

Writing Project Planner: Owl Case Study

Part 1: Big Picture Planning: A worthy task, well-framed	
Writing Project Snapshot	As part of their case study on owls, third graders will write opinion pieces describing which physical traits are most important to owls for their survival. Students will use facts from their research to support this opinion. These writing pieces will accompany a high quality owl illustration that will be turned into...
Timeframe	4 weeks
Focus Question/Prompt	<p>What physical trait is most important to owls for survival?</p> <p>Owls are becoming an increasingly endangered species due to human impact on natural habitats. Owls must rely on their adapting physical traits to survive. Use a minimum of three facts from our research to support your opinion.</p>
Learning Targets	<p>I can describe the physical traits of owls.</p> <p>I can share my opinion about physical traits of owls.</p> <p>I can use facts from my research to support my opinion.</p> <p>I can revise my writing after getting feedback from a friend and teacher.</p> <p>I can use tier 3 vocabulary from research in my writing.</p>
Models to use with students	Use a combination of endangered animal opinion writing pieces and illustrations as mentor texts.
Criteria (align to learning targets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagram of owls and physical traits • Opinion of which physical trait owls rely most on for survival • 3 reasons for opinion based on a facts from research • Writing revised after feedback from peer and teacher, using opinion rubric and checklist • Use tiered words from research (academic and domain: ex. endangered, talons, etc.)

Part 2: Test Driving the Task: Questions to ask yourself as you write	
To what extent is the task clear, doable and purposeful? Who will be the authentic audience?	This task requires students to meet a number of the third grade CCSS ELA standards particular to writing and language. For an end of the year case study, this feels appropriate. The audience for this work will be...
Does the focus question require students to use evidence from their research/reading?	The prompt asks students to support their opinion with facts from their research.
What knowledge do I need to successfully complete this task?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical traits of owls • How writers share their opinions • How to use research to inform writing
What writing skills do I need to successfully complete this task?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of opinion writing (to share perspectives on a topic) • Structure of opinion writing (stating an opinion and supporting it with a reason) • Checking work against criteria and giving/receiving feedback based on criteria • Selecting facts from research that support my opinion • Using words that describe owls (how they look, what they do and what they need)
Part 3: Scaffolding Towards Success: Focus writing lessons	
1. What makes quality opinion writing? Look at models and name criteria	
2. Planning our writing—shared writing and independent writing: facts about worms	
3. Writing our topic sentences to introduce our opinion	
4. Supporting our opinions about owls using facts from our research	
5. Revising our writing—Did we have a opinion supported by facts?	
6. Revising our writing—Did we use words that vividly describe what owls look like, do and need?	
7. Editing our writing—does our writing send a clear message to the reader?	
8. Practicing reading our published writing	
Part 4: Quick Writes	
Quick write #1: What's my opinion about owls?	
Quick write 2: What is are the physical traits of owls?	
Quick write 3: What are the characteristics of owl behavior?	
Quick write 4: What do owls need for survival?	
Quick write 5: Why are owls becoming endangered?	