

## Curriculum Level

## Unit Level

**Curriculum Selected:** *What is the name of the specific curriculum you selected (i.e. curriculum provider, program name, etc.)? Who created it, and what guided you to choose this curriculum?*

Fishtank Learning is a non-profit English Language Arts curriculum program that was created by Claire Kaplan. I chose this program because their teaching philosophies aligned with my own. The curriculum and materials revolve around including all students, perspectives, and experiences to create a collaborative environment and establish critical thinking skills.

**Unit Selected:** *What is the title of the unit you selected? Provide an overview of the scope and how this instructional segment fits into what was learned before this unit. Why did you select this unit?*

### **Second grade English Language Arts: Unit 2 Exploring Habitats**

During this unit, students will explore various habitats (forest, desert, water, rainforest, and wetland), investigate how plants and animals survive within them, and compare and contrast the information that they gather. Rather than just learning facts about the habitats, students examine the connection between parts of each habitat and how those connections are crucial for survival. Over the course of the unit, students are challenged to use the information they learn about different habitats to compare how different plants and animals depend on their surroundings and other living things to meet their needs. Students will also be challenged to compare the differences in the kinds of living things that are found in different areas and why those differences exist. This unit builds on the previous 1st Grade Amazing Animals unit, in which students learned about different types of animals and their characteristics, and prepares students for the 3rd Grade Understanding the Animal Kingdom unit.

I chose this unit because I thought it would be the most interesting to dissect and because this was one of my favorite units I learned about when I was in second grade.

**Curriculum Goals:** *What are the stated goals of the curriculum?*

The goals of the curriculum are based upon their principles to build knowledge and nurture critical thinking, provide diverse, rigorous, and relevant texts, and prioritize student voices.

**For what age students was this curriculum made?**

Fishtank Learning provides an English and Language Arts curriculum for grades Kindergarten through 12th grade. I chose to look at the curriculum for second grade.

**Unit Assessment Outcomes:** *What are the specific assessment outcomes (not individual lesson objectives) of the unit? What will students achieve by the end of this unit? How will they demonstrate this knowledge?*

By the end of the unit, readers will be able to explore how text features help the reader learn more about a particular idea or topic. Students will also learn how to use text features and text structures to think about how details are connected and to determine the main topic of a section of text. Additionally, students will use discussion and oral discourse to show their understanding of texts. These outcomes will be met by completing two assessments that are multiple choice and short answer where students will demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary and content knowledge by using details and text evidence in their responses. There are also two projects in the unit where students will first create their own habitat using the details from the habitats read in their informational texts along with plants and animals that live there. After creating it in groups and discussing their ideas, students will write their own informational writing piece individually in their writing assignment focusing on using specific details and complete sentences to build their writing fluency.

**Stakeholders:** *Who has a stake in the creation of this curriculum? Who are the decision makers? Who will be impacted by the enactment of this curriculum? Think broadly and comprehensively (school officials, students, curriculum authors, parents, etc.)*

- Teachers
- Parents (homeschool)
- Students
- District Administrators
- School Board members

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom:** *What are a few ways this curriculum already upholds Twenty-First Century Classrooms ideals (Kaufman article)? In what ways can you adapt this curriculum to address more indicators?*

Within the curriculum unit plan, the assessments highlight and focus on the 21st-century skills of:

- Critical thinking skills
- Communicative and Collaboration skills
- Creativity, Imagination, and Innovation skills

This is seen through their emphasis on their two project assessments which have students collaborate together in groups to create and design their own ecosystem within a habitat and create their own informational page.

The curriculum could be adapted to address more indicators of 21st-century skills by incorporating tasks that focus on technology and media literacy such as through the use of incorporating additional research into their projects.

# Overview


# Unit Analysis and Alignment

Within this table, please identify all unit objectives posted, where available or derived. Across each unit objective, complete all columns to align the unit to assessments, state standards, published standardized test items, and then evaluate the alignment and suggest modifications (if necessary).

Add as many additional rows as needed to accommodate your unit.

| 1   | 2   | 3  | 4  | 5   | 6  |
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| Unit Objective(s)   | Assessment Tied to Objective<br><i>(ways this objective is measured by student outcomes: project, test, etc ~ include examples.)</i>  | State Standard Connected to this Specific Objective<br><i>(Write out the TEKS, Common Core, etc..)</i>   | Published Assessment Examples of Questions<br><i>(2 per objective- use STAAR or other state released assessments)</i>  | Evaluation of Alignment<br><i>(Reflect: Do the unit assessments and objectives align with the state assessment? How/ how not?)</i>  | Modify Unit<br><i>(How would you modify or add to the unit to increase alignment? Provide examples to show what you mean)</i>  |
| <p>By the end of the unit the students will be able to explore vocabulary using text features to help the reader learn more about a particular idea or topic.</p> | <p>Unit Content Assessment<br/> <a href="https://d2lroyfkw9g4l6.cloudfront.net/G2SciSocU_Assessment_UpdatedStandards_FM6180.pdf">https://d2lroyfkw9g4l6.cloudfront.net/G2SciSocU_Assessment_UpdatedStandards_FM6180.pdf</a></p> <p>Example Questions:</p> <p>3. In the forest, many animals make homes in trees. These are called</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>burrows</li> <li>forest floors</li> <li>nests</li> </ol> <p>6. Answer the question below using what you learned from the unit:</p> <p>How do different plants and animals depend on their habitat for survival?</p> <p>Your answer should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details about <u>egg</u> habitat that you learned about:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>forest   desert   rainforest   water</li> </ul> </li> <li>Two examples from that habitat</li> <li>3 or more vocabulary words from the unit:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>habitat   herbivore   omnivore   carnivore   energy   depend</li> </ul> </li> <li>Complete sentences</li> </ul> | <p><u>L.2.4:</u> Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.</p> <p><u>RI.2.1:</u> Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.</p> <p><u>RI.2.2:</u> Identify the main topic of a multi-paragraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.</p> <p><u>RI.2.4:</u> Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 2 topic or subject area.</p> | <p><i>(Assessment questions taken from the 3rd grade STAAR test from 2022)</i></p> <p>Question 1 aligns with TEKS 3.3B: Using context to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words</p> <p>1 What does the word <u>snatched</u> mean in paragraph 11?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hid</li> <li>Tossed</li> <li>Broke</li> <li>Grabbed</li> </ol> <p>Question 29 aligns with TEKS 3.7C: Use text evidence to support an appropriate response</p> <p>29 Which sentence best explains why members of a book club are likely to read a whole book?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading helps you learn to say new words. (paragraph 2)</li> <li>The desire to be prepared will encourage you to finish reading what you started. (paragraph 3)</li> <li>You might already know some members in your book club. (paragraph 6)</li> <li>All you need are some other members and a place to meet. (paragraph 7)</li> </ol> | <p>When comparing the unit assessments and objectives to the state test, I think in some ways they are similar but also different. Each assessment focuses on meeting the vocabulary standards and skills as well as going back to find text evidence in the text to determine the meaning. However, I think the unit in some ways lacks the ability for the students to determine the meaning of the word. Instead, some of the questions provided have them locate the unfamiliar word rather</p> | <p>To modify the unit, I would have the assessment focus on vocabulary words in the informational texts where students have to derive their own understanding and meaning of the word in context rather than just locating it in the text. Therefore, they can use the text features in the informational texts along with text evidence to determine meaning. For example, using the vocabulary word burrow, they can use the text evidence context of the sentence along with the text features such as a picture or fact box to</p> |

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|  |  | <p><a href="#"><u>RI.2.5</u></a>: Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.</p> |  | <p>then asking the meaning.<br/>For example, if you click on the link to the assessment the first two questions are correlated to vocabulary but the students can easily locate the answer word for word in their text which does help their text evidence strategies and standards, but fails to align with the standards that has them make meaning of a vocabulary word that is unfamiliar.<br/>Therefore, if they do not know what the word means they are simply just locating the word to find an answer without connecting the meaning or definition to it. Whereas in the state assessment, the students must go back to the passage or paragraph to re-read it and find key details and evidence to determine context and meaning.</p> | <p>determine what the meaning of burrow is.</p> |
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| <p>By the end of the unit, students will be able to evaluate text features and text structures to think about how details are connected to determine the main topic and purpose of a section of text using key details.</p> | <p>Cold Read Assessment<br/> <a href="https://d21royfkw9g4l6.cloudfront.net/2022-06-24_G2_SS_Unit_1_Cold_Read_Assessment_004C0B.pdf">https://d21royfkw9g4l6.cloudfront.net/2022-06-24_G2_SS_Unit_1_Cold_Read_Assessment_004C0B.pdf</a></p> | <p><b>RI.2.3:</b> Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.<br/> <b>RI.2.5:</b> Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.<br/> <b>RI.2.7:</b> Explain how specific images contribute to and clarify a text.<br/> <b>W.2.8:</b> Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.</p> | <p>Question 6 aligns with TEKS 3.10.C: Explain the author's use of graphic features to achieve specific purposes</p> <p>6 Look at this illustration.</p>  <p>What is the most likely reason the author includes this illustration in the story?</p> <p>F To show an important part of the fox's plan<br/> G To show how the crows build their nest in the banyan tree<br/> H To show why the snake moves into the banyan tree<br/> J To show that the crows need the fox's help in order to stay safe</p> <p>Question 18 aligns with TEKS 3.6.G: Evaluate details read to determine key ideas</p> <p>18 What key idea about Coyote is supported by the details in paragraphs 10 through 12?</p> <p>F Coyote believes that he will enjoy eating a giant wheel of cheese.<br/> G Coyote is tired of chasing Conejo.<br/> H Coyote howls at the moon when he is hungry.<br/> J Coyote likes to sneak up on Conejo.</p> | <p>I feel like the assessments align for these standards and assignments. Each focuses on the use of text evidence and the author's use of features such as pictures and graphics to determine the purpose of what is happening in the text and connect it to the story. They also encourage students to go back and re-read to decipher and evaluate which details are important and the main ideas needed in order to include these in their responses to the questions.</p> | <p>Modify the variety of habitats read about in their informational texts that include specific examples from around the world</p> <p>On the assessments, have students prove their evidence or key details found in their text or passages using reading strategies (e.g.: UNWRAP strategy) so they are highlighting and citing where their answers came from to prove their responses.</p> |
| <p>By the end of the unit, the students will be able to compare and contrast the key details of where plants and animals live and why they live there.</p>  | <p>Habitat Project:<br/> In small groups, students will design and present a habitat for a given animal using knowledge of plant and animal relationships and habitat features from the unit</p>   | <p><b>SL.2.1:</b> Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.<br/> <b>SL.2.2:</b> Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.<br/> <b>SL.2.4:</b> Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts, and</p>  | <p>Question 9 aligns with the TEKS 3.6.H: Synthesize new information to create new understandings</p> <p>9 What can the reader conclude about Mission Blue from information throughout the selection?</p> <p>A Mission Blue wants more people to travel to oceans.<br/> B Mission Blue plans to stop people from fishing in oceans.<br/> C Mission Blue wants all its volunteers to be scientists.<br/> D Mission Blue values teaching people about oceans.</p> <p>Question 33 aligns with TEKS 3.8.D Explain the influence of the setting on the plot</p> <p>33 How does the windy setting contribute to the poem?</p> <p>A The windy setting causes the mother squirrel to become afraid of storms.<br/> B The windy setting makes a squirrel family leave the woods.<br/> C The windy setting adds a feeling of mystery to the plot.<br/> D The windy setting causes a problem the mother squirrel must solve.</p>  | <p>I agree with the alignment between the two assessments in regard to creating new understanding and meaning after reading the text in the passage and about all of the habitats from the unit. I think both also place the importance of looking at the setting of the story and how it creates an influence either in the poem or</p>   | <p>To strengthen the unit, I would provide access to more information and include research standards to broaden the students' access to various habitats, plants, and animals. Giving them more freedom and choice to choose from will allow them to feel more motivated to choose a place, animal, or plant that they might have a connection to</p>  |

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|  |  | <p>relevant details, speaking audibly in complete sentences.</p> <p><u>RI.2.5:</u> Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.</p> <p><u>RI.2.3:</u> Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.</p> <p><u>RI.2.10:</u> By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</p> |  | <p>on the wildlife in the habitats. However, I was surprised to find that the STAAR test failed to include any questions that focus on connections to self, text, or world because of how much emphasis is placed on this skill and is used in the unit plan to connect and compare each informational text to the other. I feel like normally they include two passages in which you have to determine how they are similar or different.</p> | <p>which will encourage them in their assignment. Research platforms such as Pebble Go and Kiddle allow students to choose from kid-friendly places around the United States or the world and provide research-based facts about different topics.</p> <p>For example, each group can choose various habitats around the world and choose one that they agree on or feel passionate about. They then could use the research platforms along with their informational texts used throughout the unit to gain more key details and facts about their habitat along with various animals or plants that also live there and use this to include it in their project and presentation. Sharing these will give the whole class knowledge about the range of habitats around the world allowing them to apply it to their experiences of what they have seen.</p> |
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|   |  |  |   |  | This will also incorporate more 21st-century skills by implementing technology.  |
| Students will be able to write complete sentences, ensuring that they are able to clearly communicate their ideas. Students should also use what they have learned about text features to include text features in their own informational writing, writing their own page in their informational books about the different habitats and animals they have studied. | Writing Project:<br>Choose one of the informational texts from the unit and create your own informational page to add to it that explains how plants and animals depend on their surroundings and other living things to meet their needs in the places they live by using complete sentences and key ideas and details from the text. | <u>L.2.2:</u> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.<br><u>W.2.2:</u> Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.<br><u>W.2.6:</u> With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.<br><u>W.2.8:</u> Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question | <i>(Assessment questions taken from the 3rd grade Revising and Editing STAAR test in 2020)</i><br>Question 6 aligns with editing spelling and capitalization skills<br>6 What change should be made in sentence 7?<br>F Change <b>activitys</b> to <b>activities</b><br>G Change <b>would</b> to <b>wood</b><br>H Change <b>study</b> to <b>studies</b><br>J Change <b>scientists</b> to <b>Scientists</b><br><br>Question 10 aligns with revising sentences in a piece of writing that includes choosing details to support a sentence.<br>10 Which supporting detail <b>BEST</b> follows sentence 18?<br>F The organization protected people during wars.<br>G Clara thought she would be able to rest in Europe.<br>H Today it has millions of volunteers.<br>J Clara cooked for soldiers when she was in the United States. | I believe the alignment for the unit could better meet the state standards by including revising and editing common core standards by updating the unit objective. If the task is for students to write a page of their own in an informational text, the students should go through the whole writing process of brainstorming, choosing a topic/habitat, writing their facts, revising, editing, and then publishing. The objective and standards can be updated to match this and reflect the state assessment. | I would modify the unit by creating a rubric or revising and editing checklist for the students to have with them as a guide for what to look for when they're finished writing their informational page for the informational text of their choice. This has them apply their revising and editing skills and makes them accountable for their own work to correct mistakes and enhance their writing so that they can use these same skills in the state assessment. |

# Alignment Reflection

**Vertical Alignment Reflection:** *Does the level of sophistication the TEKS or Common Core state standards require align with the amount of rigor evidenced in the unit? Provide two pieces of evidence (screenshots, quoted documentation, etc.) to support your claim. One “paragraph” should suffice, along with your evidence.*

When reflecting upon the quality and rigor of the habitats unit plan for second grade, the lesson plans embedded within the unit provide more of a progression of higher-order thinking skills compared to only focusing on the assessments and the overall view of the unit plan itself. Without looking at the lesson plans and just focusing on the unit, the rigor of the summative assessments is not as rigorous as the state tests. For example, the unit content assessment requires that students go back and locate vocabulary words in their text features such as a fact box or caption from their informational texts in the first four questions (picture below). After locating the vocabulary word students could create meaning and context. However, the rigor of the questions does not match the quality of the STAAR test questions about creating meaning from unfamiliar words. Rather than just locating the word in the passage or text, the STAAR focuses on the advanced Bloom's taxonomy of evaluating and judging the meaning of a word using the context in the story rather than just locating and finding the definition. The students in the state assessment questions must first create their own meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary word from the text and then evaluate which answer choice aligns with their own definition. (second picture below). Although both assessments require that students go back to the passage and re-read to locate the word, only the state assessment has them use the text evidence in their responses. When comparing the two images and the two questions from the unit assessment and the state assessment it is evident to see how different each is based on how the questions are worded to target different levels of rigor.

**Part 1: Vocabulary** (RI.2.1, RI.2.4, L.2.4, L.2.5, L.2.6)

1. In a rainforest, the ground is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. burrow
  - b. forest floor
  - c. nest
  
2. Many desert animals live in homes under the ground called \_\_\_\_\_ to keep cool.
  - a. burrows
  - b. forest floors
  - c. nests
  
3. In the forest, many animals make homes in trees. These are called \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. burrows
  - b. forest floors
  - c. nests
  
4. **Carnivores** eat \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. other animals
  - b. both plants and animals
  - c. plants

Unit Content Assessment questions over vocabulary

1 What does the word snatched mean in paragraph 11?

- A Hid
- B Tossed
- C Broke
- D Grabbed

29 Which sentence best explains why members of a book club are likely to read a whole book?

- A Reading helps you learn to say new words. (paragraph 2)
- B The desire to be prepared will encourage you to finish reading what you started. (paragraph 3)
- C You might already know some members in your book club. (paragraph 6)
- D All you need are some other members and a place to meet. (paragraph 7)

STAAR questions over creating meaning of words using evidence

The core values of the Fishtank curriculum pride themselves on rigorous materials and content, yet we see this lacking in the study of the unit objectives and assessment in comparison to the questions the state assessments require the students to answer.

This is seen specifically in their multiple choice questions and assessments which is concerning due to the fact that is how the state assessments such as the STAAR tests are majority formatted. However, the unit provides more rigor throughout their short answer response questions embedded within their assessments which ask students to provide specific examples from the text. These types of assessment questions within the unit provide practice for students to apply these skills on the state assessments and match the alignment. Furthermore, these types of questions from the unit assessment align with the constructed short-answer responses that have now been included in the STAAR test.

**Overall Summary:** *Provide an overall summary of your findings, including strengths, weaknesses and implementation challenges of the instructional unit; provide possible recommendations for modifications, if appropriate, elaborating on the notes you provided in the rightmost column above. In what ways does the instructional unit best exemplify 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning skills, particularly with the use of technology, as best you can tell from the information provided.*

Overall, the curriculum provides two types of assessments, tests, and projects, that include either multiple-choice questions or a variety of short-answer responses. Within these assessments, the curriculum unit contains both strengths and weaknesses that we can deconstruct and evaluate in comparison to the alignment of the state. Based on my findings, I can conclude that the curriculum assessments in comparison to the state strengthen in their differentiation of questions and response types. The curriculum upholds its emphasis on student choice and caters to different types of learners and students by incorporating a variety of questions that address each student. The content assessment provides multiple choice questions along with short answer responses that allow students to choose out of a list of options what to write about to answer the question to the best of their abilities. This ultimately sets the students up for success and caters to their differences in abilities and ranges. In addition, the unit provides more creativity and expression of understanding through the assessment projects implemented throughout the unit and writing samples that give a variety of responses and answers for students to interpret their own understanding while still meeting the standards of focusing on key text features using text evidence. By incorporating these 21st-century skills, the curriculum allows ways to measure students' learning in ways that are relevant and applicable to their future by building a foundation of creativity, innovation, and collaboration with their peers.

My findings also discovered ways that the curriculum could be strengthened through modifications to build upon their areas of weakness. The rigor in the curriculum, specifically in the multiple choice questions, could be worded differently to require students to create their own meanings and interpretations using the context from the texts throughout the unit. This would create higher-order thinking skills which would align fluently with the state assessments. In addition, the curriculum could also benefit from incorporating more 21st-century skills through the

implementation and use of technology. Throughout the unit, it was noted that there were no suggestions for technology, but my suggestions of using research standards to align the assessments could help to close the gap and better prepare students for the world where technology is evolving. By using research engines students could acquire skills on how to locate credible sources and critically think to evaluate the key ideas and facts to quote and include in their presentations and writing.