

Publisher Response: Grades 3-5

Since Bookworms is about the power of research and literature together to enhance achievement, knowing its story will help you to understand this review.

Bookworms began as the work of two university reading researchers: Mike McKenna and Sharon Walpole. It was available for free on a simple website. You can still see it there (bookwormsreading.org). Amazing things happened with those first materials. Many schools used them, and some made dramatic improvements to achievement. EdReports reviewers did a painstaking review of that initial curriculum. You can see it here, with Comprehensive Reading Solutions as “publisher.”

Sharon and Mike had never seen the EdReports rubric. They were only influenced by the standards and by the existing research. That review identified (correctly) the absence of a full writing curriculum and of culminating tasks. Partnership with Open Up Resources allowed Walpole to design those. She and colleagues at the University of Delaware went point by point through the review and used the reviewers’ comments at each grade level to enhance the original materials; Open Up provided the design expertise to enhance usability.

We are proud of what we built together. Here is a short list of the additions and enhancements in Bookworms K-5 Reading and Writing (2018):

- Daily identification of standards
- Research units that extend topics from reading into informational writing
- A genre-based writing strategy curriculum with focus on the development of schemata for narrative, opinion, and informational text structures to organize and communicate knowledge from reading
- Participatory grammar instruction for all language standards
- Alignment of interactive read-alouds in sequences that complement shared reading to build knowledge
- Two extensive culminating tasks at the end of each grade level allowing students to demonstrate their competence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking

Bookworms is hard to understand compared with other curricula because it is entirely different. It is aggressively paced. The magic of Bookworms is that its skin looks simple. The instruction is precise. A very small number of instructional routines are used repetitively to ensure that teachers can maximize productive student time actually reading and writing. A full tier-two intervention is included, along with chances to accelerate achievement. What makes this simple skin work is the very complex skeleton that holds it together.

Scores on this Ed Reports review are nearly identical to the scores of the initial team. The curriculum, though, is entirely revised. The revision directly addressed the items in the initial review and, we believe, made the curriculum even stronger. Below we provide evidence for this strength, organized by indicator, so readers can judge for themselves.

Indicator 1h

Bookworms is not organized in units – it is organized in grade levels. We provide two extensive culminating tasks to demonstrate grade-level standards at the end of each year. Those tasks are set up from the start of the year, with shorter culminating tasks that occur throughout the year. Reading in Bookworms informs writing, and both are sequenced to build deep text structure knowledge. Our culminating tasks require students to read and write, and then to collaborate and present to demonstrate their speaking and listening accomplishments. We built reading and writing instruction to prepare them for this all year. In grade 3, students spend the last month of school on three major tasks, each encompassing over 7 hours of work time. For grade 4, we engage students in these tasks for over 17 hours in the last three weeks of school. Fifth grades' deep dive in science information text and historical fiction ends with a research unit to enhance understanding of a piece of historical fiction, and then they use 15 hours to link reading, writing, listening, and speaking in their culminating tasks. Each grade level includes varied culminating tasks across the year:

Grade 3

- Research writing: Weeks 5-8
- Informative writing: Weeks 9-10
- Opinion writing: Week 18
- Informative writing: Weeks 22-23
- Opinion writing: Week 27
- Research and presentation: Weeks 31-32
- Book Review and Advertisement: Week 33
- Narrative: Week 34

Grade 4

- Research writing: Weeks 10-11
- Persuasive letter: Weeks 14-15
- Research writing: Weeks 15-16
- Newspaper article: Week 23
- Opinion writing: Weeks 26-27
- Book Review and Advertisement: Week 33
- Narrative: Week 34

Grade 5

- Research writing: Weeks 13-15
- Informative writing: Week 19
- Opinion writing: Weeks 23-25
- Research writing: Weeks 24-25 and 29-30
- Book Review and Advertisement: Week 33
- Narrative: Week 34

The coherent sequences of text-based questions and tasks can be found in the ELA lesson plans for the units above. You will see that many extend attention to texts from Shared Reading. The sequences of text-based questions and knowledge and skills demonstrated in the culminating tasks. Teachers confirm (and build) student readiness with each set of questions and text-based tasks across the year.

The sequences of high-quality text-based questions, activities, and tasks are arranged so that ideas develop from one lesson to the next, supporting students in synthesizing their learning for each culminating task.

Indicator 2a

Bookworms texts were selected to build reading confidence and competence and specifically reordered to address this indicator. We build knowledge through our interactive read alouds, alternating narratives more complex than those the students are reading with sets of science and social studies information books that build knowledge of grade-appropriate topics.

We have added tables to explicitly address this indicator, which identify the social studies and science topics connected through texts throughout the year. All are grade-level appropriate and all provide support for concepts that will be developed deeply in science and social studies.

Grade 3

Week 5-8: American Civics
Week 9-11: Earth Science
Week 16-17: Biomes / Science Cycles
Week 19-23: Historical Figures / Civil Rights

Grade 4

Week 3-5: American History
Week 9-14: Jamestown Colony
Week 15-16: British Rule in Early America
Week 21-22: Exploration and American Settlements
Weeks 31-32: Benjamin Franklin and His Inventions

Grade 5

Week 4-5: Animal Study
Week 7-9: Life Processes
Week 10-13: Civil Rights
Week 16-17: Scientific Hypotheses Tested
Week 23-35: States of Matter

Indicator 2c

The highly structured and scripted lesson plans in Bookworms provide explicit guidance for teachers in supporting students' literacy skills. The design of reading and writing instruction is clear and repetitive. Academic language is built into the lesson script, which includes many key words mentioned in the standards. Guidance is also found in the Teacher Manual (Initial Planning, Instructional Routines for Shared Reading, ELA, and Differentiated Instruction, Evaluating Student Progress).

The daily text-based responses are more challenging over time. Each is an individual comprehension check; the content has not been addressed within the collaborative discussion. In addition, the tasks are labeled by their standards-based writing type. The tasks require analysis of text-based information and provision of evidence/reasons. Over the course of a whole year, integrating knowledge and ideas moves from being directly taught to embedded in student work in culminating tasks (see list in 1h above).

In ELA, teachers engage students in discussion during listening. They also model text-based responses, allowing students to learn how to answer these inferential, text-based questions in the text structures of narrative, description, and opinion. This modeling informs the work that students do in written responses to Shared Reading.

In Shared Reading, an inferential discussion follows every day's reading. Nearly all of the questions guiding that discussion are inferential, requiring students to make inferences from across areas in the text or from the text to relevant prior knowledge. The questions are sequenced within each discussion for a coherent oral review of that day's content. As the texts are carefully sequenced to be harder over time, the discussion questions are inherently also more challenging.

Indicator 2d

Leading up to the final two extensive culminating tasks which we identified, students engage in shorter tasks requiring paired and small-group collaboration and discussion. We did not title these activities as "culminating tasks", but readers can see how they were built to enable mastery of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and provide students the opportunity to demonstrate comprehension and knowledge of a topic or topics.

Refer to Indicator 1h above for the complete list of grade-level culminating tasks. You will find eight culminating tasks for grade 3, seven culminating tasks for grade 4, and seven culminating tasks for grade 5.

Indicator 2g

The research projects in Bookworms leverage students' content knowledge as their reading and writing skills increase. The sequence we provide is designed to develop skills and abilities to use topic-subtopic and sequence of event structures. This knowledge-building comes through the words and illustrations in information books and the rich discussion and vocabulary instruction that accompanies them. Specific research projects are identified below:

Grade 3

W5-8: US Government

W9-10: Rocks and minerals

W22-23 Famous Historical Figures

Grade 4

W10-11: Natural disasters

W15-16: King George III and Taxation

W23: Roanoke colony

Grade 5

W13-15: Civil Rights

W19: Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad

W24-25: States of Matter

We hope that this information adds value for readers.