

# Study Guide for



*Reading and Writing*  
**GENRE**

with **Purpose**

*in K–8 Classrooms*

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# Introduction

As we consider ways to improve student learning, we need to consider a few of the elements that support learning for both students and teachers. All learners, children and adults alike, need to see the relevance—the authentic purpose—of what they are learning. It is what makes learning exciting and growth sustainable—and it is the basic premise of this book.

We designed the book to be immediately relevant to your practice; with it, we hope you bring authentic purpose to inform your practice and reinvigorate your teaching. Research shows that knowledge is deepened when the learner is able to process material over time and with others, so we hope you have that opportunity. As you read this book with your colleagues, you will be able to discuss the principles found in each chapter and begin to apply them to the projects and lessons you design. Additionally, we hope that you have the chance to reflect on the lessons you are teaching. Then, through your collaboration, you will continue to refine, share, and develop even more projects and lessons to support your students’ “reading and writing genre with purpose.”

The book introduces five basic principles to underpin your instruction and revisits these principles in each chapter as they apply to different kinds of text. The authors respond to common dilemmas that teachers face when having to make instructional decisions such as preparing students for high-stakes tests. These will make for interesting conversations as you and your colleagues grapple with how to best use your time in ways that will transform learning and guide students to see the power they hold as competent and engaged readers and writers.

While this book is meant to support instruction—whether or not that instruction is explicitly focused on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—the book has special relevance to those who are implementing the Standards. We hope you will use the questions and activities found in this study guide to help address CCSS and guide students toward college and career readiness.

## Chapter 1

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# Reading and Writing in a World of Varied Texts

*Questions to ask yourself and to explore with your colleagues:*

- In the past when you've noticed students seem unengaged in reading or writing, what are some ways you've successfully infused purpose into your students' work?
- Discuss with your colleagues the definition of genre (page 5). What was their response?
- What does it mean to teach "genre with purpose" as the authors describe?
- What experiences have you seen in your life (in and out of the classroom) related to what the authors describe as "natural predisposition to learn and use genres" (page 3)?
- What examples of real-world application (as described on page 12) do you see as possibilities within your own community?
- Consider the suggestions for "Making teaching genre with purpose work in your context" on pp. 18–20. Because the application of these principles is very dependent on your particular context, what advantages does your context offer for the implementation of these principles? What constraints do you see to implementing these principles, and how can you begin to address these?
- The table below shows how chapters of this book map onto the broad text type categories in the Common Core State Standards (recognizing that categories and chapters will necessarily have some overlap). What connections do you see between this book and the Common Core?

	<b>Primarily Aligned with Reading Standards for Literature</b>	<b>Primarily Aligned with Reading Standards for Informational Text</b>	<b>Primarily Aligned with Writing Standard 1, 2, or 3?</b>
Chapter 2: Narrative Genres	×		3
Chapter 3: Procedural Genres		×	2
Chapter 4: Informational Genres		×	2
Chapter 5: Dramatic Genres	×		3
Chapter 6: Persuasive Genres		×	1

- Consider the five principles for teaching genre developed in this book (pp. 16–18):
  - Design compelling, communicatively meaningful environments
  - Provide exposure and experience
  - Explicitly teach genre features
  - Explicitly teach genre-specific or genre-sensitive strategies
  - Offer ongoing coaching and feedback.

Which of these do you think are a strength of your teaching already, and which would you like to work on in the coming semester or year?

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Where do I already use this principle?</b>	<b>Where can I work on this principle this year?</b>
Design compelling, communicatively meaningful environments		
Provide exposure and experience		
Explicitly teach genre features		
Explicitly teach genre-specific or genre-sensitive strategies		
Offer ongoing coaching and feedback		

As you make your way through the chapters dealing with each specific genre, keep the following in mind:

- What are you already doing with genres in this category? What are you satisfied with, and where would you like to make your practice more effective and engaging?
- How does each chapter provide you with ideas for addressing the Common Core State Standards in each of the English Language Arts and Literacy strands?
- Each chapter in the book includes one to two pages of common characteristics of the types of text discussed in that chapter as well as one or more texts annotated to show the use of these features. How might you make use of these pages as a teacher?
- How might a project address the genres featured in this chapter along with genres featured in other chapters you've read?

## Chapter 2

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# Sharing and Making Meaning of Experience: Narrative Genres

*Questions to ask yourself and to explore with your colleagues:*

- How might you use your students' heritage or traditions to create a project that would naturally allow you to embed your narrative text instruction in a project?
- What current assignments will you need to remove or adjust to make room for more authentic narrative assignments?
- The Family History Project allowed Carmela to create a place where ELL parents feel welcome and valued. Discuss ways you can further create your classroom as a welcoming place for all parents, especially those of ELLs?
- How does the Family History Project, as well as the Evacuation Day project discussed later in the chapter, help you to meet the demands of the CCSS?
- On page 43, the authors describe story mapping as an effective way to help students make sense of narrative text. Share mapping tools that you have used to support this important work.
- The authors discuss the power of providing feedback to students. How do you incorporate feedback into students' daily reading and writing? In what ways might you make this feedback more sensitive to genre? How might you improve the quality of your feedback to elevate your students' thinking and writing?
- Work with colleagues to develop a project that involves narrative genres, enacts the five principles, and addresses specific Common Core State Standards. (Please note: Appendix A provides a Project Planning Sheet to correspond with each chapter and Appendix B provides a general Project Steps Planning Sheet. Consider using these as a group, or designing your own.)

## Chapter 3

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# Learning How and Teaching Others: Procedural Genres

*Questions to ask yourself and to explore with your colleagues:*

- The authors emphasize rethinking popular procedural text assignments. What are some ways to stretch students to craft more purposeful and sophisticated procedural texts?
- What are some mentor texts you can use for a unit on procedural texts?
- Consider the characteristics of procedural texts on pp. 68–69. How will you make decisions about which text characteristics to teach to your students? How might you teach these characteristics so that they become part of your students’ “writing toolkit”?
- The authors discuss *think-aloud* as a great way to model reading of procedural texts. What are some ways to prepare for an effective think-aloud?
- What are reading and writing strategies that are especially important for reading and writing procedural text? How can you tell whether students are using these strategies, and what can you do if they aren’t?
- Work with colleagues to develop a project that involves procedural genres, enacts the five principles, and addresses specific Common Core State Standards.

## *Chapter 4*

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# **Developing and Community Expertise: Informational Genres**

*Questions to ask yourself and to explore with your colleagues:*

- How does having an interested audience engage students in reading or writing informational texts?
- How can you enhance the amount of exposure to and experience with informational texts you provide to students?
- How do informational text assignments aligned with Principle One differ from “reports”?
- Discuss the possibility of teaching genre-specific strategies using the gradual release of responsibility.
- What strategies can you teach students for planning their informational writing?
- How does the “octopus approach” help decrease the possibility of plagiarism?
- Work with colleagues to develop a project that involves informative/explanatory genres, enacts the five principles, and addresses specific Common Core State Standards.

## Chapter 5

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# Exploring Meaning Through Performance: Dramatic Genres

*Questions to ask yourself and to explore with your colleagues:*

- In what ways do you currently incorporate performance into your curriculum?
- In what ways do you currently read dramatic texts in your classroom? How do you use film and video?
- Discuss with your colleagues which of the Common Core State Standards for Reading Literature could be addressed by engaging students in preparing to perform a play or dramatic reading.
- Which Common Core State Standards for Writing could you address through engaging students in writing poetry or drama?
- What characteristics of dramatic texts are new to you (see pp. 124–126)? Which can you imagine teaching at your grade level?
- The authors suggest a variety of ways that all students can participate in performance. Consider their suggestions and your own ideas and begin to plan how you could incorporate more drama into your students' classroom experiences.
- Work with colleagues to develop a project that involves dramatic genres, enacts the five principles, and addresses specific Common Core State Standards.

## Chapter 6

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# Effecting Change: Persuasive Genres

*Questions to ask yourself and to explore with your colleagues:*

- There are many kinds of persuasive texts. Work together to name as many as you can.
- In this chapter, as in the chapters that come before, the authors make the case that students learn genres best when they read and write them for the same reasons people read and write those genres outside of a school context. Discuss some possible situations in your school or community that might provide a compelling reason to try to persuade others to think or act a certain way.
- The five-paragraph essay has been a source of concern to writing teachers for many years, with some teachers organizing their writing programs around it, while other teachers avoid it as artificial. Consider the authors' stance, shared on pp. 146–147. Discuss your feelings and how you and your colleagues will manage this issue.
- Examine reading standards related to argument in the Common Core State Standards (e.g., those that have to do with identifying reasons an author gives to support a point). Examine the writing standard for argument (1) at each grade level. Based on the chapter, how might you support students in meeting these standards?
- Consider the characteristics of persuasive texts on pp. 149–150. How will you make decisions about which text characteristics to teach to your students? How might you teach these characteristics so that they become part of your students' "writing toolkit"?
- Work with colleagues to develop a project that involves persuasive genres, enacts the five principles, and addresses specific Common Core State Standards.