

# VIEWING GUIDE



# Reading the World

Content Comprehension  
with Linguistically  
Diverse Learners



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# Contents

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# Introduction

Content matters. As teachers, we nurture kids' curiosity and encourage them to explore the real world. Our view of content comprehension envisions students engaged with a rich curriculum in science and social studies. Kids focus on important ideas and issues, acquire knowledge about and develop insight into content topics by reading, writing, talking, listening and investigating. Teachers merge content teaching with comprehension strategy instruction so that learners will understand and remember more over time.

In this three-part series, Video 1 focuses on the “big picture” of content comprehension with diverse language learners and introduces many of the instructional practices which we see put into practice on the other two videos. Video 2 provides an in-depth look at merging comprehension instruction with science in first grade. Video 3 shows how a fifth-grade class integrates comprehension instruction with a social studies topic study on immigration. This series highlights instructional methods for teaching all kids as well as practices that are particularly effective with children who are learning English.

While insects and immigration are the focus topics in Videos 2 and 3, the process for teaching science and social studies can be applied to any curricular topic. Research and inquiry are integrated with comprehension strategies across the curriculum. Regardless of the topic you are studying, comprehension strategies give learners the tools to gather new information and understand content.

At Columbine Elementary school in Boulder, Colorado, Anne Goudvis and Stephanie Harvey work alongside educators who engage in responsive teaching, planning content instruction that meets the learning and language needs of both native English speakers and English language learners. Approximately 75 percent of the students are English language learners, and about the same percentage are eligible for free and reduced lunches. More information on Columbine may be found at the school's web site: <http://schools.bvsd.org/columbine/about.html>.

## Video 1:



## Content Comprehension: Across the Day and Throughout the Year

The conceptual underpinnings and key ideas that guide content instruction with diverse language learners are introduced on Video 1. ELL consultant Nancy Commins introduces key ideas and assumptions that provide a framework for planning and implementing content comprehension instruction. Collaborating with Anne and Steph, the teachers explicitly teach students a repertoire of comprehension strategies for understanding science and social studies content. We see content instruction in action through glimpses of planning sessions, classroom lessons and discussions, and observing children as they create new learning and share their work and thinking.

## Key Ideas



### **The goal of content instruction is understanding.**

Students acquire knowledge, enhance understanding and develop insight in science and social studies. Reading, writing and thinking are active processes—kids ask questions, gather information, infer big ideas and issues and conduct investigations as they engage in content learning.



### **Explicit comprehension strategy instruction is a means to an end.**

We teach thinking and learning strategies for understanding content topics. How we learn (the process) is every bit as important as what we learn (the content). In fact, the whole point of learning how to learn (the process) is so you can learn something (the content)! We can't have one without the other. Content and process then are completely integrated to facilitate understanding: we ask questions to spur investigations and find answers, we summarize and synthesize information to grasp big ideas and issues (Pearson, Harvey and Goudvis 2005).



### **Teachers plan and design instruction that carefully considers children's linguistic diversity—all the different languages our students speak as well as their language proficiency.**

Rather than developing several different programs for “linguistically different” students, there is one instructional plan that is responsive to the learning and language needs of all the kids in a school (Commins and Miramontes 2005). Teachers develop an inclusive and cohesive instructional philosophy that translates into consistent instruction across all grade levels. Explicitly teaching the language of comprehension instruction to all children builds a common language for thinking and learning throughout the school.



### **Collaboration and planning between grade level and vertical teams results in more thoughtful instruction.**

Based on kids' literacy and language development, teachers design instruction that focuses on important concepts, essential questions and curriculum standards in science and social studies rather than a potpourri of activities and lesson plans. Classroom teachers, ELL teachers, and the librarian coordinate and design instruction that focuses on comprehending content and identifying reading, writing and language instruction that helps kids learning English understand this content.



### **For English language learners, moving between text, images, photographs, realia, and experiences is essential.**


In order to understand new information, ideas, and concepts, we carefully choose our materials and plan instruction to clearly communicate the information and concepts central to the topic study. We use a multi source-curriculum of trade books, magazines, historical fiction, picture books, illustrations, photographs, artifacts, etc. to give kids a range of entry points into topics.

 **Opportunities for talking, responding, and discussion support kids to become better readers, writers, and thinkers.**

Children who are learning a language need time to talk about content—discussing information and ideas, turning and talking to rehearse their thoughts with peers, conferring with teachers, and sharing what they are learning. In fact, all learners need plenty of opportunities for purposeful student-to-student talk (Johnston 2004).

 **Every grade level works with the librarian to integrate content studies in science and social studies with the research process.**

When the librarian works with all the teachers in a building around curriculum, he or she has knowledge of topics, key concepts and goals for instruction at different grade levels and can guide planning efforts so that instruction builds kids' knowledge of both content and process over time.

 **Kids have plenty of opportunities to make their thinking visible and share their learning in many different ways.**

Kids write their own books, create large posters, investigate their own questions through research, share family experiences and stories, etc. They love sharing what they've learned and there's no better way to demonstrate understanding of a topic or an issue than to think about and organize what you've learned so that you can teach it to someone else.

*Try it*

- Before teaching a unit or topic study, meet with your grade level team, the librarian, ELL teachers, and specialists and others to discuss key concepts, important issues and ideas, and essential questions that provide a focus to the study. Linking these to state and district standards helps us eliminate tangential activities and teach to core ideas and concepts that further kids' understanding. Continue meeting throughout the topic study to reflect on and keep instruction on track.
- Gather photographs, artifacts and other realia to make content concepts explicit and concrete for English language learners. Make sure to build in time for building kids' background knowledge, vocabulary and concepts about the topic before tackling a more formal study. Taking time to encourage kids' lingering questions and get them connected to and engaged with the topic means they will be far more motivated to investigate further.
- Meet as a vertical team to discuss and define a common language for content comprehension in science and social studies. Think through your curriculum and identify strategies that integrate comprehension and content instruction across the grades. For instance, thinking strategies such as asking questions, hypothesizing, and drawing conclusions from observations can be introduced over the grade levels in science. Build comprehension instruction into your research process: For instance, begin with asking thoughtful questions, then support kids to determine important information and synthesize it as they find answers to their questions. When we teach kids a process for research and investigation, this carries over from year to year.

- Make sure kids have plenty of opportunities to share their written work, self-made books, poems, posters, and research projects with other kids, teachers, parents, and especially the principal. Include response sheets on projects posted in the hallway, asking readers to “Write your questions and comments here . . .” Kids love reading others’ comments on and connections to their work, and we learn so much from each other! When kids know that one important purpose of their work is to teach what they have learned to other people, this really motivates them to get better at sharing their thoughts publicly. And all this sharing and discussion builds a community of teachers and learners throughout the school.

## Video 2: Learning and Wondering About Science

Learning about the real world through a variety of experiences and nonfiction resources makes a lot of sense for young children. Research shows that effective instruction paired with a multi-source curriculum is linked to high achievement (Allington and Johnson 2002). Reutzler, Smith and Fawson (in press, 2006) found that when second graders were taught a repertoire of comprehension strategies for understanding and learning information in science, their knowledge acquisition and retention of science content improved.

### Key Ideas



#### **Content comprehension instruction in the primary grades:**

- Comprehension instruction is at the heart of all best practice instruction. We model explicit thinking strategies students can use to understand and learn information when reading in science, social studies, and all content areas.
- Instruction is child-centered and focuses on the big ideas and key concepts central to understanding content topics, not simply “covering” the curriculum.
- All kids, but especially English language learners, need a curriculum focused on content. We build knowledge about a topic over time, gradually releasing kids to investigate their own questions, and eventually share their learning with each other.
- Content instruction occurs throughout the day and is fully integrated with literacy instruction—in reading workshop, in small group ELL instruction, during specific content times, and as part of classroom-library research projects. The librarian participates in content instruction whenever and wherever it makes the most sense, not just when it’s time for classes to come to the library.



#### **Explicit comprehension strategy instruction gives kids the tools to learn and understand information.**

We explicitly teach kids to:

- notice, learn, and respond to new information from photographs and text
- ask questions and wonder about information

- monitor thinking, including going back and rereading to clarify understanding
- leave tracks of thinking on Post-its and note taking forms
- move from notes to sentences to summarize learning



**Responding to learning by merging their thinking with the information and then writing and illustrating their thinking is a powerful way for kids to organize, demonstrate, and share their learning.**

- Drawing pictures and writing about learning on large posters engages kids and helps them to organize their thinking. The large format and opportunity to express their learning through drawing and images supports English language learners to read, write, and think about content as a means to learning English.
- When kids put information into their own words and illustrate their mental images on posters and in projects, they hold their thinking and learning over time and their curiosity, passion, and voice come through loud and clear.



**The reading workshop structure emphasizes:**

- Modeling, guided practice and lots of conversation in small and large groups.
- Asking students to report out what they noticed the teacher doing during the modeling portion of the workshop. Writing down these observations guides kids as they practice these reading behaviors themselves.
- Turning and talking throughout lessons to encourage oral response and focus thinking.
- Independent work time to read, write, talk about, and illustrate learning.
- Conferences that support kids who are emergent readers and writers as well as those who are more proficient. Conferences enable us to teach to children's individual needs and interests and take their learning further.
- Informal and formal opportunities to share thinking and create new learning.

## Prebrief (01:58)

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Teacher Brad Buhrow describes ways to teach kids to use comprehension strategies that focus on learning new information, asking questions, and summarizing what they learn in science through writing and drawing.

## Modeling (06:50)

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In this segment, Brad models how he learns information from and asks questions about text and photographs in a Big Book about insects. He is explicit about showing how he gathers information from photographs and images in a Big Book, reads text for further information and writes this on his note taking sheet. Recording the information and questions on the large anchor chart with the sample note taking sheet (I learned/I wonder) reinforces the process Brad is teaching.

Brad asks the kids to observe what they notice him doing and share out their observations. When students articulate and discuss the reading and writing behaviors they notice in a demonstration, they are better prepared to practice these strategies and behaviors on their own.

*Try it*

Find several times during the day when you are modeling or demonstrating reading or writing practices. Ask your students to observe and then share out what they noticed you doing. Does this seem to help them both pay closer attention to your demonstration and/or have a clearer idea of what they are to do on their own? Try recording the process you are demonstrating on an anchor chart, as Brad did.

### **Turning and Talking (10:59)**

Brad asks the kids to do a quick turn and talk before sharing out what they noticed him doing as a reader and writer. Sharing with each other keeps them engaged with the topic and the lesson. Sharing with a partner also gives kids—and especially English language learners—time to rehearse thoughts and gain the confidence to share their thinking with the larger group.

*Try it*

It makes sense to explicitly teach kids how to turn and talk with one another. Find another adult or ask a child to come up front and model how to talk together about the task, demonstrating how to take turns sharing and discussing ideas. Sharing information and ideas quickly and succinctly is an acquired skill, one which we show kids how to do and then give them plenty of time to practice.

### **Adding to the Anchor Chart (11:24)**

Notice that Brad writes down what the kids noticed him doing as a reader, adding their comments and observations to the anchor chart. This chart captures both the lesson language and the children's comments so that they can use it as a guide when working on their own to read and respond to informational text.

### **Guided Practice (13:43)**

Kids remain gathered on the rug and begin to read their own insect book, taking notes on their I learned/ I wonder note taking sheet. Brad gives them some time to get started on their own, letting them know he's going to check on the rest of the class.

### **Checking on the Rest of the Class (14:00)**

As the kids work in the small group, Brad quickly checks on the rest of the class. Notice that kids are working independently: reading and writing about insects. Brad has worked hard to establish these independent routines—making sure kids have appropriate and engaging texts, are well supplied with pencils, paper, markers, etc., and have a plan in mind. When kids know what to do and how to do it, small group sessions are less likely to be interrupted by other kids.

*Try it*

For independent work time to go as smoothly as possible and to allow for small group lessons and conferences, try reviewing all those things that facilitate kids working independently. Make sure everyone has a clear idea of the expectations for this time: Are all the materials kids need readily available? Do the kids have a clear sense of options for the independent work time? Does each child have a plan and

something to work on? Before sending kids off, we often ask them to briefly share what they will be doing so that we know kids have a purpose and plan in mind.

### **Quick Conferences During Guided Practice (14:22)**

Brad moves about the room and conducts quick “touch base” conferences to make sure kids are able to read, think and write about the information in the texts and pictures.

### **Small-Group Share (18:12)**

Before going off to work independently, the kids briefly share their learning. Sharing in this way gives kids practice articulating their new learning and questions and prepares them to keep going with their reading and responses. Note that Brad has taught the kids to hold up their thumbs if they would like to share. This prevents endless hand waving and supports them to listen to the person who is sharing.

When Alexia asks “I wonder if the honeybee is eating honey from the flower,” Brad notices this misconception but decides to discuss this with her at a later point. As a child just learning English, correcting her publicly might discourage her from speaking up in group conversations. In making this decision, Brad determines that her willingness to share her question publicly is more important than resolving the misconception about the word “honey” at this particular moment in time. He will take advantage of another opportunity to support Alexia to revise her thinking and clear up her misconception. When reading and researching in the content areas, teachers need to be aware of the array of misconceptions that can arise and be ready to work with students to clear them up when the time is right. Brad knows that other students may have some misconceptions about concepts and vocabulary such as pollen, nectar and honey. Over the next few days, he brings in photos of pollen on a flower as well as beehives and honeycombs to make these concepts more concrete and build kids’ knowledge base about these ideas.

*Try it*

With young children, and particularly English language learners who are encountering vocabulary and concepts that are brand new to them, it makes sense to think about ways to make concepts and vocabulary comprehensible via artifacts, photographs, pictures, etc. Work with your team members to identify and find materials that demonstrate hard-to-understand concepts and problematic vocabulary. “Showing” kids the meaning behind new terms and vocabulary can be more helpful than lengthy verbal explanations.

### **Reading, Writing, and Research: Independent Practice (24:43)**

Brad confers with children individually to scaffold their language and thinking as they move from notes on their reading to composing sentences and illustrating information they’ve learned. He supports children like Jose Carlos, who writes and illustrates a poster based on the notes he took during the lesson.

As he works with Kent, Brad draws lines to show where the title and Kent's name could be placed on the poster. To scaffold the task for this emergent writer and speaker, Brad writes Kent's thought in conventional syntax and spelling so that Kent can write it "big" on his poster. When kids' work is put up on the walls for others to read and learn from, Brad works with the children to make sure their spelling and writing is correct and readable.



### **What's with all the posters? Artistic and written expression in first grade**

Creating large illustrated posters gets kids involved and engaged with new learning. This practice is effective for all kids because "working big" is a natural form of expression for young children that encourages them to use their creative powers and imagination to express their learning. The large paper fits their developing fine motor coordination and the physical activity involved in writing and drawing seems to be especially engaging and motivating. Kids are eager to spend long periods of time drawing and writing about all the great things they are learning. Unlike paper and pencil tasks, the open-ended nature of creating posters (or writing their own book, creating a mobile, etc.) fosters creative writing that encourages kids to merge their thinking with the information they are learning.

For English language learners, the emphasis on expressing and sharing their ideas through writing and drawing is important because kids can illustrate information that they may have trouble putting into words. Giving all kids, native English speakers as well as ELL's, opportunities to demonstrate and share their learning via their "artistic voice" is enormously rewarding for these young learners.

### **Reading to Answer a Question (30:00)**

Librarian Nell Box helps Tristian and Marianna read to answer their question about butterflies. Knowing the question ahead of time helps Nell find text that the children can read, so that she can support them to practice keeping their question in mind and reading to answer it.

*Try it*

- As kids became more familiar with reading, talking, and writing about what they are learning, consider ways to integrate literacy and content instruction. The short time it takes to create student-written books, charts, and posters keeps young learners engaged and motivated to share their learning. Spending weeks on elaborate research projects can dampen enthusiasm and interest. Consider teaching your students ways to read for information that answers their authentic questions about a topic. Then they can share interesting information quickly on a poster or in a self-published book.

*Try it*

- Brad, Anne, and Stephanie meet to review the lesson and reflect on the teaching and learning that went into the insect topic study. Take time to meet with your teammates to reflect on your instruction and the kids' learning. We learn so much from each other when we meet to talk about our practice.

## Video 3:

# Exploring Immigration in Social Studies

Reading comprehension and thinking strategies provide a common language for discussing and investigating topics in social studies. We teach kids a language for thinking and learning: activating background knowledge, asking questions, synthesizing information and inferring themes and issues. And we give kids plenty of opportunities in large groups, small groups and pairs to talk about their thinking. Our framework for topic studies includes: exploring and building background knowledge, gathering and learning information, synthesizing it, and sharing learning to bring it to life (see pp. 15–18).

## Key Ideas



### **Explicit comprehension instruction as a means to learn and understand information.**

- Kids read and discuss picture books, gather information from a variety of non-fiction texts and eventually pursue their own personal investigations. Differentiated instruction takes place in a variety of groupings and formats, with classroom and ELL teachers and the librarian collaborating and team teaching lessons.
- There aren't enough hours in the day, so fifth-grade teachers integrate literacy and social studies instruction, reading picture books, informational text on the topic and doing research during readers' and writers' workshop.
- Strategy instruction at this grade level focuses on surfacing important ideas and themes, determining important information and synthesizing learning. Kids continue to use a repertoire of strategies learned in earlier grades to read and learn from informational text and build knowledge in the topic.



### **Response.**

- Options for responses are differentiated. Kids differ, so should their responses.
- Responses are frequently shared orally in small and large groups—kids post their thinking on the walls and enter into conversations about their thinking. Students read their written pieces and stories to each other, asking for comments and questions.
- We can't forget that older kids, too, love to express their thinking and learning through art. Class matrix charts include both written and visual evidence of themes that are central to an understanding of the topic. Students write and illustrate picture books, reports and charts, posters and other projects to share their research.



### **Collaborative planning, teaching and reflection.**

- Classroom teachers, ELL teachers, and the librarian spend time discussing instructional plans and reflecting on lessons taught to better differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of all kids.

- Team teaching and debriefing after instruction provides an opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively to better address the needs of English language learners. Teachers devise their own unique ways to teach the content, but they share a common focus on key concepts, big ideas and focus questions.

## Planning Meeting with the Fifth-Grade Team (01:50)

Classroom and ELL teachers, the librarian and Anne discuss the big ideas and themes children are surfacing as they read a variety of picture books about immigration. The teachers reflect on ways that the picture books make difficult concepts easier to grasp and build kids' background knowledge about key concepts important to understanding the topic.

## Connect and Engage (03:38)

Anne and fifth-grade teacher Steve Ollanik lead a brief discussion of some of the issues and ideas kids have noticed when reading picture books about immigration. The class launches into another picture book, *My Freedom Trip*, the story of a family who tries to flee from North Korea to freedom in South Korea right before the beginning of the Korean War.

## Modeling and Guided Practice (05:12)

There's nothing like holding a conversation with another person to demonstrate to kids how they can read and talk with a partner. Team teaching during the modeling portion of the lesson prepares kids to read and discuss the text collaboratively with a peer. Steve and Anne model thinking through the first few pages of *My Freedom Trip* together, drawing inferences about the characters' thoughts, feelings and actions and asking questions to clarify their understanding of the story. They ask the kids to notice what they did and said as they read and talked together. Kids share out their observations before trying this process themselves with a partner.

*Try it*

Too often teachers lead a solitary existence and have few opportunities to team teach with colleagues. Commandeer the librarian, the principal, a literacy coach, an ELL teacher or a willing parent to work with you to model partner reading and discussion. Kids, too, with a little preparation, are superb partners for modeling conversations in front of the class. Remember to ask the kids to watch carefully so they can later articulate the reading and thinking behaviors you demonstrate.

Kids use a three column form with the headings Words or ideas from the text/My response/Themes and big ideas from the text. Kids reason through the text and work together to jot their thoughts as they continue reading. This prepares the kids to infer the bigger ideas and themes after they have read the whole story. Pulling out words and ideas from the text and responding as they read prepares the kids to find evidence in the text to support the themes they surface.

*Try it*

Picture books can be an invaluable resource for building kids' background knowledge about a topic. Select an upcoming topic in your social studies curriculum and

build a picture book collection that provides your students with authentic information and compelling narratives about the topic. Your librarian will have loads of titles to share. Lists of realistic fiction as well as historical fiction related to a number of frequently studied topics can be found in Harvey and Goudvis' *Strategies That Work* (2000) and in *The Comprehension Toolkit: Language and Lessons for Active Literacy* (2005). (See the bibliography at the end of the Viewing Guide.) Also consult your school and community libraries for additional books on topics of interest.

### Partner Reading (09:34)

Partner reading makes a lot of sense—kids can help each other with difficult words or ideas and monitor each others' thinking. Trying out their ideas before sharing them with the large group gives kids the confidence to share their thoughts with the entire class. This oral rehearsal and practice is particularly important for English language learners. As kids work together, Steve and Anne move around the room, conferring with kids to encourage them to think more deeply about the text.

### Collaborative Practice (15:15)

Collaborative practice involves kids talking to one another in small groups, often without the teacher present. (See Harvey and Goudvis 2005a for an example of Steph modeling this practice with Steve Ollanik's class.) While kids practice collaboratively Steve and Anne move about the room conferring with partners and discussing themes they have pulled out of the story. Sometimes when we confer with kids, we leave them with a question, something Anne does as she talks with Rahul, Johnson and Sharda. If kids are to deepen their understanding of what they read, they need time to think and talk with each other about their interpretations and make meaningful connections to their own lives.

*Try it*

Find time in the day for kids to read and talk together about their reading. Student-to-student talk is one of best ways to make sure kids are understanding and learning from their reading. Brainstorm ways to schedule more time for collaborative practice as part of your literacy block, reading workshop or social studies time.

### Sharing Themes and Big Ideas (21:50)

Kids come up to share and we notice how they have merged their thinking with the big ideas in the text. As kids come up to the board to place their Post-its in theme-related clusters, they talk and share their views of similar and/or closely related themes. We've found that kids could spend hours talking about and organizing their thinking in this way, because it's motivating both to take our own thinking public and learn about other peoples' thinking. After the lesson we assess the nature and quality of their thinking by spending time looking at the Post-its.

*Try it*

Think of ways to share Post-its and other responses so kids can take their thinking public. Putting the Post-its up for all to see and then clustering them according to theme allows kids to notice those themes that were most salient as well as the wide range of themes and big ideas kids inferred from the texts.

## Gathering Information from Historical Photographs and Nonfiction (25:50)

It makes sense to differentiate instruction with small ELL groups based on students' language proficiencies. Because reading proficiency can vary within the same group, kids receive extra support as they read through the text together, stopping to share comments and questions. Erika, Lori, and Nell divide the class into small groups so that instruction can be closely geared to students' language and literacy levels. The small group format supports all the kids to stay engaged and participate in the reading and conversation.

*Try it*

When teachers plan and teach together, students benefit from smaller teacher-student ratios. Think about ways you might collaborate and teach with others in your building. If ELL teachers, the librarian and other teachers can join you to work in the classroom or library, rather than always “pulling out” the students they teach, you’ll have an opportunity to collaborate on the instruction in a way that meets the needs of English language learners and native English speakers. Finding time to collaborate and teach together requires rethinking how teachers work with kids throughout the building, but the results are well worth it.

## Reflecting on the Lesson (29:00)

From Lori, Erika, and Nell’s reflections on the lesson with the informational posters, they all described a common goal: making sure the kids learned information from and asked questions about the photographs and text. Having defined a common purpose ahead of time, each teacher was free to teach in the way that made most sense for her students. In every group, kids connected to the information and related personal experiences to the topic.

*Try it*

We look long and hard for entry points into social studies topics that kids can relate to and we know students are highly engaged when they can connect the topic to personal experiences. Consider a variety of sources other than the usual suspects such as the social studies textbook. Great newspaper and magazine articles abound, and many essays, memoirs, poems, and other kinds of informational text are only a quick click away on the web.

## Research and Investigations (30:52)

Children completed a variety of research in relation to this topic. Some wrote family stories or found relatives or friends who were willing to share their personal experiences. Others investigated famous people who moved from one culture to another, or investigated immigration patterns from a country of their choice. Like Johnson, some students wrote this information on a poster; others created picture books, reports, charts, etc. Each project involved asking questions and investigating information that connected to some of the themes and issues discovered over the course of the topic study.

Personal stories are one response option when studying immigration and are particularly appropriate in classrooms where a large number of the kids are recent immigrants. They are a wonderful way to engage most students. We always

keep in mind that there are many possible response options to culminate an immigration unit.

## Content Literacy: From Curriculum Topics to Investigations

We share the following framework (Harvey and Goudvis 2005b), designed for planning and teaching content literacy topics, such as those demonstrated here.

As kids read, write, talk, listen, and investigate their way through the curriculum, they develop an understanding of content that goes beyond merely covering it. They explore, read extensively, engage in discussion and debate, and delve into topics of their own choosing. Instruction focuses on key concepts, big ideas and important questions as a topic study unfolds.

### **Build Background Knowledge Through Exploration**

- Engage with and activate background knowledge about the topic
- Learn vocabulary and concepts central to the topic
- Immerse kids in the topic via picture books, field trips, experiences, etc.

### **Gather Information to Develop Big Ideas and Questions**

- Read, write and talk using comprehension strategies: I learned, I wonder
- Hold thinking on Post-its, note taking forms, learning journals, etc.
- Turn and talk about information, share learning, engage in discussion
- React and respond to information orally and in writing
- Ask and answer questions to expand thinking

### **Summarize and Synthesize Information and Ideas**

- Move from facts to ideas; explore lingering questions
- Organize information and merge our thinking with it
- Weave our thinking and voice into what we say and write

### **Demonstrate Understanding and Share Learning**

- Create responses, posters, picture books, etc. to synthesize learning
- Organize information to teach what we've learned to someone else
- Understand our learning process and articulate it
- Take our thinking public via sharing and oral presentations

## Framework for a Science Topic Study

### Goals for the Insect Topic Study

Key concepts and ideas include mastering the vocabulary of insect body parts and behaviors, and understanding how insects are adapted to the specific environments where they live. Kids learn to research, learning information, asking and answering questions, illustrating and writing up information to synthesize it.

## Instruction

### *Explore and build background knowledge*

Observe and record information—seeing, touching, hearing, feeling

Content word wall for learning concepts and vocabulary

Notice new learning from text, photos, etc.

### *Gather information*

Read and ask questions, merging thinking with the information

Listen to a wide variety of nonfiction and fiction read-alouds

Research individually and in small groups to read, respond and take notes

Chart questions and record answers from reading

Use nonfiction features to navigate texts: Titles, table of contents, index, captions, labels, etc.

### *Summarize and synthesize information*

Nonfiction writing: Move from notes to sentences

Poetry: Brainstorm descriptive words, using content word wall, notes, observations

Mind maps: Kids organize information according to key concepts: movement, body parts, other adaptations.

### *Share information to bring it to life*

Organize learning to teach it to someone else

Articulate and understand the content and the learning process

## Examples from Insect Topic Study

“Catch and release” insect observations; exploring habitats

Words, pictures, and definitions of body parts, habitats, movement, etc. (See Figure 1)

Immerse kids in the topic, introduce What I learned/I wonder form (See Figure 2)

Leave tracks of thinking on Post-Its, journals, notebooks

Nonfiction Big Books, *Insects* by National Geographic Picture books and stories about insects

My new learning/Questions/Connections and comments form (See Figure 3)

What I learned/I wonder chart

Note-taking that incorporates features

Create large posters with information and illustrations

Insect poetry

Insect mind map

Oral presentations of research: posters, poems, mind maps, etc.

Cross grade level sharing/teaching

# Framework for a Social Studies Topic Study

## Goals for the Immigration Topic Study

Investigating essential questions about immigration:

- Why do people leave one culture/country to live in another? Explore differences between people leaving for economic and social reasons compared to those fleeing because of wars, famines, and other difficult circumstances.
- As people leave one country or culture for another, what are their journeys like? What hardships do they experience along the way?
- What is it like to have to adjust to life in a new culture/country? How might people try to keep their original customs, traditions and language yet still adapt to a new culture and way of life?

Key concepts such as immigration, emigration, refugees, economic pressures, famine, etc. are woven into the study.

## Instruction

## Examples from Immigration Topic Study

### *Explore and build background knowledge*

Picture book study: selected picture books with authentic information and compelling narratives

Immigration from many cultures and perspectives; book clubs/literature circles as well as whole class read-alouds

First person stories: teachers, parents, community members share experiences

Build an understanding of how to tell a personal story to prepare kids to write their own stories

Content word wall, charts and world map

Vocabulary and concepts to support ELL's especially. Also chart: current statistics on immigration, maps of the world to trace journeys, family origins, etc.

Chart of lingering questions—questions arise from picture books, personal stories and experiences

Charts of lingering questions

### *Gather information*

Kids brainstorm questions and read to find answers

Charts of questions about Ellis Island

Read, take notes and merge thinking with nonfiction

Immigration theme sets: Chinese, Irish, Mexican, German—from *National Geographic*

Notes, questions and paragraphs about historical texts and photographs build knowledge about immigration in the early 20th century

*Immigrant Kids* by R. Freedman Writing journal entry from the perspective of a child

### *Summarize and synthesize information*

Pull out themes from picture books; identify themes and evidence to support these

Post-its used to create a theme matrix chart with evidence to support themes and vice versa book, themes, and evidence to support themes from text (See Figure 4)

Summary/responses on nonfiction reading

Small group work with nonfiction texts (see theme sets).

### *Share learning to bring it to life*

Simulations and role play

Simulation of immigration at Ellis Island

Written products synthesize learning

Kids write picture books, posters, reports tell their own or someone else's immigration story (See Figure 5).

Reports on countries, significant events in the history of immigration, eg. the Irish potato famine.

Research on famous immigrants and their stories; comparison of immigration past and present through charts and visuals.

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Pile, M. 2005. *Mexican Immigration*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Theme Sets.

**Figure 1** Illustration and caption from the content word wall.



Figure 2 Content note-taking form.

My name is Brody

(My new schema)

What I learned!

My topic is PRAINGO  
MANTIS

(My questions)

I wonder?????

a mosquito  
mouy  
is like a  
not a  


I wonder  
WONDER  
WOT @ 150  
PRAMANTIS  
OAT


a house  
fly has  
holes

how fast  
CAN a  
fly go


PRAMANTIS  
is a  
CRICKETS


**Figure 3** Content note-taking form with teacher notation.

**My new schema**


Thorax 

---


Abdomen 

PRAYING MANTIS has 6 legs 


---

FRATLESS  front legs grasping

---

Wings 

---

Chewing 

**My "I wonders?"**

CAN They COF with other lags,

---

has 6 legs


---

front legs grasping

• compound eyes

•••

**My connections and comments!**

P.m.  I need a p.m. so he can eat the moths at my house.

I need a p.m. SO he CAN eat them moths at my house.

---

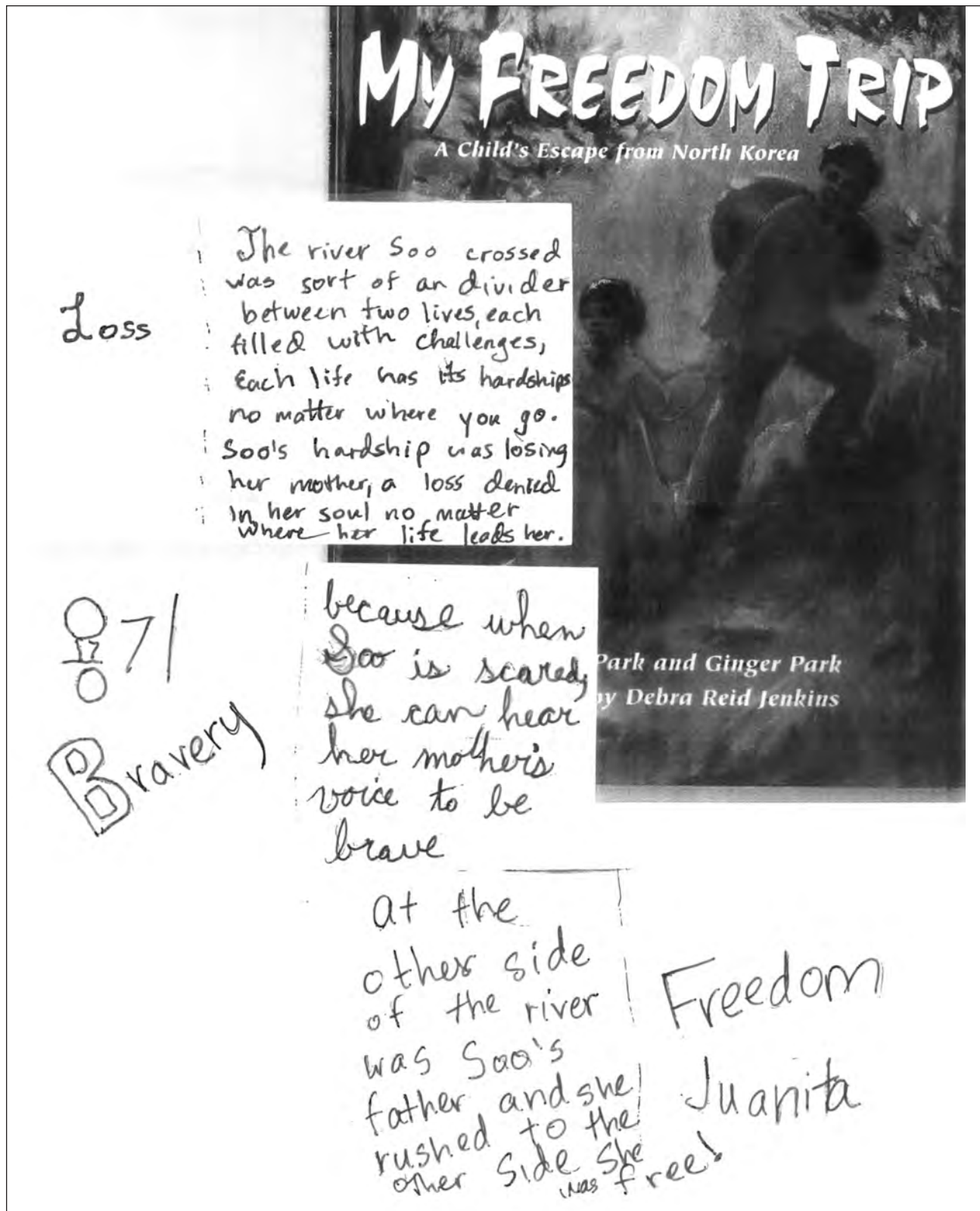
King of insects King of the insects

④ ② T-W

④ ② T-T

④ ② T-L

**Figure 4** Post-its with themes and evidence to support each theme.



Loss

The river Soo crossed was sort of an divider between two lives, each filled with challenges, Each life has its hardships no matter where you go. Soo's hardship was losing her mother, a loss denied in her soul no matter where her life leads her.

7/1  
Bravery

because when Soo is scared, she can hear her mother's voice to be brave

at the other side of the river was Soo's father and she rushed to the other side she was free!

Freedom

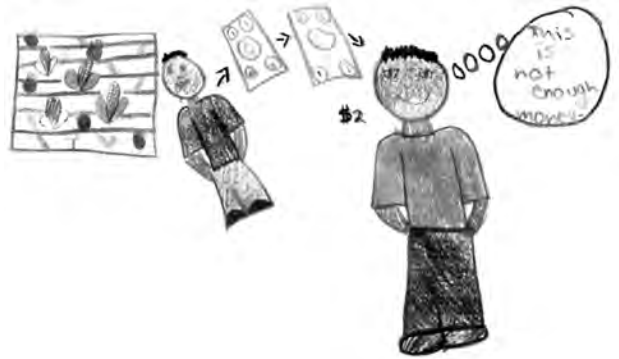
Juanita

**Figure 5** Excerpts from a student's picture book.

My dad immigrated from San Luis Del Cordero Durango, Mexico. He worked on farms, taking care of the crops, and he played baseball, basketball, and football. When they would play one of those games everyone wanted my dad on their team because my dad was a fast runner.



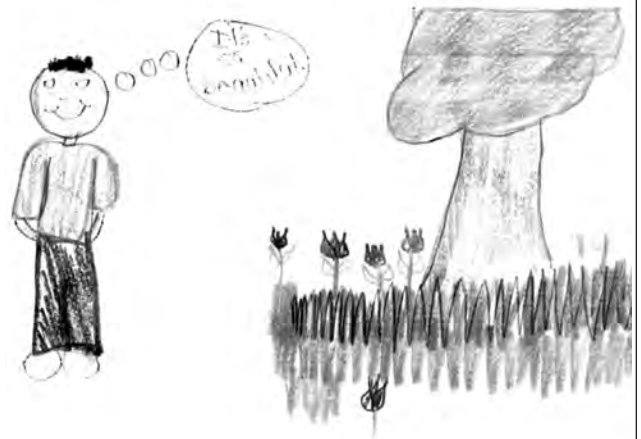
The reason my dad left for a job is because they didn't pay him well, only about two dollars a day. He wanted to come to America because he had heard from his family that was already there that they were paid well. So that's why he wanted to come.



He also wanted to come because he had met a wonderful lady (that turned out to be my Mom). He had fallen in love with her from first sight. At first when they were going out he was in Mexico and she was in America; so they would just talk on the phone and write letters. They wanted to be together so that's why he wanted to come.



When my dad arrived his first impression was that he thought America was a lot prettier than Mexico.



# Time Codes for *Reading the World*

## Video 1: Content Comprehension: Across the Day and Throughout the Year

27:11

Introduction 00:02–06:21 (06:19)  
Collaboration and Planning 6:21–07:09 (00:48)  
First Grade Planning Meeting 7:09–10:16 (03:07)  
Fifth Grade Immigration Study 10:16–12:08 (01:52)  
Reading and Writing Nonfiction to Learn Content 12:08–18:39 (06:31)  
Sharing Learning 18:39–25:42 (07:03)  
Credits

## Video 2: Learning and Wondering About Science

36:58

Introduction 00:02–06:55 (06:53)  
Reading Workshop: Small-Group Lesson 06:55–24:43 (17:48)  
    Modeling 07:11–10:59 (03:48)  
    Turning and Talking 10:59–13:43 (02:44)  
    Guided Practice 13:43–18:12 (04:29)  
    Small-Group Share 18:12–24:43 (06:31)  
Reading, Writing, and Research 24:43–35:41 (10:58)  
    Independent Practice 24:43–35:41 (10:58)  
Credits

## Video 3: Exploring Immigration in Social Studies

32:57

Introduction 00:02–03:35 (03:33)  
Immigration Topic Study Part 1: Building Background with Picture Books  
    03:35–25:50 (22:15)  
    Connect and Engage 03:56–05:12 (01:16)  
    Modeling and Guided Practice 05:12–12:35 (07:23)  
    Sharing Thinking 12:35–15:15 (02:40)  
    Collaborative Practice 15:15–21:50 (06:35)  
    Sharing Themes and Big Ideas 21:50–25:50 (04:00)  
Immigration Topic Study Part 2: Gathering Information from Historical  
    Photographs and Nonfiction 25:50–31:40 (05:50)  
    Personal Stories 31:11–32:11 (1:00)  
Credits