

Grade 6 Playlist: Examples and Anecdotes for Support

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.3:

- Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

Welcome

Often, authors write informational texts to inform an audience. They aim to teach readers something that they did not know before. Authors of informational texts typically try to present their topic in a way that is both clear and interesting. The strategies they use to introduce and develop the topic affect how readers engage with the text.

Objective

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- analyze how key concepts are introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text.

Review

Key Terms

- An **analysis** of a text is a close and detailed examination. When analyzing a text, the reader “takes it apart” and studies every detail and its relation to the text as a whole.
- When authors **illustrate** a concept in a text (such as an individual, an event, or an idea), they explain it in order to make it clearer to the reader (just as the author of a novel would include photographs or drawings to help the reader see the story’s setting better). Often, this involves using charts, pictures, examples, or anecdotes.
 - **Anecdotes** are short stories, often describing things that really happened or personal experiences of the person who is telling the story.
- When authors **elaborate** on a concept in a text, they add more detail to an explanation, often by using the same types of supporting materials that illustrate concepts.



Exploring the Standard

Authors of nonfiction texts use many different methods to make complex subjects easier for readers to understand. For example, charts, drawings, and photographs can give readers a clearer understanding of key concepts in the text. Other methods include examples and anecdotes, which can relate key concepts to the real world and emphasize how the subject affects readers.

Watch!

Watch this video to learn how authors introduce and develop main ideas in texts:

- <https://www.opened.com/video/espark-learning-how-main-idea-is-introduced-and-developed/426825>

Practice!

Read this short article about Benjamin Franklin. What specific examples does the author give? How do these examples support the main idea? How does the diagram in the article also support the main idea?

- <http://www.k12reader.com/worksheet/find-the-main-idea-ben-franklin/>

A Closer Look: Using Anecdotes in Informational Texts

“I spent three hours doing my homework last night! I didn’t go to bed until midnight.” “We hiked for two hours before reaching the summit of the mountain. Our muscles ached, but the view was worth it.” “My great-great-grandfather worked as a coal miner for ten years after he immigrated to the United States, but he eventually started his own business and was very successful.” These sentences sound like comments that could be overheard in a lunchroom, on the bus, or while walking down the street. But in certain contexts, they could be used to support and illustrate nonfiction concepts: an argument about the stress that students face when completing their schoolwork; a description of a nearby peak in a major mountain range; an essay about the triumphs and hardships of immigrants to the United States.

Including an anecdote in an informational text can breathe life into the subject. It helps readers relate to a subject that they may not realize they have a connection to. Anecdotes also make texts more entertaining and engaging to the reader. They can be funny, strange, or just interesting. However, they should only be used when they are relevant and helpful to readers.

When an author uses an anecdote to illustrate or elaborate, analyze the text to discover why it is being used. Does it add to the reader’s understanding of the subject? Or is it used only as a means of diverting attention from a weak text?

Watch!

These videos explore the use of anecdotes to make texts more interesting:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zADFwkkX86k>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGRbV1CU424>



Teaching Notes: Examples and Anecdotes for Support

The goal of RI.6.3 is for students to understand how authors introduce, illustrate, and elaborate on individuals, events, and ideas in nonfiction texts, particularly through anecdotes and examples. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activities

1. Go over what it means to introduce, illustrate, and elaborate upon an idea. Then, have a class discussion in which students share examples of each when writing about a central topic (such as how science has developed since the Middle Ages). How might a writer introduce this topic? How might a writer illustrate or elaborate upon the topic?
2. Present a brief documentary video to the class that gives a biographical description of a famous scientist and his or her work, such as Isaac Newton or Robert Boyle. Ask students to identify examples and anecdotes given in the video. Students should explain how the examples and anecdotes help viewers understand the life and work of that person.

Writing Prompts

1. Have students conduct research on the physicist Isaac Newton and how he made his discoveries. Then, have them write an essay describing Newton's life and his accomplishments. In the essay, students should use at least one anecdote from Newton's life. Alternatively, allow each student to choose a different scientist, and ask students to prepare an oral presentation to tell about him or her. Students should include at least one anecdote in their presentation.
2. It is well known that some famous historical anecdotes are not true, such as the story concerning future president George Washington's honesty after chopping down the cherry tree. Instruct students to think about why stories such as these have value, even if they are entirely untrue, and to write a brief response (one or two paragraphs) stating their thoughts.

Additional Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching RI.6.3:

- **“Using Personal Anecdotes to Improve Writing Skills”:** This resource gives ways to teach the use of anecdotes:
<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/improve-student-writing-skills>
- **Anecdotes in Historical Documents:** This resource provides excerpts from historical documents that include anecdotes. Guiding questions are listed to help students analyze the use of anecdotes:
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/france-america/langarts2.html>

