

May, 2018

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Response to EdReports Evaluation
***Journeys* Grades 3-6**

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on EdReports’ review of *Journeys* Grades 3-6. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is proud of *Journeys*’ proven track record. It is a profound privilege to know that *Journeys* teachers have inspired millions of students to become lifelong readers and learners. [Research](#) shows that *Journeys*, paired with excellent teaching, improves student outcomes. Though we are confident that the efficacy of *Journeys* speaks for itself, we are also aware that opinions may vary. Allow us to shed new light on a few criteria that Houghton Mifflin Harcourt stands behind wholeheartedly but that EdReports has reviewed with mixed favorability. Included below are references to essential resources that EdReports did not consider in their analysis:

Gateway One: Text Quality and Alignment to Standards

- **1a and 1d:** All texts in *Journeys* include text complexity rubrics with qualitative and quantitative analysis. The “Why This Text?” provides selection rationale for the teacher, and the “Text X-Ray” targets challenging sections of the text. All texts meet the grade-level standards for complexity and rigor while providing a balance of literary and informational text selections.
- **1g and 1h:** Text-based activities abound during a typical *Journeys* Lesson:
 - “Cite Text Evidence” labels guide teachers during Read Aloud and the Anchor Text lessons
 - “Dig Deeper” lessons include returning to the text a second time for a deeper analysis, annotating text using a graphic organizer, and targeting text evidence to support analysis
 - “Your Turn” requires students to revisit the text and gather evidence for text-based discussions and writing tasks
 - Independent tasks, including the Readers Guide, give students a chance to practice responding to text using evidence
 - “Compare Texts” prompts ask students to make cross-genre comparisons using evidence from both texts
 - Culminating Performance Tasks bring the Unit full-circle by requiring students to revisit the texts and themes of the Unit
 - Small Group Leveled Readers give students another medium to apply the skills and strategies learned in the Whole Group lessons
 - The Close Reader offers a space to annotate, read, re-read, and gather evidence to support class discussions
- **1i and 1j:** Teachers facilitate critical thinking and academic discourse through their teaching practices and questioning strategies. The “Think Aloud” best practice is prevalent throughout

Journeys and includes verbatim examples of what a teacher might say to students to generate rich discussions. Other supports include:

- Day 1: “Classroom Collaboration” and “Think Through the Text” questions (Anchor Text)
 - Day 2: “Dig Deeper” analysis and “Your Turn” speaking and writing tasks
 - Day 4: “Think Through the Text” questions (Paired Selection) and “Compare Texts”
 - Day 5: Speaking and Listening/Research and Media Tasks
- **1k:** *Journeys* offers a mix of on-demand writing prompts, process writing, and short, focused projects that include writing. Digital Interactive Writing Lessons support the teacher-directed instruction and can be used flexibly.

Daily on-demand writing opportunities include:

- Day 1: Predictive Writing
- Day 2: “Your Turn” Response to Reading
- Day 3: Reader’s Guide
- Day 4: Compare Texts
- Day 5: Research and Media (short, focused, collaborative project)

Process writing lessons reflect what good writers do—analyze mentor texts, study models, use organizational tools to catalogue thoughts, and ultimately write drafts. Each Unit ends with a 2-week writing workshop where students publish a piece after engaging in the full writing process.

Examples of focused writing projects include:

- Research and Media Performance Tasks
 - Culminating Unit project
 - Cross-Curricular Connection
- **1m:** *Journeys* features two main types of writing—Response to Literature and genre-based writing.
 - Response to Literature is always evidence-based and presents itself multiple times per week (see **1g** and **1h** above)
 - Genre-based writing instruction occurs daily and focuses on Informative, Narrative, or Opinion modes (one mode per 5-Lesson Unit). The first 3 weeks isolate one writing trait per Lesson and utilize the anchor selections as mentor texts
 - Students publish their writing at the end of the Unit, but their final products are intended to reflect the traits and style of the focus genre rather than respond to the texts in the Unit
 - **1n:** Every grade-level grammar standard is covered comprehensively in the *Journeys* program. In addition, certain lessons can be supplemented with a Grammar Snap lesson (digital video). As all teachers know, grammar should be taught organically rather in grade-level silos. In many cases, this leads to either a review of past lessons or a stretch toward future lessons.
 - **1o:** Every grade-level Fluency, Vocabulary Strategy, and Foundational Skills standard is covered comprehensively in the *Journeys* program. Above and beyond the explicit lessons in the weekly scope and sequence, *The Literacy and Language Guide*, written by Shane Templeton, is a critical resource. Within it are daily word study lessons that reinforce the core program objectives.
 - **1p:** Students have multiple opportunities to practice word analysis skills in meaningful contexts, specifically during the Second Read of the Anchor Text:
 - The “Language Detective” activity teaches students to be resourceful as they grapple with unfamiliar sentence structures or word patterns
 - Fluency skills are taught opportunistically as students re-read sections of the anchor text
 - Students dissect domain-specific vocabulary words while using the historical or scientific contexts of stories or informational texts to guide them

Gateway Two: Building Knowledge with Texts, Vocabulary, and Tasks

- **2a:** *Journeys* Units are cohesively structured around themes that come full circle with the Unit-ending Performance Task:
 - “Motivate and Engage” activities prime the pump for the Lessons to come
 - Stream to Start videos and Channel One News build excitement for the topics in the Unit
 - FYI supports students’ knowledge of the Unit topics on an ongoing basis through online, high-interest, curated, age-appropriate informational articles
 - Motivating quotations invite discussion and emotional connection
 - “Preview Unit Texts” encourages students to create their own schema
- **2b:** The instructional materials in *Journeys* spiral in complexity, and therefore so do their associated tasks. Mastery of skills can be determined via formal assessments, anecdotal evidence, digital annotations, or weekly practice exercises in the Readers Notebook or Close Reader consumables.
- **2c:** Students are encouraged to respond to texts in ways that transcend the explicit. Please see **1g and 1h** above for examples of these opportunities.
- **2d:** There are both Unit and Lesson level culminating tasks in *Journeys*. Both types give students a forum to demonstrate understanding of topics and skills.
 - Lesson-level response to texts: “Your Turn” and “Compare Texts” integrate speaking, listening, and writing and are evidence-based
 - Lesson-level writing products: These short pieces support the week’s trait lessons and prepare students for a larger product at the end of the Unit
 - Unit-Level Research and Media Tasks: Students collaborate with peers and utilize research skills to make connections to the topics learned throughout the Unit
 - Unit-Level Performance Tasks: Provide a full-circle opportunity to revisit the Lesson texts and reflect through a writing task that reinforces the Unit’s writing genre lessons
- **2e:** *Journeys’* focus on Tier 2 Academic Vocabulary is one of its many strengths.
 - Grades 3-6 have consistent instructional routines for introducing these words
 - Words are taught to mastery by the end of the Lesson
 - Target words are revisited in the Small Group Leveled Readers, Vocabulary Readers, Anchor Texts, and Paired Selections
 - The last day of every lesson is devoted to Domain-Specific Vocabulary
 - The *Literacy and Language Guide* provides activities written by Shane Templeton to reinforce vocabulary words through word sorts and games
 - myWordList in the Student eBook encourages students to keep track of words to use later in their speaking and writing tasks
- **2f:** *Journeys* offers a comprehensive writing scope and sequence aligned to the grade-level standards. In addition to the daily writing lessons embedded in the program, the *Literacy and Language Guide* features two additional lessons per week in a “workshop” style format. The Common Core Writing Handbook supports these lessons. Moreover, the Performance Assessment book offers supplemental practice with the writing forms of standardized tests. *Journeys* teachers will find more than enough support to teach writing processes, traits, and forms.
- **2g:** Examples of Research projects include:
 - Unit Research and Media tasks: Teaching plans are explicitly stepped out, and up to three digital Interactive Lessons on a writing and/or research skill can be used to support instruction
 - Research and Media Literacy Lessons on Day 5 of the instructional week
 - Cross-Curricular Connection

- **2h:** One of the goals of *Journeys* is to nurture lifelong readers and learners. Teachers have guidance on how to teach Independent Reading skills each week on Day 3. The Grab and Go resource provides independent reading logs and response forms as well. The Leveled Readers and Vocabulary Readers give students practice with independent reading during Small Group instruction. The Leveled Reader App encourages readers anytime, anywhere!

It is with absolute confidence that Houghton Mifflin Harcourt places *Journeys* in the hands of millions of teachers and students, and we are proud of the proven difference it has made.