

Grade 4 EL Education
Module 2: Researching to Build Knowledge and Teach Others: Animal Defense Mechanisms

Guiding Questions and Big Ideas:

- **How do animals' bodies and behaviors help them survive?**
- **How can writers use knowledge from their research to inform and entertain?**
 - *To protect themselves from predators, animals use different defense mechanisms.*
 - *Writers use scientific knowledge and research to inform and entertain.*

What will your child be doing at school?

In this module, students explore animal defense mechanisms. They build proficiency in writing an informative piece, examining the defense mechanisms of one specific animal about which they build expertise. Students also build proficiency in writing a narrative piece about this animal.

In Unit 1, students begin by building background knowledge on animal defense mechanisms using an Animal Defenses research notebook to record notes and synthesize new information. Listening closely and close reading of informational texts about animal defense mechanisms will prepare students for the mid-unit assessment, in which they listen to and read new texts about animal defense mechanisms. They closely read complex texts, which involves answering questions about the text to gain a deeper understanding. They determine the main idea or ideas of a text and identify supporting details, and they analyze diagrams to further their understanding about a text. They use all of this to write a summary of the text. Students continue their study of the topic in the second half of the unit. They will continue to record notes and to synthesize new information in their Animal Defenses research notebooks. This whole class study of animal defenses will act as a model for students as they research an animal of their choice in Unit 2. At the end of this unit, students select their "expert animal" to research with a small group during Unit 2.

In Unit 2, students research their expert group animal and its defense mechanisms. Close reading of informational texts and web pages about their animal prepares students for the mid-unit assessment, in which they cite evidence, determine the main idea, and then summarize and organize their research. They closely read complex texts as well as web pages and answer questions about the texts to gain a deeper understanding. In the second half of the unit, students synthesize information from their research by writing an informative piece detailing their animal's physical characteristics, habitat, predators, and defense mechanisms. This piece serves as the introduction to their performance task, a choose-your-own-adventure narrative, written in Unit 3. Their research in this unit will also serve as a resource for writing narratives with scientifically accurate details in the following unit.

The Language standard that students will focus on in unit 2 (L.4.2c) requires them to use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.

- For this, we use the acronym FANBOYS, which helps students to remember that the comma goes before the words for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so when joining two independent clauses.

In Unit 3, students apply the research they have completed (in Unit 2) about their animal and its defense mechanisms to write a choose-your-own-adventure narrative about their animal as part of their performance task for this module. Students begin this unit by reading a mentor literary text, *Can You Survive the Wilderness?* by Matt Doeden, as a class. This text introduces them to the format of a choose-your-own-adventure. Students hone their writing skills through practicing with a class model based on the millipede. For the mid-unit assessment, students plan for and draft the introduction to their own narratives. Then, through mini lessons and peer critique, they continue to revise their writing. Finally, in the end of unit assessment, students write the second choice ending of their narrative on demand, and then combine this with their first choice ending to create their final performance task in a choose-your-own-adventure format.

The Language standard that students will focus on in unit 3 (L.4.1d and L.4.2b) requires them to order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns and to use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.

- For ordering adjectives, we use the acronym NOSASCOMP, which helps students remember that when more than one adjective is used to describe something, the adjectives should be written in the following order: number, opinion, size, age, shape, color, origin, material, purpose. For example:
 - the ugly, old, brick house
 - two round, blue, diamond earrings

Central to the EL Education curriculum is a focus on “habits of character” and social-emotional learning. In this module, students work to become effective learners: develop the mindsets and skills for success in college, career, and life (e.g., initiative, responsibility, perseverance, collaboration). The following student learning targets are a focus for this unit:

- I work to become an **effective learner**.
- I take **initiative**. This means I see what needs to be done and take the lead on making responsible decisions.
- I take **responsibility**. This means I take ownership of my ideas, my work, my goals, and my actions.
- I **persevere**. This means I challenge myself. When something is difficult or demanding, I keep trying and ask for help if I need it.
- I **collaborate**. This means I work effectively with others.

How can you support your child at home?

- Talk to your child about the animal defense mechanisms he or she has been learning about.
- Encourage your child to do further research on animal defense mechanisms at the library or on the internet.
- Watch television documentaries about animals and animal defenses on television.■ Invite your child to tell you about determining the meaning of unfamiliar words by identifying the root and affixes.
- Talk to your child about the choose-your-own-adventure narrative and the elements of a narrative
- Read short stories or narratives and encourage your child to identify the elements of a narrative.
- Invite your child to tell you about the use of the acronym NOSASCOMP to know in what order to write adjectives when more than one adjective is used to describe something.
- Invite your child to tell you about the use of the acronym FANBOYS to determine when to use a comma before a coordinating conjunction.
- Play online affix games:
 - Determine the meaning of words with the prefixes pre-, re-, and mis-: <https://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/determine-the-meaning-of-a-word-with-pre-re-or-mis>
 - Use the prefixes pre-, re-, and mis-: <https://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/use-the-prefixes-pre-re-and-mis>
 - Fun English Games: Prefix and Suffix Game: <http://www.funenglishgames.com/gram-margames/prefixsuffix.html>
 - Maggie's Earth Adventure: Short Circuit: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/adventure/grammar3.htm#>
- Play online games on IXL to practice coordinating conjunctions:
 - 'Identify Coordinating Conjunctions.' IXL Learning. Web. 9 Apr, 2015. <http://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/identify-coordinating-conjunctions>
 - 'Use Coordinating Conjunctions.' IXL Learning. Web. 9 Apr, 2015. <http://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/use-coordinating-conjunctions2>
- Play online games on IXL to practice ordering adjectives: <https://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/order-adjectives>
- Play online games on IXL to practice punctuating dialogue: <https://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-4/punctuating-dialogue>