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# Literature Models to Teach Expository Writing

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Maupin House

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***Literature Models to Teach Expository Writing***

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# A Slug's Life

by John Himmelman

## Primary lesson

**Materials:** *A Slug's Life*, animal riddles (page 21), sticky notes, chart paper, markers, pencils, planning sheet divided into four sections horizontally.

**Mini-lesson:** Describing an animal

### Mini-lesson

#### A. Building background

Share three of the animal riddles found at the end of this lesson (page 21). Have students guess which animal you are describing. After each animal, have a student reveal why he guessed the animal he did. Point out that the details helped them to picture the animal in their minds.

#### B. Introduce the book and the author

Read the title of the book and ask students to make a prediction as to what kind of animal this book will be about. Write “Slug” at the top of a clean sheet of chart paper.

Next, ask the students to share some details they think might be in the book, keeping in mind the riddles they shared in the “Build background” section.

Write these details underneath the word “Slug.”

#### C. Read the book aloud

#### D. Discuss the following

Determine whether the students’ prediction was correct. The story was about a slug. Circle the word on the chart paper.

Next, determine if any detailed predictions were included in the story and circle those.

Finally, ask if there were any details in the story that weren’t on the prediction chart. If so, add them to the chart.

#### E. Demonstrate the skill

Explain to students that there are 28 pages in John Himmelman’s book about slugs. Every page has some kind of detail about the life of a slug. He knows a lot about slugs. One way he may have decided what he wanted to say about slugs in his book might have been similar to what the class did in the “Build background” section. He might have listed on a piece of paper every single fact he knew about a slug.

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Next, ask students for a suggestion as to how John Himmelman organized all those facts. He probably thought about what a slug looked like, what it ate, where it lived, and where it went during day and night.

Make note that writers often use a Table of Contents to tell the reader exactly where to find the information they want. In the front of a book they list subtopics such as “Looks” or “Eats.” These help the reader find information quickly. Himmelman did not make a Table of Contents for this book. However, during center time, a few students may want to design one independently for *A Slug’s Life*.

Hand out sticky notes to six students. Have preprinted “Looks” on two notes, “Eats” on two notes, “Lives” on two notes, and “Goes” on two notes.

As you read the student-generated list of details, have each of the six students place the sticky note beside the correct sentence. For example, if the detail sentence says, “A slug is gray,” the students with the “Looks” sticky notes would place their notes on the appropriate detail.

#### **F. Model the skill**

Have the two students who held the “Looks” sticky note stand and read their detail sentence. Have the students who held the “Eats” sticky notes stand and read their detail sentence, and so on.

Explain that by grouping the sentences by topic and then into paragraphs about the same topic, the reader is better able to picture the slug in their heads. That is what John Himmelman did in his book.

### **Quiet Writing/Conferencing**

Give each student a piece of paper that has been divided into five horizontal sections. Ask them to think of an animal or insect (besides a slug) and write it in the first section. In the second section, have them write two sentences that would describe what that animal or insect looks like. In the third section, have them write two sentences that describe what that animal or insect eats. In the fourth section, two sentences about where it lives and in the fifth section, where it can be found. Teachers of emergent writers may want to do this activity in small groups or as guided writing using only one sentence instead of two. Then on another day, allow them to write their details independently.

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As the students continue with their independent writing, encourage them to list their facts, and add any other details about their animal or insect that come to mind. As you circulate, help them include the new detail sentences in the correct section. Remind them that they are painting a picture of their animal or insect with words, similar to the riddles used at the beginning of the lesson.

### **Sharing**

Allow three to four students to share their animal/insect descriptions. Have them leave the name of the animal/insect until the end so the audience can guess from the description that the student author wrote.

Ask the audience to give suggestions for other details the student author could include in a revision of their description.

# **A Slug's Life**

## **Primary Lesson**

### **Suggestions for Animal Riddles**

It might be green, black or yellow.

It has many legs.

It is long and squiggly.

It eats leaves and milkweed.

It can be found in a garden.

It can be found on leaves.

It spins a cocoon.

It turns into a butterfly.

It is a caterpillar.

It can be brown, black, white, or yellow.

It might have spots.

It has long or short fur.

It has a tail.

It has four legs.

It eats meat.

It eats bones.

It likes to run in the yard.

It can fetch things like newspapers or balls.

It lives in a pen or a house.

It is a dog.

It can be green or brown.

It has four legs.

It has a long tongue.

It eats flies and bugs.

It lives in a pond or a lake.

It hops from place to place.

It is a frog.

# **A Slug's Life**

## **Primary Lesson Planning Sheet**

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Name of Animal

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Looks Like

---

Eats

---

Lives

---

Where found