



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Jane Goodall, Renowned Naturalist and Champion of Chimpanzees

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.05.06
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How can the teacher of young children help them to understand the crucial role each person must come to play in repairing the health of our natural environment? Fostering such thinking at an early age will help children to become responsible inhabitants of the earth. This curriculum unit will begin with my students learning about the fascinating life and work of Jane Goodall, a tireless advocate of chimpanzees. Her life, her love of animals from a very early age, her patient techniques of studying chimpanzees in the wild, and her groundbreaking discoveries about them will effectively engage the children's interest and, so, serve as a stimulating topic for them to read and to write about. They will learn about how this lover of animals became a great scientist. Her philosophy is really quite simple: As we learn to care about all species, we better appreciate the interconnections among all living beings.

Our focus in third grade is on literacy, helping students develop and strengthen their reading skills as well as their writing skills. My focus in this unit is on reading and writing informational texts. Indeed, this genre of nonfiction presents its own unique set of challenges which students must learn to master. We as teachers must provide them with the strategies that will help them to 'unlock' the knowledge found in such texts. This unit will be interdisciplinary in scope, incorporating reading, writing, science, poetry and art, and will, I believe, provide topics of high interest that will motivate even the most reluctant reader and writer.

Part of the third-grade reading curriculum involves immersing students in nonfiction reading and helping them appreciate and use the many features inherent in these texts. There is a natural progression from the teaching of reading nonfiction to that of writing it. I plan to focus on three types of writing in this unit: journal writing, writing descriptive observations and writing an informational text. I have used an excellent and very teacher-friendly resource book entitled *Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports* by Lucy Calkins and Laurie Pessah to help structure my lessons on teaching young students to write informational texts or as they refer to them, 'all-about' books.

(Recommended for Reading, Writing, and Science, grades 2-5.)

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