ELA – Forensics Module
3 Lessons

Standards:
- Standard 2: Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions or interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.
- Standard 19: Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.
- Standard 23: Students will organize their ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose.

Guiding Principal:
- An effective English language arts curriculum develops thinking and language together through interactive learning (ELA Frameworks)

Activity:
- Lesson #1: Journalistic Writing
- Lesson #2: Investigating the Crime
- Lesson #3: Reporting your Findings

Length of Time:
- 3 days

Assessment:
- Lesson #1: Composing a news article
- Lesson #2: Gathering crime scene evidence and assessing your suspects
- Lesson #3: Write a formal crime report that can be presented to a jury during indictment proceedings

Next Steps:
- After the three lessons have been mastered, the module will be completed.

Materials:
- Please refer to detailed lesson plan for materials and step-by-step instructions
Lesson #1: Journalistic Writing

You are a news reporter who has been assigned to cover a story about a robbery that has taken place at a middle school in the city. Upon speaking to the authorities at the police department, you are given a crime scene report that you will use to develop a news article about the crime that has been committed.

**Step 1: Reviewing the Crime**

Read the crime scene report carefully and use the information provided to identify the facts of the case in order to compose a news article that is factual and which uses the details of the investigation to tell the public about the incident.

**Crime Scene Report:**

At approximately 7:15 a.m., Friday morning, Mrs. King, the seventh grade science teacher, thought something was fishy as she walked down the hall and noticed that her door was open. She walked into her classroom and immediately discovered that the small aquarium had been broken and her prized gold fish were gasping in the sink. Beside the broken aquarium were the shattered remains of the pink piggy bank that had been on the shelf above the aquarium. A can of blue paint was spilled on the floor. Footprints of a barefooted burglar led to an open window. Bits of a white powdery substance were found next to the broken, empty, piggy bank. The only other item found was a half-eaten large chunk of chocolate candy.

When the police arrived, they immediately began to gather forensic evidence.

- Sticky fingerprints were lifted from the aquarium and piggy bank.
- The painted footprints were measured.
- The chunk of chocolate candy was collected for examination. It appeared there were teeth imprints.
- The white powdery substance by the piggy bank was carefully placed in a plastic bag and taken to the forensic chemist for identification.

*At the time of the interview, police were not releasing any names of suspects, however, they did report that they do have a number of people that they described as persons of interest.*
Step 2: Answering the Basic Questions

- **Who** was the victim of the crime?
- **What** happened during the burglary?
- **When** did the incident occur?
- **Where** did the incident occur?
- **Why** was the classroom burglarized? *(do not answer this question yet – wait until lesson #3 where you develop a crime scene report that identifies who committed the crime based on a group of suspects that will be provided).*
- **How** did the perpetrator leave forensic evidence behind that will help the investigators?

Step 3: How to Write a News Article

**Task:** Write a newspaper article that reports the facts associated with the crime that was committed.

**Style:** You will be writing in a different style than you are used to in class. Newspaper articles generally contain sentences and paragraphs that are short and direct. Most paragraphs in news articles contain a maximum of three sentences.

**Format:** Newspaper articles should contain the following items:

- **Headline** – An attention-getting phrase at the top of the article.
- **Byline** – By (your name).
- **Lead Paragraph** – Start with a strong, interesting sentence to get the reader engaged. Start with the basics, but don’t review everything; wait for the middle of your article to incorporate the majority of your information.
- **Explanation and Amplification** – This section will also include several brief paragraphs explaining the detail surrounding the crime. Include: *who, what, when, where,* and *how,* as appropriate (the *why* will come later in lesson #3).
- **Conclusion** – Identify if any suspects have been detained, if the investigators have any leads, or if the case is still pending.

**Bias:** Newspaper articles should be written without bias. In other words, you should report the facts objectively – don’t give opinions in your news article.
Lesson #2: Investigating the Crime

You are a crime scene detective who works with the crime scene investigation unit of the local police department. Below is the crime scene report that you have generated based on your investigation of a crime scene and the forensic evidence that you were able to gather while on site.

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Task: Using the clues found at the crime scene, determine which of the four suspects is the "barefooted burglar."

- Who did it?
- What do you think was the motive for this crime?
- How did you use forensic science to solve the crime?
- Write the results of your findings and convince a jury of your peers.
Suspects

Burglar’s Fingerprints

Fingerprints that were lifted from the aquarium and piggy bank
The teeth impressions in the chocolate chunk of candy indicated protruding teeth with spaces between them.

The measurement of the footprint at the crime scene was 10 ½”.

THE FEET CAN MEASURE THE HEIGHT

The bones of the feet can tell a lot about a person.

Fact: When you divide the length of each person's left foot by his/her height, and then multiply the quotient by 100, the results of your calculations should be about 15, illustrating that the length of a person's foot is approximately 15 percent of his or her height. For example, a basketball player who is 7’2” tall would, on average, have a foot that measures 12.9” or 13” (if you round-up).

How did we figure this out? 7 x 12 = 84 + 2 = 86” x .15 = 12.9 (13” rounded up)

Identify the approximate length of each of your suspect’s feet by using the following formula:
Height in inches  X  .15 = length of foot
Suspect Details

**Lou Lou**
Height: 5’3”
Alias: Sweet Tooth

Lou Lou is so addicted to sugar that she never leaves home without it. She loves to bake sweet things and has a pantry full of sugar bins. She claims to have been baking her famous chocolate chunk cookies the morning of the crime using her own specialty flour (although not a morsel of cookie or chocolate chunk was left when the police arrived). Lou Lou rarely wears shoes, which often cause her to slip and break things, especially her collection of ceramic pigs.

**Dan the Man**
Height: 5’10”
Alias: The General

Dan was wearing a woolen General’s uniform with small holes when apprehended in the woods. He claimed to be gnawing on wood for moisture and insects to practice his survival training. His teeth look like a beaver’s from gnawing. His wife complains that she never has any baking soda due to Dan’s compulsion about storing clothes in mothballs. He thinks the baking soda takes away the mothball smell, so he stuffs his pockets with the substance. Also, his wife reports that her giant chocolate kisses continually disappear from the candy cupboard. He blames his dog, Patten, an English Bull Terrier, who patrols the neighborhood. His neighbors report that Dan loves the military.
He was very regimented about playing Taps on his bugle every day at sunset until an irate neighbor broke his bugle. Dan has been trying to save money for a new one.

**Peg the Leg**  
Height: 5’  
Alias: Lucky Lady

Peg is a librarian known for hanging horseshoes and four-leaf clovers in her library. Employees say that she is so superstitious that she insisted on carpeting in the library instead of laying tiles so that she would not step on the cracks. She wraps construction zone tape around open ladders so no one can walk under them. Cola bottles litter her office, which she drinks with chocolate chunks. Her teeth are chipped from knocking the bottles against them. She is always throwing salt over her shoulder for good luck and always keeps a salt shaker in her purse. Her alibi was that she was closing open umbrellas the morning of the crime.

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**Jake the Jock**  
Height: 6’6”  
Alias: Armchair Quarterback

Jake the Jock is known for quoting statistics on every sport from boomerang throwing to dog sledding. His neighbors report that he is the neighborhood pitcher for baseball games. Last year, a baseball hit him in the mouth and knocked out his front tooth. This has cramped his eating style of chocolate chunks, candied apples, and corn on the cob. His wife claims that on the morning of the crime Jake was rubbing his hands with cornstarch to keep them dry in preparation for an important baseball game.
Lesson #3: Reporting your Findings

Now that you have used the clues found at the crime scene, you are able to determine which of the four suspects is the "barefooted burglar." After making an arrest, you must provide a report of your findings to a jury in order for the suspect to be convicted of the charges against him/her. You must provide answers to the following questions:

- Who did it?
- What do you think was the motive for this crime?
- How did you use forensic science to solve the crime?

Once you feel confident with your investigation, write a thorough and detailed report of the results of your findings and convince a jury of your peers. Be sure to include comments and facts about how all of your forensic science points to the suspect you have arrested. Include comments about:

- Fingerprinting
- Tooth impressions
- Relationship between height and foot size
- Foreign substances found at the crime scene
- Motive