



BIG GREEN LESSONS

WINTER WRITING, INFORMATIVE: GRADES 6-8

KEY

In this lesson, students will...

UNDERSTANDINGS

- write informative/explanatory pieces based on a non-fiction Learning Garden topic.

STANDARDS

ALIGNMENT

Common Core - English Language Arts

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization and analysis of relevant content.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- Chart paper/whiteboard and markers
- Writing materials for students (pencils/paper, computers, tablets, etc.)
- Graphic organizer, optional
- Informative/explanatory writing rubric

TEACHER BACKGROUND

The winter may seem like a slow season for your school Learning Garden without active planting, observing, and harvesting activities happening during a prime growing season. This can be the optimum time, however, for students to engage further with Learning Garden experiences by identifying a topic connected to the Learning Garden that they can research and explore more deeply.

If the weather allows, consider touring the Learning Garden to introduce this writing – give students time to explore the differences between a fall and winter Learning Garden. You may also consider introducing the activity in the Learning Garden space, doing the student discussion and brainstorming, even writing the first drafts in the Learning Garden.

Informative writing for middle school focuses on gathering information from texts and other sources in order to present relevant facts about non-fiction topics and organizing writing in order to best present the most appropriate information to the reader.



There are plenty of non-fiction topics to choose from in the Learning Garden! Consider having a list of your own ready to support students who are struggling to identify their own topic to write about.

Before the lesson, determine the length of the informative/explanatory piece you expect from your students, considering the time of year and amount of time available to devote to the writing process; additionally, prepare for time to research topics further as best suits your class schedule.

INTRODUCTION

Spend time discussing the following introductory questions:

- What are some things about our Learning Garden you are interested in learning more about?
- What are some things about our Learning Garden we can research or gather more information about from other sources?
- What are some things about our Learning Garden we might want to explain to others?

LESSON

1. Review as necessary the components of informative/explanatory writing.
2. Have students “Think, Pair, Share” their potential topics from the introduction questions.
3. Allow pairs to share the topics generated and record all ideas on a chart paper or whiteboard.
4. Share your own non-fiction topic from the Learning Garden in order to model the writing process.
If using a graphic organizer, model how to use the graphic organizer with your own idea. *Use this opportunity to highlight a classroom focus for writing, for example, a strong conclusion.
5. Model drafting your own informative/explanatory piece for students. You may identify areas where you need to gather additional information, as well as ideas as to where you might find the best information. (For example, “My topic is soil. As I’m drafting, I realize that I don’t know as much about the specific kind of soil in our region as I would like. I might flag that as a place where I need to gather more information. I could probably research that online, or even look in my social studies textbook to ensure I know what region we’re in.”)
6. Give students time to choose a topic of their own and begin drafting their piece and/or identifying research questions, additional information they might need, and sources for that information.
7. Circulate as needed, reinforcing desired writing techniques with students.
8. Allow time to access supporting research materials: books or the



internet, etc. Time should also be allotted for note-taking in order to incorporate external facts into their own pieces.

9. As time allows (possibly over the remainder of the week), move through the writing process with the Learning Garden informative pieces. After drafting, revise and edit your model and then have students revise and edit their own; repeat as necessary.
10. Create a final draft of your model and publish, and have students create a final draft and publish. Lastly, if possible, allow students to share or present their informative/explanatory pieces.
11. Use your school's informative writing rubric to score student writing and provide feedback.

CONCLUSION

Have students share key parts of the lesson and review the Key Understandings.





NAME: _____ DATE: _____

LEARNING GARDEN INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY

Topic/Introduction:
Important Detail and Example:
Important Detail and Example:
Important Detail and Example:
Conclusion: