

A Common Core State Standards &
Next Generation Science Standards-Aligned
Discussion/Project Guide for Grades K-3

Charles's Bridge

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Written by Sandra Novacek
Illustrated by Nicole Lapointe
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When armed soldiers arrive near their hometown in 1938, Charles's parents must move the family to another town in Czechoslovakia. Artistic Charles misses his old home--as well as the art supplies he had to leave behind. He knows there's no hope of replacing them, not with war looming.

Then one day Charles spots a beautiful bridge, and inspiration strikes. He can make some art supplies! With paints made from clay, herbs, and vegetables, and brushes fashioned from branches and pussy willows, Charles paints the bridge.

Inspired by actual events, Charles's Bridge is a story of inspiration and an artist's fierce desire to create art and capture beauty during wartime.

Guide crafted by
Debbie Gonzales, MFA



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Introducing Charles and Sandra

“He gave you love, now you must give him immortality.”

~ Da Chen, Chinese author

Meet Charles Novacek - Artist, Linguist, and Survivor of the Czech Resistance:



To those he met in his adopted hometown of Detroit, Michigan, Charles Novacek was a fascinating Renaissance man. He spoke seven languages, traveled the globe and constantly pursued knowledge. After retiring from a successful career as a civil engineer, Charles returned to school, following his lifelong dream of becoming an artist. He earned a master’s degree in painting from Eastern Michigan University and a Bachelor of General Studies and Master of Arts in Liberal Arts Studies from the University of Michigan-Dearborn, eventually showing his paintings and sculpture in Detroit area galleries.

What most people never discovered, however, was that the charming, erudite artist spent his boyhood in the Czech Resistance, defending his homeland from the Nazis and the Communists. Charles’ father, Antonin, had been a prisoner of war in World War I and ensured his son developed wilderness survival skills at an early age. Charles’ childhood was spent exploring the wilds of Slovakia and the Tatra Mountains. He learned how to find food and water, how to fire a rifle and shoot an arrow, and how to create shelter. He learned the details of the landscape around his home, including the location of its many caves.

Meet Sandra Novacek – Author, Master Librarian, and Educator:

Sandra A. Novacek was born and raised in the Detroit, Michigan area and found her true calling as a librarian as a young girl, when she developed a checkout system for the Nancy Drew mysteries she loaned to her friends. After earning a BA in English and Theater from Michigan State University and a Masters in Library Science from Wayne State University, Sandra worked as a high school English and theater teacher, then became director of the U.S. Army Education Center in Pruem, Germany before assuming her first librarian position at the Library of Michigan. In 1975, she began a distinguished career as director of the Cromaine Library in Hartland, Michigan. Sandra also served her profession on a national level through leadership positions with the American Library Association and as president of the Michigan Library Association. In 1996, a library patron introduced Sandra to Charles Novacek, widower, artist and retired engineer who spoke seven languages and had a fascinating life story. Sandra left her library post and settled with Charles in a high-rise overlooking Detroit’s riverfront.



Learn more about Charles and Sandra by accessing www.charlesnovacekbooks.com.



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Pre-Reading Exploration

Meet the Illustrator - Nicole Lapointe:

Nicole Lapointe is a Detroit-based freelance artist whose main focus is digital illustration, but she also dabbles in multiple art mediums including stained glass, painting, and photography. Her most recent illustrated book is the award-winning *Rosie: A Detroit Herstory*. In her non-art time, Nicole can be found out in the woods hiking, visiting National Parks, roller skating, doing charity work, studying local history, being involved with the The Marche Du Nain Rouge, and Theatre Bizarre, and attending Lakes of Fire. Learn more about Nicole by accessing her website at www.nicolelapointe.com.



Consider the illustrations on the front and back covers of the book:

- Examine the illustration of the boy. Identify his most outstanding feature.
- Study the objects he is holding in his arms. Describe them.
- Predict what he intends to do with the objects. Identify the clues that suggest his intentions.
- How is the boy feeling? How do you know?
- What does the use of vibrant colors suggest about the emotional tone in this scene? Explain your answer.
- Illustrations tell stories with images, rather than words. What is the story this illustration is telling?
- The title of the book is CHARLES'S BRIDGE. Make a connection with the title and the illustration featured on the back cover. What does the bridge in the illustration have to do with the boy holding art supplies?
- Predict what this story is going to be about.

The Charles's Bridge - Fun Facts:



- The bridge in the story is a baroque bridge in the town of Náměšť nad Oslavou in the Czech Republic aka Czechia (former Czechoslovakia).
- It was built by Count Václav Adrian of Enkenvoirt in 1737.
- An arched road bridge with sculptural decoration by Josef Winterhalder, the bridge is the second largest Czech bridge with the richest sculptural decoration following the Charles Bridge in Prague hence it is sometimes referred to as the "Little Charles Bridge".
- Today the bridge is designed for pedestrian traffic only.



Discussion Questions

My sketchpad and paintbrushes are necessities, he thought stubbornly. He'd rather have his art supplies with him than any of the clothing stuffed inside his suitcase.

- The word *necessity* means essential, indispensable, and needful. Which do you feel would be more essential to survive escaping danger during wartime - art supplies or clothing? Explain your answer.
- To Charles, having a sketchpad with him at all times was something he needed to get him through life daily. Predict why this was so.
- Notice the scenery in the illustrations featuring Charles and his family at the train stop. Why do you think the illustrator chose to use dark tones, rather than bright, vivid colors? What do the dark tones suggest about Charles's feelings at this point in the story?

Charles had hoped to make friends when he started school. But the other children laughed when he stumbled over Czech words in his strange Slovak accent.

- The word *hope* means desire, wish, and yearning. Which definition do you feel best fits Charles in the classroom scene? What is Charles hoping for? What is keeping him from making friends? Explain your answer.
- Other than his art supplies, what else Charles have to leave behind in Hrachovo?
- Consider how Charles's struggles in school combined with being forced to leave his home contributed to feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Tell how art helped to heal the sadness and rejection Charles experienced as a child.

Without any art supplies or painting, Charles spent his afternoons walking alone through the dark, pine-scented forest.

- Describe the change in color choices used in the illustration depicting Charles in the woods. Determine what the brighter, more colorful tones suggest about Charles's feelings at this point in the story.
- Explain why Charles is placing a fishing rod in the cave. How can a fishing rod serve as an essential item for survival?
- Imagine what it was like to be constantly concerned about war forcing you from home. Consider how art helped Charles deal with fear and worry.



I wish I could paint this bridge, *he thought, But there was no hope of doing that - his art supplies had been left behind, and paints and paper were still in short supply.*

- *Ingenuity* is defined as inventiveness, creativity, cleverness, and resourcefulness. Which definition best describes Charles's discoveries to make his own paint and brushes from the wild? Explain your answer.
- Not only did Charles ultimately paint his beloved bridge as a young man, he did so, once again, from memory as an adult. The painting he created then was stunning enough to be featured in an art exhibit. Make a connection between his youthful yearnings to paint the bridge and the effect this longing had upon his memory.

*As colors filled the page, Charles could feel the darkness slip away - his lonely classroom, his ache for home, his worries about the war that was slowly marching closer.
All that existed for him was his art and the bridge.*

- Consider how Charles's passion to paint the bridge helped define the person he would later become.
- Oftentimes objects serve as symbols to represent something abstract such as freedom, joy, and happiness. Determine how the actual Charles's Bridge might serve as a symbol for the life of Charles Novack. How does the bridge serve as a representation of his life's story?



A replica of the bridge in the town of Náměšť nad Oslavou painted by Charles Novacek in 2003.



Making a Sketchpad

As colors filled the page, Charles could feel the darkness slip away – his lonely classroom, his ache for home, his worries about the war that was slowly marching closer.

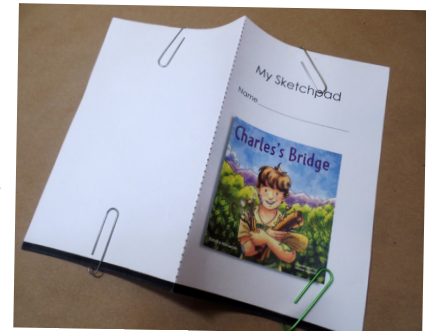
Objective: To observe, illustrate, and record patterns in nature.

Materials:

- CHARLES'S BRIDGE, the book
- My Sketchpad (Guide, pgs. 8-11)
- Needle
- Thread
- Paper clips
- Stapler (optional)
- Lapboard
- Colored pencils
- A cozy spot in nature

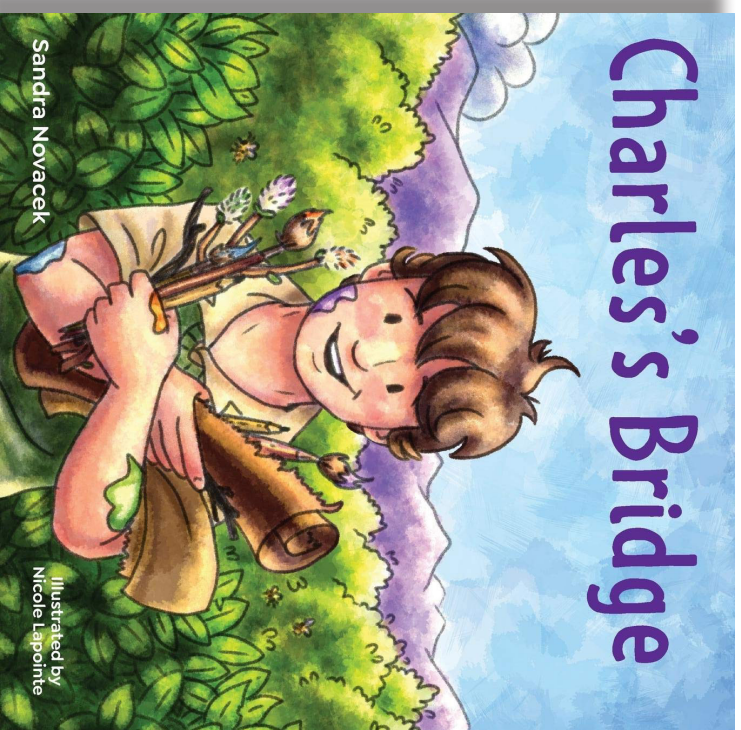
Procedure:

- Examine the illustrations in the CHARLES'S BRIDGE depicting Charles in nature. Observe and identify the plants, animals, and objects in the scenery surrounding him. Discuss how nature served to inspire him to move beyond his sadness to become engaged in his art once again.
- Explain that, like Charles, the students will have the opportunity to become artistically encouraged by nature.
- Print the My Sketchpad pages from the guide.
- Fold pages along the dotted lines. Secure pages together with paper clips.
- Using thread and needle, stitch pages together. (Use stapler to complete this task, if desired.)
- Gather colored pencils, lapboard, and sketchpad and find a wooded area, a spot by a stream, or any natural setting.
- Sit quietly and observe the surroundings. Then draw what you see.
- Just for fun, choose two leaves of different shapes. Make a rubbing of each. Identify the leaves' similarities and differences.
- Write a short essay about your experience. Use sensory language to describe your observations.
- Share your journal and your essay with the class.



My Sketchpad

Name _____









Building Bridges: A Lesson in Engineering

*At last, the painting was finished. Charles gazed at it proudly.
Whatever rivers he crossed, no matter how long his journey, he would carry it with him always.*

Objective: To facilitate a simple test comparing the effects of two different types of bridge structures.

Materials:

- CHARLES’S BRIDGE, the book
- Building Bridges: Project Analysis Template (Guide, pg. 13)
- Two books of equal or close to equal thickness
- 1 piece of cardstock
- A collection of small toys such as marbles, figurines, cars, etc.

Procedure:

- Instruct students to examine the illustration of the bridge on the back cover of the book. Explain that this type of bridge is known as an *arched road bridge* or a *deck arch bridge*.
- Identify the various parts of the bridge:
 - The Deck: The flat surface of the bridge.
 - The Towers: The vertical concrete structures that extend above the bridge deck.
 - The Arches: The curved structure built to support and sustain the vertical loads.
- Define the term *hypothesis*, which is a guess you make based on information you already know. Ask them to state a hypothesis regarding which type of bridge is the strongest - a deck bridge or an arch bridge.
- Using the Building Bridges: Project Analysis Template as a guide, instruct students to engage in the following two-part experiment.

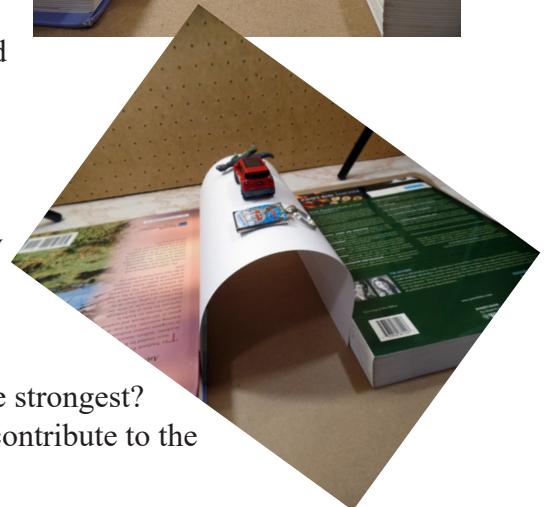
Part 1: The Deck Bridge

- Place the two books close to each other, about 3.5 inches apart.
- Place the piece of cardstock across the books, creating a deck bridge.
- Place a small toy on the deck. Record observations.
- Continue to add additional toys until the bridge collapses. Record observations.



Part 2: The Arch Bridge

- Bend cardstock and place it between the books.
- Balance the toys on top of the curved piece of cardstock. See how many toys you can place on the arch before the paper collapses. Record Observations.
- Was your hypothesis correct?
- In conclusion, which type of bridge - the deck or the arch - are the strongest? How does the combination of being both a deck and arch bridge contribute to the stability of Charles’s Bridge? Explain your answer. Share your work with the class.



Building Bridges: Project Analysis

Hypothesis: *Which type of bridge is stronger - a deck bridge, an arch bridge or a deck arch bridge? Explain your prediction.*

Part 1–The Deck Bridge:

Maximum number of toys supported _____

Record observations:

Part 2–The Arch Bridge:

Maximum number of toys supported _____

Record observations:

Project Analysis:

Was your hypothesis correct? Circle your answer. Yes No

Your conclusion?



Further Research

At age 11, Charles joined the Czech resistance movement with his family. His father and uncle, Josef Robotka, taught Charles and his sister Vlasta how to resist pain, hunger, and fear - and to trust no one. Meanwhile, Charles kept drawing, carrying a sketchpad and pencil wherever he went (Author's Note).

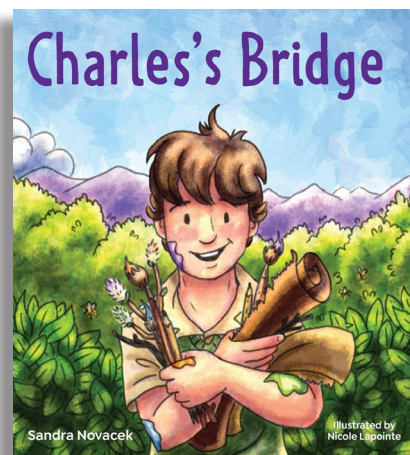
Objective: To write and illustrate an informative essay in which students name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide a sense of closure.

Materials:

- CHARLES'S BRIDGE, the book
- Text Set References (Guide, pg. 15)
- The Meet Charles Novacek Template (Guide, pg. 16)

Procedure:

- To write and illustrate an informative essay in which students name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide a sense of closure.
- Guide students through the various linked resources referenced in the Text Set References. Give them a sense of the Czechoslovakian experience and culture by perusing through the book list, Slovak and Czech language videos, contemporary, and historical references.
- Instruct students to write and illustrate a story about Charles Novacek based on the book CHARLES'S BRIDGE and the content presented in the text set. (Young students may use the Meet Charles Novacek story template found in this guide.)
- Encourage students to explore some of the following topics in their pieces.
 - His childhood during wartime
 - His social struggles
 - His family life
 - His love for art
 - His love for his country
 - How learning Charles's experiences and overcoming obstacles has enriched their lives
- Encourage students to share their work with the class.



www.charlesnovacekbooks.com

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Links for Further Research

Access the following links to develop a deeper understanding of Charles Novacek's childhood, homeland, language, and life experience.

History:

[Charles Novacek \(charlesnovacekbooks.com\) hosted by Sandra Novacek](http://charlesnovacekbooks.com)

[End of Czechoslovakia | Historical Atlas of Europe \(15 March 1939\) | Omniatlas](#)

[Calling All Czechs! The Prague Uprising of 1945 - An article and photos hosted by the National WWII Museum in New Orleans](#)

Homeland:

[Prague with Kids - Tips & Activities to Try - a video](#)

[American Kids Hike to Czech Medieval Castle Hukvaldy - a video](#)

Language:

[Learn Czech for kids - Animals - Online Czech lessons for kids - Dinolingo](#)

[Learning Czech - Colors & Numbers in Czech](#)

[Learning Czech - Introduction to Czech Basic Phrases](#)

[Simple Slovakian with Bibiana - Counting](#)

[Simple Slovakian with Bibiana - Insects](#)

[Simple Slovakian with Bibiana - Colors](#)

[Simple Slovakian with Bibiana - Family Members](#)

Additional Reading:

[Border Crossings: Coming of Age in the Czech Resistance by Charles Novacek](#)

[A List of Children's Books About the Czech Republic Hosted by KidsTravelBooks.com](#)

[Children Czech Resources hosted by The Czech Language Club](#)



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Common Core State Standards Alignment

		Discussion	SketchPad	Bridge Project	Text Set
English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text					
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.K.1	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.K.2	With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.K.3	With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.K.4	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.K.7	With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.K.10	Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.1	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.2	Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.3	Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4	Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.7	Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.10	With prompting and support, read informational texts appropriately complex for grade 1.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1	Ask and answer such questions as <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , <i>where</i> , <i>when</i> , <i>why</i> , and <i>how</i> to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.3	Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a <i>grade 2 topic or subject area</i> .	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.6	Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.	•			•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.7	Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.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.RI.3.2	Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.3	Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.4	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a <i>grade 3 topic or subject area</i> .	•	•	•	•
English Language Arts Standards » Writing					
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.2	Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.		•	•	•



		Discussion	SketchPad	Bridge Project	Text Set
English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Writing					
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.5	With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.		•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.8	With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.		•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.2	Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.		•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.5	With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.		•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.7	Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of "how-to" books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions).		•	•	•
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.2.5	With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.		•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.6	With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.		•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8	Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question		•	•	•
English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening					
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>kindergarten topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.2	Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.3	Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.4	Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.5	Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.6	Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 1 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.3	Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4	Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5	Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.	•	•	•	•



English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening		Discussion	SketchPad	Bridge Project	Text Set
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.6	Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 2 topics and texts</i> 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.2.3	Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.6	Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.	•	•	•	•
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 <i>grade 3 topics and texts</i> , 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.3.6	Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.	•	•	•	•



Next Generation Science Standards Alignment

		Discussion	SketchPad	Bridge Project	Text Set
K-PS2-1.	Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions				
	<i>Science and Engineering Practices</i>				
	Planning and carrying out investigations to answer questions or test solutions to problems in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to simple investigations, based on fair tests, which provide data to support explanations or design solutions.			•	
	With guidance, plan and conduct an investigation in collaboration with peers.			•	
	<i>Crosscutting Concepts</i>				
	Simple tests can be designed to gather evidence to support or refute student ideas about causes.			•	
K-LS1-1	From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes				
	<i>Analyzing and Interpreting Data</i>				
	Analyzing data in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to collecting, recording, and sharing observations.		•		
	Use observations (firsthand or from media) to describe patterns in the natural world in order to answer scientific questions.		•		
	<i>Patterns</i>				
	Patterns in the natural and human designed world can be observed and used as evidence.		•		

