

April, 2018

**Houghton Mifflin Harcourt**  
**Response to EdReports Evaluation**  
***Journeys* Grades K-2**

**Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on EdReports’ review of *Journeys* Grades K-2. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is proud of *Journeys*’ proven track record. It is a profound privilege to know that *Journeys* teachers have encouraged 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* (Anchor Texts, Paired Selections, and Read Aloud Trade Books) 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.
- **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. Suggestions for how to set students up for rich classroom conversations are offered every day, multiple times per day. 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. Explicit instructional supports for teachers occur in many contexts:
  - 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
- **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 **1h** above)
  - Genre-based writing instruction occurs daily in a 5-week Unit. The first 3 weeks of writing instruction focus on writing traits under the umbrella of a featured genre (Narrative, Informative, or Opinion); the last two weeks feature a writing workshop where students publish a piece of their own writing
  - Writing traits are always taught using the Anchor Text as a mentor, but the final product is not intended to cite evidence related to the text.
  - Genre-based writing does not replace evidence-based writing—both are prevalent and important
- **1o: and 1r:** Above and beyond the best practices embedded in each lesson, our research-based phonics scope and sequence includes practice opportunities in the following mediums:
  - Decodable Texts feature the week’s High Frequency Words and phonics principles in engaging stories
  - Blend-It-Books offer extra at-home practice and nourish the home-school connection
  - The Word Study section of the *Literacy and Language Guide*, written by Shane Templeton, includes daily activities linked to the *Journeys* phonics principles
  - Teachers have support during the First Read of the Anchor Text to opportunistically teach/reinforce the phonics concept in an authentic context
  - The Reader’s Notebook provides practice pages for independent work
  - Instructional Cards supply teachers and students with tactile manipulatives for centers and small groups
- **1t:** In addition to the differentiation suggestions for Foundational Skills embedded at point of use in the Teacher Guide and in the Small Group section, *Journeys* offers differentiated practice pages for ALL levels—Advanced, EL, and Struggling—in the Grab and Go resource. The *Literacy and Language Guide* is a robust resource for additional phonics and word sorting activities.

**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:
  - The Unit opener includes “Motivate and Engage” activities that prime the pump for the Lessons to come
  - Multimedia like 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
  - A motivating quotation invites discussion and emotional connection

- “Preview Unit Texts” gives students a chance to create their own schema on the connections between the Lesson texts and the Unit theme
- **2c:** Students are encouraged to respond to texts in ways that transcend personal connection or emotion. Please see **1h** above for examples of these opportunities.
- **2d:** There are many types of culminating tasks in *Journeys*; some are at the Lesson level and others are at the Unit Level. All types give students a forum to demonstrate understanding of the topics and skills covered in the Lesson or Unit.
  - Lesson-level response to texts: “Your Turn” and “Compare Texts” integrate speaking, listening, and writing and demonstrate students’ understanding of the skills and strategies highlighted in the Lesson
  - Lesson-level writing products: Short pieces that support the week’s trait lessons and prepare students for a larger product at the end of the Unit. These relate to a writing genre rather than texts read during a Lesson
  - Unit-Level Research and Media Tasks: Give students an ongoing opportunity to collaborate with peers on the topics learned throughout the Unit and create products that utilize Research Skills and integrate writing, speaking, listening, and language standards
  - 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 K-2 have consistent instructional routines for introducing these words
  - Words are reviewed during Opening Routines each day and 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
- **2h:** One of the goals of *Journeys* is to nurture lifelong readers and learners. Teachers have supports 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.

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.