

Friends School Haverford

Library Curriculum for Grades 3-6

GRADE 3

Third Grade is a pivotal year in library. Students learn about library classification, first why it came about, and then how to use it. They learn how to use the basic library points of access – author, title, and subject. Finally, they put these concepts together to locate library books, using the library catalog to find the call number.

Since all libraries use similar systems to organize their books and catalogs, I stress to our students that the methods they learn in our small school library can be translated to the largest libraries in the world. These are skills they will use throughout their school years, and in many cases, throughout their entire lives. I reinforce these lessons in fourth and fifth grade, to make sure the students stay comfortable with their abilities.

Also in third grade, our students study folktales all year. I explain what a folktale is, and read a wide variety from all over the world. I guide the class in picking out plot motifs – building blocks of plot which might be found in many different stories – and we keep track of these motifs, noting how often they are found in the stories we read. In the spring, each student will choose motifs, and write an original fairy tale, showing how plot motifs allow one to construct a story that will retain the flavor of a traditional tale.

Grade 4

During the fourth grade year, I teach students how to use several basic reference tools – the encyclopedia, the dictionary, indexes in the backs of nonfiction books, map coordinates, basic internet searching, and how to read information found in table form. As the students start learning how to research a topic – gathering information from more than one source – these basic tools will be invaluable to them, and the more efficient and comfortable they can learn to be in their use, the better.

Also in fourth grade, I build on our third grade study of folktale by discussing the literary fairy tale form, and parody – specifically, parodies of folktales. After exploring these topics, I go on to read the class several shorter novels, continuing my emphasis on plot by having students give me a synopsis of the plot so far before each reading session. This gives the students practice in differentiating between truly important plot elements and extra details, a valuable ability in nonfiction reading as well as fiction.

In fifth grade, they will review their reference work, and will have much more in-depth instruction in internet searching, to support their research expectations.

Grade 5 and 6

Fifth and sixth grade students in library review the basic reference tools they learned in fourth grade – the encyclopedia, the dictionary, and indexes in the backs of nonfiction books. I reinforce their table-reading skills as well as index skills with a unit on the *World Almanac*, an excellent all-purpose reference volume with a complex index and long, complicated tables of information.

During fifth grade, I teach students internet searching, using the Google Advanced Search screen. I teach basic Boolean logic, the foundation of all internet search engines. I teach a variety of advanced internet topics, including image searching, phrase and partial phrase searching, trimming URLs, and how to start screening sites for reliability.

A major project for the year is the *April Fact-finding Quest*, which presents each student with a different set of questions to answer, using any means available. This exercise steps outside the purely instructional “how to use this resource” training, and focuses on a more real-life problem – how to get the information you need, using whatever source you can think of. This month-long exercise asks students to use more creativity, and is usually very exciting and enjoyable – real detective work!