# Dear Family Member,

Welcome to our next unit of study, "Investigating the Past."

In this unit, we'll be learning about historical figures like the Native American Sacagawea, who traveled with Lewis and Clark during their famous cross-country trip in the early 1800s. We will be discussing how historians study primary sources like photographs, diaries, and artifacts to learn about the past. In fact, many of our selections are in the form of narrative nonfiction: diary entries about traveling the Oregon Trail in the 1840s; a personal narrative about a girl's first flight — in a single propeller airplane — in 1945; and a journal kept during a recent dig for dinosaur bones. And just like historians, we will be studying the information we gather and drawing conclusions.

"Investigating the Past" is a unit that will capture your child's imagination and also introduce your child to concepts and events in our past. I'm certain you'll enjoy continuing the conversation with your child. As always, should you have any questions about our reading program or about your child's progress, please don't hesitate to contact me.

# Investigating the Past

In this unit, we will read about people and events in the past, and think in depth about the question "How does understanding the past shape the future?" Here are some activities designed to continue the conversation about history and to build on the skills and concepts your child is learning in school. Hopefully you'll even have some fun, too, as you work together!

Topic Connection

## His Story, Her Story, Our Story

In this unit, your child is learning that primary sources like interviews, diary entries, photographs, and artifacts can help us learn about the past. Perhaps you have some old family pictures that you can look at with your child. What details can you spot in the picture that help tell us about the times and the people? Examine the picture itself—is it in black and white? Color? What condition is it in?

Vocabulary Connection

## Investigating Words

In school, students are enriching their vocabulary and learning new words related to this unit, such as **exhibit, explore, remove, museum,** and **witnessed.** Have your child explain the meaning of these words to you and how they can be applied to your daily life. Then work with your child to use these words in his or her everyday language. For example, ask your child if he or she would like to "explore" a part of your town or historic building he or she has never been to.

Comprehension Connection

## In Conclusion . . .

Good readers think about the descriptions and hints an author provides so that they can draw conclusions about what the author means. In fact, drawing conclusions is one of the skills we've been working on this year. To practice this skill, watch a scene from a movie with your child. Then ask her to draw conclusions about what a character is thinking or feeling. Encourage your child to base those conclusions on facts from the movie.

Phonics Connections

## The Endings Are Here

In our phonics instruction, students are learning inflectional endings like *-ed* and *-ing* that require spelling changes. To help your child with adding endings, try the following activity. Get 6 index cards. Write the 4 words from the unit (shown below) on a card and make one pile. In the other pile, put index cards with the ending. Take turns picking a word card and an ending card. Write each word with its new ending.-

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| **explore** | **stop** | **tip** | **put** | **remove** |
| **ing** | **ed** | | | |