT 2	• Combine simple sentences by adding conjunctions and pronouns. (L.3.1.f, L.3.1.h) • Use subordinating conjunctions "before," "after," "when," and "if." (L.3.1.h) • Write topic sentences. • Edit for complete sentences and spelling. (L.3.2.e, L.3.2.f, L.3.2.g) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	N/A	• Combine simple sentences by adding conjunctions and pronouns. (L.3.1.f, L.3.1.h) • Use subordinating conjunctions "even though," "although," and "though." (L.3.1.h) • Write topic sentences. • Edit for complete sentences, capitalization, and spelling. (L.3.2.a, L.3.2.e, L.3.2.f, L.3.2.g) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Use a single-paragraph outline to brainstorm cohesive paragraphs. (W.3.2.a) • Understand the components of a topic sentence. (W.3.2.a) • Draft topic sentences. • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)

UNIT 3	• Write simple, compound, and complex sentences. (L.3.1.i, L.3.1.h) • Edit for complete sentences and spelling. (L.3.2.e, L.3.2.f, L.3.2.g) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	N/A	• Use transition words and phrases in appropriate genres, to illustrate points and show time and sequence. (L.3.6) • Use subordinating conjunctions "since" and "while." (.L3.1.h) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Use a single-paragraph outline to brainstorm cohesive paragraphs. (W.3.2.a) • Draft topic sentences. (W.3.2.a) • Elaborate on supporting details. (W.3.2.b) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)
UNIT 4	• Use appositives to vary sentence structure. (L.3.1.a, L.3.1.i) • Edit for complete sentences, capitalization, and commas. (L.3.2.a, L.3.2.b) • Write simple, compound, and complex sentences. (L.3.1.i) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Use single-paragraph outlines to brainstorm cohesive paragraphs. (W.3.1.a) • Understand components of a topic sentence. (W.3.1.a) • Differentiate between topic and supporting details. (W.3.1.b) • Write concluding sentences. (W.3.1b) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Expand sentences by adding details that tell who, what, where, when, or why. (L.3.3.a, L.3.1.i) • Edit for complete sentences and spelling. • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Use a single-paragraph outline to brainstorm cohesive paragraphs. (W.3.2.a) • Understand the components of a topic sentence. (W.3.2.a) • Differentiate between topic and supporting details (W.3.2.b) • Write concluding sentences. (W.3.2.d) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)
UNIT 5	• Combine sentences using appositives, pronouns, and conjunctions. (L.3.1.f, L.3.1.h, L.3.1.i) • Edit for complete sentences and spelling. • Write simple, compound, and complex sentences. (L.3.1.i) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Use single-paragraph outlines to brainstorm cohesive paragraphs. (W.3.1.a) • Understand components of a topic sentence. (W.3.1.a) • Differentiate between topic and supporting details. (W.3.1.b) • Write concluding sentences. (W.3.1.d) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Combine sentences using appositives, pronouns, and conjunctions. (L.3.1.f, L.3.1.h, L.3.1.i) • Edit for complete sentences and spelling. • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)	• Use single-paragraph outlines to brainstorm cohesive paragraphs. (W.3.2.a) • Understand the components of a topic sentence. (W.3.2.A) • Differentiate between topic and supporting details. (W.3.2b) • Write concluding sentences. (W.3.2.d) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.10)

GENRE-BASED WRITING FOCUS AREAS

All Fishtank ELA units include longer, process-based writing assignments. These assignments challenge students to use what they learn about coherent sentence and paragraph construction while also exploring the different genres of writing. In Literature units, students engage with a range of narrative writing and opinion writing that builds from unit to unit. In Science and Social Studies units, students engage with a range of research projects and opinion writing that also build from unit to unit. By the end of the year, students are able to write well-crafted narratives, informational texts, and opinion pieces as a way of showing understanding of key unit content. All longer research and opinion projects also require students to present and share what they have learned with others.

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

	Narrative Writing	Informational Writing	Opinion Writing
UNIT 1	• Brainstorm a logical sequence of events. (W.3.3.a) • Introduce characters and setting. (W.3.3.a) • Write events that unfold in a logical way and include a problem, solution, key events, and lesson. (W.3.3.a) • Use different strategies to start and end a story. (W.3.3.d) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10)	• Conduct short research projects to build knowledge. (W.3.7) • Take notes and sort evidence into categories. (W.3.8) • Introduce a topic and group related information together. (W.3.2.a) • Develop the topic with facts. (W.3.2.b) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10, SL3.4, SL3.5)	N/A
UNIT 2	• Brainstorm a logical sequence of events. (W.3.3.a) • Introduce characters and setting. (W.3.3.a) • Write events that unfold in a logical way. (W.3.3.a) • Use temporal words and phrases to manage the sequence of events. (W.3.3.c) • Write using correct verb tenses. (L.3.1.e, L.3.1.d) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10)	• Conduct short research projects to build knowledge. (W.3.7) • Take notes and sort evidence into categories. (W.3.8) • Introduce a topic and group related information together. (W.3.2.a) • Include illustrations and text features to aid comprehension. (W.3.2.a) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10, SL.3.4, SL.3.5)	• Clearly state an opinion. (W.3.1.a) • Provide reasons that support an opinion. (W.3.1.b)

UNIT 3	• Use dialogue and description to show character responses. (W.3.3.b, L.3.2.c) • Use relevant text details or background knowledge from the text to develop characters, ideas, or situations. • Use temporal words to show a sense of time (when, after, later, etc.). (W.3.3.c, L.3.6) • Use powerful vocabulary and precise words to create a picture. (L.3.1.a, L.3.1.g, W.3.3.b, L.3.3.a, L.3.5.c, L.3.6) • Provide a sense of closure. (W.3.3.d) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10)	N/A	• Clearly state an opinion. (W.3.1.a, RL.3.6) • Provide reasons that support an opinion. (W.3.1.b) • Use appropriate transition words to connect your reasons. (W.3.1.c, L.3.6) • Include a concluding statement. (W.3.1.d)
UNIT 4	• Use relevant text details or background knowledge from the text to develop characters, ideas, or situations. • Write a sequence of events that unfolds naturally. (W.3.3.a) • Use precise words and phrases to develop events and experiences. (L.3.1.a, L.3.1.g, W.3.3.b, L.3.3.a, L.3.5.c, L.3.6) • Provide a sense of closure. (W.3.3.d) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10)	• Introduce a topic and group related information together. (W.3.2.a) • Develop a topic with facts, definitions, and details. (W.3.2.b) • Write a concluding sentence. (W.3.2.d) • Include text features and visual supports to aid comprehension. (W.3.2.a) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10, SL.3.4, SL.3.5)	• Clearly state an opinion. (W.3.1.a, RL.3.6) • Provide reasons that support an opinion. (W.3.1.b) • Use appropriate transition words to connect your reasons. (W.3.1.c, L.3.6) • Include a concluding statement. (W.3.1.d)
UNIT 5	N/A	• Conduct short research projects to build knowledge. (W.3.7) • Introduce a topic and group related information together. (W.3.2.a) • Develop a topic with facts, definitions, and details. (W.3.2.b) • Write a concluding sentence. (W.3.2.d) • Include text features and visual supports to aid comprehension. (W.3.2.a) • (Spiral: W.3.4, W.3.5, W.3.6, W.3.10, SL.3.4, SL.3.5)	• Clearly state an opinion. (W.3.1.a, RL.3.6) • Provide reasons that support an opinion. (W.3.1.b) • Use appropriate transition words to connect your reasons. (W.3.1.c, L.3.6) • Include a concluding statement. (W.3.1.d)

SPEAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS AREAS

All Fishtank ELA units require students to use discussions and oral discourse as a way of deepening content understandings. Learning how to have productive discussions, either in small groups, partners, or as a whole class, is something students need to be taught. All Fishtank Literature and Science and Social Studies units include Speaking and Listening Focus Areas that progress and build from unit to unit. More guidance on the different Speaking and Listening Focus Areas can be found in our Guide to Academic Discourse.

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

UNIT 1	- Prepare for discussion. (SL.3.1.a) - Elaborate to support ideas. Provide evidence or examples to justify and defend a point clearly. (SL.3.1.a, SL.3.1.d) - Use specific vocabulary. Use vocabulary that is specific to the subject and task to clarify and share thoughts. (L.3.6) (Spiral: SL.3.1.b, SL.3.6)
UNIT 2	- Elaborate to support ideas. Provide evidence or examples to justify and defend a point clearly. (SL.3.1.a, SL.3.1.d) - Use specific vocabulary. Use vocabulary that is specific to the subject and task to clarify and share thoughts. (L.3.6) (Spiral: SL.3.1.b, SL.3.6)
UNIT 3	- Elaborate to support ideas. Provide evidence or examples to justify and defend a point clearly. (SL.3.1.a, SL.3.1.d) - Use specific vocabulary. Use vocabulary that is specific to the subject and task to clarify and share thoughts. (L.3.6) - Build on a partner's ideas. Seek to genuinely understand what their peers are saying, and then build on. (SL.3.1.c) (Spiral: SL.3.1.b, SL.3.6)
UNIT 4	- Build on a partner's ideas. Seek to genuinely understand what their peers are saying, and then build on. (SL.3.1.c, SL.3.1.d) - Paraphrase to make meaning. Paraphrase what others are saying in order to keep track of key ideas in a discussion. (SL.3.1.c) - Question and clarify. Seek to clarify a particular point a student makes by asking follow-up questions. (SL.3.1.c, SL.3.3) (Spiral: SL.3.1.b, SL.3.6)
UNIT 5	- Question and clarify to build understanding. Seek to clarify a particular point a student makes by asking follow-up questions. (SL.3.1.c, SL.3.3) - Build on and challenge partner's ideas. (SL.3.1.c, SL.3.1.d) - Synthesize to build deeper meaning. Synthesize everything from the discussion into a coherent statement at the end of the discussion. (Spiral: SL.3.1.b, SL.3.6)

FLUENCY FOCUS AREAS

Reading fluency is essential for reading comprehension. All Fishtank Literature units include targeted Fluency Focus Areas. Guidance on how to model and reinforce the Fluency Focus Areas is included in the Enhanced Lesson Plans and the Fluency Package of each unit.

LITERATURE

UNIT 1	• Read with expression and volume to match interpretation of the passage. (RF.3.4.a, RF.3.4.b)
	• Use proper intonation to show interpretation of the passage. (RF.3.4.a, RF.3.4.b)
	• Read with a rate appropriate to task and purpose. (RF.3.4)
UNIT 2	• Self-correct when reading difficult words and sentence structures. (RF.3.4.c, RF.3.3.b, RF.3.3.c, RF.3.3.d)
	• Read smoothly and with accuracy. (RF.3.4)
	• Use proper intonation to show interpretation of the passage. (RF.3.4.b)
	• Read with a rate appropriate to task and purpose. (RF.3.4)
UNIT 3	• Self-correct when reading difficult words and sentence structures. (RF.3.4.c, RF.3.3.b, RF.3.3.c, RF.3.3.d)
	• Read smoothly and with accuracy. (RF.3.4)
	• Read in a conversational manner that matches the purpose for reading. (RF.3.4)
	• Read with a rate appropriate to task and purpose. (RF.3.4)
UNIT 4	• Adhere to punctuation while reading, particularly commas. (RF.3.4)
	• Read verse with rhythm and flow. (RF.3.4)
	• Self-correct when reading difficult words and sentence structures. (RF.3.4.c, RF.3.3.b, RF.3.3.c, RF.3.3.d)
	• Read with a rate appropriate to task and purpose. (RF.3.4)
UNIT 5	• Adhere to punctuation when reading, particularly end marks. (RF.3.4)
	• Read dialogue in a way that shows interpretation of the passage. (RF.3.4)
	• Self-correct when reading difficult words and sentence structures. (RF.3.4.c, RF.3.3.b, RF.3.3.c, RF.3.3.d)
	• Read with a rate appropriate to task and purpose. (RF.3.4)

VOCABULARY FOCUS AREAS

Vocabulary development is an essential part of all Fishtank ELA units. The vocabulary focus of a unit varies depending on the vocabulary demands of the particular text(s). We do not identify priority focus areas for vocabulary in each unit; all of the following vocabulary focus areas are spiraled across all Fishtank ELA units.

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

ALL UNITS	- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text. (RL.3.4, RI.3.4) - Distinguish literal from nonliteral language. (RL.3.4, L.3.5.a) - Use sentence-level context to figure out the meaning of a word. (L.3.4.a) - Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known affix is added. (L.3.4.b, RF.3.3.a, RF.3.3.b) - Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of a new word with the same root. (L.3.4.c) - Use glossaries and dictionaries to confirm the meaning of a word or phrase. (L.3.4) - Distinguish shades of meaning among related words. (L.3.5.c)