**Building Bridges with Unlikely Friends**

**In this third six-week unit of second grade, students explore both literal and figurative bridges.**

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**Overview**

* + They read how-to texts on building bridges and view these amazing structures on the Internet. Through realistic fiction, they examine the possibility of friendship in conflict-filled settings. Reading fantasy texts that depict animal experiences completes their exploration. Building on the writing of previous units, they write a letter to a character in *Charlotte’s Web*. Students also gather words from poetry and explore the meanings of idioms and words with common roots.
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**Focus Standards**

* + These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.
    - **RL.2.7:**Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.
    - **RL.2.3:**Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
    - **RI.2.6:**Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.
    - **W.2.2:**Write explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
    - **L2.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
    - **L.2.2(b):**Use commas in greetings and closings of letters.
    - **L.2.4:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 2 reading and content,* choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.
    - **L.2.4(d):**Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict the meaning of compound words.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/CCSSI_ELA_Standards.pdf) (1.5 MB)

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**Suggested Student Objectives**

* + - Read a how-to book on building and designing bridges.
    - Write an explanatory piece on “how to build a bridge.”
    - Read informational texts on both literal and figurative bridges.
    - Discern authors’ techniques for describing characters.
    - Write friendly letters to one of the characters in *Charlotte’s Web*.
    - Use commas correctly in the greeting and closing of a friendly letter.
    - Write responses to a letter from a character’s point of view.
    - Read *Henry and Mudge*, a chapter book, to focus on characters**.**
    - Use knowledge of a root word such as “bridge” to predict the meaning of compound words and idioms.
    - Enjoy Haiku poetry, embracing the riddles and the language.
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**Suggested Works**

* + (E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

**Literary Texts**

**Stories**

* + - *Henry and Mudge: The First Book* (Cynthia Rylant and Sucie Stevenson) (E)
    - *The Fire Cat*(Esther Holden Averill) (E)
    - *George and Martha: The Complete Stories of Two Best Friends* (James Marshall)

**Stories (Read Aloud)**

* + - *The Cricket in Times Square*(George Selden and Garth Williams) (E)
    - *Charlotte’s Web*(E.B. White and Garth Williams) (E)
    - *Zen Shorts* (Jon J. Muth)
    - *Pop’s Bridge*(Eve Bunting and C.F. Payne)
    - *Mackinac Bridge: The Story of the Five-Mile Poem*(Gloria Whelan and Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen)
    - *One Green Apple*(Eve Bunting and Ted Lewin) (EA)
    - *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Karen Lynn Williams, Khadra Mohammed, and Doug Chayka)
    - *Snow in Jerusalem*(Deborah da Costa, Ying-Hwa Hu, and Cornelius Van Wright)
    - *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret*(Florence H. Parry and Ted Lewind)
    - *My Father’s Shop*(Satomi Ichikawa)
    - *Silent Music* (James Rumford)
    - *The Little Painter of Sabana Grande*(Patricia Maloney Markun and Robert Casilla)

**Poems (Read Aloud)**

* + - “The Bridge Builder” (Will Allen Dromgoole)
    - *If Not for the Cat*(Jack Prelutsky and Ted Rand)
    - *I Am the Dog I Am the Cat*(Donald Hall)

**Informational Texts**

**Informational Text**

* + - *Bridges* (See More Readers) (Seymour Simon) (EA)

**Informational Text (Read Aloud)**

* + - *Bridges Are To Cross*(Philemon Sturges and Giles Laroche)
    - *Bridges: Amazing Structures to Design, Build & Test*(Carol A. Johmann, Elizabeth Rieth, and Michael P. Kline)
    - *Owen and Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship*(Isabella and Craig Hatkoff, Paula Kahumbu, and Peter Greste)
    - *Owen and Mzee: The Language of Friendship*(Isabella and Craig Hatkoff, Paula Kahumbu, and Peter Greste)
    - *Tara and Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends* (Carol Buckley)
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**Sample Activities and Assessments**

* + **Teacher Notes:** *This unit could be taught in three parts. First, start with “bridges” so that students see the bridge as both an architectural structure and a symbolic coming together. Students will then see how children are able to bridge cultural gaps through friendship. Then read the fictional works to further the theme of “Unlikely Friends.” Students will think about differences in characters such as Charlotte and Wilbur and the way they become friends. Finally, writing a friendly letter to a book character will help the students to think deeply about the fictional characters.*

**Informational Reading / Explanatory Writing**

Introduce a chapter from *Bridges: Amazing Structures to Design, Build & Test.* This is an informational book, but it is also a “how-to” book: It will teach “how to” build bridge structures in the classroom or at home. Read the text to the children and allow them to view the way the “how to” section is set up in steps to follow. Gather the supplies and allow the students to follow the directions to experiment with building a bridge. Discuss how diagrams help to explain the directions. Have the students write an explanatory paragraph telling someone else how they made their respective bridges (SL.2.6, W.2.2, RI.2.6, RI.2.3, RI.2.7)

**Informational Reading / Explanatory Writing**

Begin a class discussion by asking the students, “If a real hippopotamus had no other companions, what other kind of animal could you imagine her having for a friend?” Be sure to require good reasons for their opinions as they answer. Read the book *Owen and Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship*(Isabella Hatkoff) aloud. When you are finished reading, have the students discuss what the author (a six-year old girl) wanted to accomplish by publishing the book, using questions such as, “What did she want to explain? Describe? What questions did she want to answer? Why are there so many photographs?” Ask students to write a paragraph explaining how the two animals in the story became friends. (SL.2.6, W.2.2, RI.2.6, RI.2.3, RI.2.7)

**Language Activity**

After reading about bridges, have students predict the meaning of compound words that contain the word “bridge”: footbridge, drawbridge, flybridge, and bridgework. Repeat the activity using another root word such as “water”: waterbed, watercolor, watermelon, waterlog, watershed, waterproof, watertight, rainwater, waterway, and waterspout. Extend this lesson by discussing idioms using the word “bridge” such as, “we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it,” “that’s water under the bridge,” and “don’t burn your bridges.” (L.2.4d)

**Class Discussion / Literature**

Introduce the idea of a “bridge” as a metaphor by reading the book *Pop’s Bridge*(Eve Bunting). In this book, a group of boys experience the sacrifice involved in bridge building and the joy that comes with friendship. Discuss the literal bridge in the book and the way the bridge served as a link not only between two places but also between two people. Introduce the following Isaac Newton quotation: “We build too many walls and not enough bridges.” Discuss what Isaac Newton may have meant by his comment. (RL.2.7)

**Class Discussion / Literature**

Introduce a book such as *Snow in Jerusalem* by reviewing how unlikely friends become friends through finding something in common. Tell the students that they are going to read a book about two children who were not friends, but they found something in common. As the story is read, have the students focus on how the children find something in common to make a friendship. Talk about how these two characters faced a challenge and made a hard choice. (RL.2.3, RL.2.7)

**Literature / Letter Writing**

Read aloud the book *Charlotte’s Web* (E.B. White) aloud to the class. After you have finished the book, have the students connect the characters in the book by writing friendly letters. Students should choose one of the characters in *Charlotte’s Web* and write the character a letter. Have students let the character know why they the character and what they like about him/her. Students should ask their character a question about something they are wondering. Require proper use of punctuation and form for the letters.Revise the letters and edit for spelling and punctuation. Then, have students trade letters and write back to their classmate as if they were the classmate’s chosen character. For example, if a child receives a letter addressed to Wilbur, she would write a letter back as if she were Wilbur and answer the question asked. (L.2.2b, RL.2.7, W.2.5)

**Writing / Digital Communication**

To encourage the communication among unlikely friends, arrange for your students to be pen pals, or email pals, with students from another class in a place far away. Setting parameters for what can be shared, ask students to write letters introducing themselves and asking the other student about him/herself. The purpose of this activity would be to find ways the students are similar and the ways the students are different from one another. (W.2.6, W.2.5, L.2.2b)

**Class Discussion / Literature**

As students read the *Henry and Mudge* books, challenge them to look closely at the characters. Before the first chapter, ask the students to be ready to describe Henry and Mudge. Using Post-Its or white boards, require each student to write down two characteristics of each character. Although one of the characters is a dog and one is a boy, they have a wonderful friendship. Have students share at least two words to describe Henry and two words to describe Mudge. Discuss what can be learned about friendship through these stories. (RL.2.7, L.2.5b)

**Class Discussion / Poetry / Language**

As you read from the poetry collection *If Not for the Cat*(Jack Prelutsky), explain to students the Haiku style of poetry. Point out to the students that these poems are very short, but they make you think. As you read a poem, keep the accompanying illustration hidden until students try to guess the animal being described. These poems are filled with words that may be new to your students. When you are finished with each poem, ask students to choose one new word to save in the word bank. (L.2.4e, L.2.5, RL.2.4)

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**Additional Resources**

* + - [Friendly Letter Mini-Lesson](http://www.lesn.appstate.edu/fryeem/RE4030/friendly_letter_minilesson.htm) (L.2.2b)  
      Note: This is a lesson plan about writing a friendly letter.
    - [Letter Generator](http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/games-tools/letter-generator-a-30187.html) (ReadWriteThink) (W.2.6, L.2.2b)  
      Note: Use this online generator to help students write a friendly letter.
    - [Build A Bridge](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bridge/build.html) (RI.2.3)  
      Note: This lesson is an online bridge building activity for the future civil engineer.
    - [Fun and Learning About Bridges](http://www.bridgesite.com/funand.htm) (RI.2.3)  
      Note: This is an expansive site, including links to additional resources, for learning about bridges.
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**Terminology**

* + - “how-to” books
    - body
    - capitalization
    - closing
    - compare
    - compound word
    - contrast
    - editing
    - explanatory writing
    - figurative
    - friendly letter
    - greeting
    - haiku
    - idiom
    - literal
    - revision
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**Making Interdisciplinary Connections**

* + **This unit teaches:**
    - **Art**: Structural art (e.g., architecture and symmetry)
    - **Geography**: World geography (e.g., as related to settings such as Jerusalem)
    - **Science**: Animals (e.g., habitats)