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Discovery Through Nonfiction [6th grade]

Allison Grant
Trinity University

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UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: **Discovery through Nonfiction**

Grade Level: **6th grade**

Subject/Topic Area(s): **Reading – Nonfiction and Discovery**

Designed By: **Allison Grant**

Time Frame: **6 Weeks**

School District: **North East Independent School District**

School: **Jackson Middle School**

School Address and Phone: **4538 Vance Jackson
San Antonio, TX 78230
(210) 442-0550**

Brief Summary of Unit (Including curricular context and unit goals):

In this unit students will read a variety of informative and literary nonfiction texts focusing on the tragedy and discovery of the Titanic. The readings will provide them with the opportunity to uncover the understandings that discovery is the illumination of information, discovery leads us to understand the truth, and discovering types and features of nonfiction makes us more effective readers. Through discussion with their classmates and creation of several graphic organizers, students will answer the question “what is discovery and what is it not?” As students read the nonfiction books *882 ½ Amazing Answers to Your Questions About the Titanic* and *Exploring the Titanic* accompanied by various newspaper articles, biographies, autobiographies and essays, they will explore the questions “how does discovery affect our understanding?” and “to what extent is reading nonfiction different from reading fiction and to what extent is it the same?”

The unit will conclude with a project in which students will apply what they have learned to create an informational and a literary nonfiction text. The texts will be intended for a time capsule to help people in the future discover the people and place of the student’s middle school in the current year.

Unit: Discovery through Nonfiction
Grade & Subject: 6th grade Reading

Stage 1: Desired Results

Understandings

Students will understand that . . .

- Discovery is the illumination of information.
- Discovery leads us to understand the truth.
- Discovering types and features of nonfiction makes us more effective readers.

Essential Questions

- What is discovery and what is it not?
- How does discovery affect our understanding?
- To what extent is reading nonfiction different from reading fiction and to what extent is it the same?

Knowledge

Students will know . . .

- Types of nonfiction – literary and informative
- Characteristics and purposes of both types of nonfiction
- Factual information on various historical discoveries

Skills

Students will be able to . . .

- Recognize and use text features such as titles, pictures, diagrams, subtitles, or organization
- Read a variety of nonfiction texts
- Express and support personal responses to texts

Content Standards

6.7 Reading/fluency. The student reads with fluency and understanding in texts at appropriate difficulty levels. The student is expected to:

- (C) Demonstrate characteristics of fluent and effective readers.
- (D) Adjust reading rate based on purposes for reading.

6.8 Reading/variety of texts. The student reads widely for different purposes in varied sources. The student is expected to:

- (B) Select varied sources . . . when reading for information or pleasure.
- (C) Read for varied purposes such as to be informed, to be entertained, to appreciate the writer's craft, and to discover models for his/her own writing.
- (D) Read to take action such as to complete forms, make informed recommendations, and write a response.

6.10 Reading/comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of

strategies. The student is expected to:

- (A) Use his/her own knowledge to comprehend.
- (B) Establish and adjust purposes for reading such as reading to find out, to understand, to interpret to enjoy , and to solve problems.
- (E) Use the text's structure or progression of ideas such as cause and effect or chronology to locate and recall information.
- (I) Find similarities and differences across texts such as in treatment, scope, or organization.
- (L) Represent text information in different ways such as in outline, timeline, or graphic organizer.

6.11 Reading/literary response. The student expresses and supports responses to various types of texts. The student is expected to:

- (D) Connect, compare, and contrast ideas, themes, and issues across text.

6.12 Reading/text structures/literary concepts. The student analyzes the characteristics of various types of texts (genres). The student is expected to:

- (A) Identify the purposes of different types of texts such as to inform, influence, express, or entertain.
- (B) Recognize the distinguishing features of genres, including biography, historical fiction, informational texts, and poetry.

6.13 Reading/inquiry/research. The student inquires and conducts research using a variety of sources. The student is expected to:

- (B) Use text organizers including headings, graphic features, and tables of contents, to locate and organize information.
- (F) Produce research projects and reports in effective formats for various audiences.

Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Performance Task

As we conclude our exploration of discovery through nonfiction, you will use the knowledge and understanding that you have gained to reflect on your own discovery of the middle school experience and of yourself through making this transition.

The year is 2107 (100 years in the future) and a nuclear disaster completely destroys the city of San Antonio. When it is finally decided that it is safe enough, teams of archaeologists are sent to explore the grounds. One team visits the site where Jackson Middle School once stood. Nothing is left of the building, but as the archaeologists begin to dig through the dirt they find a time capsule buried in the ground. This discovery will allow them to understand more accurately the place and the people who were once here. Just as you discovered Jackson Middle School in your first few weeks as a brand new 6th grader, this team of archaeologists will discover Jackson through what they find in this time capsule.

Your job is to apply your knowledge of discovery and nonfiction to create examples of texts from both types of nonfiction – informative and literary – that will be included in the time capsule to help those in the future understand as much as possible about the place of Jackson Middle School and the people who walked the hallways each day.

- The first text will be an example of **informative nonfiction**.
 - You may choose the form – newspaper article, magazine article, pamphlet, or encyclopedia article.
 - It must use **at least 2 of the text features** that we have discussed in class.
 - Your text should focus on the place of Jackson Middle School and include **at least 3 things that make the school unique** or that you had to learn in your first days as a student here.
 - It should clearly **show the purpose** of informative nonfiction.

- The second text will be an example of **literary nonfiction**.
 - You may choose the form – autobiography or biography.
 - Your text should describe you as a student and include a **discovery that you have made about yourself** as you have transitioned into middle school.
 - It should clearly **show the purpose** of literary nonfiction.

Other Evidence

- Student responses to the Four Corners statements about discovery
- Exit Slip to check for understanding of vocabulary definitions
- Contributions to bubble map categorizing different types of discoveries
- Exit Slip to describe a personal discovery
- Venn diagram for the two main types of nonfiction
- Entrance Ticket with description of text feature purposes and one example
- Numbered Heads to review *882 ½ Amazing Answers to Your Questions*
- Paper dolls for autobiography and biography
- 3-2-1 strategy statements, questions and connections
- Group presentations of various nonfiction texts
- Individual bubble maps with presented discoveries categorized
- Informal checks for understanding, specifically using Michael Eaton questions

Stage 3: Learning Activities

Day 1

- Students will decide to what extent they agree or disagree with a number of provocative statements in a Four Corners activity that asks them to begin thinking about the theme of discovery. They will circle their opinion on a handout and write one sentence for each statement that gives a reason for their thinking.

- Discovery means finding something that no one has found before.
- People who make discoveries must be geniuses.
- Discoveries do not happen very often.
- All discoveries lead to progress.
- Christopher Columbus discovered the United States of America.
- Anyone can be a discoverer.
- Once students have completed their written responses, practice the strategy with easy statements (“Apples taste good.” or “Sports books are interesting.”) and have students move to the corner of the room that corresponds with what they have circled. Collect student handouts.

Day 2

- Return the Four Corners handouts to the students and complete the activity by having them move to different corners of the room, share their thoughts with their groups, choose a speaker, and present their opinion to the rest of the class.
- After all statements have been discussed, debrief the Four Corners activity.

Day 3

- Introduce the question “**What is discovery and what is it not?**”
- Place students in groups. Give each group a set of scenarios on strips of paper that describe situations of discovery, creation, invention, and finding and include strips with those headings. Students should work together to sort the scenarios to fit most appropriately with the headings. Monitor the groups to make sure that they are sorting the items correctly. Once groups have completed the sorting activity, they should work to create definitions in their own words for the words “discovery,” “creation,” “invention,” and “finding.”
- When all groups have finished drafting their definitions, discuss those that they have created and provide them with the dictionary definitions as needed to clarify their understanding.
 - Discovery: sight or knowledge gained of something previously unknown
 - Creation: an original product or the act of causing to exist
 - Invention: something produced using imagination
 - Finding: something located by chance or with effort
- Students will complete an Exit Slip in which they will have to match “discovery,” “creation,” “invention,” and “finding” with their definitions and choose one of the words for which to give an example. If students run out of time, students can complete this as an Entrance Ticket for the next day.

Day 4

- Begin the day with a large piece of butcher paper posted in the classroom. The butcher paper should have “discovery” written in the center as the beginning for a bubble map which will help students to see the different categories of discovery.
- Give each student a Post-It note. Keeping in mind the definition of discovery that they have already created, students should record a discovery on their Post-It note. Once they have all recorded a discovery students will walk around the room and try to group themselves with others who have similar discoveries. For example, a student who writes about discovering strength in him or herself through a parent’s divorce would not group with another student who writes that

Christopher Columbus discovered North America. Encourage students to talk to one another as they establish the criteria for what kinds of discoveries belong to each category. They should then think of a name for their category. Ask students to share their categories and add them to the bubble map. Students can then place their Post-It notes in the appropriate place on the map.

- Give each student two more Post-It notes. Looking at the categories on the bubble map, students will choose two different categories than the one they originally were a part of and will think of a discovery that would fit into each. They then place their additional discoveries on the bubble map. Leave the bubble map on display so that students have a point of reference throughout the unit.

Day 5

- Introduce the question **“How does discovery affect our understanding?”**
- Read the book *Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair* by Patricia Polacco. Students should listen for the different discoveries throughout the book and record them on a sheet of paper. After reading the book students will determine in which categories their recorded discoveries belong as a review of what they have already learned. They will also choose one discovery from their list and either describe or draw a picture to show the effect that it had on either the characters or the greater world.
- Students will also complete an Exit Slip that asks them to describe a personal discovery that they have made in the past few weeks since they have entered middle school. Collect the Exit Slips and save them for students to use in their final performance assessment.

Day 6

- Introduce the question **“To what extent is reading nonfiction different from reading fiction and to what extent is it the same?”**
- Explain that genres in writing are just like categories. Ask students to verbally define fiction and nonfiction. Explain that we will specifically be focusing on the nonfiction genre.
 - Fiction = fake
 - Nonfiction = not fake
- Give each student a copy of a two-circle Venn diagram simply labeled One and Two. Play two different examples from movies of literary nonfiction and informative nonfiction. For example, use *School House Rock* as an example of literary nonfiction and a documentary from the History Channel as an example of informative nonfiction. As students watch each segment they should record the similarities and differences that they notice. Discuss the things that they noticed and lead students to understand that while all of nonfiction is based on factual information, each of the two major types has a different primary purpose.
 - Literary nonfiction: to entertain or express opinions or feelings
 - Informative nonfiction: to inform
- With this information, have students label their Venn diagram with the appropriate type of nonfiction that the movie clip most represents.
- During the discussion of the two types of nonfiction, create a graphic organizer

“Nonfiction” chart in the classroom that includes the purposes of each type that will be used as students encounter examples of both types throughout the unit. As new pieces are introduced, they will be added to the appropriate column on the chart so that students can visually see the connections that they are making.

Day 7

- Give the students in the class a copy of a menu from a restaurant that has been retyped with no text features (headings, organization, etc.). Ask the students to find the total price of several items for a meal. Note how long it takes them on the board. Next give them copy of the same menu just as it would appear in a restaurant and ask them to find the total price of a different several items. Note how long this takes on the board.
- Ask students which menu they preferred using. Lead students in a discussion to realize that text features help to make us more effective readers and that text features usually highlight or point out the most important points and ideas from a text. Make sure they realize the application to content area textbooks as well.
 - Boldface/italics – important words or concepts
 - Titles/headings – main ideas
 - Indentations – new paragraphs with new ideas
 - Pictures/diagrams/charts – details extending important ideas

Day 8

- Students will complete an Entrance Ticket that asks them to describe the purpose of text features and to list one specifically.
- Give each student a copy of a short text that has no text features. Ask students how they would feel if they had to read it and determine the main idea. Review the previous discussion about text features. Provide markers, scissors, glue and extra paper. Students will then read the text and reformat it to add at least one of each text feature to make it a more approachable and legible document.

Day 9-11

- In order to teach the students background information on the Titanic and to give them experience using text features to find specific information in a nonfiction book, students will conduct a modified Jigsaw activity. They will be broken into teams of four. Within those teams of four, each student will have a focus area that they must concentrate on while reading the book *882 ½ Amazing Answers to you Questions about the Titanic*. Each group member will be given separate handouts with specific questions to answer and will move to a new expert group so that they are working with others who have the same questions.
 - The Ship experts will use pages 5-21.
 - The Journey experts will use pages 22-41.
 - The Iceberg experts will use pages 42-59.
 - The Rescue experts will use pages 60-77.
- Within their expert groups, students will work to find answers to all of their questions. Each expert group will also submit one to three different questions that they find most interesting from their section. These will be used in the Numbered Heads activity. They will then return to their original groups of four to teach their material to their teammates.

Day 12

- To make sure that students know the background information and facts about the Titanic, they will work with their Home Group of four to answer questions. After being given some time to review, each group member will be given a number. When a question is asked, students will consult with others in their group to make sure that everyone is ready to answer the question. A random number will then be called and the student who has that number in the group will have to stand up. The first person in the class to stand up will be given the opportunity to answer the question. Points will be given for correct answers and the winning team will be given reward cards.

Day 13

- Students will read a newspaper article relating to the discovery of the Titanic disaster or wreckage. While we read the article together as a class, we will talk about the distinguishing features of newspapers (headlines give us the main idea, the first paragraph answers the who, what, where, when questions, subsequent paragraphs tell us details, mood and character descriptions are not included). We will also talk about main idea and details. The main idea is usually found in the headline and first paragraph of a newspaper article. Students may use highlighters to mark the places in the article where the main ideas can be found.
- As a class we will look at a brief encyclopedia article and discuss its format.
- Both newspaper articles and encyclopedia articles will be added to the "Nonfiction" chart.

Day 14

- Students will read an autobiography of someone involved with the history of the Titanic (for example, Robert Ballard) and complete a paper doll for the person. They will include five things that they learn about the person while they are reading.
 - Thinking bubble – thoughts and dreams
 - Head – sights and sounds
 - Hands and arms – work and possessions
 - Heart – feelings
 - Feet and legs – settings and places
- Collect paper dolls to be used again.

Day 15

- Students will read a biography of someone involved with the history of the Titanic (for example, The Unsinkable Molly Brown) and complete a second paper doll for the person with the same elements as in the autobiography.
- Discuss the differences between the autobiography and biography.
- Both autobiography and biography will be added to the "Nonfiction" chart.

Day 16-20

- Read *Exploring the Titanic* by Robert Ballard using various comprehension strategies including Say Something to scaffold understanding.

Day 21

- Students will be placed in groups to read a nonfiction text that describes a

discovery other than the Titanic. In their groups, students will read the text together and use the 3-2-1 strategy (3 new things learned, 2 questions that it raises, and 1 connection) to review the reading at the end of class.

Day 22

- Continuing in their groups, students will finish reading their nonfiction text and prepare information to present to the class including type of nonfiction, genre (autobiography, biography, essay, article), and a description of the discovery.

Day 23

- Groups will present their nonfiction text to the class.
- Students will be given a handout of the categories of discovery bubble map. As groups are presenting, individual students will listen and ask questions to find out about the discovery so that they can place it in a category on the bubble map.

Day 24-25

- These are built in buffer days for any activity that necessitates longer than expected or allowed for in planning.
- If students are ready to move on at this point, continue with work on the final assessment or show a documentary on the discovery of the Titanic.

Day 26

- Complete Time Capsule Worksheet.

Day 27

- Begin work on Informative Nonfiction Text for Time Capsule.

Day 28

- Complete work on Informative Nonfiction Text.

Day 29

- Begin work on Literary Nonfiction Text for Time Capsule.

Day 30

- Complete work on Literary Nonfiction Text.
- If students complete the project early, conduct a Gallery Walk of their products so that students can see what their peers have created.



Discovery Time Capsule

The year is 2107 (100 years in the future) and a nuclear disaster completely destroys the city of San Antonio. When it is finally decided that it is safe enough, teams of archaeologists are sent to explore the grounds. One team visits the site where Jackson Middle School once stood. Nothing is left of the building, but as the archaeologists begin to dig through the dirt they find a time capsule buried in the ground. This discovery will allow them to understand more accurately the place and the people who were once here. Just as you discovered Jackson Middle School in your first few weeks as a brand new 6th grader, this team of archaeologists will discover Jackson through what they find in this time capsule.

Your job is to apply your knowledge of discovery and nonfiction to create examples of texts from both types of nonfiction – informative and literary – that will be included in the time capsule to help those in the future understand as much as possible about the place of Jackson Middle School and the people who walked the hallways each day.

- The first text will be an example of **informative nonfiction**.
 - You may choose the form – newspaper article, magazine article, pamphlet, or encyclopedia article.
 - It must use **at least 2 of the text features** that we have discussed in class.
 - Your text should focus on the place of Jackson Middle School and include **at least 3 things that make the school unique** or that you had to learn in your first days as a student here.
 - It should clearly **show the purpose** of informative nonfiction.

- The second text will be an example of **literary nonfiction**.
 - You may choose the form – autobiography or biography.
 - Your text should describe you as a student and include a **discovery that you have made about yourself** as you have transitioned into middle school.
 - It should clearly **show the purpose** of literary nonfiction.



Discovery Time Capsule Worksheet

Informative Nonfiction Text	
What form will you choose?	
Which two text features will you use?	
What three things are important to know about Jackson?	
1.	
2.	
3.	
What is the purpose?	
Literary Nonfiction Text	
What form will you choose?	
Describe a discovery that you have made about yourself in middle school.	
What is the purpose?	

Time Capsule Rubric

		Unacceptable (F)	Approaching (C)	Meeting (B)	Exceeding (A)
Both Texts	Does the project show that you used your time wisely and gave it your best effort? (10 points)	The project shows no effort or thought.	The project shows minimum work and effort.	The project shows that you used your time wisely and gave it a good effort.	The project shows that you made the most of your time and gave it your best effort with a thoughtful and creative approach.
	Does the project show that you have an understanding that nonfiction is based on factual information? (15 points)	The project does not show an understanding of the basis of nonfiction.	The project shows a partial understanding of the basis of nonfiction.	The project shows that you understand that nonfiction is based on factual information.	The project shows that you have a clear understanding of the basis of nonfiction and use it appropriately.
Informative Nonfiction	Did you use at least two nonfiction text features? (15 points)	The informative text does not use nonfiction text features.	The informative text uses only one nonfiction text feature or uses the features ineffectively.	The informative text uses two nonfiction text features.	The informative text uses two or more nonfiction text features in a thorough, thoughtful, or creative way.
	Did you include at least three things important to someone trying to discover an understanding of the school? (20 points)	The informative text does not include things important to understanding the school.	The informative text includes one or two important things or includes three things that are unimportant to understanding the school.	The informative text includes three things important to someone trying to discover an understanding of the school.	The informative text includes three or more important things that are carefully or creatively chosen to help someone gain an understanding of the school.
	Is the purpose of informative nonfiction clear and appropriate? (10 points)	The informative purpose is missing.	The purpose is inappropriate.	The purpose of informative nonfiction is clear and appropriate.	The purpose of informative nonfiction is clear and appropriately used to help convey the information.
Literary Nonfiction	Did you include a personal discovery you made about yourself? (20 points)	The literary text does not include a personal discovery.	The literary text mentions a personal discovery but it is unclear.	The literary text includes a personal discovery you made about yourself.	The literary text includes a personal discovery you made about yourself revealed in a thoughtful and thorough way.
	Is the purpose of literary nonfiction clear and appropriate? (10 points)	The literary purpose is missing.	The purpose is inappropriate.	The purpose of literary nonfiction is clear and appropriate.	The purpose of literary nonfiction is clear and appropriately used to help convey the information.

Allison Grant
Summer 2007