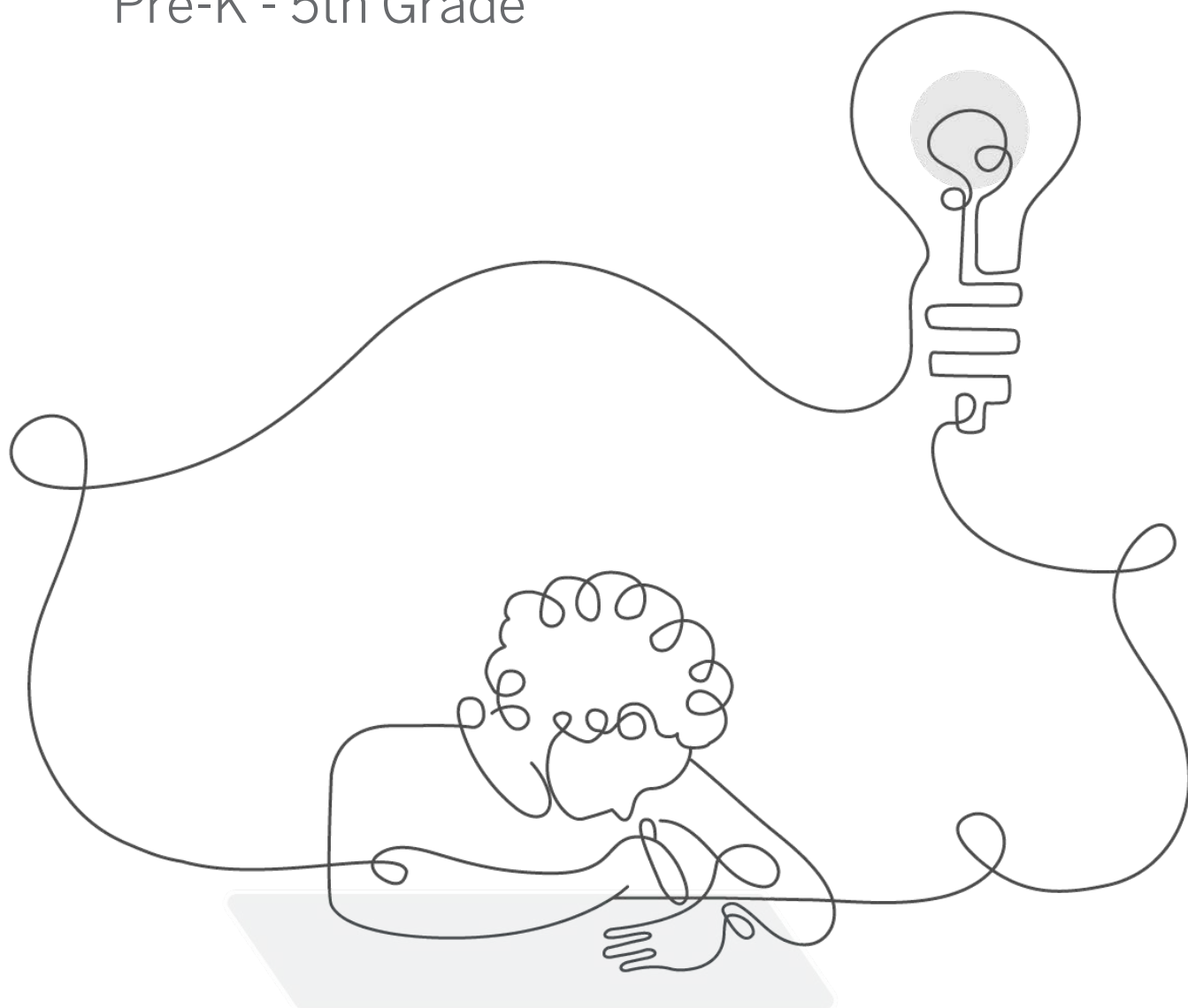




Sample Caregiver Letters

Pre-K - 5th Grade



All About Me: Family Letter 1



Dear Family Member,

Your child probably already likes to talk about what makes him/her special. At school, we will be learning all about how we are all different, but how we are all also the same! We will learn all kinds of words to describe ourselves and name our body parts. We will also be painting, playing with play dough, playing musical instruments, and tracing around our bodies.

Below are some suggestions for activities you might do at home to help your child remember what they are learning about at school:

1. Read Aloud Each Day

Children love hearing **stories, especially before bedtime**. Before you read a book, talk about the **title** of the book and what it might mean. As you read books, point to and label the **characters' body parts**. Talk about whether or not the characters are **humans** (your child is learning the word **human's** in school).

2. Sing Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes are a fun way for children to learn **the rhythm and sounds of language**. Your child may come home singing and doing the motions for “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes,” and “Open, Shut Them.” **The words to “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes” are on this back of this letter**—have your child show you the motions that go with this rhyme. You could also share your own favorite nursery rhymes with your child.

3. Talk About Body Parts

Name body parts as your child gets dressed and takes a bath. Name fingers as you clean and clip fingernails. Talk about how you can move your body parts as your child plays outside.

4. Practice Using Hands and Fingers

Your child is doing lots of activities to develop small movements using hands and fingers. Have your child practice at home by squeezing toothpaste and using a toothbrush, holding a fork, painting outside with water, drawing with sidewalk chalk, doing puzzles, etc.

Please send in a photograph of your child as a baby for us to use in an activity at school.

All About Me: Family Letter 2



Dear Family Member,

There are many exciting things about being a human being. We are learning all about our five senses, how humans grow and change, and the things humans need to stay alive.

Below are some suggestions for activities you might do at home to help your child remember what they are learning about at school.

1. Read Aloud Each Day

Children love hearing **stories, especially before bedtime**. As you read each book, remember to **talk about the author and illustrator** (your child is learning about these people in school). The author is the person who wrote the words and the illustrator is the person who drew the pictures.

2. Sing Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes are a fun way for children to learn **the rhythm and sounds of language**. Your child may come home singing and doing the motions for “Do Your Ears Hang Low?” “Where is Thumbkin?” and “Pat-a-Cake.” **The words to “Do Your Ears Hang Low?” are on this back of this letter**—have your child show you the motions that go with this rhyme. You could also share your own favorite nursery rhymes with your child.

3. Talk About the Five Senses

Talk with your child about things he/she can **see, hear, touch, smell, and taste** during mealtime or bath time. Mention the **parts of the body** that go with each sense.

4. Talk About the First Letter of Your Child's Name

Your child is learning to recognize the first letter of his/her name in school. To help your child learn his/her initial letter, you could create a sign for your child's bedroom door that has his/her name on it.





Dear Family Member,

For the next few weeks, your child will be learning all about animals at school. Your child might already know lots of things about animals—you might even have a pet dog or goldfish at home. We can't wait for your child to share the things s/he already knows with the class. At school, we will learn the names of many animals and how animals' body parts help them survive. We will even have an Animal Hospital set up in our Dramatic Play Center! In our Small Groups, we will also be practicing telling stories, rhyming, drawing and writing, and counting syllables in words.

Below are some suggestions for activities you might do at home to help your child remember what they are learning about at school:

1. Read Aloud Each Day

Ask your child to choose stories that have animals as the characters for you to read aloud. As you read, point to and label the various animals in the story. Ask students what they know about these animals as you read.

2. Sing Nursery Rhymes

Your child may come home singing and doing the motions for "An Old Person of Ware," "Here is the Beehive," and "Five Little Ducks." The words to "Here is the Beehive" are on this back of this letter—have your child recite the rhyme and talk with your child about the words in the song that rhyme (*bees and sees, hive and five*).

3. Go on a Nature Walk and Talk about Animals

In class, your child will be learning how to make observations about many different kinds of animals. Help your child practice observing and describing animals you might see on a daily basis. As you walk outside, talk about the birds, squirrels, insects, and pets you see as you walk. Discuss how the animals look (color, size, body parts), where they live, and what they like to eat.

4. Practice Drawing and Writing

Your child is doing lots of activities that will get him/her ready to start writing. Have your child practice at home by drawing with crayons and thick markers. Your child is already starting to write his/her name or first initial at school. Have your child practice writing his/her name at home by signing drawings with either his/her first initial or whole name. You could also write your child's name and have him/her copy it underneath.





Dear Family Member,

Children love learning about and seeing pictures of animals, and we will continue learning more about animals in the coming weeks. Your child will learn about baby animals and their mothers. S/he will also learn about groups of animals, such as birds, insects, fish, and mammals. In our Small Groups, we will be practicing telling stories, rhyming, drawing, and writing. Your child might come home saying the 'mmm' sound, since we will be learning all about words that start with 'mmm' (like *monkey*).

Below are some suggestions for activities you might do at home to help your child remember what they are learning about at school:

1. Read Aloud Each Day

As you read stories about animals, talk with your child about what real animals need to stay alive. Talk about what certain animals like to eat and drink, and where they like to live.

2. Sing Nursery Rhymes

At this point in the school year, your child has learned quite a few nursery rhymes. Encourage him/her to sing the old favorites, and to share the new rhymes s/he is learning at school. Your child may come home singing and doing the motions for "The Eensy, Weensy Spider" and "Hickety Pickety, My Black Hen." The words to "Hickety, Pickety, My Black Hen" are on this back of this letter—have your child recite this rhyme for you and talk about how hens and other animals lay eggs.

3. Play with Stuffed Animals

Encourage your child to play with his/her stuffed animals. As your child plays, talk with him/her about where those animals might live (pond, ocean, forest, desert) and what they might like to eat.

4. Practice Rhyming

Your child is doing lots of activities to practice rhyming. As students go about their daily routines, encourage them to make silly rhyming pairs using everyday words. The words can be real or made up, but should end with the same sound (for example: *brush* and *mush*, or *plate* and *bait*).

5. Practice Writing Name

At school your child is practicing writing his/her name to sign in to school each day. Encourage your child to practice writing his/her name whenever she is drawing. You can also write your child's name so s/he can copy it.



This unit provides a fun and engaging experience for students to discuss and relate to well-known classic nursery rhymes and fables.

What's the story?

Students will **listen to** and **recite classic rhymes**, such as “**Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star**” and “**Jack and Jill**.” They will also be introduced to favorite characters, such as **Humpty Dumpty** and **Little Miss Muffet**.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn **new vocabulary**, develop an **awareness of language**, identify **story elements**, and explore **different types of fiction**. These foundational skills will help them **become better readers and writers**.

Throughout the unit, students will **practice sequencing events** in a story. They will also work to **compare and contrast characters** from the different nursery rhymes and fables they will read.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. I know you have been learning that the word *sweet* can mean more than one thing. Can you tell me one meaning of the word *sweet*? Can you use it in a sentence for me?

Follow up: Can you make a sentence using the other meaning of *sweet*?

2. What are some words that rhyme in “Jack and Jill”? (Jill/hill; down/town)

Follow up: What are some other words that rhyme with those words?

In this unit, students will be introduced to the importance of being environmentally aware individuals.

What's the story?

Students will learn that the best way to conserve Earth's natural resources is through the three Rs of conservation: **reduce**, **reuse**, and **recycle**.

What will my student learn?

Students will become familiar with the earth's **natural resources** and will begin to recognize how people's actions **affect the environment** in which we live. They will also learn about **land**, **water**, **air**, and **pollution**. Students will explore the **water cycle** and the steps of the **recycling and composting** processes.

In this domain, students will work with their classmates to **create a book** that will include ideas for solutions on how to take better care of the earth. They will also share their understanding of the domain by **completing charts**, **drawing detailed pictures**, and **discussing their learning** with their peers.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

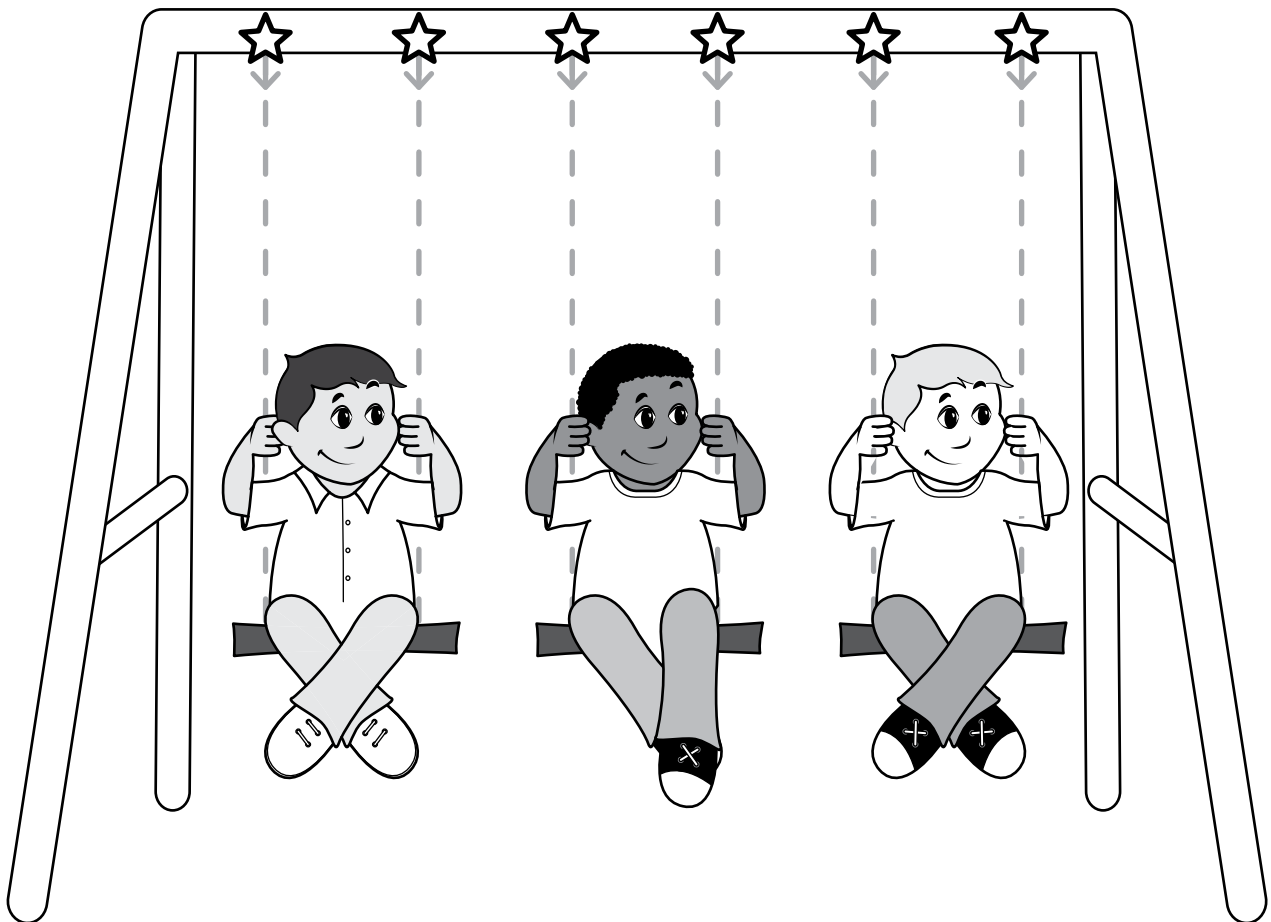
1. What are the three things that make up the earth?
Follow up: Where can you find water on Earth? Why are land, water, and air important to people?
2. What happens to garbage when we throw it away?
Follow up: Do you think you would want to live near a landfill? Why? What can we do to create less garbage for the landfills?
3. What are some examples of natural resources that you have been learning about?
Follow up: How do we use some of these natural resources? What natural resources can be used to make energy and fuel? Why are natural resources so important? What will happen if we run out of them?
4. What are the three Rs of conservation?
Follow up: Give me an example of how you could reuse something. What sorts of things can be recycled? How can we reduce the amount of natural resources we use?

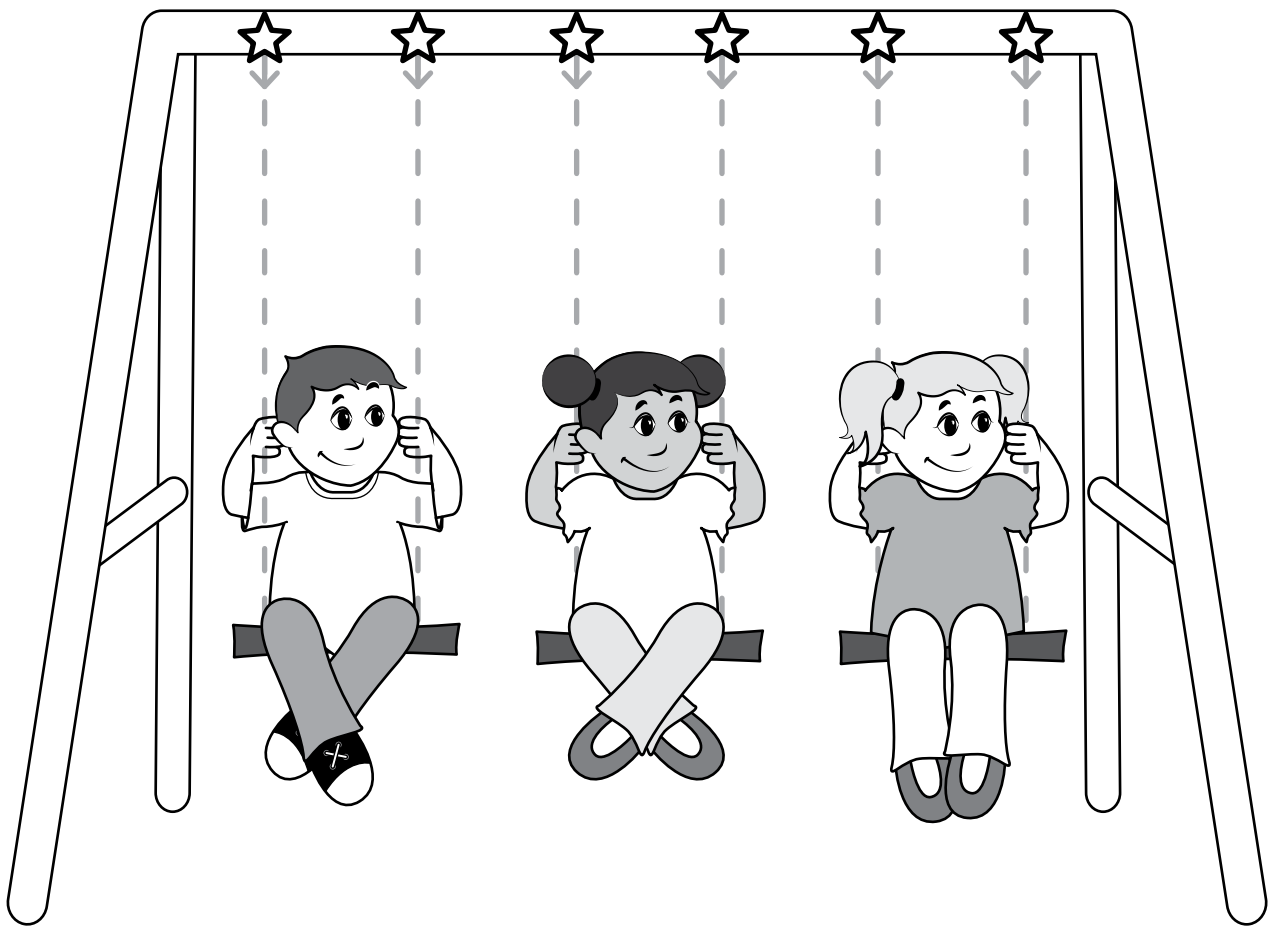
5. What is composting?

Follow up: What are some things you can compost? How does that help take care of the earth?

Dear Caregiver,

In class, we have been practicing vertical lines. Knowing how to draw a vertical line is important because vertical lines are found in a number of letters (e.g., 't', 'd', 'h'). Have your student trace the dotted vertical lines on both pages of the activity, starting at the stars and moving down.





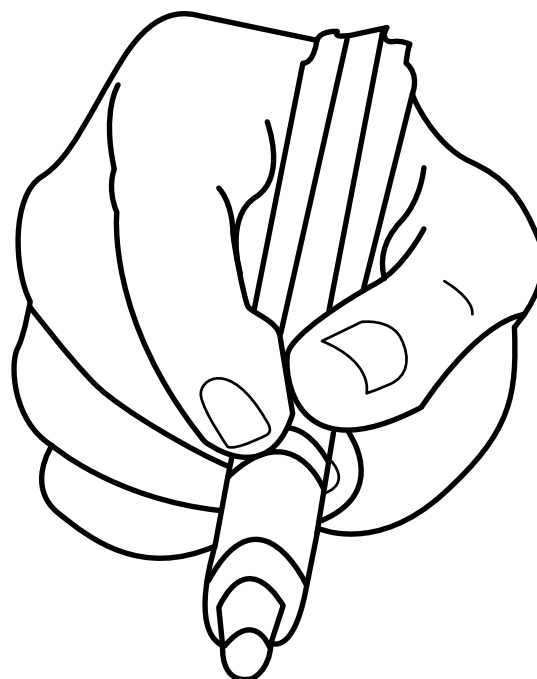
Dear Caregiver,

In our class, we have been working on prewriting skills. Your student has not yet been taught to write letters but has been developing their fine motor skills. Below are some suggestions for activities you can do at home that will allow your student to practice and develop their hand and arm muscles and hand-eye coordination. Both are very important when learning how to use a writing utensil.

Have your student:

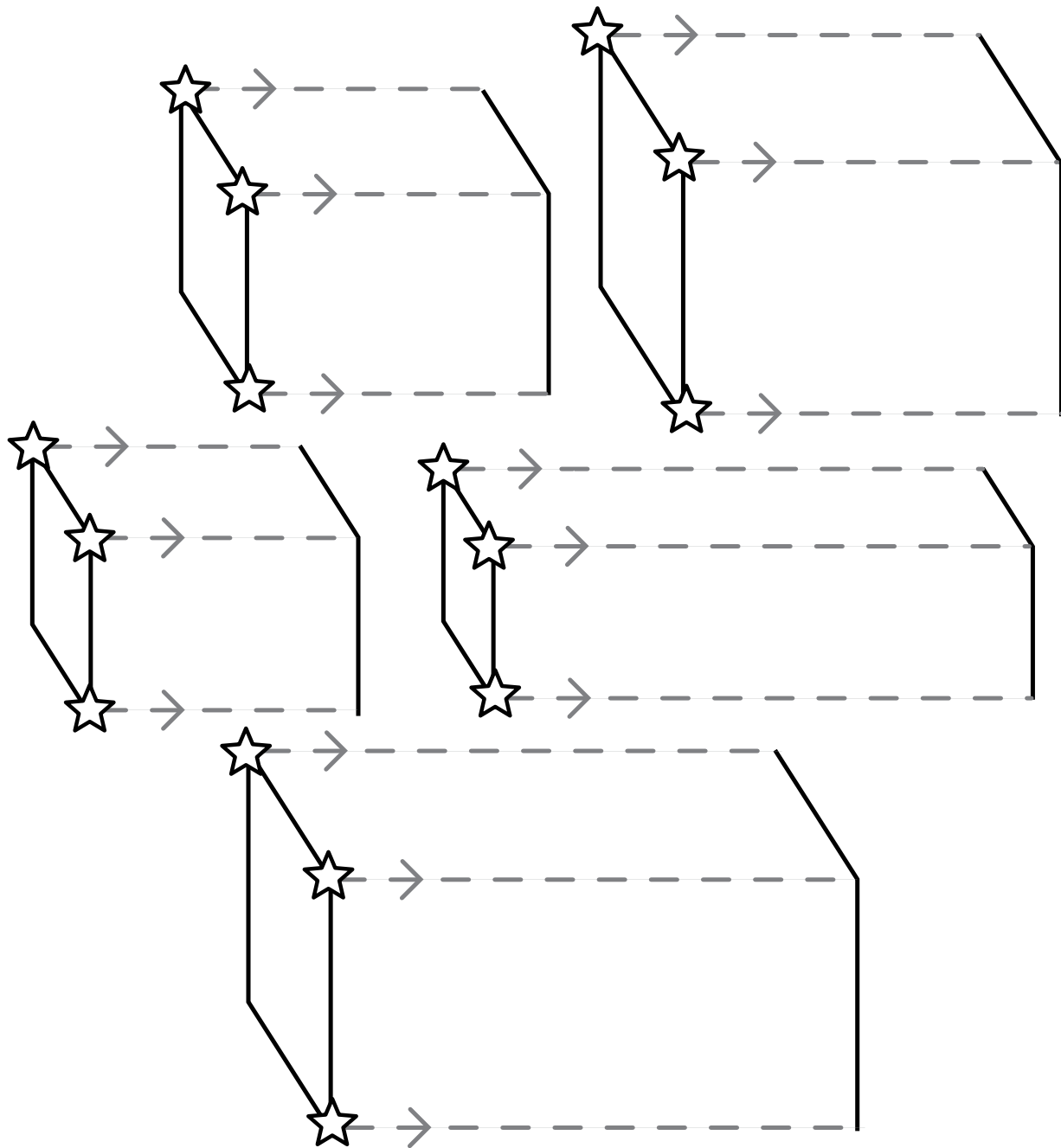
- build with blocks
- transfer water from one container to another with an eyedropper or spoon
- pick up small objects like beads with their eyes closed
- use tweezers to pick up crumpled bits of paper
- cut up junk mail with child-friendly scissors
- string beads onto yarn or string
- scrunch up a sheet of paper in one hand
- mold and roll modeling clay into shapes
- draw and color pictures

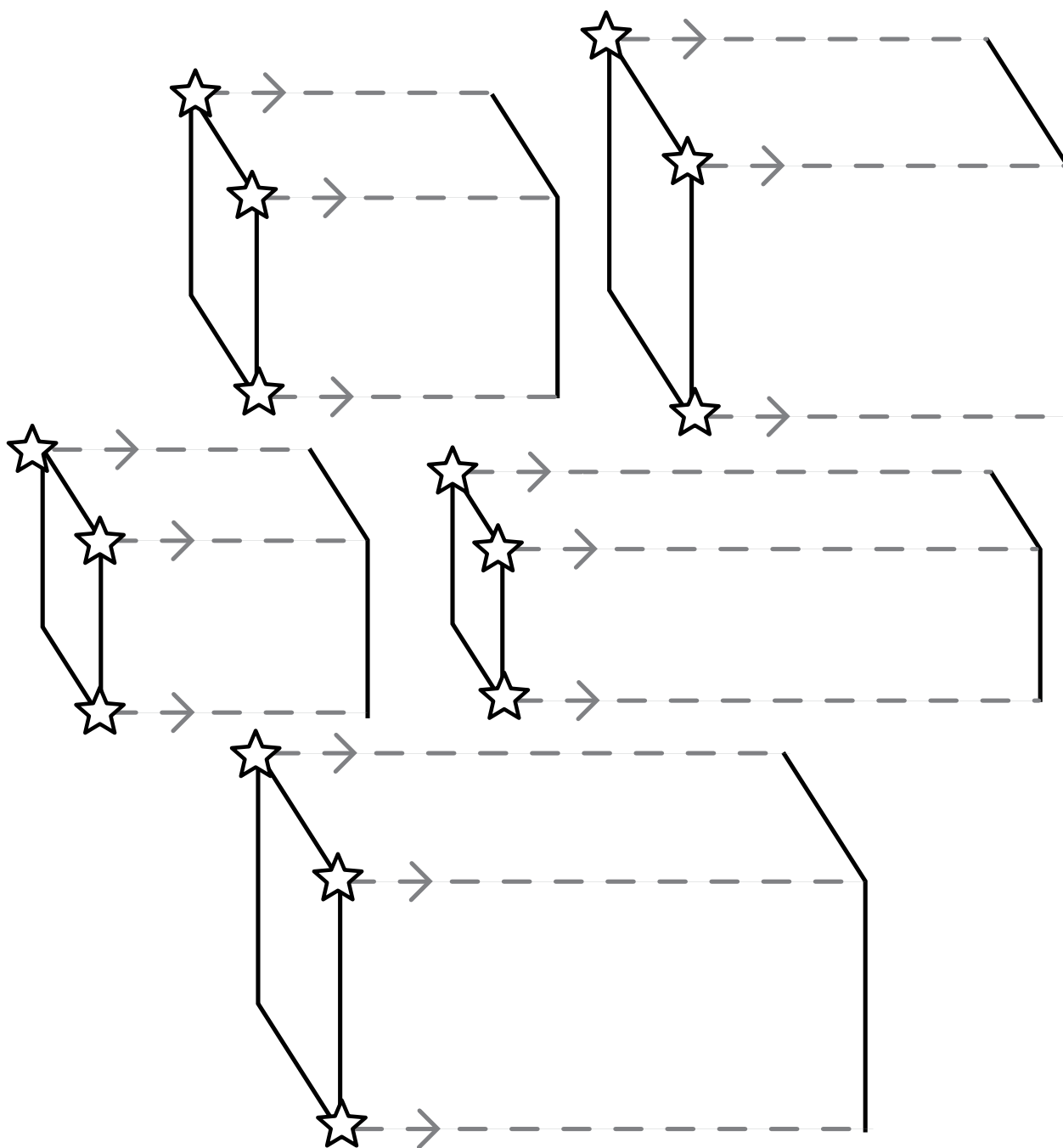
We recommend that your student draw and color with small pieces of crayon. Drawing with crayons provides greater sensory input than drawing with pencils or markers. This is because the wax has greater resistance to the paper than graphite or ink; the push-and-pull motion strengthens finger and hand muscles. The small size of the crayon discourages creative grips and encourages the tripod grip (shown here). Using the tripod grip will give your student better control of the shapes they draw and increase the length of time your student can write.



Dear Caregiver,

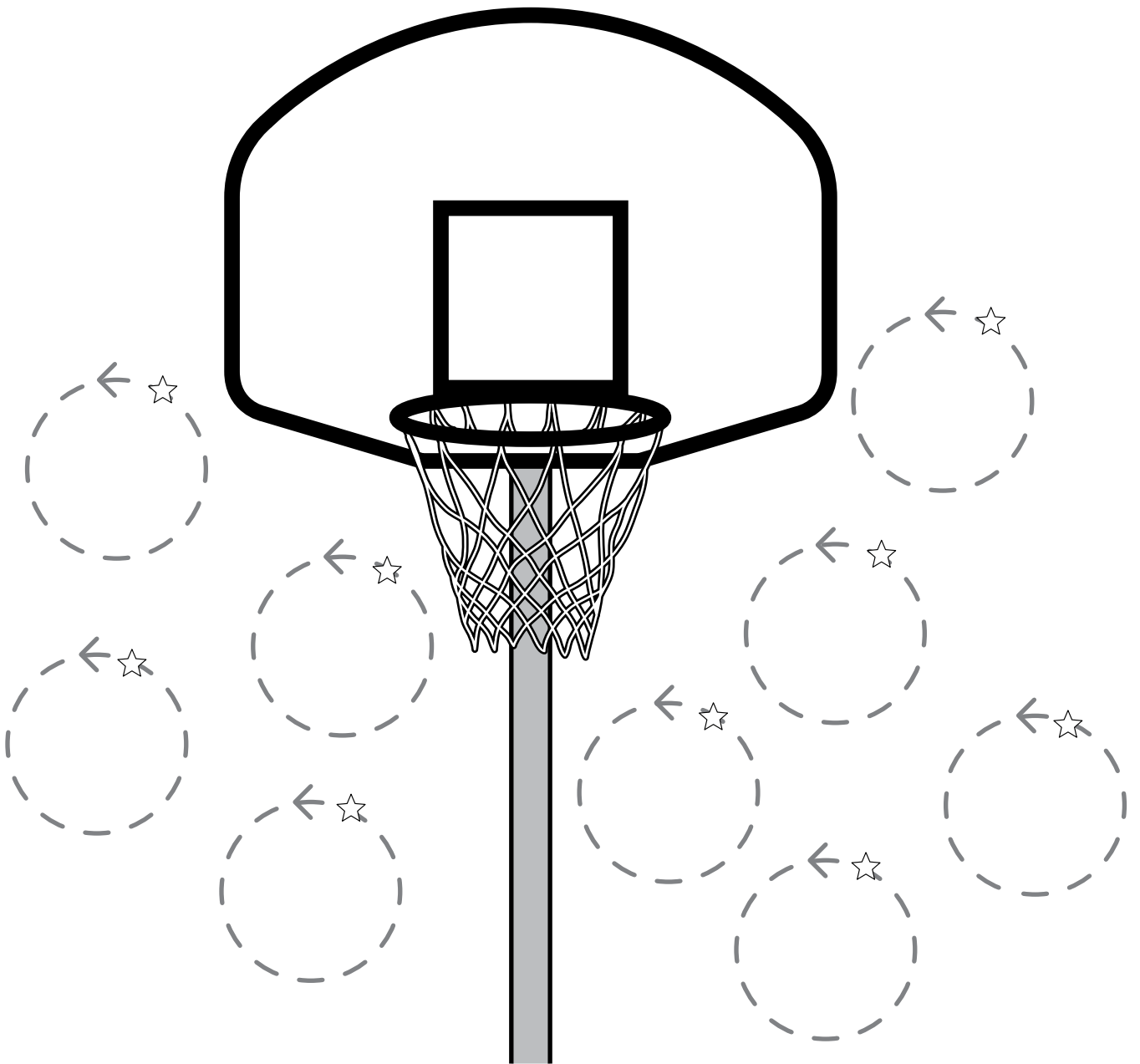
In class, we have been practicing horizontal lines. Knowing how to draw a horizontal line is important because horizontal lines are found in a number of letters (e.g., 't', 'f', 'z'). Have your student trace the dotted horizontal lines on both pages of the activity page, starting at the stars and moving to the right.

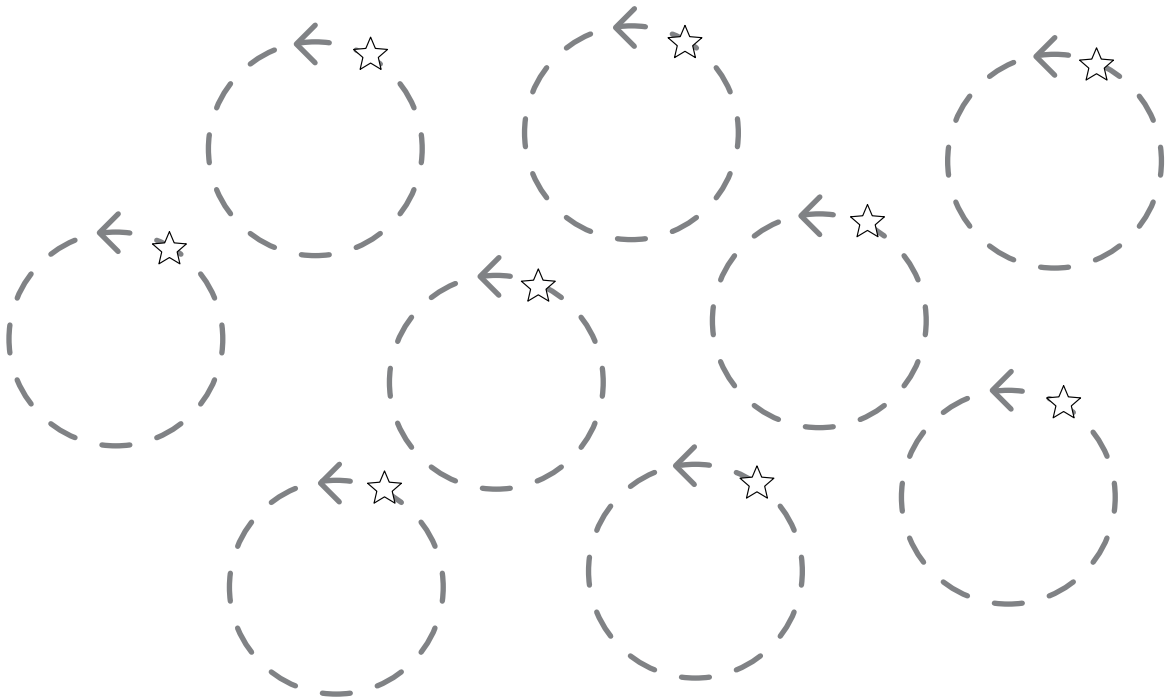
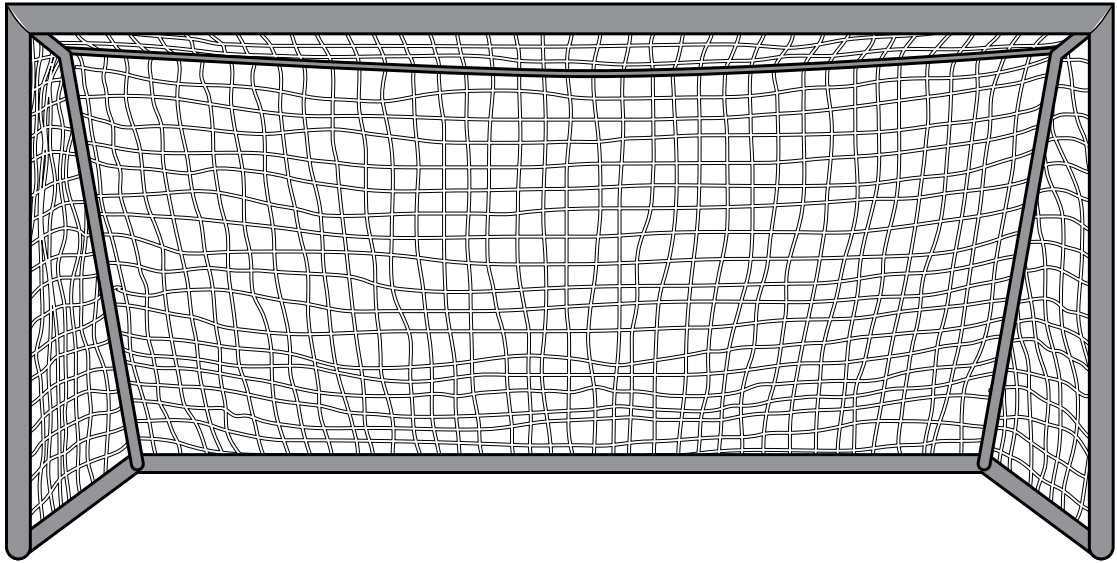




Dear Caregiver,

In class, we have been practicing circles. Knowing how to draw a circle is important because circles are found in a number of letters (e.g., 'b', 'd', 'o'). Have your student trace the dotted circles on both pages of the activity, starting at the stars and moving to the left.





In this unit, students will be introduced to stories that have been loved for generations.

What's the story?

Students will be introduced to **classic fables**, such as “The Boy Who Cried Wolf,” and **classic folktales**, such as “The Crowded, Noisy House.” These stories provide a wonderful opportunity for students to develop a strong foundation for the **understanding** and **enjoyment** of **fiction**.

What will my student learn?

Students will continue to **increase their vocabulary** and **reading comprehension skills**. They will become familiar with **key elements** and **parts** of a story as they **explore valuable lessons** that are taught through the morals of the stories.

Throughout the domain, students will **explore narrative writing** by identifying elements in the stories they hear and by working with their peers to **plan** and **draft some narrative writing** of their own.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What has been your favorite fable so far?
Follow up: I know that fables are meant to teach a moral, or a lesson. What was the moral of that fable?
2. Where did the story you read today take place?
Follow up: How would you describe that setting?
3. What is the term used to describe when animals act like people in a story? (personification)
Follow up: Tell me about one of the stories you read where an animal acted like a person.
4. I know you have been learning about the word *disguise* in this unit. Can you use that word in a sentence for me? I will try to use it in a sentence too!
Follow up: Why was the wolf disguised as a sheep in “The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing”?

In this unit, students will explore how connected living things are to the environment they live in.

What's the story?

Students will learn about the concept of **habitats**, the different **plants** and **animals** that are a part of specific habitats, and what makes each habitat **unique**.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn about **habitats** and how plants and animals develop characteristics that help them **adapt** and **survive** in particular climates. Students will also learn about the **types of foods** animals eat and will be introduced to the notion of a **food chain**.

Students will **identify and describe** different habitats based on their **unique characteristics**. They will learn to **classify** animals according to the types of food they eat. Students will also explore **informational writing**. They will keep a habitat journal, creating a new entry for every habitat they learn about.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What is a habitat?

Follow up: Describe the habitat that surrounds where we live. Is it a good habitat for plants and animals? Why?

2. Tell me about the Arctic tundra.

Follow up: What animals live there? What kinds of plants grow there? How have the animals that live there adapted to keep themselves warm?

3. What are some animals that you have been learning about?

Follow up: What habitat do those animals live in? How have they adapted to their environment? Why is it important for living creatures to adapt to their environment?

4. Let's compare some of the habitats you have been learning about. (Choose from tundra, savanna, desert, forest, rainforest, etc.)

Follow up: How are they similar to one another? How are they different? Which habitat would you want to live in? Why?

Dear Caregiver,

It is exciting to start the school year—a warm welcome back to you and your student!

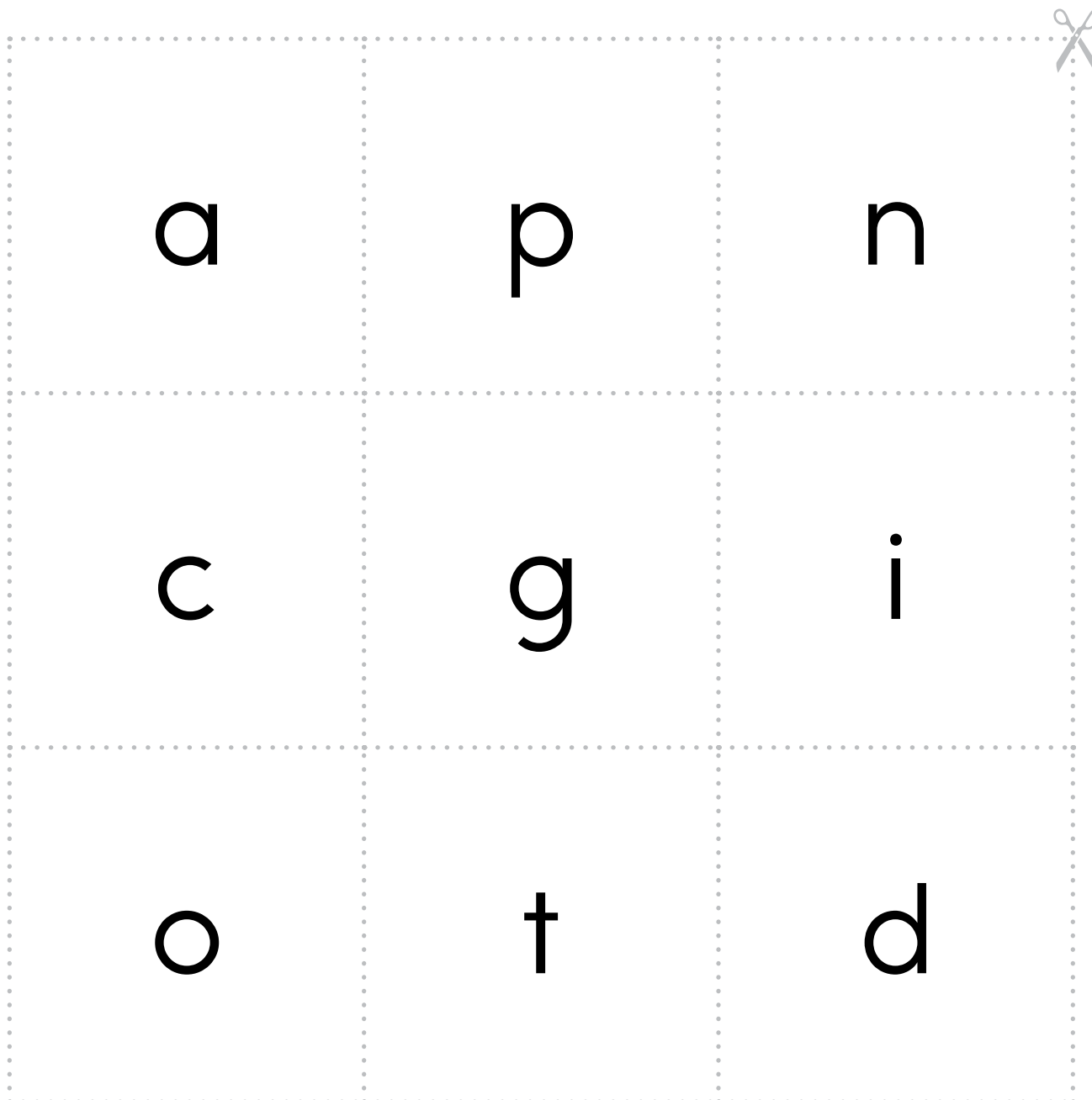
During the early weeks of school, we will review the skills taught in Kindergarten. This review period will also give us the opportunity to get to know your student better so we can identify their particular areas of strength and weakness in reading. It is important that we determine exactly what level of instruction is most appropriate for your student.

Once we have completed our evaluations, your student will be placed in the instructional materials most appropriate for their learning needs. You will begin to see more examples of class work, as well as homework, on a regular basis.

It is important that parents become involved in the education of their student. If you would like information on how you can help your student at home, please do not hesitate to contact me. You will continue to receive periodic caregiver letters that will give you tips and activities to do with your student at home. I look forward to teaching your student this year and helping each student to grow as a reader!

Dear Caregiver,

Have your student cut out the letter cards. Arrange the cards to make the word *cat*. Have your student read the word sound by sound. Repeat with the following words: *pat, pot, pit, nap, it, got, dog, dig, not*. If your student does well reading the words, read the words aloud one at a time, and ask them to spell the word by arranging the letter cards.



Dear Caregiver,

This is a story your student has read at school. Encourage your student to read the story to you and then talk about it together. Note that the tricky parts in Tricky Words are underlined.

Repeated reading is an important way to improve reading. It can be fun for your student to repeatedly read this story to a friend, relative, or even a pet.

King Log and King Crane

Once the frogs said, “We wish we had a king!
We need a king! We must have a king!”

The frogs spoke to the gods. They said, “We
ask you, the gods, to send us a king!”

“The frogs are fools,” said
the gods. “As a joke, let us
send them a big log to be
their king.”

The gods got a big log and
let it drop. The log fell in the
pond and made a
big splash.



The frogs were scared of the log. They said,
“King Log is strong! We must hide from him in
the grass!”

As time went by, the frogs came to see that
King Log was tame. He did not bite. He did not
run. He just sat there.

“King Log is not a strong king!” said one frog.

“I wish we had a strong king!”

“I do, too!”

“We must have a strong king!”

The frogs spoke to the gods. They said, “We
ask you, the gods, to send us a strong king,
and send him soon!”

This time the gods sent a crane to be king of
Frog Land.

King Crane was not like King Log. He did not just sit there. He ran fast on his long legs, and he ate lots of the frogs!

The frogs were sad.

“King Crane is a bad king,” they said. “We miss King Log! He was a fine king. We made a bad trade!”

The frogs spoke to the gods. They said, “We ask you, the gods, to send us back King Log!”

The gods were mad.

“**Fools!**” they said.

“You said you must have a strong king. We sent you one. He is yours to keep!”



In this unit, students will explore classic fairy tales and tall tales and the well-known lessons they teach.

What's the story?

Students will listen to classic stories such as "**Beauty and the Beast**" and "**Paul Bunyan**," which will lay the foundation for understanding stories in future grades.

What will my student learn?

Students will review the **elements of fiction** they learned about in previous grades. They will take the **lessons** that are learned from the stories and use them to **relate to the problems** the **characters face**. Students will also be introduced to the **American frontier** as they listen to various tall tales and explore the elements of that genre.

Students will use their knowledge of the elements and characteristics of fairy tales and tall tales to **write about a scene** from a story and **rewrite a fairy tale** of their own.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What are some of the characteristics you have learned about fairy tales?
Follow up: How did you know that "The Emperor's New Clothes" or "Beauty and the Beast" was a fairy tale?
2. In the story "Beauty and the Beast," the Beast is described as fearsome. What does *fearsome* mean?
Follow up: What made him seem fearsome? Can you think of other words that are synonyms (that is, have the same meaning) of *fearsome*?
3. Is "Paul Bunyan" a fairy tale or a tall tale?
Follow up: How did you know? What is one of the exaggerations you talked about when you read the story?
4. What were your two favorite tall tales you read? ("Paul Bunyan," "Pecos Bill," "John Henry," "Casey Jones")
Follow up: What was the same about the two main characters? What was different? What made each of them seem larger than life? What parts of each of the tall tales could really happen? What parts could not really happen?

The Human Body: Building Blocks and Nutrition

In this unit, students will be introduced to a number of topics related to the human body.

What's the story?

Students will learn about how **cells** are the **building blocks of life** on Earth. They will also explore how cells form tissues, tissues form organs, and organs work within various **body systems**.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn about the **digestive and excretory systems**, focusing on the fundamental parts and functions of these body systems. They will also be taught the **five keys to good health**, the importance of **good nutrition**, and how to eat a well-balanced diet.

In this domain, students will create several entries in the *My Human Body Journal*, including entries where they **describe** the **five senses** and the important discovery **Anton van Leeuwenhoek** made.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. Why is the human body sometimes called *the human machine*?
Follow up: Do you think that is a good name for it? Why? Name one of the systems that is a part of your body.
2. What did Anton van Leeuwenhoek discover?
Follow up: What instrument did he use to make that discovery?
3. What are the four types of tissue you read about?
Follow up: How are cells connected to tissue? Why are cells called *microscopic*? How would you describe cells and tissues? Can you draw a picture of them?
4. Describe or draw a picture of a meal that contains a lot of nutrients.
Follow up: Why are nutrients important? What types of nutrients would you be getting if you ate that meal? Why is it important to eat a balanced diet?

Dear Caregiver,

During the next several days, your student will be learning about the Maya as part of a domain on early American civilizations. They will learn about the importance of farming and the cities that grew where people settled. Your student will also learn about the existence of leaders called kings as well as the importance of the stars and planets in the Mayan religion. Below are some suggestions for activities that you may do at home to reinforce what your student is learning about the Maya.

1. Where Are We?

Have your student locate the region where the Maya lived (Yucatán Peninsula and Mexico) on a world map or globe. If you do not have a world map at home, you may be able to obtain one at your local library. Talk about the geography and climate of this area. (rainforest, hot)

2. Draw and Write

Have your student draw and/or write about what they have learned about the Maya and then share the drawing with you. Ask questions to help your student use the vocabulary learned at school.

3. Sayings and Phrases: The More the Merrier

Your student has learned the saying “the more the merrier.” Talk with your student about the meaning of this saying. (The more people who are involved in something, the more fun it will be.) Point out times when the saying applies in your daily life.

4. Read Aloud Each Day

It is very important that you read to your student each day. The local library has many books about early American civilizations, including books about the Maya and Mayan civilizations. A list of books and other resources relevant to this topic is attached to this letter.

Be sure to let your student know how much you enjoy hearing about what they have been learning at school.

It is recommended that you preview all books before presenting them to determine whether the content is appropriate for your student. Because human sacrifice was a common practice in the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan cultures, a number of trade books mention this topic.

Recommended Resources for Early American Civilizations

Trade Books

Aztec, Inca & Maya (Eyewitness Books), by Elizabeth Baquedano (DK Children, 2011) ISBN 978-0756673208

The Ancient Maya (True Books: Ancient Civilizations), by Jackie Maloy (Children's Press, 2010) ISBN 978-0531252291

The Aztec Empire: Excavating the Past, by Nicholas Saunders and Tony Allan (Heinemann-Raintree, 2005) ISBN 978-1403448392

Machu Picchu with Code (Virtual Field Trips), by Gillian Richardson, Heather Kisson (Weigl Publishers, 2012) ISBN 978-1619132566

Dear Caregiver,

It is exciting to start the school year—a warm welcome to you and your student!

The purpose of this letter is to tell you about the reading program your student will be using this year. The program, called *Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)*, is an innovative set of instructional materials developed by the Core Knowledge Foundation. If your student attended our school in either Kindergarten or First Grade, they probably used *CKLA* for reading instruction in those grades.

CKLA consists of two types of instruction every day. The 60-minute Knowledge Strand builds general knowledge, vocabulary, and other language skills.

The Skills Strand, also 60 minutes, uses a phonics-based approach to teach the mechanics of reading and spelling. Students will also receive grammar and writing instruction during this Strand.

During the early weeks of school, we will review the skills taught in First Grade. This review period will also give us the opportunity to get to know your student better so we can identify their particular areas of strength and weakness in reading and writing. It is important that we determine exactly what level of instruction is most appropriate for your student.

This week your student will bring home copies of a story we have read together in class. We hope you will encourage your student to reread the stories aloud and discuss them with you at home. However, if your student has difficulty reading the stories and appears frustrated, please read the stories aloud to them. We will be observing and assessing your student during these first few weeks to be sure that they are placed in the appropriate level of instruction. Your student will use the instructional materials most appropriate for their learning needs. You will soon begin to see more examples of class work, as well as homework, on a regular basis.

It is important that caregiver become involved in the education of their student. If you would like information on ways to help your student at home, please do not hesitate to contact me. You will continue to receive periodic Caregiver letters that will give you tips and activities to do with your student. I look forward to teaching your student this year as we continue using *CKLA* in our Second-Grade classes.

Dear Caregiver

This is a story your student has read at school. Encourage your student to read the story to you. Then talk about it together.

The Hot Dog

Mom had a hot dog.

She left the hot dog on a shelf in the den.

The hot dog sent up a smell.

The smell drifted and drifted.

The cat bandit sat on the deck, wishing he had a snack.

Then the hot dog smell hit him.

Such a smell!

Sniff, sniff, sniff!

The cat bandit ran in the den.

He spotted the hot dog up on the shelf.

He got up on a bench.



Then he sprang up on the TV set.

Then, with a big jump, he sprang up and landed on the shelf.

Then—munch, munch, munch—the cat bandit had himself a picnic lunch.



Dear Caregiver,

Below you will find our spelling words for this week. We are beginning to learn how to put words in alphabetical order using just the first letter of each word.

The activity page your student has for homework should be completed in this way:

1. On the next page, have your student write the alphabet down the side of the paper.
2. Have your student read all of the words aloud and circle the first letter in each word.
3. Ask your student to write each set of words in alphabetical order.

quickly

neatly

ugly

jelly

chilly

slowly

funny

angry

empty

mommy

daddy

happy

pretty

grumpy

Tricky Word: alphabet

Please continue to encourage your student to read at least 20 minutes every night. At this point in the school year, your student should be able to self-select reading material and read independently for the entire 20 minutes.

A

quickly neatly ugly alphabet

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

jelly chilly slowly

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

funny angry empty mommy

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

daddy happy pretty grumpy

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

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Welcome!

Grade 3, Unit 1

Classic Tales:

The Wind in the Willows

In this unit, students will be exposed to classic children's stories and will learn about the elements of fictional narratives.

What's the story?

Students will explore interesting **themes** and discuss **character traits** through a variety of classics, from *The Wind in the Willows* to a selection from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn about the **elements of fictional narratives**, including dialogue, narration, characters, plot, and setting. They will be **exposed to rich language** and a variety of **vocabulary** and will **discuss literature** with their teacher and classmates.

Students will be guided through a variety of **writing experiences** focused on different purposes for their writing. They will also **collaborate** with their classmates and **share** their **ideas** as they develop and deepen their understanding of these literacy skills.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. Who were the main characters in your reading today?
Follow up: What are some adjectives you would use to describe those characters?
2. Where did the story you read today take place?
Follow up: How would you describe that setting?
3. What are themes? (broad ideas that come up many times over the course of a story or book)
Follow up: What are some of the recurring themes that you have noticed in the stories you have been reading or in the stories your teacher has been reading to you?
4. I know you have been learning about the word *meandered* in this unit. Can you use that word in a sentence for me? I will try to use it in a sentence too!
5. Whose perspective was your Read-Aloud told from today?
Follow up: How did you know that?

In this unit, students will learn about the properties of light and sound.

What's the story?

Students will build on what they previously learned about the **five senses** and the human body, focusing on the **senses of seeing and hearing**. Students will be introduced to this content through a narrative story about two old friends, Samuel and Jack, who are losing their sight and hearing.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn **how light** and **sound travel in waves** and how light and sound can be manipulated by various instruments.

In this unit, students will **respond to texts** they have read, **conduct research**, and **take and organize notes**. As part of their final writing task, they will **plan, draft, revise, edit**, and **publish a newspaper article**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What are some sources of light?
Follow up: What would Earth be like without the light from the sun? What would it be like without the heat energy from the sun?
2. What are some things that are transparent?
3. What causes light to reflect off water, glass, and other smooth and shiny objects?
Follow up: What are some things in our house that are reflective?
4. What happens to light when it encounters a translucent object?
Follow up: What are some examples of translucent things?
5. Explain the difference between convex and concave.
Follow up: How do scientists use convex lenses? What are concave lenses used for?

In this unit, students will continue to build their knowledge about animal habitats and taking care of the earth.

What's the story?

Students will learn about **food chains**, the **balance of nature**, **changes** to the environment, and how to **protect the environment**.

What will my student learn?

Students will read about **producers**, **consumers**, and **decomposers** in food chains. The Reader for this unit contains a selection of readings that focus on **ecosystems** and the balance of nature. Students will also explore how the environment changes both naturally and as a result of human actions. Finally, they will read a biography about **John Muir**.

Throughout the unit, students will write **Ecologist's Journals**, in which they will **summarize** what they have learned, **apply** the concepts that they have explored during their reading, and **extend their knowledge**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What is a producer? Give me an example of one.
Follow up: What is a consumer? Give me an example of one. What is a decomposer? Give me an example of one. What is the most important decomposer?
2. What is a food chain?
Follow up: Can you describe one of the food chains in the Mara National Reserve? What happens if a part of the food chain disappears forever?
3. How was the Petrified Forest created?
Follow up: What are the effects of flooding? Is flooding a natural change or a human change to the environment? How do you know?
4. What are some examples of human changes to the environment?
Follow up: What are some examples of environmental damages that have been caused by humans?
5. What are some things we can do to protect the environment?
Follow up: What are some things that you already do?

In this unit, students will spend some time examining the genre of personal narratives.

What's the story?

Students will read different **personal narratives** and will work to **identify the elements** of this particular genre.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn elements like vivid **descriptive language**, **dialogue** that shows character, **defining traits**, and **figurative language**. They will learn to make meaning from these texts by reading them **critically** and **closely** to improve their **comprehension skills**.

Students will **write every day** in this unit. In examining the different elements found in personal narratives, they will build their knowledge of **descriptive writing**. They will also have opportunities to use these elements in their writing by **creating their own personal narratives**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What is a personal narrative?
Follow up: What are three things that make an essay a personal narrative?
2. How would you define character traits?
Follow up: What is your favorite book or movie? Who is your favorite character in it? Describe the traits of that character. What evidence from the book or story supports your thinking? What do you think people would say are your character traits? What evidence would they have to support their thinking?
3. In this unit, you have been talking about sensory details. Look around us right now. Describe sensory details you are noticing in our home.
Follow up: What do you see around you? What do you hear? Smell? Taste? Feel?
4. What is dialogue?
Follow up: What are some of the rules for punctuating dialogue?
5. What is one of the memories you chose to write about in this unit?
Follow up: Why did you choose this memory? Share with me what you wrote about and how you incorporated some of the elements of personal narratives into your writing.

In this unit, students will be given tools and strategies to approach poetry.

What's the story?

Students will explore the **methods** and **devices** used by **poets**, which will prepare them to **read** and **interpret** both **formal and free verse poems**. The poems they will read represent a wide variety of periods and can be enjoyed by younger and older readers alike.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn to read texts **closely** and **carefully**. Because poems are often multidimensional, students will have opportunities to let their imagination flourish, **explore figurative language**, and **expand** their **creativity**.

Students will use a **Poet's Journal**, which has been created to reinforce the unit's **integration of reading and writing poetry**. The poems and activity pages in this journal will allow students to **review** material, **answer** questions, and **complete activities** designed to increase their comprehension. Students will also use these pages to **compose original texts** and apply what they have learned throughout the unit.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What is alliteration?
Follow up: Can you give me an example of what it sounds like? What is the difference between repetition and alliteration?
2. What have you learned about the poet Harryette Mullen?
Follow up: Tell me about her poem "Ask Aden."
3. What is the difference between first person and third person?
Follow up: Can you give me an example of each?
4. What have you learned about Langston Hughes?
Follow up: What was the main theme of his poetry? What do you think was the meaning of the poem "Harlem"?
5. What is a metaphor?
Follow up: Can you share a metaphor you talked about in one of the poems you have read? Can you give me an example of a metaphor?
6. What are some strategies you have learned for reading poetry aloud successfully?
Follow up: What have you learned about poetry that has made it enjoyable to read and to write?

This unit offers a unique learning experience for students as they read a range of informational texts about inventors, inventions, and the process of creation.

What's the story?

Students will have the chance to ultimately become inventors themselves while they **analyze the world** around them, **identify problems**, and **create solutions** for those problems.

What will my student learn?

Students will become contestants of an exciting reality TV game show. As part of the show, they will **practice observation, communication, and persuasion** in fun and interactive ways.

Students will engage in **collaborative discussions** and will **share ideas** with their classmates. They will work in teams to **participate in activities** and **challenges** that will be guided by both the teacher and inventor-judges, such as Thomas Edison and George Washington Carver.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. Describe what an invention is.
Follow up: What are some examples of different kinds of inventions?
2. Tell me about Thomas Edison.
Follow up: What were some of his inventions? I know he patented over a thousand inventions in the United States. What does it mean to patent something?
3. Tell me about George Washington Carver.
Follow up: What challenges did he face as an inventor? What is one fact you learned about him that you find interesting?
4. Why did Ruth Wakefield feel like she needed to “clear up some untruths” about her invention?
Follow up: What is the real story? Why do you think there have been so many false versions of her story on the Internet?
5. What do you think was the most important invention you learned about?
Follow up: Why? How did the invention change things? How would our world be different if that invention never existed?

In this unit, students will have the opportunity to explore the genre of personal narratives.

What's the story?

Students will read a variety of **personal narratives** and they will focus on identifying the **unique elements** of this genre.

What will my student learn?

Students will build their knowledge of **descriptive writing** and will put that knowledge to use in their own writing. They will examine and use those features of personal narrative writing to **compose** works about their **own lives and experiences**.

This unit will help students discover that they are **capable of personal writing** and that it can be a **fun and creative** way to share what they have to say about themselves. This unit provides a **supportive** environment for them to begin to **identify themselves as writers**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What has been your favorite personal narrative from this unit?
Follow up: Why? Could you relate to the person in the story? Why?
2. What is a personal narrative?
Follow up: How is it different from other genres of writing that you have learned about? What are some of the elements of personal narratives that stand out to you?
3. How can the use of strong verbs and adjectives impact your writing?
Follow up: What are some strong verbs you could use instead of the word *said* to really make an impact?
4. What is personification?
Follow up: Consider this example: "The ice cream in the freezer was calling my name." What is the nonhuman thing? What human action does it have? Can you personify a vacuum? A car? Your pet? Give me an example.
5. In this unit, you read a personal narrative by Rosa Parks. What did you know about her before you read it?
Follow up: What new things did you learn about her? How was her school different from yours? How was it similar? Can you talk about her experience based on her point of view? And from her teachers' point of view?

6. What is tone?

Follow up: Can you tell me about our weather today using a scientific tone? Now try doing it in a sarcastic, a passionate, and an optimistic tone.

In this unit, students will explore the fiction genre through a classic novel, *Don Quixote*.

What's the story?

This unit exposes students to the **timeless aspects** of this classic work, such as the relationship between **Don Quixote** and his sidekick, **Sancho Panza**.

What will my student learn?

Students will trace the **development** of **plot, characters**, and **literary elements** over the course of the novel. They will also read excerpts from an adapted version of *Adventures of Don Quixote*, which will enable them to **compare and contrast** the two texts used in the unit.

The **writing lessons** provide multiple opportunities for **peer collaboration**. Students will regularly engage in **written responses** to the texts they are reading and will work on **writing a persuasive essay**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What are the differences between knights and soldiers?
Follow up: Why might someone want to become a knight? Why might someone want to become a soldier? Which would you rather be?
2. What are some of Don Quixote's character traits?
Follow up: Can you give me some examples of when he displayed those traits?
3. Tell me some facts you have gathered through your reading about Don Quixote.
Follow up: What are some opinions that you have about Don Quixote?
4. How are Don Quixote and Sancho Panza similar to one another?
Follow up: How are they different from one another? What are some of Sancho Panza's character traits?
5. You learned about the word *ironic* (or *irony*). What does it mean?
Follow up: What did you learn about verbal irony? What did you learn about situational irony? Can you give me some examples?
6. What were some of the adventures that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza experienced together?

In this unit, students will be introduced to the concepts of matter, physical and chemical changes, and elements and compounds.

What's the story?

Students will explore how **matter** can be **transformed by physical and chemical changes**, resulting in the extraordinary diversity of our physical world. The unit is written as a **detective story** rather than as a standard informational text, combining literary and informational characteristics into a single text.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn concepts about **matter and its different states**. They will also learn about **physical and chemical reactions and changes, elements, and compounds**. These concepts are introduced gradually through the context of the protagonist's experiences, teaching students **practical examples** of these ideas.

Students will look beyond their Reader to **additional sources** to better understand the concepts introduced. They will also have the opportunity to integrate skills learned, such as how to **read and analyze** informational and literary texts, how to use information to **explain concepts and ideas**, and how to **write for different audiences and purposes**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. What are the three states of water? What can cause water to change in state?
Follow up: What does all matter have in common?
2. Why are all compounds molecules, but all molecules are not compounds?
Follow up: Can you give me some examples of compounds? What about molecules?
3. You have learned that matter can move between different states. How does that help you understand fossil creation?
Follow up: What are the different physical properties of a fossil?
4. What is a mixture? What is a solution? And a compound?
Follow up: Can you give me an example of each? What do they have in common? What is different about them?
5. What is the difference between a physical and a chemical reaction?
Follow up: How do they impact chemical composition? How do they impact the physical properties of matter? What about heat or light? Are physical and chemical changes reversible?