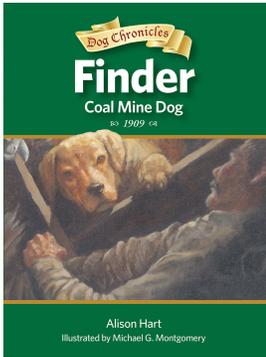


# TEACHER'S GUIDE



## Finder, Coal Mine Dog

Written by Alison Hart | Illustrated by Michael Montgomery

HC: 978-1-56145-860-8

**Series:** Dog Chronicles

Ages 7–10 | Historical Fiction

Lexile • F&P • GRL V; Gr 5

### ABOUT THE BOOK

When Thomas's family needs money, he's forced to go to work in the coal mines, even though neither of his late parents wanted that for him. His only comfort is his dog, Finder, a failed hunting dog who now pulls a cart in the mines. When disaster strikes, can Thomas and Finder escape from the fires deep below ground?

### THEMES

Survival | Loyalty | Family | Adventure | Child labor  
Mining in the early 1900s

### ACTIVITY WORKSHEETS

The following activity worksheets are included in this guide:

- Crossword Puzzle
- Research and Writing Assignment
- Timeline of Events

### AFTER YOU READ

Use the following excerpts from the book as post reading discussion questions.

- ***“Thomas...” Uncle hesitates and looks to the ground. “Your Aunt Helen and I have been talking. School might not start for you this year. I’ve already spoken to the supervisor at Cherry Coal Mine. You can start out digging.” (p. 4)***
  - Explain why Uncle George hesitated before telling Thomas about the plans to begin working at the Cherry Coal Mine.
  - Discuss how Uncle George’s plans conflict with Thomas’ desire to go to school.
  - Explore Thomas’ relationship with his uncle. Explain the reason why Thomas lives with him and the burden he represents.
  - In your opinion, does Thomas have a choice in the matter? Do any of the other children working in the mine? Explain your answer.
- ***But even from this far away, I sense his fear. I bark, telling him not to leave me, but suddenly the cage drops, and Thomas falls***

## MEETING THE STANDARDS

The activities in this guide directly address a variety of standards across the curriculum. Following each activity, you’ll find an abbreviation for the standard(s) it supports. For a complete list of the Common Core English Language Arts Standards addressed, please see pages 11–13.

***though the tower and disappears into the earth. (p. 41)***

- Imagine this scene from Finder's point of view. Tell how sensing Thomas' fear develops a deeper emotional connection between Thomas and his dog.
- Explore the desperation Finder must've felt when he witnessed Thomas disappearing into the ground.
- Consider how Thomas' going underground serves as a symbol for death. Discuss how miners constantly live in fear and with the reality of dying.
- ***Out of the corner of my eye, I see Thomas raise the gun. I hear the boom. The rabbit flies in the air and falls limp. I smell death. (p. 49)***
  - Examine Uncle George's plans for Finder to become a hunting dog. Consider ways that Uncle George's plans for the dog are similar to those he has for Thomas.
  - Explain why Finder is afraid. Is it the sound of the gun or death that frightens him the most? Explain your answer.
  - Describe the conflicting emotions Thomas feels in this scene, by being forced to terrify his dog in this way.
- ***"This will be your cart, Finder." Uncle helped me screw axles and wheels to the sledge and add traces. "You'll pull it to the coal car after I fill it" (p. 67)***
  - Identify an earlier scene in the book that foreshadowed Finder's task of pulling Thomas' cart full of coal.
  - Uncle helped Thomas construct Finder's cart. Explain what Uncle's willingness to do so reveals about his character.
  - Discuss what Finder's willingness to work alongside Thomas in the treacherous mine says about the dog's devotion to his owner.
- ***"Remember, you are not the only one who lost someone in the mine. Every time a miner steps into the cage and drops down that shaft, he worries that he or someone he knows will be the next to die." (p. 73)***
  - Dominick states, "Mining is like going into battle" (p. 73). Identify ways that war and mining are similar.
  - List the feelings and emotions that the miners shared.
- *Superstition* is defined as being a false belief, irrational, and fear. Explain the miners' superstition regarding Finder.
- ***Thomas volunteers to go for a stretcher and Peter Donna goes with him. I stay with Seth, lying close beside him to keep him warm. Mr. Galletti drapes his jacket over the boy, and for once he doesn't scowl at me. (p. 86)***
  - Explain what Thomas' willingness to go for a stretcher says about his character.
  - Tell why Mr. Galletti doesn't scowl at Finder.
  - Explore how Finder's role in caring for injured Seth helps him to win acceptance with the other miners.
- ***There is no blood, and his face looks peaceful, but just like the critters Uncle shoots. Mr. McKinney is dead. (p. 99)***
  - Explain why Finder referenced the "critters Uncle shoots" when he discovered that Mr. Kinney was dead. Tell how this type of reference is keeping with the dog's point of view.
  - Discuss the cause of Mr. McKinney's death. Refer back through the text to find evidence of his gradual demise.
  - Consider the contrast of moods in this scene—the excitement about payday, only to discover Mr. McKinney dead. Predict the affect this shift in emotional tone would have on a miner, specifically a young miner.
- ***"This way, this way," I tell him, my woofs insistent. He raises his head, blinks, and widens his bloodshot eyes. "Finder," he says, slowly getting to his feet. "Finder can lead us to safety." (p. 119)***
  - Thomas had always been confident in Finder's tracking capabilities. Explain how the action in this scene validates Finder's abilities with the other miners.
  - Reflect on the various events that have occurred throughout the story to prepare Finder for this important scene and those that follow.
  - Likewise, recall the prior events that served to prepare Thomas for this scene. Tell how his faith in Finder empowers Thomas, and eventually others.
- ***"Finder," he croaks. His tongue is swollen but I know he is saying my name. His hand moves ever so slightly, trying to reach for me, and I nudge my nose under it. (p. 158)***
  - Explore the emotional contrast in this scene in

which Finder saves Uncle George's life. Uncle George is desperate while Finder is strong. Explain how their roles have changed from the beginning of the story.

- Notice Finder's response when Uncle George tries to reach for him. Explain what Finder's nudge reveals about his character.
- On page 10, Thomas tells Finder, "We need to prove to Aunt and Uncle that we can earn our keep." Discuss how this quote serves as an introduction for the entire story. Identify how Thomas and Finder ultimately earned their "keep" in ways that were true to their desires and character.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alison Hart is the author of more than forty books for young readers, including *Emma's River*, *Anna's Blizzard*, and the *Racing to Freedom* trilogy. Hart is a teacher at Blue Ridge Community College and lives in Virginia.

[www.alisonhartbooks.com](http://www.alisonhartbooks.com)

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Michael G. Montgomery has illustrated numerous children's books. He attended Georgia Southern University and the University of Georgia. Montgomery lives in Georgia.

[www.michaelgmontgomery.com](http://www.michaelgmontgomery.com)

## REVIEWS

"Well-told and entertaining."  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

### Alison Hart's Dog Chronicles series:

*Darling, Mercy Dog of World War I*  
*Murphy, Gold Rush Dog*  
*Finder, Coal Mine Dog*  
*Leo, Dog of the Sea*

### Also available from Alison Hart:

*Anna's Blizzard*  
*Emma's River*

*Gabriel's Horses*  
*Gabriel's Journey*  
*Gabriel's Triumph*

Peachtree Teacher's Guide for  
**FINDER, COAL MINE DOG**  
prepared by Debbie Gonzales

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# AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

## ALISON HART

interviewed by Debbie Gonzales



**DG:** Discuss the difficulties and challenges of writing a historical fiction novel from a dog's point of view.

**AH:** I have written over 60 books, so I have had to "become" a police officer, a slave, a cat, a horse, a detective, a young girl... the list goes on and on. A dog was not difficult!

**DG:** Describe your writing process. Does the plot come to you first, or do the historical facts guide the storyline?

**AH:** I describe my brain as a big simmering pot. Facts, fancies, settings, historical details and real characters get thrown in and mixed around until a story emerges, and then changes as I toss in more facts, fancies, etc., as needed, to make a delicious soup.

**DG:** *Finder, Coal Mine Dog* is set in a fascinating time and place in history. Tell how you first discovered the Cherry Mine Disaster and when you decided to use it as inspiration for this story.

**AH:** A story about pit ponies that worked in the coal mines in England has been stewing in my head for a long time. When I began writing the *Dog Chronicles* series, I switched my focus from horses to dogs. I found a photo online of a dog pulling a cart of coal in Illinois, so I knew that a story about a dog in a mine could be a possibility. I then researched coal mine disasters. The Cherry Mine Disaster was one of many, but after I read *Trapped*, by Karen Tintori, the story would not let me go.

**DG:** It is interesting to note that you name actual survivors of the disaster in the story. Explain why you chose to do so.

**AH:** When I wrote *Gabriel's Journey* about an actual battle in Virginia during the Civil War, I also used real people from history. It was very satisfying, and since then, I have tried to include heroes (and villains) in my historical fiction as long as I can stay true to the time, and if possible, honor their memories.

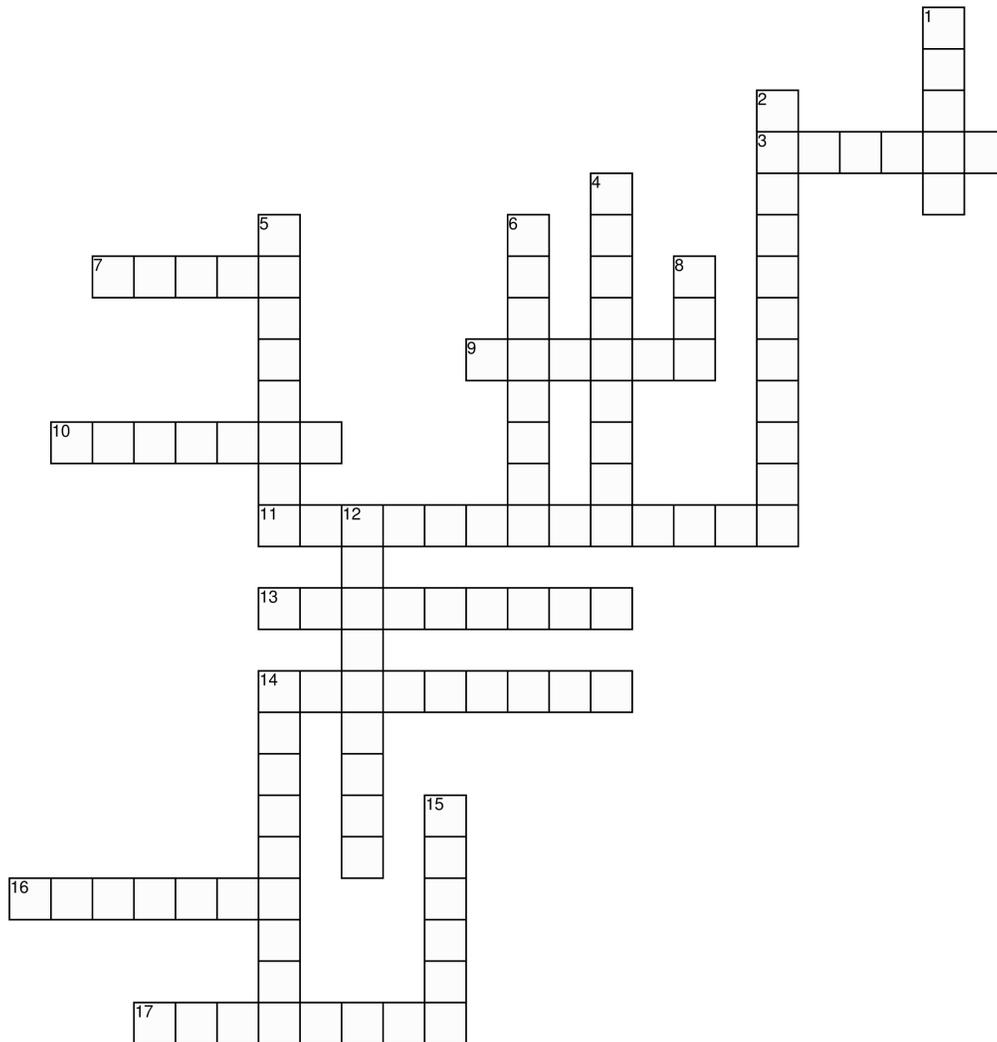
**DG:** Tell about your latest project. What new book can we look forward to reading sometime in the near future?

**AH:** *Leo, Dog of the Sea* is about Magellan's journey around the world in the 1500s. It is proving very challenging due to the magnitude of the voyage and the many events that it encompassed.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE:

*Leo, Dog of the Sea* will soon be available from Peachtree Publishers. Check out the other books in the Dog Chronicles series: *Darling, Mercy Dog of WWI* and *Murphy, Gold Rush Dog*.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



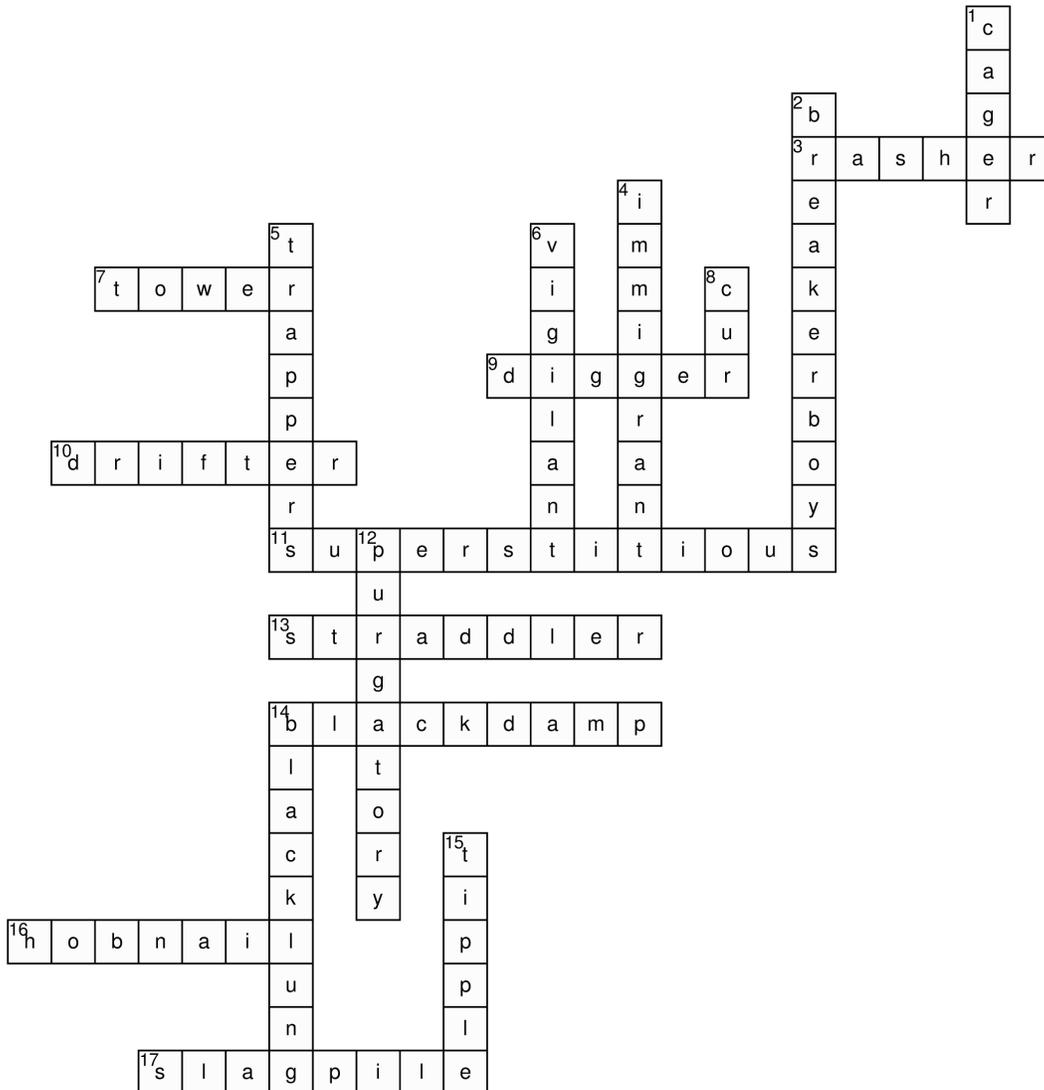
### ACROSS

3. Thin slice of cooked bacon
7. Uppermost peak of a coal mine structure, also known as the hoist frame
9. Digs coal from vein then shovels it into cars
10. Dog that catches scent from the air
11. Fearful, unrealistic belief
13. Dog who catches scent on the ground
14. A lethal mix of nitrogen and carbon dioxide
16. Short nail with thick head, used to protect boots
17. Large hills of rocks and pieces of coal

### DOWN

1. Person who loads and unloads mine cars onto cages
2. Boys that sort rock from coal
4. Person who leaves one country to settle in another
5. Objects that opened and shut the large doors between tunnels
6. Alert, watchful
8. The original pioneer dog
12. A place or condition of great suffering and death
14. Disease caused by inhaling coal dust
15. Large structure where mine cars were “tipped” over and dumped into larger railroad cars

### CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS



## RESEARCH and WRITING ASSIGNMENT

**RESEARCH** one or more of the topics below and write an informative essay examining the chosen subject. Use citations, developed facts, and details in the piece. Report on the topic by presenting original ideas, opinions, and how the topic enhanced the plot.

### TOPIC LIST:

- Cherry Coal Mine Disaster
- Eight Day Men
- Child Labor in the mining industry
- The Brownie Camera
- Canine breed known as the Cur
- Sequencing process of mining coal: from the vein to the railroad car
- St. Paul Coal Company
- Lewis Hine and his collection of child labor photos
- *Treasure Island*
- *The McGuffey Readers*
- 1909 World Series game
- The Wright Brothers

**DISCUSS** *Finder, Coal Mine Dog* was written from the point of view of Finder, a dog. Notice how the setting, physical details, emotional responses, and overall theme are presented from a dog's perspective—more specifically—a straddler. Consider the research required to create a believable tale, such as *Finder, Coal Mine Dog*, as seen and experienced from a dog's point of view.

**WRITE** a narrative piece from Snow White the cat, Seth's rat, or the panicked mules point of view. Choose a scene from the book in which the animal is featured. Include other characters in the scene. Use dialogue and description revealing the animal's character and role in the scene, making certain to keep the perspective close to the animal's experience. Illustrate the scene. Share the piece with the class.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

**OBJECTIVE:** To compare, contrast, and analyze the story's plotline with the dates of actual historical events.

### MATERIALS:

- *Finder, Coal Mine Dog*
- Timeline Strips and Arrows (p. 9–10)
- Tape
- Scissors

### PROCEDURE:

- Using scissors, trim around the borders of the Timeline Strips and Arrows.
- Using tape, construct the Timeline by securing strips together in a numerically sequenced manner.
- Lay Timeline on flat surface.
- Place arrows alongside the Timeline of Events by placing them next to the corresponding date.
- Consider the placement of the arrows. Notice the span of time between placement.
- Analyze the Timeline of Events by considering the statements below:

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Consider what Thomas' ability to read well says about his character. Tell what Thomas' superior reading skill reveals about his father's desire for his son to prosper outside of the mining life.
- Calculate the years that passed between the Cherry Mine Disaster and the passing of the Child Labor laws. Consider how many years it took to pass the regulations and how many children were affected in the meantime. Express your opinions about child labor. Describe how the struggles of children of the past make you feel today.
- Describe evidences of technological progresses during the early 1900s.
- Explain how the World Series game offered a diversion and a sense of relief from the toils of labor the miners had to endure.
- Observe the events featured in the Timeline of Events. Comment on any event and/or series of events that spark interest or serve to be of great concern.

**TIMELINE STRIPS**

1800

1810

1820

1830

1840

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tab

1850

1860

1870

1880

1890

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tab

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

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tab

**TIMELINE ARROWS**

*McGuffey's Second Reader*, written by William Holmes McGuffey is published.

**1836****1904**

St. Paul Coal Company erects new mine site 90 miles southwest of Chicago, establishing a new mining town called Cherry, named after mining superintendent, James Cherry.

*Treasure Island*, written by Robert Louis Stevenson is published.

**1883****1905**

Dec 11, 1905: Cherry Mine opens, equipped with the latest technology of the day. Considered to be one of the safest mines of all time!

December 7, 1903: The Wright Brothers complete first successful flight in Kittyhawk, North Carolina.

**1903****1909**

Nov 13, 1909: The Cherry Mine Disaster. A load of hay destined for the mule stable catches fire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> vein, causing one of the worst mining disasters in history.

October 16, 1909: Pittsburgh Pirates beat the Detroit Tigers, 4 games to 3, in the World Series.

**1909****1938**

Fair Labor Standards Act passed. Federal regulation for minimum ages of employment and hours of work for children was achieved.

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS GUIDE DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS:

<b>English Language Arts Standards: Reading Literature</b>		Discussion Questions	Crossword Puzzle	Timeline	Research	Writing	Author Spotlight
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1	Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.	√		√	√	√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.3	Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.	√		√		√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.5	Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.	√		√			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.6	Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.	√				√	√
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	√	√	√	√	√	√
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1	Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.	√		√		√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3	Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events	√		√		√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	√	√	√	√	√	√
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	√		√		√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).	√		√		√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	√	√	√	√	√	√
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	√				√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6	Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.	√				√	√
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	√	√	√	√	√	√

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT (CONTINUED)

### English Language Arts Standards: Writing

		Discussion Questions	Crossword Puzzle	Timeline	Research	Writing	Author Spotlight
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.2	Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.3	Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.					√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.7	Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).				√	√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.			√			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.					√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.8	Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.					√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.					√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7	Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.					√	

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT (CONTINUED)

### English Language Arts Standards: Speaking and Listening

		Discussion Questions	Crossword Puzzle	Timeline	Research	Writing	Author Spotlight
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.	√		√	√	√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.2	Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.	√		√			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.5	Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.					√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	√		√	√	√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.2	Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	√		√	√	√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.4	Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	√		√			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4	Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.				√		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.5	Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.				√	√	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	√		√			
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.4	Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.				√		