A feature article is defined by having “some personal story,” “a strong voice when the writer is speaking emphatically or appears to be talking directly to the reader,” and “opinion, when the writer shares what he or she thinks.” Morgan’s successful experiences working with a class of 4th graders were based on a unit of study which was conducted in a Writer’s Workshop format. The unit began with a look at exemplary anchor texts from sources like Time For Kids and continued with a series of mini-lessons. Short descriptions of the key mini-lessons are:

- **Analyzing the structure of feature articles.** Morgan broke down the components of feature articles to the student-friendly terms of “facts,” “story,” “strong voice,” and “opinion.” The class analyzed anchor texts and identified each component, what it added to the article, and different ways that authors organized their work. Students then broke into groups and looked for each component before coming back together to create a chart and talk through their findings. Lastly, students color-coded articles to visually see where each component fit in the broader structure.

- **Selecting a topic.** In addition to class discussions about the proper breadth vs. depth of a good topic, Morgan led the class in a brainstorming exercise where they listed a topic they were interested in and then free-wrote everything they knew about that topic. This led many students to see that he or she might only have a passing interest in a given topic and helped him or her to find one that combined interest and knowledge.

- **Utilizing facts.** In this mini-lesson, Morgan and the class again analyzed mentor texts, this time looking for specific ways in which authors use facts to advance their cause. They discussed the selection of which interview quotes to include, usage of statistics (e.g. when to use 40% and when to use “almost half”) and descriptive word choice.

- **Choosing a title.** This mini-lesson on creating strong titles was based on the idea that you can two types of titles: basic “straightforward titles” or clever “wink-at-you titles”. Morgan required that each student come up with five titles of each type before choosing the best one. This resulted in some gems, such as “Oh, My Darling” to address the overlooked benefits of clementines.” And “Why Should I?” about forest preservation.

**Conclusion and Citation**

Expanding non-fiction writing past the research project has potentially great benefits for students. As Morgan concludes, “select a topic that you love, don’t give up, keep trying, and rewrite are all key understandings for writers. Writing is a layered process that takes thinking and rethinking, writing and rewriting. It is challenging work, and the students demonstrated that they were ready for this challenge.”