This accessible unit welcomes second-graders into the world of nonfiction writing by rallying them to write lots of little books on anything they know a lot about—soccer, an ice cream shop, ladybugs—in ways that teach their reader about the topic. This unit helps students feel that puffed-up pride of being an expert and taps into their eagerness to show and tell, channeling them to write with details and writerly craft.

**Unit Overview**

The unit begins with students writing non-fiction chapter books and then builds in sophistication, ending with students taking all they’ve learned over the course of the unit and writing different kinds of nonfiction books, with transference and independence as key goals.

**Fit with the Core Units of Study**

*The How-To Guide for Nonfiction Writing* gives students the opportunity to lift the level of their nonfiction writing before diving into writing about science in Unit 2: *Lab Reports and Science Books* in The Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing series. If you are also teaching the Units of Study for Teaching Reading series, you might choose to teach this unit alongside Unit 2, *Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction*. Whenever possible, it is helpful to make these reading-writing connections for your students.
This unit taps into the power of play as students move into reading increasingly complex texts with new words to solve on every page. What better way to rally your students to this challenging work than to turn to them and say, "Let’s play word detectives and use everything we know to work hard and solve all the tricky words in our books!"? Then watch as your students transform themselves into the kinds of readers you imagine they can be—all the while learning so much more about the process of reading.

**Unit Overview**

The first bend of this unit has children learning to become word detectives, being alert for difficult words, using what they know to solve those words, and checking their attempts. In the second bend, students are ready to officially become word detectives, able to draw on prior knowledge, increase their bank of high-frequency words, and use known words to help figure out unknown words. The final bend focuses on ways that readers look closely at words and use visual information effectively. You will teach children to use their phonics knowledge to solve words in continuous text, as well as using knowledge of common spelling patterns, contractions, and compound words. Throughout the unit, you’ll also ask children to develop their fluency skills.

**Fit with the Core Units of Study**

You will likely want to teach this unit fairly early in your first-grade year after setting up the routines and structures laid out in Unit 1, *Building Good Reading Habits* from the Units of Study for Teaching Reading. This unit will be helpful if you have many students who would benefit from additional instruction with foundational reading skills such as learning to monitor their reading; developing efficient word-solving skills that consistently use meaning, structure, and visual information; expanding their knowledge of phonics and its application in context; and strengthening fluency.
Mystery

Foundational Skills in Disguise

Brooke Geller & Alissa Reicherter

Your students will be so excited to read mysteries that they’ll leap at the chance to do the work required to solve the mystery. This genre naturally supports close and inferential reading as students notice clues and think, “What could this detail suggest?” When youngsters weigh whether this or that character could be a suspect, they do the deep thinking about characters’ traits and motivations. Mysteries also teach readers to synthesize as they consider whether something that happens in Chapter 7 perhaps relates back to a question that was raised in Chapter 4. And many mysteries are part of a series, written to lure readers to move from one book to another.

Unit Overview

In the first bend of this unit, students will read several mysteries, each time working hard to solve the mystery. In the second bend, you’ll shift students from thinking about each individual mystery to considering patterns across mysteries. Then in bend three, the unit will take a turn. Students will now read any fiction, no longer necessarily choosing only mysteries. You’ll teach them that they can apply all they have learned to do as mystery readers to any fiction book they happen to be reading.

Fit with the Core Units of Study

We believe that third-graders will benefit from starting their year with two units that emphasize fiction reading. We imagine this unit following Unit 1, Building a Reading Life, in The Units of Study for Teaching Reading series. It can, alternatively, be taught anytime in the spring. If you teach a class of readers who are reading considerably below benchmark levels, you may decide to wait and teach it once your kids’ skills have developed a bit so they have access to more books.
This unit presents students with a crystal clear path to help them craft structured literary essays. Across the unit, you’ll teach students strategies to read analytically and grow strong interpretations grounded in the text. You’ll help them craft claims and develop them across their essays, drawing on varied techniques to do so. This unit prepares students to read, reread, and rethink the text in increasingly sophisticated ways—to notice things they might otherwise pass by and to have new and original thoughts about it—skills that are important, not only for high-stakes tests, but also for other challenging academic work students will do throughout their lives.

**Unit Overview**

While this unit is ultimately a writing unit, know that you will also strengthen your students’ reading skills. In the first bend in the unit, students learn to read closely and carefully, and to pay attention to the details in their texts that carry significance. Then, as the unit continues, students shift their focus to interpretation, developing deeper ideas about the lessons and themes in their texts.

**Fit with the Core Units of Study**

This unit provides a solid foundation for the opinion-writing students will do in Units 3 and 4 in The Units of Study for Teaching Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing series. In addition, you can teach this unit after Interpretation Book Clubs: Analyzing Themes in The Units of Study for Teaching Reading series. You will find many opportunities to reference teaching points and charts from that unit to support students in their new writing work.