



EXPEDITIONARY
LEARNING

Grade 4: Module 1B: Unit 3: Lesson 1

Introducing Biographies: *A River of Words*



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Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)

- I can explain what a text says using specific details from the text. (RI.4.1)
- I can make inferences using specific details from the text. (RI.4.1)
- I can determine the main idea using specific details from the text. (RI.4.2)
- I can summarize informational or persuasive text. (RI.4.2)

Supporting Learning Targets

- I can identify the text features of *A River of Words*.
- I can define the word “biography.”
- I can determine the gist of *A River of Words*.

Ongoing Assessment

- Gist recording form
- Exit ticket



Agenda	Teaching Notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Opening<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Engaging the Reader (10 minutes)B. Reviewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)2. Work Time<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Text Walk: <i>A River of Words</i> (15 minutes)B. Read-aloud and Determining the Gist (20 minutes)3. Closing and Assessment<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Revisiting the Guiding Question: What Inspired William Carlos Williams? (10 minutes)4. Homework<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. On a new page in the “My Reflections” section of your poetry journal, reflect on the following question: What has inspired you as a writer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the opening of this lesson, students review the guiding question: What inspires writers to write poetry? They are re-introduced to this question by rereading “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams, rereading Jack’s response in <i>Love That Dog</i>, and discussing what inspired Jack’s response.• Students then read a biography about William Carlos Williams: <i>A River of Words</i>. The Work Time portion of this lesson thus bridges the students’ previous reading—the novel and poetry—to a new genre of text on which they will focus during the first half of this unit: biography. Since only the teacher has a copy of <i>A River of Words</i>, students do not read the text closely on their own. Instead, they listen as it is read aloud and determine the gist. Students then circle back to the guiding question: What inspires writers to write poetry? This launches students into a deeper study of biographies and the challenge of inferring what has inspired their selected poet (whose poems they began reading during Unit 2).• In Lessons 2 and 3, students will closely read the Author’s Note from <i>A River of Words</i> (provided in Lesson 2 supporting materials) to learn more about Williams and the features of biographies, as well as about how to refine the “things close readers do.” Then, in Lessons 3 and 4, students read a short biography about their selected poet in preparation for writing the essay component of their performance task.• Teachers must find a way to display the pages of the one copy of <i>A River of Words</i> so all students can clearly see the text features during the Text Walk, and read the words and see the illustrations when asked to determine the gist. Consider the best way to display the pages: perhaps on a document camera, or inviting students to gather in a whole-group area of the classroom.• To support students in determining the gist, the text has been broken into parts that are outlined on the Gist recording form (for teacher reference). The book itself has no page numbers, so it may help to go through and use sticky notes or flags to mark each transition between sections. Note that on the Gist recording form, students are only expected to determine the gist of each section of <i>A River of Words</i>. Later, when students read of the Author’s Note in this book, they will learn to determine the main idea of informational text (through a close reading of the text).



Agenda	Teaching Notes (continued)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In Units 1 and 2 students worked in small groups for reading <i>Love That Dog</i> and various poems. In the next three lessons, students will work with a partner while reading about William Carlos Williams. These partnerships should be strategic. Place students together based on their needs, preferably with struggling readers and proficient readers together.• In advance:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Prepare: William Carlos Williams anchor chart (a blank piece of chart paper with the title “William Carlos Williams” at the top).– Find a separate time of the day to allow students to browse and select a book for independent reading during this unit. Students will begin reading from this text for this lesson’s homework. In Unit 2, students were allowed to continue reading from Unit recommended texts if they chose. But now in Unit 3, students will be reading informational text and biographies; so be sure they select a new independent reading book from the Unit 3 recommended text list as early in this unit as is feasible.– Reinforce organizational routines for students. If you used folders in Units 1 and 2 to organize student materials, be sure these folders are organized and ready for new materials. If you did not use folders in Units 1 and 2, consider using them for Unit 3; students need a place to keep their texts, note-catchers, and graphic organizers for this unit. Students will need their reader’s notebooks, poetry journals, <i>Love That Dog</i> text, and poems from Units 1 and 2. These materials may be kept inside or alongside this folder.– Post: Learning targets and the Guiding Questions anchor chart.



Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
text features, biography, gist; autobiography, synopsis, dedicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guiding Questions anchor chart (from Unit 1, Lesson 1)• <i>Love That Dog</i> (book; one per student and one to display and read aloud)• <i>A River of Words</i> (book; one for teacher read-aloud)• Document camera• Close Readers Do These Things anchor chart (begun in Unit 1, Lesson 2)• Gist recording form (one per student)• Gist recording form (for teacher reference)• William Carlos Williams anchor chart (new; teacher-created)• Poetry journals (students' own; from Units 1 and 2)



Opening	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Engaging the Reader (10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place students with their reading partners. Tell them that during the next few lessons, they will be working in pairs as readers.• Remind students of the second guiding question for the module on the Guiding Questions anchor chart: What inspires writers to write poetry? Tell them that they will think about this question throughout this unit.• Ask students to get out their copies of the text <i>Love That Dog</i> and tell them that you would like to revisit what inspired Jack to write his first poem.• Tell students to turn to page 1 of <i>Love That Dog</i>. Read pages 1–5 aloud as students read silently in their heads.• Ask students to take 1–2 minutes to discuss this question with their partner:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* “How do you think Jack was inspired to write his first poem about the blue car? What evidence in the text supports your thinking?”• Refocus students and invite volunteers to share their responses whole group. Listen for them to suggest that Jack may have been inspired by reading William Carlos Williams’s poem “The Red Wheelbarrow” because his poem about the blue car had very similar characteristics.• Read “The Red Wheelbarrow” aloud as students follow along.• Then ask students:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* “What do you think inspired William Carlos Williams to write his poem “The Red Wheelbarrow”?”• Call on a few volunteers to share their thoughts; it’s fine if students don’t have a solid response or theory. Point out that other than the content of the poem, students currently don’t have much that helps them infer what inspired Williams. Tell them that in this unit, they will learn more about the poets they have selected and what may have inspired them as writers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Because students will be familiar with both of these poems, consider choosing two strong readers to read each aloud to the whole group rather than reading them yourself.• To engage all students in the reading process, you could also encourage them to whisper-read the poems in pairs rather than reading them aloud to the whole group.



Opening (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>B. Reviewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus students' attention on the learning targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "I can identify the text features of <i>A River of Words</i>." * "I can define the word 'biography.'" * "I can determine the gist of <i>A River of Words</i>." • Review with students the importance of learning targets—to help them know what they are expected to learn and do during a lesson. Tell them that at the end of the lesson, they will share how they moved toward the learning targets. • Read aloud the first learning target and underline the words <i>text features</i>. Ask students to briefly discuss with their partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "What do you already know about text features?" • Invite volunteers to share what they discussed whole group. Listen for students to explain that text features are things like titles, table of contents, diagrams, charts, photographs with captions, and bulleted lists. • Next, ask students to chorally read aloud the second learning target with you and underline the word <i>biography</i>. Once again, ask them to quickly discuss with their partner what they think this word means. • Cold call students to share what they discussed whole group. If students don't know what a biography is, invite a student to look it up in a dictionary and read the definition aloud for the class. Point out to students that the word <i>biography</i> consists of two parts, <i>bio</i> meaning life and <i>graph</i> meaning write. • Invite students to read the third learning target with you. Underline the word <i>gist</i>. Ask students to briefly review <i>gist</i> with their elbow partner. • Invite volunteers to share their responses whole group. Listen for students to explain that the gist is their initial understanding of what the text is mostly about. Remind them that the gist is a preliminary pass at a text, and is a particularly useful early step when trying to make sense of a complex text. Getting the gist is one of the "things close readers do." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research indicates that cold calling improves student engagement and critical thinking. Prepare students for this strategy by discussing the purpose, giving appropriate think time, and indicating that this strategy will be used before students are asked questions. • Careful attention to learning targets throughout a lesson engages, supports, and holds students accountable for their learning. Consider revisiting learning targets throughout the lesson so students can connect their learning with the activity they are working on.



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Text Walk: <i>A River of Words</i> (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show students the front and back cover of <i>A River of Words</i>. Select a student to read aloud the writing on the cover. • Ask them to take 1 or 2 minutes to discuss with their partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “What do you think the book is going to be about? Why do you think that?” • Refocus students and invite volunteers to share their responses whole group. There are no right or wrong answers, but because students have already read poems by William Carlos Williams, they should be able to explain that the book is about the poet. • Point out that this text is a biography. Review the meaning of this academic vocabulary with students. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Who can remember from our learning targets what a <i>biography</i> is? • Call on a volunteer to review the meaning of this word (an informational text about someone’s life). • At this stage, you might also distinguish between <i>biographies</i> and autobiographies (the story of someone’s life written by that person himself/herself). Point out that the root <i>auto</i> in the word <i>autobiography</i> means self. Give students the following example, if William Carlos Williams had written this book about his life, it would be an <i>autobiography</i>. Point out that <i>A River of Words</i> is written by Jen Bryant, and therefore it is a biography <u>about</u> Williams. • Show students the inside front covers. If you have a dustcover on your book, read the words on the flap inside the front of the book aloud. If possible, display this on a document camera so students can read along silently in their heads. • Ask students to discuss with their partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “What does this piece of writing tell us?” • Cold call students to share their responses. Listen for them to explain that this tells the reader a little bit about William Carlos Williams and gives us an idea of what the book is about. Tell students that this is often called the <i>synopsis</i>. • Point out the rest of the writing on the inside front cover. Ask students to identify what it is. Students should recognize this as some of William Carlos Williams’s poems. • Show them the inside back cover and again ask students to identify the writing. Listen for students to recognize the writing as some more of William Carlos Williams’s poems. • If you have a dustcover on your book, read the words on the back inside flap of the book aloud for the group. If possible, display this on a document camera so students can read along silently in their heads. 	



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to discuss with their partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “What does this piece of writing tell us?” • Select volunteers to share their responses whole group. Listen for students to explain that it gives us information about the author and illustrator of the book. • Flick through the first five or six pages of the book with the students, but don’t read any of it. Ask students to discuss with their partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “What do you see?” • Cold call students to share their answers whole group. Listen for students to explain that they see a title page with illustrations and all of the other pages contain writing with illustrations. • Turn to the timeline at the back of the book. Invite students to spend a few minutes looking at the pages and ask them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “What is this and how do you think it might be useful for the reader?” • Select volunteers to share their responses. Listen for students to explain that it is a timeline of both the events in William Carlos Williams’s life and important world events. It is useful for the reader because they can see when the most important things happened in his life and what was going on in the world at the time. • Turn to the Author’s Note and the Illustrator’s Note. Invite a student to read the titles. Explain that sometimes in a book, an author and illustrator may write things they would like the reader to know about the book. For example, if a book is fiction, but based on a real event, the author may explain that in the Author’s Note. • Turn to the final two pages. Invite a student to read the “Further Reading” title. Explain that the author may have referred to these books listed to help her write the story of William Carlos Williams, and if a reader is really interested in learning more about him, they know where to look next. • Point out that the final page explains to whom the author has <i>dedicated</i> the book. Briefly explain that to <i>dedicate</i> means to recognize someone special by making a special gift of your work, like dedicating a song to your mother on Mother’s Day. • Tell students that this first exploration of these text features, and the closer reading of these features in later lessons, will help them to understand this rich text more deeply. Explain that text features are generally helpful to readers in better understanding a text and that they will use this strategy often throughout the year. 	



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus students on the Close Readers Do These Things anchor chart. Add the following to the bottom of the chart: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use text features to better understand the text: illustrations, synopsis, author's notes, timelines. <p><i>Note: Additional text features can be listed as examples on the anchor chart as students encounter them throughout the year.</i></p>	
<p>B. Read-aloud and Determining the Gist (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell students that now that they have explored the book through their Text Walk, they will hear the whole text read aloud. (Be sure that students can see the text as you read aloud so that they can read along and improve their fluency skills.) Read <i>A River of Words</i> once through without stopping. Slowly flip through some pages of the text and point out the illustrations. Remind them to pay close attention to these illustrations, as they will help them better understand the text. Display and distribute the Gist recording form. Invite students to read silently in their heads as you read the headings of the columns. Remind students that the gist is a reader's first impression of what the text is mostly about. Explain to students that you are going to read <i>A River of Words</i> aloud to them again and stop at strategic points so they can write the gist of what you have just read. Read aloud the text again. Stop at the first place suggested on the Gist recording form (for teacher reference). Ask students to discuss with their partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "What was this section of the text mostly about?" Invite volunteers to share their responses. On the displayed Gist recording form, model how to record the gist (see Gist recording form (for teacher reference) for an example response). Invite students to record the gist of this part of the book on first box on their recording form. Continue reading the book, stopping at the strategic places suggested on the Gist recording form. Give students time to discuss the gist, share with the whole group, and record the gist in the correct place on their form. You do not need to model filling out the form each time. Once students have written the gist of the final part of the text, invite students to discuss with their partner to synthesize their learning about William Carlos Williams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "What do you now know about William Carlos Williams? What are some key facts you would share with someone who didn't know anything about him?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging students to discuss before they write can ensure that all students have something to write about and can provide them with the confidence to do so. Consider allowing students who require additional support in writing to record key words and phrases for the gist rather than writing in complete sentences. To further support ELLs or other struggling readers, consider giving a sentence starter for the final question on the Gist recording form: "This book is a biography because_____."



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select volunteers to share their responses. Record student ideas as bullet points on the William Carlos Williams anchor chart. Refer to <i>A River of Words</i> when students give responses that are not accurate.• Afterwards, read the final question on the recording form (“How does this text fit the definition of a biography?”) aloud to the class. If necessary, review the definition of a biography. Then ask students to write a response to this question independently.• Collect students' Gist recording forms for a formative assessment of their ability to determine the gist of informational text during a read-aloud and their initial understanding of this genre of informational text.	



Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Revisiting the Guiding Question: What Inspired William Carlos Williams? (10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reread the guiding question: “What inspires writers to write poetry?” Tell students that now that they have learned more about William Carlos Williams’s life, it will be easier to infer what inspired him to write poetry. Ask students to get out their poetry journals and turn to a fresh page in the “My Reflections” section. Ask them to respond to the following prompt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “After reading a biography of William Carlos Williams, what could you infer about what inspired him as a writer?” Give students a few minutes to respond in writing. Partner students up to share their responses. After they have shared, ask for a few volunteers to share whole group. Listen for students to suggest the following and go back to the text to point out evidence that support their responses. (See Part 2 of the text indicated on the Gist recording form (for teacher reference)): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – William Carlos Williams was inspired to write poems because of his teacher. Evidence from text: “But when Mr. Abbott read poetry to Willie’s English class, Willie did not feel hurried.” – William Carlos Williams was inspired to write poems from hearing the poems of famous English writers. Evidence from text: “At first he imitated the famous English writers he had learned about in school.” – William Carlos Williams was inspired to write poems from the things he saw everyday, like wheelbarrows. Evidence from the text: “I want to write about ordinary things—plums, wheelbarrows, and weeds ...” Distribute the Homework: What Has Inspired You? handout. Read the question on the form for students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “In Unit 2, you wrote your own poems. What has inspired you as a writer?” Tell students that, for homework, their task is to record their answers to this question on their handout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For students who may need more support, consider providing a sentence starter for the reflection on the guiding question. For example, “William Carlos Williams was inspired by ordinary things such as _____.”
Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On a new page in the “My Reflections” section of your poetry journal, reflect on the following question: What has inspired you as a writer? 	



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Supporting Materials



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Gist Recording Form

Name:

Date:

Part	Gist (what the text is mostly about)
Part 1	
Part 2	
Part 3	
Part 4	
How does this text fit the definition of a <i>biography</i> ? Give an example from the text.	



Gist Recording Form
(For Teacher Reference)

Part	Gist (what the text is mostly about)
Part 1 (Up to “Sometimes, as he listened to its perfect tune, he fell asleep.”)	Willie grew up in Rutherford, New Jersey, and liked to spend time outside watching everything and listening to the river.
Part 2 (Up to “... and Willie needed to earn a living.”)	Willie began to write poetry after enjoying listening to it at school. He wrote a lot of poems about ordinary things and let his poems find their own shape on the page.
Part 3 (Up to “Every afternoon, he returned to his office where more patients waited.”)	Willie went to study medicine and after graduating returned home to set up his own medical practice.
Part 4 (To the end of the book.)	Even though he was a doctor, Willie continued to enjoy writing poems.
How does this text fit the definition of a <i>biography</i> ? Give an example from the text.	Possible Answer (examples from the text may vary): This book is a biography because it is a story about the life of poet William Carlos Williams. It tells about how he was inspired to write poetry and became a doctor too.