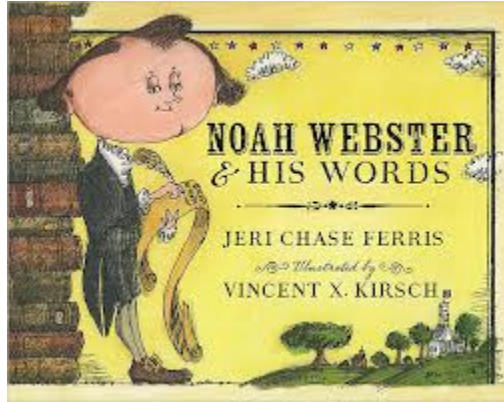## NOAH WEBSTER & HIS WORDS
### by Jeri Chase Ferris, illustrated by Vincent X. Kirsch
A Mentor Text Lesson Plan by Marcie Flinchum Atkins



**Writing Skills Focus:**
Using specific vocabulary
Good word Choice
Research
Writing poetry
Show, Don't Tell

**Target Audience:**
2nd Grade-5th Grade

**Objectives:**

Students will generate specific words (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) about a famous person by utilizing research skills.

Students will find words in the text(s) and infer words from the story.

Students will cite specific examples of how Ferris SHOWS us what Noah Webster did so that the reader can infer about his character.

Students will create a dictionary of specific words as a Dictionary Biography of a famous person.

Students will utilize good word choice to create a biographical diamante of a famous person.

Students will identify a character trait about their famous person, and write an anecdote that SHOWS this character trait without TELLING it.

## Standards:

### Virginia Standards of Learning:
Standards are listed here for referencing by number in your lesson plans. For link to complete standards, go to:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/2010/stds_all_english.pdf

**English**
**2nd Grade Standards**
2.2 a, b, c, d, e, 2.7 c, d, e, 2.9 all, 2.10 b, c, 2.12 a, c, 2.13 a, b, j

**3rd Grade Standards**
3.2 e, 3.4 b, c, d, e, f, g, 3.6 i, k, 3.7 a, 3.9 b, e, g, 3.10 a, 3.11 b, c

**4th Grade Standards**
4.2 a, b, c, d, 4.4 a, b, c, d, e, 4.5 f, 4.6 a, f, i, 4.7 a, b, c, d, e, i, j, 4.9 b

**5th Grade Standards**
5.4 a, b, c, e, f, g, 5.5 a, d, e, i, 5.6 a, b, c, f, g, k, 5.7 a, b, f, h, 5,9 b, e

### Common Core:
Standards are listed here for referencing by number in your lesson plans. For link to complete standards, go to: http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf

**2nd Grade Standards**
CSS.ELA.RI. 2.4, 2.5, 2.10
CSS.ELA.W. 2.5, 2.7
CSS.ELA.SL. 2.1 b, 2.2
CSS.ELA.L. 2.2 e, 2.3, 2.4 a, e, 2.6

**3rd Grade Standards**
CSS.ELA.RI. 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.10
CSS.ELA.W.3.2 a, b, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.10
CSS.ELA.SL. 3.1 c, d, 3.2, 3.4
CSS.ELA.L. 3.2g, 3.3 a, 3.4 a, d, 3.6

**4th Grade Standards**
CSS.ELA.RI. 4.1, 4.4, 4.10
CSS.ELA.W. 4.1 a, b, 4.2 b, d, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 b, 4.10
CSS.ELA.SL. 4.1 b, d, 4.2, 4.4
CSS.ELA.L. 4.1f, 4.2a, d, 4.3 a, 4.4 a, c, 4.6

**5th Grade Standards**
CSS.ELA.RI 5.4, 5.9, 5.10
CSS.ELA.W 5.1 a, b, 5.2 a, b, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7, 5.8, 5,9 b, 5.10
CSS.ELA.SL. 5.1 c, d, 5.2, 5.4
CSS.ELA.L. 5.2 e, 5.4 a, c, 5.6

## Text(s):

NOAH WEBSTER & HIS WORDS by Jeri Chase Ferris, illustrated by Vincent X. Kirsch, Houghton Mifflin, 2012.

ISBN: 978-0-547-39055-0

## Other Materials Needed:
- 8"x11" paper (2-3 sheets per person)
- Biographies of famous people you are studying
- List of famous people you are studying
- Word Wall (see attached)
- Self-checklist for Dictionaries (see attached)
- Diamante paper (see attached)
- Anecdote paper (see attached)

## Lesson:

## Setting the purpose:
Non-fiction mentor texts are often under-utilized. While there is a growing emphasis on reading non-fiction texts, there is an opportunity to use them as mentor texts for writing fiction or non-fiction.

Word choice, especially content-specific word choice, can be emphasized in this lesson. Ferris uses very specific language to tell the story of Noah Webster. But she also SHOWS us through her storytelling what Webster did. That showing helps the reader understand more about Webster and gives the reader opportunities to make inferences about him.

The structure of a non-fiction text can also be pointed out. When we read non-fiction, we emphasize the text features that are unique to non-fiction. In this case, Ferris uses a fact unique to Noah Webster—he wrote the first American dictionary—to help with making her manuscript unique. As students write reports or non-fiction texts of their own, have them consider using a technique that is unique to the subject matter.

Writing about Benjamin Franklin? Write the information in the form of an almanac.
Writing about Tom Brokaw? Write the information as a newscast.
Writing about Captain John Smith? Write the information as a logbook.
Writing about Julia Child? Write the information in the form of a recipe or cookbook.
Writing about Shakespeare? Write the information in the form of  play.

## Utilizing the Mentor Text

1. Discuss with your students about contributions of famous people and how we know some of these famous people for unique things that they did in their lives. You might bring up famous people you are studying in other content areas. Briefly talk about characteristics or words that you associate with some of those famous people.

2. Read NOAH WEBSTER & HIS WORDS. As you read, generate a list of words that could be associated with Noah Webster. To extend the lesson even further, you could even divide the words up into nouns, verbs, adjectives. Have them consider character traits, but avoid generic ones like "nice" or "kind." Think about what makes Noah Webster unique. Create a "word wall" for Noah Webster with all of the words.

3. Have students pick out words that are RIGHT THERE in the text, but also have them infer words that are associated with Noah Webster. See the sample below.
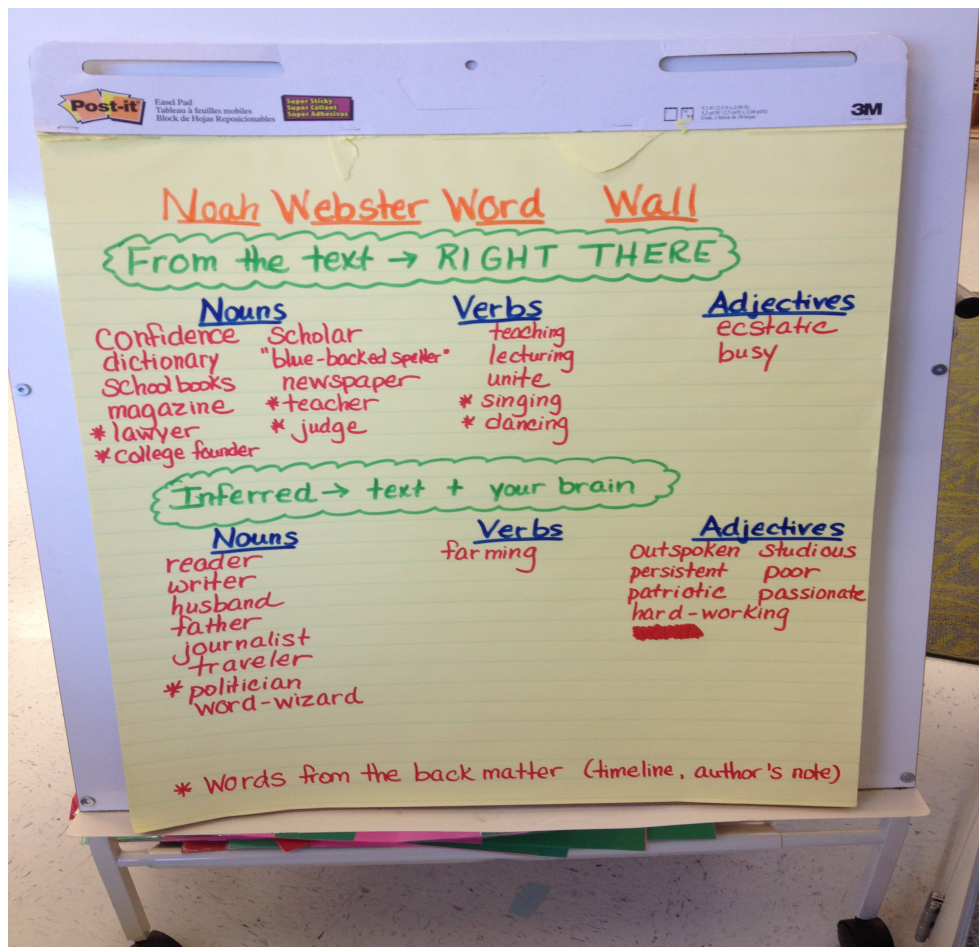
<u>Example of an inference:</u>

*From the text:* "So he studied twenty different languages, from Arabic to Italian to Welsh. He read almost every book in the local libraries, collecting words for his dictionary."

*Inference:* From this text we can infer that he was STUDIOUS—an adjective that describes someone who studies a lot. Ferris doesn't say outright he was STUDIOUS, but she SHOWS us through her words. It is implied.

4.  At this point, you can choose to go two directions:

    a.  Do the following activities with Noah Webster using Ferris' book

    b.  Utilize these activities to further your study of famous people you have to cover in content areas. (For example, I teach fourth grade in Virginia. There are a lot of famous people we study in both Virginia Studies and in Science. I will utilize these activities to enrich our understanding of these famous people.)

5.  If you are applying this work to other famous people, then you will need a select few books on those people. Have students select a famous person to research. As they read their textbook or other biographies, students should generate a list of words on their word wall (attached) that can be associated with the famous person. Encourage them to be as specific as possible. Think about words that could ONLY fit that person, as much as they can. Have students find words in the text, but they can also infer traits about that person based on what they read in the text.

## Transferring the Skill to Student Writing

<u>Mini-Dictionaries</u>
1. Have students pick 5 of their best words to create a mini-dictionary about that person. Create the dictionary pages by using ¼ of an 8x11 page. Students should write a "kid-definition" (definition in their own words—not copied out of a dictionary) and illustration for each word. For extra points, they can add the part of speech and a sample sentence. See example below for a Benjamin Franklin entry:
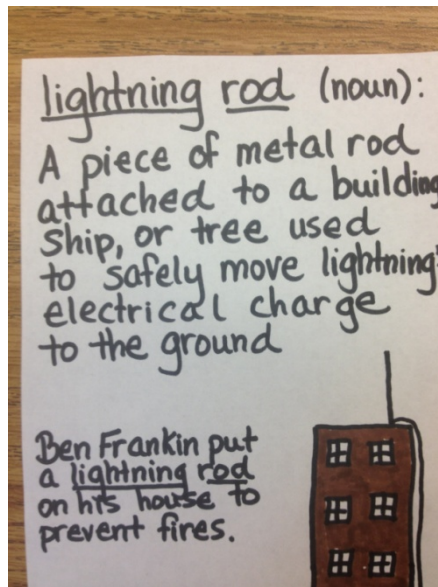


2. Guide students through the self-checklist for their dictionary (attached). You could have students do these dictionaries individual or in groups. If students have difficulty figuring out which five words to include, encourage them to think about the most important contributions each person made.
3. Include your finished Famous Person Dictionaries in a class station or non-fiction reading area to help other students who need to learn about these famous people.

<u>Diamantes</u>
See the sample attached for creating a diamante including instructions and a sample diamante for Noah Webster. Have students use words from their word walls to help them with this activity.

<u>Show, Don't Tell Anecdotal Writing</u>
1. Referring back to the Noah Webster inference example from the text, have students think of a character trait about their famous person.

   EXAMPLE FOR BENJAMIN FRANKLIN CHARACTER TRAIT: curious

2. Have students write a true anecdote about their famous person (about a paragraph) that SHOWS this character trait without TELLING it. See the attached sheet if you wish students to write on it (or they can write it wherever they write their drafts).

EXAMPLE FOR BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ANECDOTE:
Benjamin Franklin wanted to know if lightning was really a form of electricity. One night during a thunderstorm, he and his son went outside with a kite. They tied a key to the kite string and flew it up into the air. He waited a long time. At first, nothing happened. But then, the kite strings began to rise up. Franklin received a little zap when he touched the key. Lightning really was electricity!

*The reader can INFER that Benjamin Franklin is <u>curious</u> from the anecdote.*

3. Students can read each others' anecdotes and try to infer what character trait they were trying to SHOW with their writing.

**<u>Other Resources:</u>**

Jeri Chase Ferris' website:
http://www.jerichaseferris.com/noah-webster.html

Book Trailer:
http://www.jerichaseferris.com/index.html

Interview with Vincent X. Kirsch, illustrator of NOAH WEBSTER & HIS WORDS:
http://www.slj.com/2012/11/opinion/under-cover/everything-from-a-to-z-vincent-x-kirsch-adds-some-serious-fun-to-noah-webster-his-words/

Name _____

# Word Wall

| Nouns | Verbs | Adjectives |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Name _____

# Famous Person Dictionary

## Self-Checklist for Dictionary

_____ I have at least 5 words for my person.

_____ I have put my words in ABC (alphabetical order).

_____ I have written definitions for each word IN MY OWN WORDS.

_____ Each word has an illustration that shows the meaning of the word in images.

_____ I have included a title page on my mini-dictionary.

## Bonus Points

_____ I included the part of speech for each word (verb, noun, adjective, etc).

_____ I used each word in a complete, correct sentence.

## Sample Page
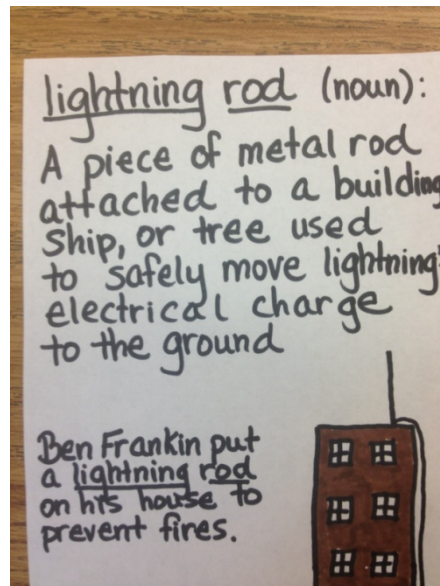
Name _____

# Diamante Biographical Poem

Look back at your list of words you brainstormed for your famous person. Use those words to help you create a diamante poem about that person.

**Line 1**: Topic of your poem. It can be your person's name.
(Example: Noah Webster)

**Line 2**: Two adjectives that describe your person.
(Example: confident, studious)

**Line 3**: Three verbs ending in –ing that would show actions your person would do
(Example: writing, teaching, learning)

**Line 4:** A four word phrase
(Example: First American dictionary author)

**Line 5**: Three verbs ending in –ing. These need to be different words from line 3.
(Example: lecturing, defining, spelling)

**Line 6:** Two adjectives that describe your person. These need to be different from line 2.
(Example: diligent, meticulous)

**Line 7:** Another name for your person.
(Example: word-wizard)

_____

A Biographical Diamante


by _____


_____


_____   _____


_____   _____   _____


_____   _____   _____   _____


_____   _____


_____

Name _____

# Show, Don't Tell Anecdote Writing

Famous Person's Name: _____

What character trait are you trying to SHOW with your writing? _____

Write an anecdote about your famous person. An anecdote is short telling of a real event.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Read your anecdote out loud to your partner. What character trait did he/she INFER from what you read?

_____