

Grade 4 Sampler



# UNITS OF STUDY

*in* Opinion, Information, *and* Narrative Writing

A COMMON CORE WORKSHOP CURRICULUM



LUCY CALKINS

*with Colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project*

Heinemann

DEDICATED TO TEACHERS™

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# Grade 4 Components

## Professional and Classroom Support

*A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop* crystallizes the essential principles, methods, and structures of effective writing workshop instruction.

The *Resources for Teaching Writing* CD-ROM provides unit-specific print resources to support your teaching throughout the year.

## Four Units of Study

- ◆ Are organized around the three types of writing mandated by the Common Core—*opinion, information, and narrative writing*
- ◆ Lay out six weeks of instruction (18–22 sessions) in each unit
- ◆ Include all of the teaching points, minilessons, conferences, and small-group work needed to teach a comprehensive workshop curriculum
- ◆ Model Lucy and her colleagues' carefully crafted teaching moves and language

## Writing Pathways:

### Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions

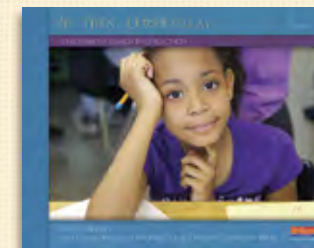
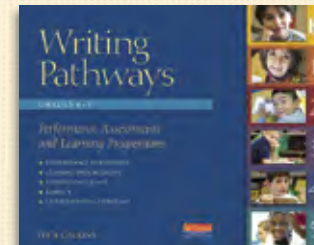
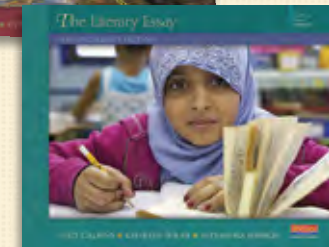
- ◆ Is organized around a K–5 continuum of learning progressions across opinion, information, and narrative writing
- ◆ Includes performance assessments, student checklists, rubrics, and leveled writing exemplars

## If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction

- ◆ Offers seven concise units of study
- ◆ Presents alternative assessment-based units that support targeted instruction and differentiation

## Units of Study Trade Book Pack

- ◆ Includes four age-appropriate trade books referenced in the units of study (*recommended*)
- ◆ Models effective writing techniques, encourages students to read as writers, and provides background knowledge





Welcome to this sampler of the Grade 4 components in the Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing series. The first pages of this sampler provide an overview of the units of study. They describe the instructional pathways each unit follows and how this journey is subdivided into bends, or parts. This overview describes how each bend builds on the learning in the previous bend and sets the stage for the learning in the next bend. Likewise, it describes how each larger unit of study builds on the learning in past units and sets the stage for learning in future units and grades. The tables of contents that follow delineate the steps of the journey and map in detail the learning students will see and experience.

The bulk of this sampler is the first bend from Unit 4, *The Literary Essay: Writing About Fiction*. This bend, “Writing about Reading: Literary Essays,” extends your students’ journey into argument writing. This in-depth look allows you to see how learning is progressively built in each unit and how students become immersed in the writing process. In addition to mapping your teaching points, minilessons, conferences, and small-group work, each session also includes Lucy’s coaching commentary. In these side-column notes, Lucy is at your side explaining proven strategies, offering professional insight, and coaching you through the nitty-gritty details of teaching.

Also included are samples of the instructional resources that support these core units. *Writing Pathways* shows you the types of learning progressions, checklists, and benchmark writing samples that will help you evaluate your students’ work and establish where students are in their writing development. *If... Then... Curriculum* describes the alternate units you can use to enhance or differentiate your instruction. The samples from the resources CD-ROM show you the wealth of teaching tools that support each unit. And finally, the trade book pack lists the mentor texts that support instruction.

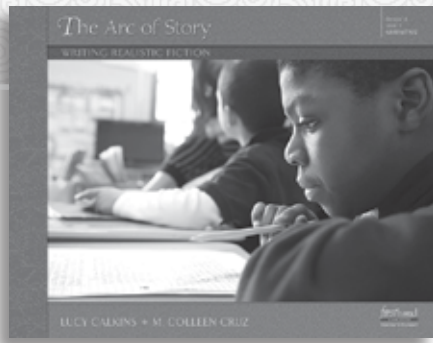
As you review this Grade 4 sampler, it is important to remember that the goal of this series is to model thoughtful, reflective teaching in ways that enable you to extrapolate guidelines and methods, so that you will feel ready to invent your own clear, sequenced, vibrant instruction in writing.

“Fourth-graders are poised to grow in important ways as writers. They are ready to internalize writing strategies so that what are, at first, concrete, methodical procedures become far more fleeting, flexible, and efficient ways of working.”

—Lucy Calkins



- ◆ Units of Study Overview and Contents *pages 2–12*
- ◆ UNIT 4: *The Literary Essay: Writing About Fiction* (Opinion/Argument Writing)  
BEND I: “Writing about Reading: Literary Essays” *pages 13–99*
- ◆ *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, K–5* *pages 100–103*
- ◆ *If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction* *pages 104–107*
- ◆ *Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM* *pages 108–111*
- ◆ Units of Study Trade Book Pack *page 112*
- ◆ About the Grade 4 Authors *back cover*



# OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS FOR UNIT 1

## *The Arc of Story* *Writing Realistic Fiction*

Lucy Calkins and M. Colleen Cruz

In the first bend—section—of this unit you will let students know that writers see ideas for fiction stories everywhere. Children then begin to collect story ideas in their writer’s notebook, fleshing them out to include elements of an effective story. Then students will storytell their ideas to a partner, making sure to use a storyteller’s voice and include literary language. Once children have chosen a story idea, you’ll teach them ways writers develop their main characters: by thinking not only about a character’s external traits but also his or her internal life and surroundings. After this writers may dramatize a scene or small moment. Finally, writers think about a character’s needs, letting a storyline emerge in which the character meets obstacles.

In the second bend you’ll focus on the classic “story arc,” showing students how stories with two or three strong scenes can successfully show the development of a character, a plot, and even a setting over the course of the story. The arc a writer creates in the planning stages becomes a touchstone for drafting. Each scene or event in the story arc is assigned its own page in a booklet, and this, plus an emphasis on skills developed in earlier years, helps fiction sound and feel storylike.

In the third bend you will help children prepare their story for audiences through focused drafting, deep revision, and editing. When

your students were younger, they were taught to intersperse dialogue with action as a revision strategy. Now you’ll add the need to ground the entire story in a place, a setting. You’ll also teach children to rethink the evolution and conclusion of their story. Writers know endings don’t come out of nowhere. You’ll teach children that in fiction, as in life, solutions are generally hinted at all along: they are solutions we arrive at little by little.

In the final bend you will show students how to take the reins and write fiction independently, teaching them the systems and skills they need to feel confident that they can continue writing fiction throughout their lives.



## Welcome to Unit 1

### **BEND I** ♦ **Creating and Developing Stories and Characters that Feel Real**

1. Imagining Stories from Ordinary Moments
2. Imagining Stories We Wish Existed in the World
3. Developing Believable Characters
4. Giving Characters Struggles and Motivations
5. Plotting with a Story Arc

### **BEND II** ♦ **Drafting and Revising with an Eye Toward Believability**

6. Show, Don't Tell: Planning and Writing Scenes
7. Feeling and Drafting the Heart of Your Story
8. Studying Published Texts to Write Leads
9. Orienting Readers with Setting
10. Writing Powerful Endings

### **BEND III** ♦ **Preparing for Publication with an Audience in Mind**

11. Revision: Rereading with a Lens
12. Making a Space for Writing
13. Using Mentor Texts to Flesh Out Characters

### 14. Editing with Various Lenses

### 15. Publishing Anthologies: A Celebration

### **BEND IV** ♦ **Embarking on Independent Fiction Projects**

### 16. Launching Independent Fiction Projects

### 17. Planning and Drafting Stories with Agency

### 18. Mining the Connections between Reading and Writing Fiction

### 19. Focusing the Reader's Gaze

### 20. Choosing Punctuation for Effect

### 21. Surveying Your Work and Planning for the Future





## OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS FOR UNIT 2

### *Boxes and Bullets* *Personal and Persuasive Essays*

Lucy Calkins, Kelly Boland Hohne, and Cory Gillette

This unit, like a number of other units in this series, begins with a quick, intense immersion in the process of writing a new kind of text—in this case, the essay. The goal of “essay boot camp,” as this bend is called, is to help students develop a sense for writing an essay. You will plan a simple essay together, aloud, and send students off to draft that spoken essay on paper. Then students will spend a few days gathering entries in their notebook, writing long about people, objects, events, and so on. As the bend ends, students will use what they’ve written in their notebook to develop a thesis statement and plan their essay.

In the next bend—“Raising the Level of Essay Writing”—students will collect and write about evidence to support each of the reasons for the opinion expressed in their thesis statement. They will select the most powerful evidence and tell it in a way that supports their reasons. They will draft sections of their essay, using transition words and phrases to create cohesion. As they draft, they will also learn to use the introduction to orient and engage the reader and the conclusion to offer final thoughts. They will assess this draft to determine how much they have grown, and then they’ll revise the draft with these goals in mind. Students will edit to improve their clarity, finding and correcting

run-on sentences and fragments. At the end of the bend, they’ll share their work in a mini-celebration.

Bend III of the unit, “Personal to Persuasive,” focuses on transference and raising the quality of work. Students will develop a plan for a persuasive essay. Then you will invite them to take themselves through the process of developing and drafting this essay with greater independence than before, transferring and applying all they have learned and using all the resources, tools, charts, etc., at hand. You will coach them to include a greater variety of evidence than before and to elaborate on how that evidence connects to their reasons and opinion. They will again assess their work, reflecting on their growth during the unit and setting future goals. Students will edit their essay using all they have learned about conventions, in particular ensuring that all grade-appropriate words are spelled correctly. They will publish their pieces in a final celebration.

## Welcome to Unit 2

### BEND I ♦ Writing to Learn

1. Essay Structure Boot Camp
2. Collecting Ideas as Essayists
3. Writing to Learn
4. Using Elaboration Prompts to Grow Ideas
5. Mining Our Writing
6. Boxes and Bullets: Framing Essays
7. Return to Boot Camp

### BEND II ♦ Raising the Level of Essay Writing

8. Composing and Sorting Mini-Stories
9. Creating Parallelism in Lists
10. Organizing for Drafting
11. Building a Cohesive Draft
12. Becoming Our Own Job Captains
13. Writing Introductions and Conclusions
14. Revising Our Work with Goals in Mind
15. Correcting Run-On Sentences and Sentence Fragments

### BEND III ♦ Personal to Persuasive

16. Moving from Personal to Persuasive
17. Inquiry into Persuasive Essay
18. Broader Evidence
19. Connecting Evidence, Reason, and Thesis
20. Getting Ready to Put Our Opinions into the World
21. Hey World, Listen Up!: Sharing Our Opinions Loudly and Proudly





## OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS FOR UNIT 3

### *Bringing History to Life*

Lucy Calkins and Anna Gratz Cockerille

In unit one you introduced the persuasive essay in a spirited boot camp in which you and your students wrote an essay in defense of ice cream. Now you will introduce the information essay in a boot camp in which together you write an overview of the American Revolution. You will also teach children that information texts are often conglomerates, containing a lot of other kinds of texts. At the end of this first bend students complete a small book in which each chapter is written as a different kind of text.

In the next bend students narrow in on a subtopic of their choice; some students will continue to research the original topic, the American Revolution. You will teach students ways writers logically structure their writing. In this bend, because students work on subtopics of their own choosing, they rely heavily on their knowledge and their research, so you will continue to explicitly teach the skills of effective research writing. You will also teach students to use transition words and phrases more effectively and to clarify and bring out the structure in their writing. Most of all, you will coach students to highlight important information by using historical details, text features, and quotations.

Bend III, “Building Ideas in Information Writing,” brings this work to a new level as students move from organizing information to developing their own ideas about the information. This bend is all about historical interpretation, very heady work for fourth-graders, but work for which they have been aptly prepared not only throughout this unit but throughout the entire school year. Their research will take on a new bent as they generate life lessons from their topic, generate questions, and then hypothesize and research answers to those questions. As always, students will spend time editing their writing before publishing it, this time focusing on the unique way writers of history use punctuation. The unit will culminate with an expert fair, at which students will be given the opportunity to teach others all they have learned about their topic.



## Welcome to Unit 3

### BEND I ♦ Informational Books: Making a Conglomerate of Forms

1. Getting the Sense of Informational Books
2. Planning the Structure of Writing
3. Planning and Writing with Greater Independence
4. Teaching as a Way to Rehearse for Information Writing
5. Elaboration: The Details that Let People Picture What Happened Long Ago and Far Away
6. Bringing Information Alive: Stories Inside Nonfiction Texts
7. Essays within Information Texts
8. Taking Stock and Setting Goals: A Letter to Teachers

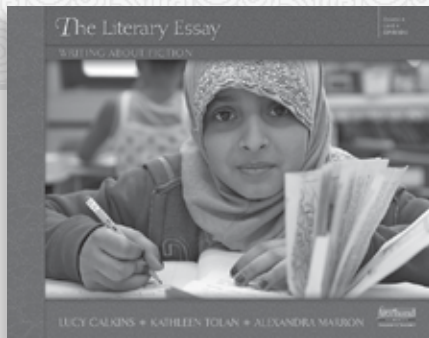
### BEND II ♦ Writing with Greater Independence

9. Writers Plan for Their Research
10. The Intense Mind-Work of Note-Taking
11. Drafting Is Like Tobogganing: First the Preparation, the Positioning ... Then the Whoosh!
12. Developing a Logical Structure Using Introductions and Transitions
13. Text Features: Popping Out the Important Information
14. Quotations Accentuate Importance: Voices Chime In to Make a Point
15. Using All We Know to Craft Essay and Narrative Sections
16. The Other Side of the Story
17. Self-Assessment and Goal Setting: Taking on New Challenges

### BEND III ♦ Building Ideas in Informational Writing

18. Information Writing Gives Way to Idea Writing
19. Digging Deeper: Interpreting the Life Lessons that History Teaches
20. Using Confusions to Guide Research
21. Questions without a Ready Answer
22. Editing
23. A Final Celebration: An Expert Fair





## OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS FOR UNIT 4

### *The Literary Essay* *Writing About Fiction*

Lucy Calkins, Kathleen Tolan, and Alexandra Marron

To write well about reading, students need to learn more not only about writing but also about reading. Throughout this unit you will teach students ways writers read complex texts closely and then write about the literature they are reading. You will first teach students to notice authors' choices about the setting, objects, words, metaphors, and characters they use in their texts. This work, so central to the Common Core State Standards, is especially powerful work for students who are analyzing texts for ideas and interpretations. Students learn that there are certain aspects of a text that tend to be more important, and they learn to pay attention to those aspects, noticing what the author has done and fashioning evidence-based theories about the text.

From the get-go, you will teach students to write structured, compelling essays in which they make and support claims and analyze, unpack, and incorporate evidence. Students focus on arguing for their ideas about characters while carrying forward what they have been taught about planning and drafting essays, writing introductions and conclusions, and marshalling evidence in support of reasons. This allows the main focus of teaching to be devoted to the special challenges of writing essays about texts.

After drafting and revising an essay about a familiar short text in Bend I and receiving feedback, students are asked to repeat that cycle in Bend II, this time applying all they have learned and also working to write more interpretively and analytically. On the first day of this second bend you will begin teaching youngsters the power of higher-level interpretive reading. Writing about favorite texts—read-alouds, short stories, novels—students learn to value complexity and examine all sides of an issue with the most open mind possible. In doing so they will also learn new, more complex ways of structuring an essay and more nuanced ways to mine a text for the evidence they need.

The unit ends with a third bend in which students learn to write comparison/contrast essays, noting different texts' approaches to the same theme or issue. Students will learn to write in ways that take into account not only the subject of a text but also the author's treatment of that subject. In this way students are taught to write more about point of view, emphasis, and interpretation, and to be aware of the craft moves authors use. Students will also learn ways to structure a comparison/contrast essay and cite evidence from two texts in a seamless, purposeful way.



## Welcome to Unit 4

### BEND I ♦ Writing about Reading: Literary Essays

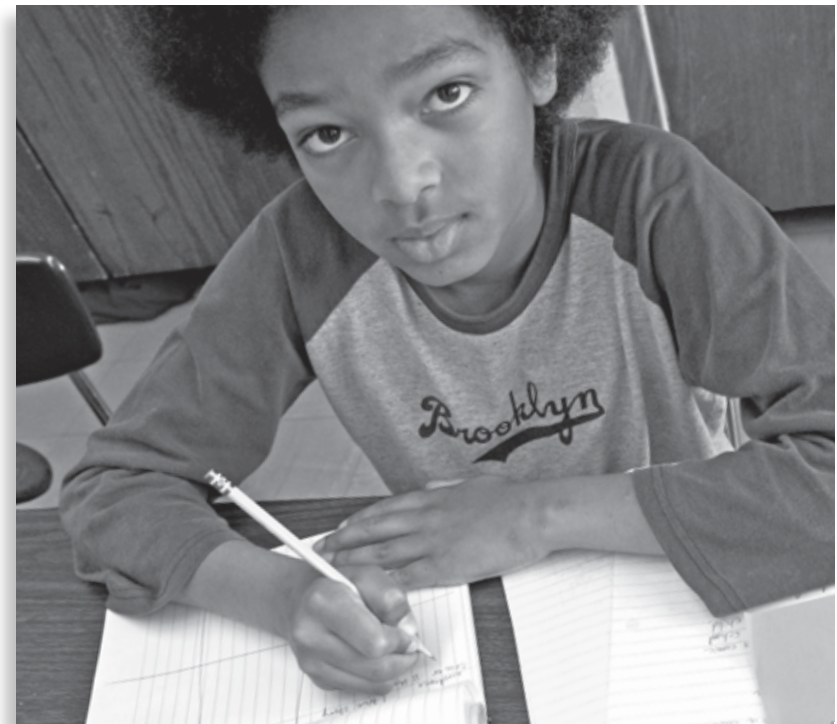
1. Close Reading to Generate Ideas about a Text
2. Gathering Writing by Studying Characters
3. Elaborating on Written Ideas Using Prompts
4. Finding and Testing a Thesis
5. Using Stories as Evidence
6. Citing Textual Evidence
7. Using Lists as Evidence
8. Putting It All Together: Constructing Literary Essays

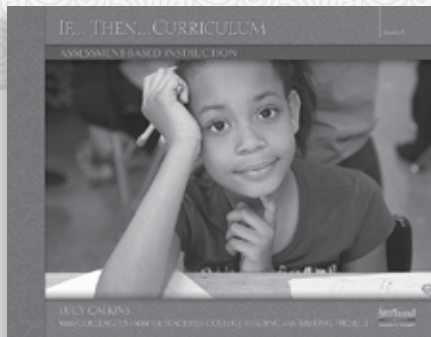
### BEND II ♦ Raising the Quality of Literary Essays

9. Writing to Discover What a Story Is *Really* About
10. Adding Complexity to Our Ideas
11. Flash-Drafting Literary Essays
12. Beginnings and Endings
13. Using Descriptions of an Author's Craft as Evidence
14. Editing

### BEND III ♦ Writing Compare-and-Contrast Essays

15. Building the Muscles to Compare and Contrast
16. Comparing and Contrasting Familiar Texts
17. Using Yesterday's Learning, Today and Always
18. Developing Distinct Lines of Thought
19. Exploring Commas
20. A Celebration





# CONTENTS

## *If... Then... Curriculum* *Assessment-Based Instruction*

Lucy Calkins with Colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

### **Introduction: Fourth-Grade Writers and Planning Your Year**

### **Part One: Alternate and Additional Units**

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#### **Raising the Level of Personal Narrative Writing**

*If you feel that your students would benefit from more work in narrative writing before tackling the fourth-grade narrative unit, THEN you may decide to teach this unit prior to The Arc of Story: Writing Realistic Fiction.*

—or—

*If your students present at a low level on their on-demand assessment for narrative writing, THEN you might want to teach this unit early in the year.*

#### **Informational Writing: Writing about Topics of Personal Expertise**

*If your students are struggling readers and writers or have not had much experience in writing about topics that require research, THEN you might want to teach this unit prior to Bringing History to Life.*

#### **The Literary Essay: Equipping Ourselves with the Tools to Write Expository Texts that Advance an Idea about Literature**

*If your students have not had a lot of experience writing about what they've read, THEN you will want to teach this unit after Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays and before The Literary Essay: Writing About Fiction.*

#### **Revision**

*If you want to present your students with an opportunity to reflect on their growth as writers and return to previous work with a new vigor, THEN you might want to teach this unit, lifting the level of their previous work.*

#### **Poetry Anthologies: Writing, Thinking, and Seeing More**

*If you want to ready your students for the CCSS' expectations on close reading of complex texts, THEN you might want to teach this unit.*

—or—

*If you want to teach your students to become more conscious of the crafting and language decisions that writers make, THEN you might want to teach this unit.*

#### **Historical Fiction: Tackling Complex Texts**

*If your students are ready for more challenging work in narrative writing, THEN you may want to teach this unit following The Arc of Story, which will allow them to transfer and apply all the narrative craft they have learned to this new, engaging genre.*

#### **Journalism**

*If your students are ready for more challenging work in opinion writing, THEN you may want to teach this unit, giving your students the opportunity to hone their skills at writing articles, observing, and gathering information before selecting carefully what they put on the page.*



## Part Two: Differentiating Instruction for Individuals and Small Groups: If... Then... Conferring Scenarios

### **NARRATIVE WRITING**

#### **Structure and Cohesion**

- If the story lacks focus . . .*
- If the story is confusing or seems to be missing important information . . .*
- If the story has no tension . . .*
- If the story has no real or significant ending . . .*
- If the writer is new to the writing workshop or this particular genre of writing . . .*
- If the writer does not use paragraphs . . .*

#### **Elaboration**

- If the writer has created a story that is sparse, with little elaboration . . .*
- If the story is riddled with details . . .*
- If the story is swamped with dialogue . . .*
- If the writer has written the external story but not the internal story . . .*
- If the writer struggles to identify and convey a deeper meaning . . .*
- If the writer is ready to use literary devices . . .*
- If the writer summarizes rather than story-tells . . .*

#### **Language**

- If the writer struggles with spelling . . .*
- If the writer struggles with end punctuation . . .*

#### **The Process of Generating Ideas**

- If the writer has “nothing to write about” . . .*
- If the writer’s notebook work does not represent all she can do . . .*

#### **The Process of Drafting**

- If the writer has trouble maintaining stamina and volume . . .*
- If the writer struggles to work independently . . .*

#### **The Process of Revision**

- If the writer does not seem to be driven by personal goals as much as by your instruction . . .*

#### **The Process of Editing**

- If the writer does not use what she knows about editing while writing . . .*

### **INFORMATION WRITING**

#### **Structure and Cohesion**

- If the writer has not established a clear organizational structure . . .*
- If there is no logical order to the sequence of information . . .*
- If information in various sections overlaps . . .*
- If the writer is ready to experiment with alternative organizational structures . . .*
- If the writer has chosen a topic that is too broad . . .*
- If the piece lacks an introduction and/or a conclusion . . .*

#### **Elaboration**

- If each section is short and needs elaboration . . .*
- If the writer elaborates by adding fact upon fact . . .*
- If the writer goes off on tangents when elaborating . . .*
- If the writer does not elaborate on information from outside sources . . .*

#### **Language**

- If the writer incorporates quotes, facts, and statistics but does so awkwardly . . .*
- If transitions from section to section sound awkward . . .*
- If the writer does not incorporate domain-specific vocabulary . . .*

#### **The Process of Generating Ideas**

- If the writer chooses ideas about which she has little expertise and/or that are difficult to research . . .*
- If the writer simply copies facts into the notebook . . .*

#### **The Process of Drafting**

- If the first draft is not organized . . .*

#### **The Process of Revision**

- If the writer is “done” while revising . . .*
- If the writer does not have a large repertoire of revision strategies to draw from . . .*

### The Process of Editing

*If the writer has edited but has missed several mistakes or would otherwise benefit from learning to partner-edit . . .*

## **OPINION WRITING**

### Structure and Cohesion

*If the introduction does not forecast the structure of the essay . . .*

*If supports overlap . . .*

*If supports are not parallel or equal in weight . . .*

*If the writer is new to writing workshop or this particular genre of writing . . .*

*If the writer has a number of well-developed reasons, but they blur together without paragraphs or transitions . . .*

*If the writer is ready to consider counterarguments . . .*

### Elaboration

*If the writer is struggling to elaborate (1) . . .*

*If the writer is struggling to elaborate (2) . . .*

*If the writer's evidence feels free-floating or disconnected from the argument . . .*

*If the piece is swamped with details . . .*

*If the writer has provided evidence, but it does not all support the claim . . .*

### Language

*If the writer uses a casual, informal tone when writing . . .*

*If the writer struggles with spelling . . .*

*If the writer struggles with comma usage . . .*

### The Process of Generating Ideas

*If the writer struggles to generate meaningful topics worth exploring . . .*

*If the writer is exploring opinions that are overly simple or without dimension . . .*

### The Process of Drafting

*If the writer has a clear plan for her writing but loses focus and organization when drafting . . .*

### The Process of Revision

*If the writer has a limited repertoire of revision strategies . . .*

### The Process of Editing

*If the writer edits "on the run," investing little time or effort in the process . . .*



# Writing about Reading: Literary Essays

BEND I



SAMPLE BEND



## Session 1

# Close Reading to Generate Ideas about a Text

**IN THIS SESSION**, you'll teach students that reading with an attentiveness to detail can spark ideas and that writing can be a vehicle for developing those ideas.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ Before starting the unit, each child will need to have read at least one of the short texts that you'll invite youngsters to study across this unit. We recommend *Fox* by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks, "Marble Champ" by Gary Soto, "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros, *Fireflies* by Julia Brinkloe, *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, "Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend" and other stories from *The Stories Julian Tells* by Ann Cameron. Alternatively, you may decide to choose one of your own favorites.
- ✓ The touchstone text you've selected for this minilesson, one for each child
- ✓ The first few paragraphs of the mentor text, *Fox*, by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks, to be displayed to the whole class
- ✓ "Ways to Push Our Thinking" list of prompts from Session 4 of Unit 2, *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* (see Teaching)
- ✓ "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart (see Link and Share)
- ✓ The short texts students will study across the unit (see Link)
- ✓ "Questions Writers Ask of Earlier Entries" chart from Session 5 of Unit 2, *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays*, to use as a model to create a new chart for this unit, "Questions Writers Ask of Texts" (see Share)
- ✓ Chart paper, Post-its, and markers

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:** W.4.1, W.4.4, W.4.7, W.4.8, W.4.9.a, RL.4.1, RL.4.4, RL.4.10, RFS.4.4, RL.5.1, SL.4.1, SL.4.4, L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.4.a, L.4.5.a,b

2

**B**ECAUSE YOU HAVE ALREADY TAUGHT MANY UNITS OF STUDY, you enter this unit with an expectation for how a unit of study will probably go. You can count on the fact that Session 1 will invite writers into the big work of the unit while also equipping them with a particular strategy for generating the new kind of writing. You can also count on the fact that the first few minilessons will give students a repertoire of strategies for generating this new kind of writing, and then the next few will help them lift the level of the writing, and you can count on the fact that students will then select a seed idea and develop it into a piece of writing.

Because this is your students' second unit this year on opinion/argument writing, you can also count on the fact that your students will be returning to many of the skills and strategies they learned earlier, for example, writing a thesis statement with supporting reasons and evidence, this time applying those skills to a new kind of opinion writing.

But this unit is a bit different from all the others. To write well about reading, students not only need to learn more about *writing*; they also need to learn more about *reading*. These sessions, then, must support reading well in addition to writing well. Specifically, this first session is intended to help children read literature closely—and to write about the literature they are reading.

More specifically, this session invites young people to use writing as a tool for developing their ideas about stories. In the personal and persuasive essay unit, you taught your writers that essayists observe the world, then push themselves to have thoughts about what they see. This session builds upon that strategy. This time, you teach youngsters that just as they earlier observed the *world* and pushed themselves to have thoughts about it, they can now observe the *texts* they are reading and push themselves to have thoughts about those texts. Just as you have repeatedly taught writers that the tiny details of their lives are worth noticing, you'll now teach them that the tiniest details of texts are worth noticing.

Part of your attention in this session and in this unit, then, will be directed toward supporting reading within the writing workshop. You won't want reading to overwhelm writing time, so during the first two bends in the unit, we recommend channeling students to

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return to familiar short texts (and later, to familiar novels). As always, choice matters, so we recommend that you encourage children to select from a small folder full of optional short texts. When we taught this unit, the folder included “Spaghetti,” “Slower Than the Rest,” and “Boar Out There” from Cynthia Rylant’s anthology, *Every Living Thing*; “Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend” from *The Stories Julian Tells* by Ann Cameron; “The Marble Champ,” a much more complex story by Gary Soto; “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros; *Fireflies* by Julia Brinkloe; and *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson. You’ll make your own choices.

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*“Just as you have repeatedly taught writers that the tiny details of their lives are worth noticing, you’ll now teach them that the tiniest details of texts are worth noticing.”*

You’ll probably find that young writers do not enter this unit already accustomed to using an attention to the details of a text to spark big ideas. This sort of marriage of close reading and interpretation requires students to straddle two ways of thinking: it asks them to be both concretely grounded and tentatively abstract. It requires them to point to, to note, and to cite—and it requires them to question, surmise, and theorize. The power that you are looking for comes from the combination.

At the start of this unit, it is more typical for your young students to be accustomed to either close *or* interpretive reading, but not to a combination of the two, which is the trademark of truly interpretative work. That is, they are apt to either point at parts of a text, citing and collecting examples, or to be at the opposite extreme, accustomed to abstract theorizing that is unanchored to the text. If you notice that your students’ writing about texts amounts either to mere retelling or to empty generalities, then, don’t be surprised. This will change, and those changes will start in this session as you teach children that when people read (or live) with a wide-awake attention to detail, they can use language—and writing, in particular—to generate big, compelling ideas that are supported by evidence.

With this session, I am trying to reclaim writing about reading as a beautiful, glorious thing. I’m trying to make writing about reading feel personal—even intimate—and intense. For many children, writing about reading is a dreaded enterprise. Often children are asked to do this simply as a way to prove they read the text. Often no one reads the writing children do about reading, and nothing happens to that writing. It’s not read, shared, revised, discussed—and, consequently, it feels wooden and lifeless.





## Close Reading to Generate Ideas about a Text

### CONNECTION

**Remind children that writers first live intensely and only then write about their experiences.**

“Do you remember when I told you that the great writer Annie Dillard has a photograph above her writing desk of a little boy standing in a waterfall, only his head above water? Annie posts that picture beside her writing desk because, she says, ‘That little boy is completely alive. He’s letting the mystery of existence beat on him. He’s having his childhood and he knows it’” (*The Writing Life* 1989, 47). “Annie uses that picture to remind herself that writers need to live intensely wide-awake lives and then write about those lives.”

**Tell children that, in the same way, writers first read intensely and only then write about that experience.**

“In this unit of study, you will be writing about your reading. Reading is one way to wake up to the intensity and meaning and truth of our own lives. The famous essayist and poet Donald Hall has said, ‘Great literature, if we read it well, opens us up to the world and makes us more sensitive to it, as if we acquired eyes that could see through things and ears that could hear smaller sounds.’ Before you can write a literary essay, you first need to climb inside a story, just as that little boy climbed inside the white water. You need to let the details of the story pound down on you—paying attention to what you see and hear and notice on the page. Only then can you decide what you want to say about the story.”

❖ **Name the teaching point.**

“Today I hope you’ll learn that to write well about reading, you need to be wide-awake readers. Some people say they read themselves to sleep, but because you are writers, you need to read yourselves *awake!* To become especially wide-awake readers, you read closely, paying attention to little details that others might pass by, and then you write to grow ideas about those details.”

### ◆ COACHING

*When today’s teaching calls upon previous teaching, this adds layers to today’s work, bringing in far more depth and resonance. I love the lead to this unit, and I love it because of all the ways in which something as everyday and ordinary as writing about reading is made extraordinary. To me, that is the gift that writing gives—it allows us to see significance in what others might walk past.*

*Notice that this teaching point is written to be memorable. The parallel construction of this helps.*

## TEACHING

**Demonstrate by rereading a snippet of the touchstone text. Highlight the fact that you pause to attend closely to what's in the text, saying or writing what you notice.**

"Readers who want to grow ideas from reading a text find it helps to not just read but to also reread a text, so let's reread the book *Fox*. I know you have already heard me read this book aloud, and we've already talked about the kinds of questions readers usually ask first. We already talked a bit about the plot and characters. This time, as we reread, let's turn our minds on high, looking for moments or details that strike us as important to the whole text, and when we find them, let's stop and talk. Put your thumb up when you find a moment or a detail in the story that seems worth growing ideas about, that may be related to the big ideas in this story."

*Through the charred forest, over hot ash, runs Dog, with a bird clamped in his big, gentle mouth. He takes her to his cave above the river and there he tries to tend her burnt wing . . .*

Noticing that the children were listening but that none had yet put a thumb up to signal that some of the details might be worth thinking about, I said, "I don't see many thumbs up yet. I'm the same as you; sometimes I just want to let the text flow over me. But to grow big ideas about a text, especially a short text, it helps to pause early and often and to force ourselves to notice what the text is actually saying instead of zooming along."

I reread the text, as if to myself, letting the children take it in again. I did this hoping that ideas would dawn in their minds.

Then I began. "I'm noticing that Dog's mouth is described as *gentle*." I underlined the word on the large copy of the text. "That seems like a really unusual word to use for a dog's mouth. When I try to grow ideas about characters, I usually notice unusual words that the author uses to describe the character. Let me jot a quick annotation on the page to note what I'm noticing." Beside the underlined word, I wrote, "Why this word?"

*The reason I suggest students look closely at the text to grow new insights is that I'm convinced writers are more apt to develop fresh ideas when they begin by attending to detail, rather than generalizing and then supplying details to illustrate those generalizations.*

*By stopping so early on in a text and zooming in on a detail students will otherwise be apt to have passed over, we recalibrate students' thinking. This is meant as a wake-up call and as a way to help children see the path they will need to take to get from where they are to where we want them to be.*

*If you do this right, your children will start to say, "Ohhh, ohhh," and climb up on their knees. You want their minds to be doing the same work you will demonstrate, because they'll learn more from your demonstration if they have been doing the exact same work and can compare their version with yours. So don't call on them just because they signal that they have something to add. This is your time to demonstrate, to teach, and to make your point.*

Shifting out of the role of reader into the role of teacher, I said, “You already know how to shift between *recording* what you see in the text to *thinking* about what you see. And you know that it is important to do this even when you’re not sure that you do have a thought! Something magical often happens when you use thought prompts to launch yourself into new ideas. Brand-new thoughts spill out. So let’s use some thought prompts to help us take what we’ve noticed in our close reading and push our brains to have more thoughts about it.” I pointed to the “Ways to Push Our Thinking” list of prompts from the *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* unit, which I had brought to the front of the meeting area. Then I picked up a pen and began to jot quickly in my notebook, saying aloud what I was writing as I wrote.

*I see that Dog’s mouth is called gentle, even though dogs have sharp teeth and use their mouths to eat other animals. The thought I have about this is . . .*

“Hmm, what should we write?” I paused for a moment, visibly thinking this over before beginning to write. “I’m not sure what I’m thinking, but here goes.”

*The thought I have about this is that . . .*

*. . . even though most dogs’ mouths are made to bite other animals, this dog uses his mouth in a different way.*

*To add on, Dog is carrying a bird in that mouth. He is saving her life instead of eating her. He is a caring kind of a dog!*

**Debrief. Remind writers that when using this strategy to generate writing about texts, you note details in the text, then write your thoughts about those details.**

“Writers, do you see that after I read a bit, I looked back at the story, noticing details? Because I own the book, I underlined the details. Otherwise, I would have left a sticky note to mark what I noticed. Then I picked up my pen and pushed myself to write. I used thought prompts like ‘I see . . .’ and ‘The thought I have about this is . . .’ and ‘To add on . . .’ to lead myself down a path of thought toward new ideas about the text. When I was writing, I wasn’t quite sure what I would end up thinking, but I find that when I get my pen moving, ideas come to me.”

*I have come to believe that the sequence of our instruction in writing is incredibly important, because once skills have become automatic, learners can use those skills effortlessly to tackle new and more complex mental operations. This session assumes children have already learned to write entries in which they observe, then shift into reflecting on what they observe. The session also assumes that children already know how to work with conversational prompts, using these to extend their first thoughts.*

*The most important word that I’ve said might be hmm. It’s crucial for us to show children that ideas don’t come to any of us right away. We wait for them to nibble, like a fisherman waits for the fish to bite. So often, children expect ideas to be right there, fully articulated, in their minds, and they don’t understand the experience of fishing for, waiting for, an idea to nibble.*

*This attentiveness to the dog’s mouth shows up a bit later in this unit when we present a draft of our writing and then again when we develop a thesis. You absolutely can notice different things, but when you alter the teacher text, watch the domino effect those changes need to have.*

*I underline the lines from the story that ground what I say and think, because I want this physical way to remind children that our ideas are grounded in a close reading of the story. Often children glance at a text and then spin out ideas that are only tangentially related to the text. If you can find a way to give your students a copy of the entire text so they can annotate as well, that’s helpful.*



## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

### Channel children toward reading, scrutinizing, and annotating the next few lines of the touchstone text.

"If I hadn't been writing about *Fox*, I would have zoomed right past the detail that Dog's mouth is described as gentle. Writers see more, notice more; they live more wide-awake lives. So let's try this. I have a short excerpt from *Fox* to display for you, and you have your own copies of *Fox*. You'll read the next few lines from where we stopped, pausing when you see a detail that's worth growing ideas about. Then pay attention to that detail and see what ideas you can grow."

*He takes her to his cave above the river, and there he tries to tend her burnt wing: but Magpie does not want his help.*

*"I will never again be able to fly," she whispers.*

*"I know," says Dog.*

*He is silent for a moment, then he says, "I am blind in one eye, but life is still good."*

*"An eye is nothing!" says Magpie. "How would you feel if you couldn't run?"*

*Dog does not answer. Magpie drags her body into the shadow of the rocks, until she feels herself melting into blackness.*

### Coach into children's work in ways that lift the level of it.

As children worked, I coached, "I love that you are using thought prompts to say more, like 'The thought I have about this is . . .,' 'To add on . . .,' and 'This shows . . .'"

"Your hands are flying! It's great that you are writing fast and furiously! You can move on to your next thought prompt if you want," I said, urging them to dive right into this work and do their thinking with their pens moving. "Richard is going back to the text, grabbing another detail, and writing some more. Are you?"

### Debrief by celebrating one student's work, explaining that the student successfully noticed an important detail and then composed ideas.

After another minute, I asked for attention. "Writers, can we talk?" Once I had everyone's attention, I said, "I want to share with you what Tony wrote. He read this bit of the story":

*"I will never again be able to fly," she whispers.*

"Then Tony underlined the word *whispers*. Tony wrote, 'I notice Magpie could have shouted or screamed that, but instead she whispered it.'"

*You'll want students to read the excerpt from their own copies of the text. Another option would be to ask students to read from an enlarged copy of the passage, written on chart paper or displayed for the class. They would not be able to underline and annotate, but the logistics might be easier.*

*The excerpt needs to be short for many reasons. Keeping the minilesson brief is one. You also want to highlight the power of close reading, and providing a short excerpt does this. Leave plenty of white space around the part so children can annotate the text with their thinking.*

*When voicing over to cajole students to write more quickly, to work with more intensity, use your voice to communicate your content. Talk with urgency, using the same voice you used earlier during essay boot camp.*

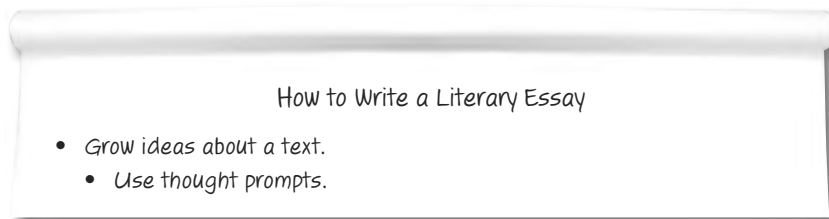
*Notice that you will return to using "voiceovers" that you used earlier during the boot camp lesson from the Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays unit. Here you will be using these voiceovers to celebrate that your writers are reading and writing quickly—and to make it likely that more are doing this.*

“Tony could have stopped there, but he wanted to keep growing his idea, so he wrote more. He wrote, ‘The thought I have about this is that Magpie is really sad. She’s the kind of sad that’s so big it makes you quiet instead of loud.’ Then he pushed himself one last time with another thought prompt: ‘To add on, she’s so sad that I bet she almost wishes she’d died in the fire instead of living when she can’t fly.’”

## LINK

**Reveal a chart showing the strategy you’ve taught for close reading and growing ideas about texts. Invite children to draw on this strategy, today and always.**

“Today, writers, you learned a strategy for reading yourselves awake. You learned that to get big ideas about texts—and eventually grow those ideas into a literary essay—you read closely and write in response to reading.” I revealed a chart showing the beginning of the process for writing about reading, with the first strategy to help that process listed.



“In today’s writing workshop, you’ll have a chance to read as well as write. I have made available a few texts that you know. You’ll see ‘Eleven’ by Sandra Cisneros, ‘Marble Champ’ by Gary Soto, *Fireflies* by Julia Brinkloe, *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, ‘Boar Out There’ by Cynthia Rylant, and ‘Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend’ by Ann Cameron, and a few others. Because you’ll be writing about these texts, use the wide margins so you can jot your thoughts. For today, would you and your partner read the same story?”

*You’ll report not on Tony’s thinking, of course, but about what a child in your own class says. As you listen to partners talk, find or help a child to say an idea about Magpie (or the character in whatever text you read) that you believe is worth revisiting. Record the child’s exact words on chart paper. You’ll see that I return to what Tony has said in tomorrow’s small-group work, when I teach children that as we read further in a story, we revise our first-draft ideas of it.*



## CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

# Supporting Close Reading

AT THE START OF ANY NEW UNIT, you'll hustle among your students, helping them begin the new work you've laid out. Today what you will be expecting children to do is to look through the folder of familiar short texts and settle on one to read and write about. It is important that most of the texts are familiar to most of the class because this way, if a reader is reading one text—say, in our instance, that Sophie is reading “Eleven”—you can still bring that student—Sophie—into a small group that is working with a different text (say, “Spaghetti”). It is also important that the texts represent a range of text difficulty, because you'll want to provision each reader with a text that he or she can read. We find that the anthology *Every Living Thing* is a wonderful source of short stories, as is *Birthday Surprises* by Johanna Hurwitz, *Baseball in April* by Gary Soto, *Hey World, Here I Am!* by Jean Little, *Going, Going, Gone!* by Judy Blume, and *The Stories Julian Tells* by Ann Cameron.

Don't be surprised if your children need quite a bit of help getting started with the work of the new unit. You have asked youngsters to engage in something that requires a different orientation than their usual writing workshop work. During writing time, they have been asked to read much more intensely than usual, inching through a text with frequent shifts between reading and writing.

So at the start of today's workshop, we suggest you survey the room and notice first whether children seem to be choosing to work with texts you think they can handle—that are not too hard for them to read. Notice next the children who are flying through the text that you hoped they'd be scrutinizing. Notice also those who are writing at a distance from the text, rarely looking from their writing to the text. These last two groups will each need a quick intervention to bring them on course.

If the entire class is working at one extreme or the other, you will want to rely on a mid-workshop teaching to right the balance; otherwise, you'll find that table conferences are especially helpful. At each table, you can watch for a minute, thinking about how best to help. Then you can intervene. One way to do so involves noticing and supporting when students are doing work you wish others were doing. The important

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Developing the Eyes to See and the Language to Discuss What Others Overlook**

Standing in the middle of the room, I called for children's attention. “I want to tell you about Raffi. When I came to him, he looked up from his reading and shrugged, like this, and said, ‘There's not that much to see in here.’

“But then we started talking, and Raffi remembered the time he had dipped his cup into the pond, looked at the water and said, ‘I didn't get any bugs or anything.’ He almost threw the water back! But instead, he studied the water through a magnifying lens, and this time he found his water was swarming with creatures!” I looked out at the class and said, “So Raffi decided to look again at the story he is reading, just as he had looked again at that pond water, and you won't be surprised to hear that this time, he saw a whole lot and wrote all this.” I held up his notebook to illustrate that he'd filled more than a page with observations.

“Writers, would you and your partner put the story you've both been reading between you and try, like Raffi did, to *really see* what's there? Underline intriguing things you notice. Talk about what you see and *think*.”

After a few moments, I intervened. “Writers, can I stop you? When you talk about your ideas, I'm having a hard time understanding some of what you say. I want to give you two tips on how to be clear when you talk about ideas.”

- “When you speak of a character, use his or her name. If you say, ‘This kid, he . . .’ and then say, ‘Then he . . .,’ people listening are often unclear which person your pronoun references.”
- “Try to avoid talk that sounds like this: ‘Well, you know, he likes all that stuff, you know.’ Assume your listeners *don't* know what you are getting at. Say outright what you mean!”



thing is to be authentic and persuasive. “William, I love how you are going back and forth between the text and your own writing, underlining a part as you read and then growing ideas about it right in the margin of your paper!” I glanced around the rest of the table. “Oh my gosh, look at Raffi. He has a ton of thoughts written already too. Can the rest of you guys notice the thinking Raffi and William have gotten onto their pages, and try doing the same?”

At another table, I saw that Sophie had written an entire page and a half about a few lines from the text. I asked all the writers at the table to pause. “Look at what Sophie is doing here! She’s developed such fabulous skills at writing long and strong, it’s almost as if she could go on examining this one part forever!” Then I told the class, “I hope you are noticing the way that Sophie read a little bit, then wrote, and then read a little bit more, and then wrote. That way, she was able to grow ideas off of a lot of details in the story, and even started to see how some of the details worked together to support big ideas.” Addressing the whole table, I said, “Take a moment to look at your own paper now. Are you finding lots of details to write about? A pattern in the details?”

To another table full of writers, who had just read a good portion of their texts but only paused once or twice to jot, I made a suggestion. “Can I teach you a totally cool trick? You all are reading *forward* in your texts, but if you go *back* to reread the text, you’ll find that you see a lot more the second time.” With this tip, I helped them slow down their reading enough to be able to notice the little details they were looking for, which others would probably pass by.

You can predict that a surprisingly large number of children will have difficulties coming up with thoughts about books. Some children, for example, will have written about personal connections rather than actually writing about the text. You can notice these writers because you will see lines like “I remember one time when I . . .” or “This reminds me of the time when I . . .” or “I found a bird once and I . . .” In these cases, you’ll want to channel these writers towards the text by telling them that they are not expected to write about times from their lives but rather about the character, and their idea about the character. You may want these writers to reread the excerpts from the text that had sparked their initial entry, and coach them to this time start by restating what that passage actually said, then to reflect on it.

Other children will restate facts rather than invent their own new thoughts. So they’ll write, “I think Gabriel wants company” or “I think Gabriel goes looking for what is making that sound.” Neither of those is a new idea—both are stated outright in the text. To help children understand the difference, I sometimes tell them that their ideas won’t be *right there* on the page of the story. If I can point to the section of the text

that comes right out and says what the child has stated, then the child is retelling the story, not growing an idea. I also sometimes tell children that ideas are often debatable.

If children are recording facts about the story rather than writing ideas, I find it helps to teach them that ideas hide inside facts. For example, it’s a fact that Gabriel thought about a *butter* sandwich. To grow a thought, I need to linger with that for a fraction of a minute, asking myself, “And what do I think about that?” Sometimes a child’s first instinct is to think by asking a question, “A *butter* sandwich, not peanut butter and jelly?” Nudge the child to speculate on an answer. “Maybe Gabriel remembers his butter sandwich because he is poor and it’s basically just bread.”

Remember that now is not the time to nitpick. Instead, it’s time to do the things that will make the biggest transformational difference.

Probably one of the biggest things you can do now is to tap into the repertoire of skills the students already know. You might, therefore, be ready to remind students that whenever they’re starting a new task, they will want to think, “What have I already learned that sets me up for this new task?”

Because I knew that during the share, I would want to remind students to draw on all they already know, I looked for and found a student who was stuck on what to write, and I asked her, “Is there anything you’ve studied before that can help you?” Of course, I had hung the “Questions Writers Ask of Earlier Entries” chart in the meeting

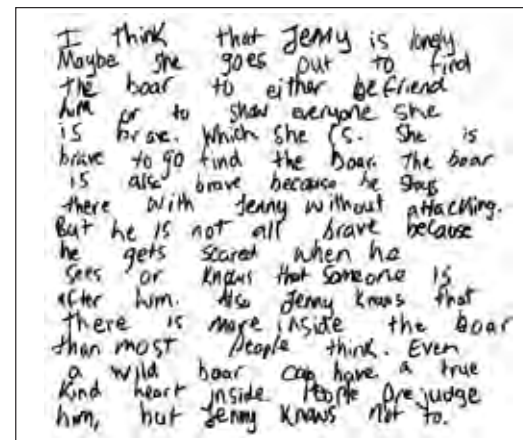


FIG. 1–1 Max’s notebook entry after thinking about the story “Boar Out There”

area in preparation for today, so it wasn’t long before a table full of students discovered it and decided to expand today’s work with some of the strategies from the chart, such as “What surprises me about this is . . .” and “What this teaches me about life is . . .” Of course, I gave students the credit for the idea that a chart from their previous unit might be brought into this unit.



## SHARE

# Using Charts from Previous Units

**Tell writers about a child who was stuck, then spotted a chart from the essay unit that supported interpretive thinking, finding ways to use strategies from the chart that relate to writing about reading.**

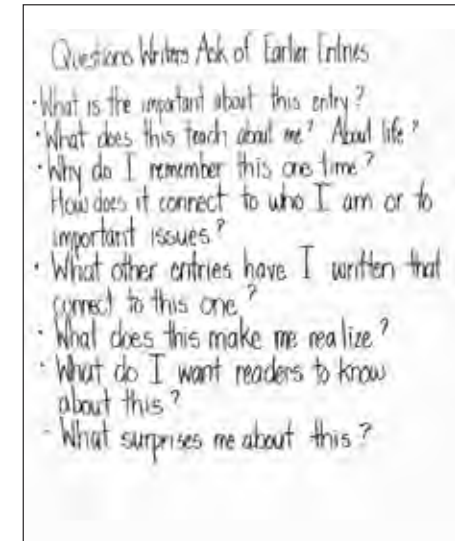
"Writers, can I stop you for a moment? I just saw Chloe doing something that I think we'd all benefit from. As you've noticed, I've prominently displayed many of our essay charts for this unit. Just a minute ago, Chloe was looking a bit stuck and unsure of what to write next. She was looking between her text and her writer's notebook, but it was clear that no ideas were coming to her. Then, suddenly, Chloe looked up and spotted the chart 'Questions Writers Ask of Earlier Entries'—the one we used to mine our entries for ideas at the beginning of our *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* unit. Chloe stared at this chart a moment and then quickly began writing fast and furiously." I directed children's attention to the chart.

### Questions Writers Ask of Earlier Entries

- What is the important thing about this entry?
- What does this teach about me? About life?
- Why do I remember this one time? How does it connect to who I am or to important issues?
- What other entries have I written that connect to this one?
- What does this make me realize?
- What do I want readers to know about this?
- What surprises me about this?

**Name the larger point—that learning from earlier units can be adapted to help with new work—then recruit the class to make a new version of the "Questions Writers Ask of Earlier Entries" chart called "Questions Writers Ask of Texts."**

"What Chloe realized, and what you should all know, is that *old charts* and old learning can help you do new work. The charts from our personal and persuasive essay unit may not fit literary essay writing *perfectly*, but we can *make* them



into useful tools. For instance, Chloe looked at the questions chart and realized that instead of 'Questions Writers Ask of Earlier Entries,' this could be 'Questions Writers Ask of *Texts*!' She took this second bullet on the questions chart, 'What does this teach about me? About life?' and added, 'What does this teach me about the character in this text? About life?' Do you see how powerful that is? Instead of asking questions to explore *herself*, she is asking questions to explore the *character* in her text."

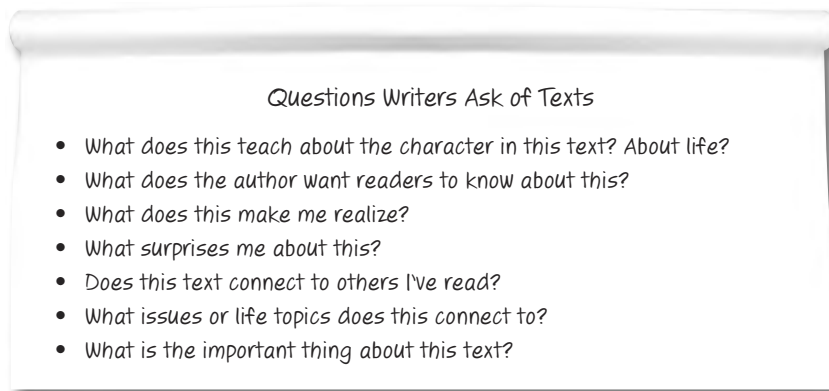
"Will you see if you can revise a few other bullets from the original chart? Work with your partners, or pull two partnerships together."

As students worked, I coached in, reminding them that the new goal was to develop ideas about the text, not their lives. "Remember, you want this to be a question you can ask about a song, a picture book, a novel—about any text." And later, "Chloe only needed to change the word *me* to *character*. Many of these questions only need a teeny, tiny switch."

Marie began. "My group was thinking about the bullet 'What do *I* want readers to know about this?' We thought that maybe, since it isn't about us anymore, it could be about what does *the author* want readers to know." I added to the chart.

Judah began excitedly, "We realized that some of the questions can stay exactly the same. Like the one 'What does this make me realize?' or 'What surprises me about this?'"

After a few moments, I pulled the class back together and charted out their new questions.



I put down the marker. "The tools you've used all year long as writers can help you even now. When you are stuck or looking to have smarter ideas for your writing, you can think back on what you've learned and use all the charts in our room to help you." I waved my arm across the room. "As we continue on in this unit, be asking yourselves, 'What do I already know that can help me do stronger, smarter work in this literary essay unit?'"



● **READING WITH PASSIONATE ATTENTIVENESS**

Tonight, read one of the stories we've chosen to study. Read it as carefully as you can. Read it like you'd read a treasure map or read it like you know there's more to it, if only you can figure it out. Read it as hard as you can. And write about whatever you notice, whatever it makes you think and feel and wonder and remember. I have made each of you a copy of the chart "Questions Writers Ask of Texts" so you can draw upon that tonight as you write a long entry.







## Session 2

# Gathering Writing by Studying Characters

**IN THIS SESSION**, you'll teach students that experts know that certain aspects of their subjects merit special attention. Literary essayists know it pays off, for example, to study characters.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart from Session 1
- ✓ The next few paragraphs of the touchstone text, *Fox*, to display to the whole class (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✓ Chart paper and markers
- ✓ The texts students worked with in the previous session (see Conferring and Small-Group Work)

**I**T WAS PREDICTABLE that in the first session of this unit, you'd help students know the ways that writers write about literature and you'd invite them to get started collecting notes and entries from which they'll eventually choose a seed idea. It is predictable that today you'll return to this work and extend the list of options that students have for ways to generate writing. Meanwhile, you'll channel children to choose the one text they'll study for the remainder of the bend and eventually write an essay about.

You are also still launching the unit, and as part of that, you are still helping your students recognize that this is big and important work. Buddha said, "Your job is to discover your work and to give your heart to it." We believe this matters—for kids and for us, as teachers, too. Gallup polls show that less than half of workers in today's society say that they know the goals of their workplace and feel they are a part of those goals. That is a devastating statistic—and not one that we want to characterize our classrooms as well as our workplaces. So it is important that in your teaching today, you are mindful that your job is not only to instruct, but also to rally your students to care about the work of this unit. One of the best ways to get youngsters to care about writing literary essays is by helping them care about characters.

My son began his college application essay like this:

When I enter the class of 2009, I will bring my experiences of trekking through the mountains of Viet Nam and my memories of a 227-day stint in a lifeboat, accompanied by a Bengal tiger. When I attend freshman classes, my role will bear the imprint of my tortuous hours standing above the town square, a scarlet letter emblazoned on my chest. Reading has given me the water I swim in, the heroes I emulate, and the imagination to believe that I can make the world a better place.

I often say that as an educator, I want to give all children what I want for my own sons. I can think of few gifts that have mattered more to my sons than the gift of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, Katherine Patterson's Gilly Hopkins, A. A. Milne's Eeyore,

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:** W.4.1, W.4.7, W.4.8, W.4.9.a, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, SL.4.1, L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.6

Brian Jacques's mouse, Martin, and all the other characters who have enriched their lives. Our children can find heroes in the books they read, and better still, they can become these characters, standing for a time in their shoes.

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*“Our children can find heroes in the books they read, and better still, they can become these characters, standing for a time in their shoes.”*

I want all children to empathize with characters—just as I want them to think deeply about them.

This session continues where the last one left off—teaching children another way to find and develop interesting, original, true ideas about texts. Specifically, the session encourages readers to think about characters' traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships. These terms are easy to list, but they are potent. They hold unbelievable potential for revealing insight. Those who analyze and write about texts know to pay close attention to characters.

SESSION 2: GATHERING WRITING BY STUDYING CHARACTERS





## MINILESSON

# Gathering Writing by Studying Characters

### CONNECTION

**Remind children that they live their lives observing and need only bring this work to their study of texts.**

"Writers, will you come to the carpet, and as you come, will you look around you with eagle eyes, noticing little details that you sometimes just walk right past?"

The children gathered. "Tell your partner what you just noticed with your eagle eyes," I said. As children talked, I listened in.

"Help! No more talking about what you noticed! So many of you are noticing things we need to clean up! Stop, stop," I said, covering my ears in jest. "No, seriously. You all are great observers. I started to realize that last week when I came back after you had that new substitute teacher for a day. I could have painted a portrait and written an essay about him just from the details you guys told me! It seemed like when you came into the classroom and saw him standing there at my desk, you started looking for signs that would tell you what sort of sub he'd be. You were practically spying on him! You took anything he did and used it as a clue to help you figure out the sort of sub he'd be, the sort of person he is. Am I right?"

Many children nodded, laughing. Becoming more somber, I said, "Writers, here is my point. *That's exactly what it is like for thoughtful readers when they meet new characters in a story.*"

#### ❁ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that skilled readers of fiction pay special attention to the characters in a story. And they especially pay attention to the main character's traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and life lessons."

I revealed our chart from yesterday, with yesterday's and today's teaching points added on.

### ◆ COACHING

*When writing minilessons for kindergarten and first-grade children, we often use physical activity to drive home a point. As I shift between writing units for young children and doing so for older students, I can't help but think, "Will physical activity be any less engaging for nine-year-olds?" Setting kids up to notice little details as they proceed to the meeting area doesn't extend the length of the minilesson, so it's hard to see the downside to using this as a way to bring home the point.*

*Reading and writing well are abstract skills, so you will often go away from reading and writing to bring home what a skill means. In this instance, you help children understand what it means to grow theories about characters by talking about the way they "read" people all the time.*

*Notice that the list of things to follow matches story structure—and is sequenced in ways that match the progression of a story.*

### How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
- Use thought prompts.
- Ask questions of texts.
- Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.

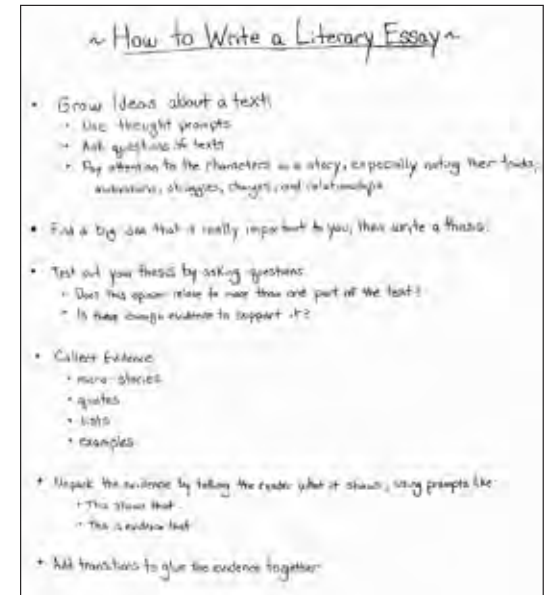
## TEACHING

**Point out that experts on any subject know the features of that subject that merit attention. Illustrate by talking about expertise in subjects you know well.**

"I've been reading a best-selling book, *Blink*. Malcolm Gladwell, the author, suggests that an expert on a topic can listen and observe something related to that topic and figure out in a flash a whole lot about that topic.

"When I watch the Westminster Kennel Club dog show on television. I love to put myself in the judge's place, eyeing the Welsh corgis, cairn terriers, and wirehaired dachshunds. But it always happens that I am still checking out the dog's coat, ears, and shape, when suddenly the judge signals, 'Take him around.' Then, before I can take in all that new information, the judge moves on to the next dog! The secret is that the person who makes those observations is an expert, and experts know which aspects of a dog are worth noticing.

"The author Malcolm Gladwell says that the secret to being an expert who can understand things in a blink lies in the fact that experts know which features of a subject merit attention. This is true for expert readers too. When reading fiction, it pays to think about characters in general, and specifically, it pays to think about a character's traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships."



*One reason this unit begins by asking students to spend several days writing about reading is to teach children that writing is a vehicle not only for communicating, but also for growing ideas. I encourage children to write about ideas that are not yet fully formed in their minds, to let ideas come out of the tips of their pencils, fresh and surprising.*

*If you have expertise in a sport that kids care about or in currently popular television shows, by all means draw on that expertise when making your points! If you are like me, obsessed with dogs, the kids will forgive you for turning to that arena for half your examples! Bring your loves into your teaching, and the passion you feel for your subject will come into your teaching as well!*



**Tell students that expert readers know it pays off to attend to specific aspects of a story. Discuss these and demonstrate how you read, attending to these aspects—in this case, character.**

"It's easier to say this than to do it, because authors don't come right out and say, 'Dog's character traits are . . . Dog's motivations (or hopes) are . . .' Instead, readers need to pay close attention to details that reveal a character's traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.

"Let's look back at *Fox* again and see if this time when we read closely, we can grow ideas about Dog's traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships—because after all, experts at reading literature know those are important features to notice about a story's characters. Remember that yesterday, we noticed that Margaret Wild describes Dog's mouth as 'gentle,' which made us start to think that perhaps Dog wants to care for Magpie. Let's read on with this idea in mind, paying close attention to the character, Dog." I motioned again to this strategy listed on the "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart and the features that I'd especially notice: traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.

*Days, perhaps a week later, she wakes with a rush of grief. Dog is waiting. He persuades her to go with him to the riverbank.*

*"Hop on my back," he says. "Look into the water and tell me what you see."*

*Sighing, Magpie does as he asks. Reflected in the water are clouds and sky and trees—and something else.*

*"I see a strange new creature!" she says.*

*"That is us," says Dog.*

"Hmm," I thought aloud. "Are you noticing some new things about Dog?" I looked at the text. I left a bit of silence, knowing the children would fill it with their thoughts.

Then I continued. "I notice that when Magpie wakes, days or weeks later, Dog is waiting for her. It is such a simple sentence—'Dog is waiting'—but it shows caring, don't you think? Even patience. This fits with our earlier idea that Dog is taking care of the bird." I looked out at the children as they nodded their heads in agreement.

"We should push ourselves to see if there is more here. Let's look for more. Hmm." I returned my eyes to the text, rereading to myself, leaving space for children to have more thoughts about Dog.

Sophie piped in, "Why does he say, 'That is us'? It is sort of weird."

"Great that you are asking questions," I said and added, to the class, "The best is if you can try to also answer your questions. Will you take Sophie's question, 'Why does Dog look in the water and say, 'That is us'? and this time, say, 'Could it be that . . . ?' and try to speculate an answer. I'll throw the question out again, and you speculate about it." I repeated, "'Why does Dog look in the water and say, 'That is us'?"

*When I reference Dog, I am referring to one of the main characters in Fox, by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks, a mentor text for this unit. This is the book we began reading in the previous session.*

*This list of what stories reveal about character is a weighty one, so I say each term slowly, giving time for each term to sink in.*

*The story reveals more about Magpie than it does about Dog, and it would be easier to talk about her character than Dog's. It will always be the case that you choose to demonstrate with the work that is harder, leaving the more straightforward work for the children.*

*Watch how I extract particular pointers from my demonstration. It's not enough to simply say, "Watch me," and then hope the children will be enthralled by simply watching me read and think aloud.*

*Teachers, if none of your students pipe in, you could run your fingers under a few lines and reread them aloud, then ask a question such as Sophie's, doing this as if you are questioning yourself. Then you can point out the importance of asking and also answering questions.*

From throughout the room, I heard one partner say to another, “Could it be that . . . ?” and soon the room was filled with conjectures.

After a minute, I brought their attention back to me by saying over the hubbub, “I heard Charlie say, ‘Maybe, the dog was lonely and now he is glad to have a friend.’”

**Debrief in ways that spotlight the work that you have done that can be transferred to another text, another day. Do this in ways that return to the teaching point.**

“Do you see that the story often gives concrete details—it tells what the characters say and do? Readers pay attention to those like they are clues—clues to the mystery of what the characters are like and what the story is really about. You can solve some mysteries by reading closely and asking questions and thinking, ‘Could it be that . . . ?’”

## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

**Set children up to try the work you’ve demonstrated. In this instance, ask children to look for a character’s motivations, traits, and so on.**

“Now it’s your turn. I am going to read on. This time, will you read closely, thinking about what the details of the text show about *Magpie*?” Pointing to the chart, I said, “Notice especially her traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.” I read on just a bit, giving the children a little more text to work with.

*“I see a strange new creature!” she says.*

*“That is us,” says Dog. “Now hold on tight!”*

*With Magpie clinging to his back, he races through the scrub, past the stringy barks, past the clumps of yellow box trees, and into blueness. He runs so swiftly, it is almost as if he were flying.*

*Magpie feels the wind streaming through her feathers, and she rejoices. “FLY, DOG, FLY! I will be your missing eye and you will be my wings.”*

I paused and let there be a bit of silence and thinking, aware of the growing anticipation to talk. “Partner 1,” I said after a moment, “start the conversation with your partner. What big ideas are you beginning to have about Magpie’s traits or motivations, her struggles, changes, or relationships?”

Immediately, Amelia turned to her partner, Charlie. “Magpie is finally happy! This is a big change from before.”

“I agree,” added Charlie. “I think that Magpie might need a friend, too. She thought that she had nothing because her wing was broken and she couldn’t fly anymore, but having a friend will help her.”

*Notice that I don’t suggest children pull out copies of one of the stories they’ve been reading during the workshop and think about the character in that story. Had my children needed lots of support, I would have chosen that option. Instead, I imagine they’ll do this during the workshop itself. I don’t usually want the work of the workshop to be launched (and I certainly don’t want it to be compressed) during the active engagement section of a mini-lesson, leaving students little new to try once I say, “Off you go.” However, when working with high-need groups of children, I often do want to launch the day’s work during the mini-lessons, and therefore I’d adjust my teaching accordingly.*

“And maybe,” added Amelia, “Magpie is starting to think that Dog can give her what she wants—like, to fly. Like when she says, ‘FLY, DOG, FLY! . . . you will be my wings.’ They are good for each other.”

## LINK

**Remind children that expert readers know which features of a story are worth studying and that it pays off to study a character’s traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.**

“So, readers, today and whenever you want to grow ideas about stories, it helps to remember that expert readers know the features of stories that are worth their attention. Among other things, expert readers pay attention to the main character’s traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and life lessons. Today you’ll be doing that, and I’m going to ask you to focus on *one* text you’ve been reading. I’ll give you a moment to look through your texts and look back over the notes you jotted yesterday to choose a text that feels important to you. Pick carefully, because this text will be the focus of your first literary essay!” I gave the children a moment to pick a text.

I pulled the children back together. “Today you can write marginal notes some of the time, but I also hope you write long and strong in your notebook, growing your ideas about characters’ traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships. You can write several entries. Remember, you can draw on any strategy, from this unit or others, to help you think deeply about your text.”



*As you move about the carpet area, use this opportunity to steer children toward texts that you know will be best suited to their needs. Encourage them to choose texts they can read fluently. If one of your struggling readers reaches for “The Marble Champ” because he saw his best friend do the same, you might intervene. “Max,” you can say: “You wrote so much about ‘Spaghetti’ yesterday. It seems a shame to drop all that brilliant thinking and start anew with a different text. What do you think about choosing ‘Spaghetti’ for your essay?” Then too, you’ll want to emphasize the smart choices children make, voicing over commentary about the children who look for texts that are just right or those they’ve already spent some time with.*

*Teachers, if you feel the list laid out here of what readers could pay attention to is too long, then you can certainly shorten it. If you do so, then you might want to alter your mid-workshop teaching or share to give these other options to your students. However, if you have already taught some of these during a character study, then many of them will be familiar to your readers and they will benefit from having them revisited and laid out as options to grow ideas about their characters now.*



## CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

# Revising Initial Theories

**Y**OU WILL WANT TO USE YOUR CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK today to be sure your children are reading, rereading, and responding with a new level of investment, drawing on all they know about reading closely and about writing-to-learn.

You may notice that some students seem to read with total detachment, not seeming to care about the characters. Engagement matters in all that students do, so you will probably want to address this. You could, for example, convene a small group of these children and ask if they'd try out some work that you'd like to later share with the whole class. Then you could teach this small group that readers of fiction don't simply read like professors, growing theories about the texts. Readers of fiction also read like many of us watch great movies. It is almost as if we become the character. The character is in trouble, and our hearts beat wildly, hoping, hoping, things work out. There is a creepy sound behind the character, and we jump in our seats. Reading in this sort of empathetic way leads a reader to grow more urgent and intense theories about a character. "I can see why she'd . . ." this reader might say. "I worry that she'll . . ." This allows the reader to have a felt sense for the character's experience and to want to reach for the exact right words that capture that experience. In the share for today's workshop, you could then tell the rest of the class that empathetic reading leads a reader to hear more, see more, feel more, care more, and yes, to think more. You can source from this small group in your share session to emphasize the value of this.

When planning your small-group work, you will also want to be alert to students who seem to be prematurely settling on one hard-and-fast idea, rather than using their growing repertoire of strategies to explore multiple theories. You may decide to convene a small group of children to give them supported practice drafting and revising their ideas as they read. With one group, I said, "Once you form an idea about a character, it is important to read on, expecting you'll probably revise that idea." I had them all pull out their copy of "Spaghetti."

"Yesterday Tony had this idea." I gestured to the pad of chart paper, where I'd written an enlarged version of what Tony had told me the preceding day. He'd been using

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

#### Revising Theories about Characters

"Writers, can I have your eyes and your attention?" I waited. "I want to remind you that the ideas you develop about characters are rough drafts. Once you have drafted an idea, say to yourself, 'I'm going to continue to read and see if upcoming sections of the text can help me *add on to* or *revise* this idea.' Often when you read more, you learn that your first idea was only partly true and needs to be changed.

"Let me show you what I mean. You already know that after I read that Dog carried Magpie gently, I put in my writer's notebook that he is caring. After we talked about the part where he and Magpie look at their reflection in the water and he tells her, 'It's us,' I added that he seems to want a friend. Then I read on, knowing new information in the text would either confirm or challenge the idea that he was lonely. Listen to what I read next.

And so Dog runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through  
Summer, through Winter.

"They stay together for half a year because they are both so happy running together! To me, that goes with my idea that Dog wanted a friend, and I'm going to add that he is a loyal friend. Staying together for all those seasons tells me he is loyal."

Then, debriefing to pull out the transferable lesson I hoped they were learning, I said, "Do you see the way I continue reading, expecting to learn more, to develop and to change my theories? Will you make sure that your theory is not something you make and leave behind? Carry it with you, and expect it to change (or be confirmed) as you read on."



thought prompts, and now I underlined those in his entry to remind children of their presence.

*I notice Magpie could have shouted or screamed that she would never be able to fly again, but instead she whispered it. The thought I have about this is that Magpie is really sad. She's the kind of sad that's so big it makes you quiet instead of loud. To add on, she's so sad that I bet she almost wishes she'd died in the fire instead of living when she can't fly.*

Teachers, you won't be surprised that I chose this one child's theory as worth tracking for a reason. I knew that if children followed Tony's thought and tracked Magpie's sadness, this would pay off. In the story, Magpie becomes less sad by the end. In most stories, the protagonist undergoes a change, so I wanted children to be accustomed to not just "proving" their idea about a character, but testing that idea—tracking it.

I invited the students to read on in the story with me, keeping Tony's idea that Magpie is sad in mind. "Remember," I told them, "try to let your ideas become complex. Ask, 'Could the story be saying something more complicated?'"

Near the end of the story, we learned Magpie gets to—in a sense—fly again.

*Magpie feels the wind streaming through her feathers, and she rejoices.  
"FLY, DOG, FLY! I will be your missing eye and you will be my wings."*

"What are you thinking *now* about Magpie's sadness?" I asked. I again gave children time to underline relevant sections of the text, and then they talked, this time as a group. They agreed that this part showed Magpie being not so sad, and that actually she is happy to be "flying" with Dog.

Gesturing to Tony's entry, I said, "When Tony suggested at the start of the story that Magpie was sad, that she almost *wished* she'd died in the fire, do you think that the evidence *wasn't* really there to support that claim? Or what do you think is going on? Could Magpie be changing? Right now, each of you, reread the story and try to figure out your position on this. Was Magpie never sad? Does Tony need to revise his initial thought?" As children worked, I voiced over, saying, "I'm glad to see so many of you finding and underlining sections of the text that help you." After a minute, I said, "Tell your partner what you're thinking."

Tony spoke. "I still say Magpie was sad because she couldn't fly anymore and because she wanted to be left alone, curled up in the shadows of the cave. But I think this part at the end shows that Dog helped her to be less sad. Dog changed her."

Wanting to extrapolate the lessons that pertain to other days and other texts, I said, "This is the work that readers who write do all the time. Readers notice things in texts, grow tentative ideas, and then they read on, knowing those first ideas will be revised. Will you make sure that you are expecting to change your first ideas about whatever text you are reading? Do as we just did and think, 'Is all of the story supporting my initial idea?' Almost always, as you continue reading, you will find that stories take turns that lead you to revise your first ideas."

You might find that some of your children are not ready to revise their ideas because they are struggling to generate ideas in the first place. You may want to pull these children together to have a conversation. To do this, it will be important for them to read a shared text—even a very short one. Then you can point out that thinking about a text often begins with selecting an important part of the text and musing over why that part is important. Alternatively, you could point out that most important sections of a text can be treated as windows to the character. What does this part show about the character? After

a few minutes of small-group discussion about whichever question you lead them to discuss, stop the conversation and ask the group to list ideas they now have about the story. Then you can ask the children to write about one of those ideas. As they write, coach them to go back to the text for evidence that supports their thinking.

Small groups such as the ones we describe in this write-up will be important throughout this unit.

I think the change in Rachel in Eleven is this: she learns not to make so many predictions and expect things because she learned that if you always expect the best, a lot of the time you'll be disappointed or let down. Like when she expected to feel eleven and to know what to do only to be forced to wear someone else's resulting sweater, and not knowing how to handle it. And she expected to feel eleven right away only to find out she had to be eleven before she knows what eleven feels like.

FIG. 2-1 Max writes about the change in the character Rachel that he sees in "Eleven."



SHARE

## Writing to Know Characters

**Tell children that when we read fiction, we can empathize with a character in ways that let us see the world through that character's eyes. Empathy is a way to grow ideas.**

"A friend of mine, Ralph Fletcher, once said, 'If you want to get to know a person, don't go out to dinner with that person—instead have a flat tire together, get caught in a rainstorm together.' When we read, we're caught in rainstorms—or in whatever happens in the story—with the characters we meet on the pages. By living through the storms of life together, we form relationships with those characters—and we learn not only *about* them, but also *from* them.

"So, readers, remember that to develop ideas about characters, it helps to first live with that character through the storms of life. If you want to grow ideas about Rachel in 'Eleven,' then it helps to first imagine that *your* teacher told you, 'Put that sweater on,' and *you* look at that sweater, hanging over the front corner of your desk, knowing it's not yours. When you experience the story within the skin of a character, when you read with that kind of empathy, you should find that the character's reactions make sense to you. Empathy helps you come to smart new insights, and *that's* your goal."

**Highlight the work you did with a few children in a small group today.**

On the overhead projector, I displayed an entry Ali wrote explaining its context. "Ali tried to put herself in the main character's shoes as she read 'The Marble Champ.' In the story, after the main character, Lupe, realizes her marble-shooting thumb is weaker than the neck of a newborn chick, the text says, 'She looked out the window. The rain was letting up but the ground was too muddy to play.' Ali pictured her doing that. In fact, she imagined herself doing that, as Lupe, and pretty soon she was writing a part of the story that Gary Soto left out, imagining the details of what Lupe may have done next. You'll see she first copied a bit from the text, and then wrote 'off from' the text" (see Figure 2–2).

*She looked out the window. The rain was letting up. She gripped the brown silk bag of marbles in one hand and a piece of chalk in the other hand. She got up and walked to the door to the outside. She took a deep breath and walked back to the marbles on the bed.*

*When I was at college, I had a poster on my wall that said, "Love does not come from gazing into each other's eyes, but from gazing together in the same direction." When we read, we and the character gaze together in the same direction. We encounter storms, predicaments, heartaches together—and because we live through life side by side, we bond with characters.*

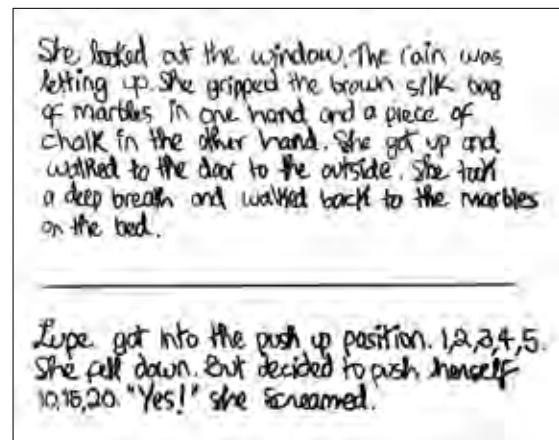


FIG. 2–2 Ali envisions herself as the character Lupe and writes off from "The Marble Champ."

Ali did this same kind of writing—pretending to be the character—based on other sections of the text too. After reading the part about strengthening her shooting by doing push-ups, five at a time, Ali wrote in her notebook:

*Lupe got into the push up position. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. She fell down. But decided to push herself 10, 15, 20. "Yes!" she screamed.*

"All this writing and imagining made Ali realize how hard it was to practice all the time. She could feel how much each little push-up hurt!"

**Ask children to try this work with a partner, using their own stories.**

"I expect most of you have not yet tried writing in the shoes of a character. Let me show you how to do this. Find an intense and important part of the text, where something is happening to the main character." I left a pool of silence. "Now reread and find a line that shows the character doing or saying something. Copy that onto the top of a blank page of your notebook. Now, reread that, imagining you are the character. Look ahead to know what happens next, but first there's going to be a bit of life that you imagine. Picture where you are, what you are doing. Make a movie in your mind. And start writing, fast and furious."

After a few minutes, I asked writers to stop. "We need to end workshop time," I said. "But always remember that another way to grow ideas about a text is to live and write inside the shoes of the main character."

*If your students are ready for further study of character, you may want to teach them that there is a saying, "When you go over the bumps, what's inside spills out," telling them that this is true for characters in books as well. When a character struggles, what's inside spills out, and for this reason, experienced readers pay special attention to what a character does in the face of difficulties. Often when characters struggle, they end up finding strengths inside themselves that they never knew existed, and this is one force that accounts for the way a character changes.*

## SESSION 2 HOMEWORK

### STUDYING HOW A MENTOR AUTHOR PORTRAYS A CHARACTER

In a few days, you will reread your notebook to select a seed idea that you can develop into a literary essay. You want to make sure that you have a lot of ideas to choose from by that time. So tonight, reread the story you've selected and use a strategy or two that you haven't yet used to grow ideas. You may want to reread paying close attention to details that seem significant and important. You may want to pay close attention to the main character's traits, motivations, struggles, and changes; or then use thought prompts to write about the ideas you have:

- The thought I have about this is . . .
- To add on . . .
- This shows . . .

Before you get started, decide and record a plan for tonight's work.

## Session 3

# Elaborating on Written Ideas Using Prompts



**W**HEN WE WRITE A NARRATIVE, the sequence of events can be determined by chronology. We can record events in the order in which they happen, making it very easy for us to say more. We recall the first thing that happened, then the next, then the next thing, and as long as we are taking small steps through the sequence of events, we don't quickly run out of things to say.

When we write expository texts, however, and especially when the expository text conveys our ideas, it is no easy matter to say more. To say more, to elaborate, the writer needs not only to recall what happened, but also to think more. This requires that the writer have not only stuff to say but also a plan, a structure, that determines the sequence of what he or she will say. Many students have enormous trouble with elaboration when writing expository texts, and as a result, their writing ends up with “a muddle in the middle.” Your students worked through this challenge throughout the sequence of units in opinion writing and especially in the recent *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* unit, and of course, they will work through this again in the current unit.

Your job today will be to lure your students into continuing to practice elaborating on their first thoughts—in this lesson, their first ideas about character. You'll help children to do this in writing by first encouraging them to elaborate in conversation. If children can talk well about a text they have read, making and defending and elaborating on their ideas, then it is not difficult to teach them to write well about the text. But the first goal is not a small one!

In this unit, you need to value talking well in addition to writing well about texts. The Common Core State Standards emphasize the importance of talk by having an entire category devoted to speaking and listening, asking us to make sure students can “engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (SL.4.1).” Yet schools often treat talk as if it's to be avoided. If a principal says to a teacher, “I passed your classroom and your children were talking,” the teacher doesn't generally regard this as positive feedback. If we describe a child as “a real talker,” we don't usually intend this as a compliment. But in our own adult lives, we recognize, as the Standards do, that talking is a way to grow. If we

**IN THIS SESSION**, you'll teach students one way writers elaborate on their ideas—using simple prompts.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ A copy of a transcript of book club conversation you and your colleagues have had, illustrating text citations and conversational prompts (see Teaching)
- ✓ Mentor text, *Fox*, to be displayed to the whole class. Alternatively, you might give several copies of the book to groups of children in the meeting area.
- ✓ “Ways to Push Our Thinking” list of prompts, updated from the *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* unit, one copy for each child, which can later be pasted in a notebook or placed in a folder 📁

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:** W.4.3, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.9.a, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, SL.4.1, SL.4.3, L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a





need help working through an issue, we meet with someone to “talk things through.” If we want to imagine possible ways to teach, we’re apt to “talk over our options” or “talk out a plan.”

Today you’ll encourage children to tap the power of talk as a tool for thinking. Moreover, you’ll help children realize that the features of a probing, generative discussion are also the features of probing, generative writing.

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*“Your job today will be to lure your students into continuing to practice elaborating on their first thoughts—in this lesson, their first ideas about character.”*



## MINILESSON

# Elaborating on Written Ideas Using Prompts

### CONNECTION

**Remind children that when writing personal and persuasive essays, they used conversational prompts—or thought prompts—to help them extend their first ideas.**

“You’ll remember that when you wrote personal and persuasive essays, you found that at first you wrote only very briefly about your ideas. You’d write your idea—say, ‘soccer teaches sportsmanship’—and then you weren’t sure what else to say, so your entries were often short. But you came to realize that you could rely on the conversational prompts that you use in book talks to help you talk back to your own ideas as they emerge on the page. Remember?

“I won’t forget, for example, when Ellie wrote this entry during the personal essay unit; she used the thought prompts—or conversational prompts—to help her get more good ideas.”

*I hate it when I am doing something important and then I get interrupted.*

*For example, when I’m reading a book and my mom calls, “Ellie, it’s time to go to sleep” but I really want to finish the book because that’s what I am into. I realize that this happens a lot to me, like when I’m watching TV or having fun with my friends. What surprises me is I always have a lot of time and no one interrupts me when I am doing things I don’t like, like homework or practicing my oboe or other things.*

#### ❁ Name the teaching point.

“Today I want to teach you that when writers want to elaborate on their ideas—in this case ideas about a character—they can use the same prompts and phrases that people use in conversations to elaborate. These kinds of prompts help writers to elaborate, to say more, think more, and write more.”

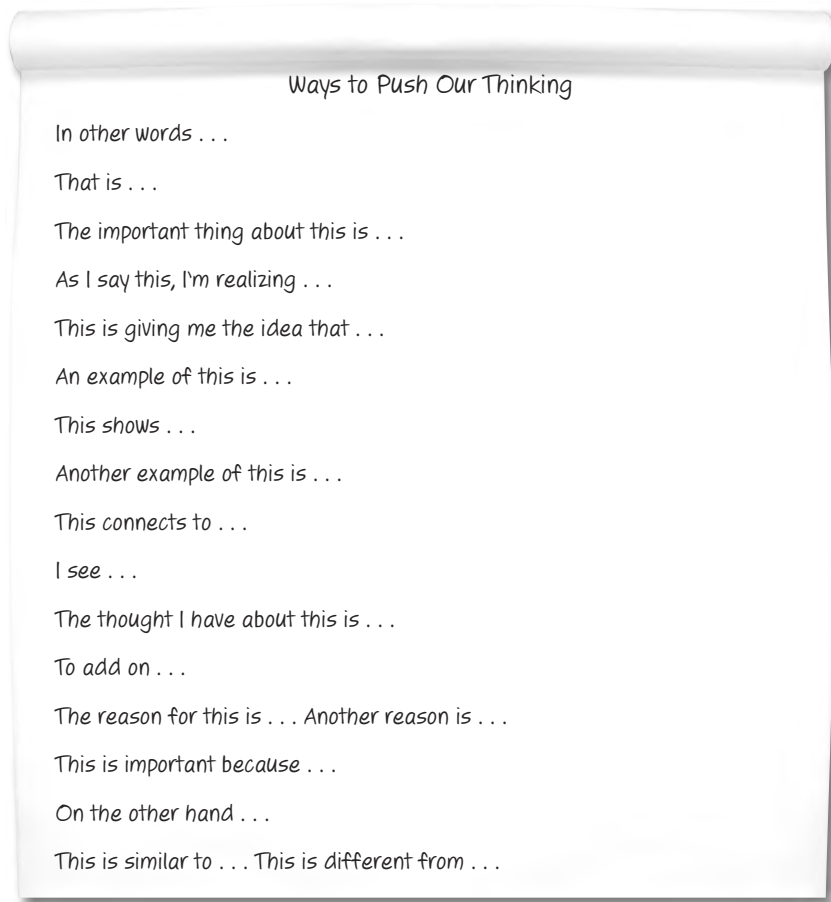
### ◆ COACHING

*Although the connection in one day’s minilesson will often refer back to the previous day’s, it’s also not unusual for the connection to link back to portions of a previous unit of study that relate to that day’s specific point. Although in this connection you refer to instruction the children received just a month or two earlier, the truth is that for years, children have been learning to elaborate. It shouldn’t surprise you that learning takes time and repeated practice. After all, you don’t watch a pro tennis player serve the ball, and then presto, your serves resemble that of the pro! Learning a skill takes time and repeated practice.*

## TEACHING

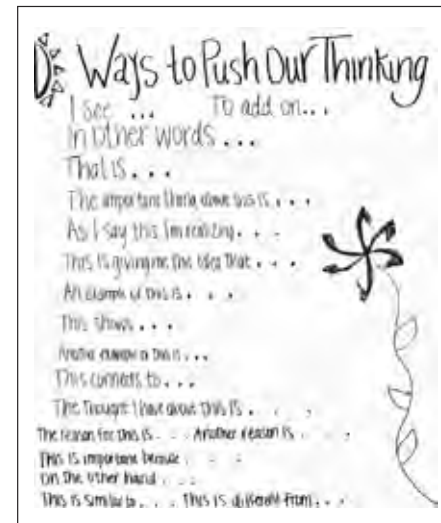
**Dramatize a discussion between you and a few colleagues about a familiar text. Set children up to notice that you incorporate thought prompts and textual evidence.**

"Yesterday at lunch the other teachers and I decided to read and talk about *Fox* ourselves. We copied down a bit of our book talk so I can show you how the talk went and, specifically, so I can show you the ways that we used prompts to help us grow ideas. You're already familiar with some of these prompts from our previous essay unit. But there are some new prompts on the chart that the other teachers and I used, and that other people use a lot too when elaborating." I handed out copies of the list.



*You don't need to distribute a transcript of the book talk to the kids, but it will help if they have a paper containing the list of thought prompts. If you can't duplicate and distribute, then copy this onto chart paper, and when a thought prompt is used, underline it while the kids watch on.*

*For each prompt we've included on this list, there are many others we could have included as well. We were selective in our choices both here and in the Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays unit because we knew that providing students with a shorter list would make it likely that they mastered a few thought prompts and that over time we could add to their repertoire. Here, students have some new additions to the list that they didn't have in the Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays unit. And in the sessions that follow, you might ask children to add onto the list, jotting down new prompts as their work becomes more sophisticated. For the full list of prompts, see the CD-ROM.*



"Instead of just reading you the transcript of our book talk, I'm going to ask the three of you," and I gestured to three volunteers, "to come up and reenact how that book talk went." I gave each child a copy of the transcript and the role of a teacher, giving away my role in the book talk as well. "As we reenact a little bit of this book talk, Partner 1, will you notice and underline *the thought prompts* (from the list) that you hear used? And Partner 2, will you keep track of the number of times *we go back to the text*, reading exact bits of the text to illustrate our points? After you listen to a bit of the book talk, I am going to give you and your partner a chance to talk about what you notice, and then all of you will take your places and continue the conversation."

Ms. Johnson: I think that Dog is caring, but also lonely. For example, it says that he runs through the "charred forest" and takes her to his cave below the river. There aren't any other animals around.

Mr. Cook: I agree. Another example of Dog being caring is that he takes care of Magpie when she's hurt, not leaving her side.

Ms. Deloy: Where do you see evidence of that? Can you go back to the text and find a specific place that shows it?

Mr. Cook: Oh, yeah. Well, Magpie finally wakes up and the text says "Dog is waiting." He didn't go anywhere for a week. He just sat and waited for Magpie. It's like she is all he has.

Ms. Deloy: I see what you are saying, and I agree. On the other hand, it could be that Dog is happy to be alone, but wants to be a good friend to Magpie and help her.

Mr. Cook: Could it be that Dog is *both* caring and sad? Characters are sometimes more than one thing.

Ms. Johnson: That makes sense. Him being sad can connect with our first idea about him being caring but also lonely. He is lonely and he knows what it's like to be sad (since he is blind in one eye), and maybe that is why he is so caring. For example, when Magpie says she will never fly again and Dog says, "I know." He understands her pain.

**Give children a moment to debrief with their partners. Then explain that when they use thought prompts to talk or write about an idea, the idea deepens.**

"Take a moment and talk to the person beside you. Partner 1, talk about the thought prompts you spotted in our conversation. Partner 2, talk about times you saw us staying close to the text." I gave the children a moment to talk and then reconvened the class.

"Readers, I hope you saw that we used prompts to push our thinking and to help us talk longer and deeper about our first ideas. We also cited particular parts of the story to make sure our thinking was grounded in the actual words and details of the story. When we do these things, we end up growing thoughts that surprise even ourselves!"

*It is easy for your minilessons to get into a rut, with each day's lesson involving you demonstrating what you'd do on your text and then scaffolding the kids to do the same on their text. Today's simulation of a book talk is one of about a score of ways to bring in some variety. Take note, because when you develop your own minilessons, you'll find that having a list of ways to vary them is helpful. Remember, novelty ignites interest. The sheer fact that this is a new configuration will draw kids' attention.*

*Notice that here and nearly always, before we ask children to observe something instructional, we highlight what it is we hope they notice and set them up for the work they will soon be doing in response to what they see.*

*Your examples, such as this, scaffold students so that when they are asked to talk and write about this text—or another one—a day or two from now, they'll have more to draw upon. This is a good thing because you are making it easier for students to think in interpretive ways and therefore to do work with your support that they could not have easily done on their own. Providing—and then removing—scaffolds is an important kind of teaching.*

*Notice that almost every minilesson contains debriefing after the teaching, and usually the teacher steps back to name what he or she has done that is transferable to another text and another day. In this instance, the children do this work.*



## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

**Set children up to carry on the book talk with their partners, using thought prompts to refer specifically to the story. Then have them continue this work in writing.**

“So that was a bit of our book talk. Instead of analyzing it, this time pretend you are part of the conversation and continue it—only you’ll be talking just with your partner. Continue to use the thought prompts and refer specifically to the story, just as we were doing.” I put a copy of the text on the overhead for all children to see and then ushered them to begin talking. I listened in on one set of partners.

Jessica said, “I agree with Mr. Cook that Dog can be both lonely and caring. For example, like he said, he waited a long time for Magpie to wake up so he could take care of her and be with her. It must be lonely to live in a cave all by yourself.”

Alex said, “Yeah, and it doesn’t even seem like a nice place! It is all burnt (Alex points to the picture) and “charred,” with ashes and stuff. Everything looks dead.”

Jessica then said, This makes me realize something about the next part of the story. Dog asks Magpie to hop on his back and they go to the river. It’s like they are making a partnership. Magpie says that she can be Dog’s missing eye and he can be her wings. This connects to everything! It helps Magpie not be sad and it helps Dog not be lonely.”

I called for the children’s attention. “Can I stop you?” I asked, and waited until I had everyone’s attention. “Remember that these conversational prompts also work for writing! Once you’ve written one idea, you can extend it using one of these prompts.”

## LINK

**Remind children that they can always use simple prompts to extend their thinking.**

“So, readers, today and always, when you say or jot thoughts about a story, it is important to push yourselves to revise those first thoughts until they become your best thinking. One way to do this is to use prompts to nudge yourself to say (and think) more. Make sure that as you do this, you are going back to the text and finding specific places that give evidence for your thoughts, so the ideas you come up with aren’t just floating in the air but are tied firmly to the text. Today the prompts will help you extend your first thoughts about the text you chose yesterday. Keep the list with you, and whenever you write or talk about texts, use them to extend and revise your first thoughts. It’s more interesting to dig deep, so I’m pretty sure you’ll end up using these all the time and inventing more of your own.”

*By asking children to extend a conversation that was already well underway, you provide them with a running start.*

*Children may ask you whether they should speak and write about characters from books in the past or present tense. They will wonder whether it is better to say, “Dog was lonely” or “Dog is lonely.” Generally, when writing about character traits, readers use the present tense: In the story “Fox,” Dog is lonely until he meets Magpie.*



## Elaborating on Theories about Characters

WHEN YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES plan for today's (and every day's) teaching, look over your records to see what you have been noticing about your students' work so you can use small groups and conferring to provide help that is tailored to their needs.

For example, you can expect that some children will list rather than describe their ideas about a character, and many of them will merely name one character trait after another. You'll probably want to carry *Fox*, or another short text the students know well, with you as you work with students. Be prepared to demonstrate the way a person needs to think hard as they reach for the words that precisely describe a character's trait. Sophia writes this about "Eleven" (see Figure 3-1).

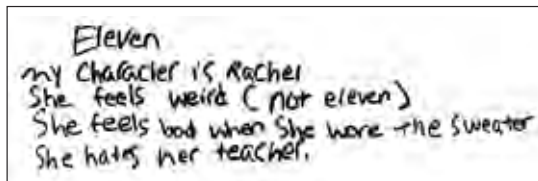


FIG. 3-1 Sophia's entry merely lists character traits.

It's a brief entry. On the other hand, Sophia does seem to be reaching to say something that she recognizes doesn't fit easily into words. She claims that Rachel, the main character in "Eleven," feels "weird." The important thing is that Sophia seems to grasp that "weird" isn't sufficient, and so she clarifies by saying that Rachel doesn't feel eleven. In an instance like this, support the student's effort to find the words that hit the nail on the head and encourage her to work longer at doing this. What *does* Rachel feel? Encourage children like Sophia to speak in whole sentences and to be explicit. She'll feel better if you equip her with words like "I imagine that she is thinking . . ."

(continues)

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING Developing Powerful Thought

Before stopping the class for a mid-workshop teaching point, I noticed Angelina's entry summing up Clover, a character in Jacqueline Woodson's *The Other Side*. "Writers, can I interrupt?" I asked the class and waited until I had their attention. "Class, I want to show you the smart work Angelina just did. In her entry, she doesn't ramble from one idea to another idea to another. She puts forth one idea, one claim, and then—here's the big thing—*she takes the time to develop that idea*. When writing about ideas, it can help to zoom in on a single idea that you want to advance, and then develop that idea by citing a bunch of parts of the text that go with it. Angelina did that." Angelina read her entry to the class. (continues)



FIG. 3-2 Angelina advocates for her claim, then expands on her idea.

### The Other Side

Clover is a very, very courageous person. Because in the book, I could tell that she is courageous since she would dare to bend rules. Clover was not supposed to go over the fence that separates the town of whites and blacks. But she instead sits on the fence with a white girl named Annie. "My momma never said anything about sitting on the fence," said Clover. She knew better than to sit on the fence or even go near it. This is why to me Clover is a courageous person. Because she dares to bend rules that were actually laws in her time.

"Writers, you might try elaborating on an idea like Angelina just did. If you are game to do this, find a thought you recorded that seems sort of powerful to you, and make a box around it." I gave them a few seconds. "Sometimes, you find a thought that is *almost* powerful, but not quite. You can rewrite your thought to make it more powerful.

"Now copy that thought onto the top of a new page in your notebook and use your thought prompts to elaborate on it. You might start with 'This is important because . . . ,' and then after a while write, 'This connects with . . .' Write fast and furiously for a few minutes."

Somewhere you'll see that when children go to write about a character, instead of thoughtfully selecting some particular descriptors that seem previously right for a character, they run through a giant list of terms that can be loosely be regarded as synonymous of each other. Ali, for example, jotted a list of descriptors for Lupe. She

wrote that Lupe is insecure, unconfident, eager to please, worried, anxious, and hard working.

In a notebook entry, Ali seems to brainstorm a host of terms that could possibly describe the character Lupe. (See Figure 3–3).

When I looked at Ali's work, I realized that she, like others, was struggling to shoehorn a complex character into a single descriptor. Her long list was Ali's way of resisting reducing Lupe to a mere label. But she hasn't actually succeeded in capturing the true impression she had of Lupe. I encouraged Ali to give up on the lack of finding a term or two or three that captured Lupe, and to write in whole sentences, whole thoughts, even whole paragraphs.

Once children have made their claims—about, say, a character's traits—you'll want to show them that writers then choose ways to elaborate. It often works for children to provide examples of this trait while using transitional phrases such as "In the beginning of the story . . . Then in the middle . . . Finally, at the end of the story . . . For example . . . And another example of this is . . ." Notice that in this instance, you are providing the writer with a structure that supports elaboration.

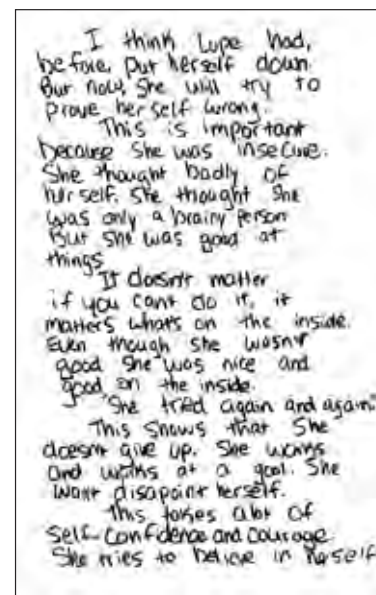


FIG. 3–3 Ali's revised entry shows her reaching for significance.



## SHARE

# Elaborating on Central Ideas

**Suggest that when zooming in on and developing ideas, it is best if the ideas are central to the text, realizing however that the truly central things are sometimes whispered, not announced.**

"I wonder if any of you have ever taken a photograph and decided one portion of that photograph was really important. If a photographer looks at a picture and decides that the tree in the upper right-hand corner is important, he can zoom in on and enlarge just that one tree. In the same way, literary essayists look over all that they have written about a text and ask, 'Is one portion of this writing especially important and central to the text?' You did this just a few minutes ago with your own writing.

"When you make decisions about what is important, it helps to ask, 'What is important *to this text*?' The important aspects of a text may not hit you over the head right away. Logan Pearsall Smith has said, 'What I like in a good author is not what he says, but what he whispers'" (Burke, p. 89).

**Suggest that finding what is whispered in a text involves being willing to let go of one's first interpretation. Noticing parts that don't fit with that first idea is a way to outgrow rather than close in on that first idea.**

"Literary essayists look for parts that seem to whisper something different than your big idea about the text. Here's the important thing. If you notice the parts that don't fit with your initial idea, you can let those parts help you revise your idea.

"Let's think about *Fox* for a moment. Earlier, Jessica and Alex were talking about how they think Magpie is the kind of character who always sees the negative side of things—that really, she is a pessimist. So many parts of the text fit with this idea—the way Magpie reacts to her burnt wing, the fact that she doesn't want Dog to help her, the way she crawls under the shadow of a rock and tries to melt into the blackness. But as a close reader, I want to ask, 'What parts of the text *don't* fit with this?' and push myself to understand why."



**Demonstrate with the class text and then ask them to try.**

I flipped through the first pages of *Fox*, looking for a part that seemed to contradict my idea. “Aha, here we go. In this scene, Magpie is joyously flying on Dog’s back. She even says, ‘FLY, DOG, FLY! I will be your missing eye, and you will be my wings.’ This scene doesn’t seem to support the idea that Magpie is a pessimist, someone who always sees the negative side of things, does it? Talk with the person beside you, and here is your challenge. Will you try to figure out how this part that doesn’t fit with our first idea about Magpie might deepen or change our thinking about her?”

After a moment or two, I called the children back together. “Do you see that by looking at one part that doesn’t fit, we can totally reshape our idea about a character? This is hard work, and I heard many of you grappling with Magpie’s personality. Judah was saying that perhaps Magpie has not lost all her happiness, that she still has a little bit of joy inside of her. Max thought that perhaps Magpie isn’t a pessimist at all. Instead, maybe she’s just very scared, but Dog makes her feel safe and strong.”

**Channel students to try to apply this work to their own texts.**

“Right now, would you take a few minutes and try this with your own text? What part of *your* text doesn’t seem to fit with your idea? How might that part change or deepen your thinking? You might draw a line under your entry from today and then start anew, writing to explore new possibilities.”

I gave children four to five minutes to write silently before calling them back together as a group. “Writers, the work you are doing is so important, so key, to this unit. Your entire literary essay will be based off of one idea, and you want that idea to be as complex and true as possible. One way you can always deepen your thinking about a text is by asking, ‘What part of the text does *not* fit with my idea?’ and then letting that part help you revise your thinking. Let’s add that to our ‘Ways to Push Our Thinking’ chart.”

*You will see that when children talk with each other, they often say, “I agree with that.” Ask children to restate the exact part of the idea they agree with. This gives them practice talking about ideas and allows them to listen for and work together to find the words that carry ideas. It also helps children feel comfortable disagreeing a bit, as debate sparks great conversation. Give them words for such discussion, such as “On the other hand, could it be that . . .” or “I partly agree, but in one way, I think differently because . . .”*

*The work children do in class discussions, small-group talks, and partnerships on the set of texts the class is analyzing provides invaluable support, because the class will have opened up many of these texts. Each child will be able to approach his or her writing with lots of ideas about the text.*

## SESSION 3 HOMEWORK

### BRING MORE OF THE TEXT TO READING RESPONSE

When you write about texts, you often reread all the notes you've written and box a line or a passage that feels to you to have potential. Then you copy that onto the top of a fresh sheet of paper and assign yourself the job of expanding your first idea, using prompts or any other strategies you know. Tonight, select an idea that is worth expanding as the focus of your work for the next few days. Try to stay with that idea for a little while—write lots and lots about it. Reread the text and find more sections that connect with your idea, then write about them. Give examples of your idea. Use prompts to nudge yourself to say more. Then, like you did in our share today, ask yourself, “What part of the story *doesn't* fit with this idea?” You may find that all of this leads you to revise your original idea, and that'd be incredibly exciting.





## Session 4

# Finding and Testing a Thesis

**IN THIS SESSION,** you'll teach students that writers select ideas to craft into theses. You'll show writers ways to question and revise their theses, making sure these are supported by the whole text.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ Mentor text, *Fox*
- ✓ Your own notebook that captures the class's thinking about *Fox*, or this same thinking on chart paper, to share with the class (see Teaching)
- ✓ "Possible Thesis Statements" list about the mentor text, written on chart paper (see Teaching)
- ✓ "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart (see Teaching)
- ✓ "How Can I Support My Thesis Statement?" list (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- ✓ Chart paper and markers
- ✓ Three booklets, each one with your thesis statement written on the front in a box followed by one of your supporting reasons (bullets) underneath it, with at least several blank pages (see Share)
- ✓ Blank booklets, three for each student, that have a box and bullet on the front page for students' thesis statements and supporting ideas (see Share)

**I** REMEMBER WELL the analytical papers I was asked to write when I was a young girl. I bought myself several packets of index cards, took the bus into the city of Buffalo, made my way to the library, and spent days recording my data about my assigned author. I measured my progress by the growing height of my stack of index cards.

When children in today's world are asked to write academic papers, the challenge has far less to do with collecting data—that they can do with one click—and far more to do with synthesizing the information they collect. Starting today, children will no longer collect assorted ideas about the text they've chosen. Instead, they will invest themselves in shaping, organizing, drafting, and revising entries that elaborate on a single thesis that they propose. The entries they develop around this thesis will be raw materials for the first of three literary essays they'll write in this unit.

As you approach this session, you and your students will bring prior knowledge from previous cycles through the writing process to help them write and develop theses. You may want to look back over some of that work and pull out relevant charts and mentor texts, so you can help students remember and draw on that knowledge today. (When children are in their fourth unit of study, they are also in their first, second, and third units of study.)

Specifically, you can hope that students will bring to this session an understanding of the relationship between the thesis, the supporting ideas, and the evidence they bring into their essays. Today we hope each student selects a thesis that is interesting to him and defensible with evidence from the text. Then you'll help students shift back-and-forth between crafting a thesis and imagining the possibilities for how that thesis will unfurl into an arguable essay.

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:** W.4.1.a,b; W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.8, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, SL.4.1, L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a



## MINILESSON

# Finding and Testing a Thesis

### CONNECTION

**Celebrate the writing and thinking your writers have generated thus far in the unit. Remind children of earlier work they did with theses and reasons.**

"Writers, your notebooks are brimming with ideas about the short text you've chosen to study. You've each got reams of ideas about a text—whether it is 'Eleven' or *The Other Side* or 'Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend.' Today I want to remind you that in the end, you need to decide on *one central idea* for your essay. Fred Fox, a famous speechwriter for President Dwight Eisenhower, once said, 'You ought to be able to put your bottom-line message on the inside of a matchbook.' He was talking about a speech, but he could have been talking about a literary essay or a short story or a memoir or any text at all. As a writer, and particularly as an essayist, you need to be able to name the one crystal-clear idea you want to convey to your reader.

"A while ago, you looked over all that you'd written and selected a seed idea for your personal essay. You rewrote it as a thesis statement and then framed your essay using boxes and bullets. Writers do similar work when writing literary essays. You first find a big idea that is really important to you, and then you write a thesis."

#### ✿ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that when you are writing a literary essay, as when you write a personal or persuasive essay, you find your seed idea—your thesis—by first rereading all your related entries and thinking, 'What is the big idea I really want to say?' Sometimes it helps to gather a bunch of possible theses about a text, then to choose one."

### TEACHING

**Demonstrate selecting a thesis by returning to the work the class has done with the mentor text, Fox, rereading entries and underlining possible seed ideas.**

"People who are writing literary essays often cull great stuff—perhaps by underlining or starring lines in notebooks or by copying over the best stuff they've collected. Sometimes it helps to make a special page full of drafts of possible

### ◆ COACHING

*Notice that we can't ramble on too long about what the students have been doing. It is tempting to do so because this is a way to orient ourselves before plunging on, but kids will listen more to new information, anecdotes, and stories than to generalizations about what they have already been taught. So if you are recapping, try to make that work a bit interactive ("Let me read over a list of things I hope you have learned. Give me a thumbs up if you feel you have mastered the things on my list or a thumbs down if you haven't yet practiced an item on my list.") And it is not always wise to recap in the connection; sometimes we bring in new information, as in this example. Minilessons, in general, need to be far more densely packed than many people realize.*

*Visual cues and props can make a big difference in our minilessons, and I haven't emphasized them enough. In this instance, for example, I held one of the working folders we'd used from the earlier essay unit so that as I mentioned boxes and bullets, the object—in this case the folder—nudged children to recall the entire process they experienced in that unit.*



thesis statements. Then it is typical to spend time—at least half an hour—drafting and revising those rough-draft thesis statements until you find something that feels right.

“We’ve been studying *Fox* together, so it makes sense that we practice this work off that text first, and then you can do this on your own with the short text you have been studying. Let’s return to our entries and ideas about *Fox*, and as we do this, ask, ‘What is the main thing we really want to say?’”

Sitting in the front of the children, I opened up my notebook and displayed it, saying, “This is what I’ve written, mostly sparked by conversations we’ve had together.” I skimmed the entries for a moment, circling a few bits, with children watching as I underlined, as below.

*At the beginning of the story, Magpie is hurt and Dog comes to her rescue. He carries Magpie gently in his mouth. This shows he is trying to help her, not hurt her. Dog carries Magpie to his cave and takes care of her burnt wing. Dog really wants to help Magpie. He helps her wing get better and then he tries to help her spirits get better.*

*Magpie does not want Dog’s help, but Dog keeps trying. This shows that he doesn’t give up easily. He tries to cheer Magpie up by telling her that he is blind and life is still good. But Magpie can only focus on the fact that she will no longer fly. For some reason, she won’t let Dog help her.*

As I looked over the entry, I voiced over my thinking process. “I’m looking in my notebook for *ideas*, not for facts. This means I’m looking for things that we’ve thought up by ourselves and that aren’t actually stated in the text. Are you spotting anything?” I underlined an idea I found. “Ah, there’s an idea!” And I continued on.

Then I paused and said, “I’ve got a couple of thoughts—they sort of go together and overlap—and I’m going to try a few ways of saying the big thoughts I have.” I took up my pen and jotted (on chart paper) some possible thesis statements.

#### Possible Thesis Statements

- Dog wants to save Magpie.
- Dog tries to help Magpie in different ways.
- Magpie doesn’t appreciate Dog’s friendship.

**Demonstrate testing a potential thesis by asking some key questions, and show that you then revise the thesis statements based on what you learn from doing this.**

“After I’ve drafted a few possible theses, I look these over, sort of weighing whether any of them seem okay. I first reread each and ask, ‘Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?’ Often this question leads me to revise the draft of a thesis so that it stretches like an umbrella over the whole story.”

*This one short text threads through many minilessons because the children have enough shared knowledge of the text and our work with it that I do not need to do a lot of reminding and summarizing; instead, I can spotlight each new point I want to make.*

*It is unlikely that you will have captured all the class’s thinking about *Fox* in written form. So much of the whole-class thinking work you and the children have done has been verbal, or scrawled quickly into your own writing notebook. In preparation for today, you’ll want to decide how you will make the past few days’ ideas visible for children. I’ve decided to showcase the class’s thinking by putting a few pages of my own notebook on the document camera, having prepared it beforehand to ensure it included enough of the class’s thinking to draw from. You could do this just as easily with chart paper and a marker, however.*

*You’ll notice that my ideas are flawed. It is important to model in ways that expose difficulties so you can address those difficulties. My list reflects the kinds of trouble that kids get into when they do this work.*

*This is unbelievably powerful. Try it yourself. You will find that very often the ideas you develop about a story relate only to one part. They are ideas like this: “In this story, the main character learns that . . . .” A claim such as that pertains to the second half of the story (as is common) and needs to be revised: “In this story, the main character wants . . . and finds it when he learns that . . . .” Or “In this story, the main character changes . . . from . . . to . . . .”*

"Let's test this thesis:

- Dog wants to save Magpie.

"If we think of examples to support this, do they come from the whole story? What do you think? Turn and talk."

The children talked, and then I asked Charlie to report on what he and his partner had said.

"We thought that this is mostly about the first part of the story, where Dog carries Magpie in his mouth and that we should go back to our idea about Dog being caring, because then we can say all the caring things he does in the story. So then maybe our thesis could be 'Dog is a good friend to Magpie.'"

Wanting to extrapolate the main point, I said, "So one way to test and revise a thesis is to ask, 'Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?' Another way to test a thesis is by considering whether the thesis is really supported in the text. Is there enough evidence?" I revealed the "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart, with the additional bullets added.

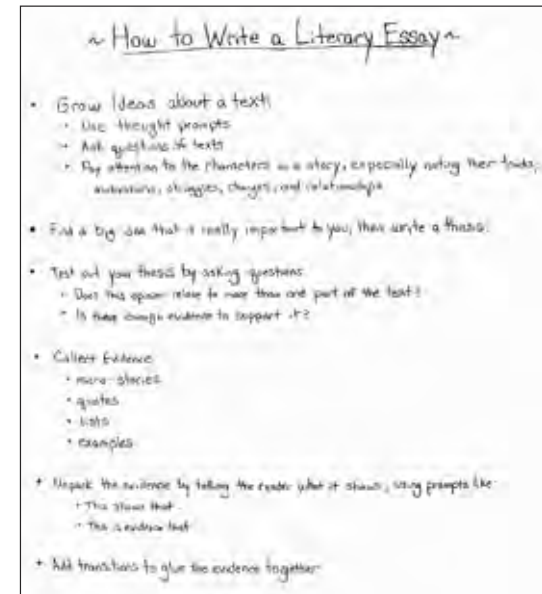
### How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
- Use thought prompts.
- Ask questions of the text.
- Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions.
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?

"If I make the thesis 'Dog is a good friend,' then I can show how one reason I think he's a good friend is because he is caring." I jotted this on a new piece of chart paper in a boxes-and-bullets format. "There are a lot of examples in the text to show that he is caring! I'd want to think about another reason I think Dog is a good friend. What made me start to think this? Let's look back at our ideas from earlier." I put our idea sheet back up for all the children to see.

At the beginning of the story, Magpie is hurt and Dog comes to her rescue. He carries Magpie gently in his mouth. This shows he is trying to help her, not hurt her. Dog carries Magpie to his

There are a number of reasons each thesis needs to pertain to the entire text. First of all, when children are writing thesis statements about very short texts, if the thesis pertains to only one portion of the text, it will be almost impossible for the child to garner enough support for the thesis. The texts are too sparse! Then, too, I am steering children toward writing interpretive essays, and this means I am hoping they consider lessons they can learn or messages they can carry from the text. An effective interpretation of a story requires that the reader take into account the most important features of the complete text, including the first and the second halves of the text, certainly, and including a great many smaller features as well.



This is a great deal of important material to convey simply through talk, so at this point I added to the anchor chart I'd introduced at the start of this unit. Notice that I don't take the time to write these in front of the class.

cave and takes care of her burnt wing. Dog really wants to help Magpie. He helps her wing get better and then he tries to help her spirits get better.

Magpie does not want Dog's help, but Dog keeps trying. This shows that he doesn't give up easily. He tries to cheer Magpie up by telling her that he is blind and life is still good. But Magpie can only focus on the fact that she will no longer fly. For some reason, she can't let Dog help her.

Children began pointing and climbing onto their knees as they spotted new ideas. "We talked an awful lot about how Dog doesn't give up, about how he keeps trying to make Magpie happy. That would work, wouldn't it?" I added the next reason for our opinion to our chart.

Dog is a good friend.

- Dog is a good friend because he is caring.
- Dog is a good friend because he doesn't give up on his friend.

#### Debrief the teaching for the children.

"So, writers, when we are looking to develop a strong thesis, there are two things we can do. First, we look back at our notebook entries and begin to list a few possible theses. Then, we test our theses by checking to see if they relate to more than one part of the text and then by asking, 'How would I support this?'"

## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

#### Set children up to try this work using their own short story.

"Let's try this with your stories now. Will you take a moment and flip through the writing you've done over the past few days? Just as we did a moment ago, star or underline places where you see ideas—ideas that might become a thesis for you later." I moved around the rug, helping children to do this work and voicing over a few pointers. "Don't forget, you are looking for *ideas*, things the text did not tell you but that you thought up on your own." And a minute later, "No idea is too big or too small. You never know what might make the perfect seed for your essay."

*Pay especially close attention to this instruction, because helping children write effective thesis statements and supporting ideas is far more complicated than you might imagine. Hopefully, the teaching seems simple and clear now—but the trail of thought leading to this point has been quite complicated and challenging!*

After calling the children back together, I ushered them into part two of today's work. "Right now, will you decide on one idea that stands out to you, one that feels important, and jot that down on the next page of your notebook?"

"Try working with your partner, testing out your theses using our list of ways to support thesis statements to help you." I pointed to the "How Can I Support My Thesis Statement" list. I listened in as children did this work in pairs and then asked for their attention.

## LINK

**Recap that writers reread notes and entries about the text, select theses, then revise their theses by asking questions of them.**

"So, writers, today and whenever you write a thesis for a literary essay, look over the ideas you've collected about the text and select one. And then remember that writers test out their possible theses in the ways you just experienced."



*Students need to believe that readers can come away from texts with different understandings, so long as sufficient evidence in the text exists to support them. Imagine how productive and provocative their writing will be if they have the chance to share and argue those understandings.*

*Whenever possible, I want to end a minilesson by reminding children of the array of options available to them so they learn to be the job captains of their own writing. In this link, though, I lay out the steps students need to take today during writing time since their thesis will be the foundation on which they will build their future writing as they gather evidence for their essay.*





## CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

# The Small Size of a Thesis Makes It Perfect for Learning about Revision

WHEN YOU CONFER WITH YOUR CHILDREN keep in mind that you are teaching them to reread their own drafts as well as to write. You want them to be able to discern problems in their writing so they can work with independence. One way to do this is to teach them to check for some of the most common problems that essayists are apt to encounter. For example, today you are helping writers tackle one such common problem. Let them know that it's always a good idea to check to be sure they're writing a clear thesis. The thesis is like an engine—it propels the essay forward.

Children often encounter difficulties imagining the paragraphs they could write to support their theses, and these difficulties should prompt them to revise those thesis statements. Judah, for example, boxed these ideas in his notebook as possible theses (see Figure 4–1).

Realizing that it would be hard to write supporting reasons for many of these, Judah settled on this more modest possible thesis.

*Lupe works hard to overcome her difficulties.*

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Deciding on Your Boxes and Bullets for an Essay**

"Writers, can I stop you for a moment? I've watched and talked with many of you as you try out various thesis statements and supporting ideas. I've noticed that many of you are struggling to uncover the ways you might support a particularly powerful thesis, and so I'm going to introduce you to a few methods literary essayists often use.

"When imagining the ways you might support a thesis, there are a few go-to structures essayists use. You might remember some of these from our personal and persuasive essay unit." I quickly jotted down on chart paper some ways students could support their thesis statements.

*How can I support my thesis statement?*

*With reasons*

*With kinds or ways*

*With times when*

*With evidence of how it is true for one character, then for another character*

*With evidence of how it is true at the beginning of the story, then at the end of the story*

"Earlier, when thinking about our thesis, 'Dog is a good friend,' we listed some reasons we think this is true. But I could also try different kinds of supports. For instance, I could list ways that Dog is a good friend: He cares for Magpie's wing; he cares for Magpie's feelings; he offers Magpie a home. Or I could try to see how my thesis is true for one character and then another. In that case, I'd write about how Dog is a good friend to Magpie and then how Dog is a good friend to Fox. Do you see how one thesis can turn into a whole host of different essays?"

"In the time that remains today, try out a few different possibilities for supporting your thesis statement. I'll ask you to decide on your thesis and supporting ideas by today's share, when we set up our systems for collecting evidence."



FIG. 4-1 Judah's boxed ideas

I helped her learn that writers are expected to add the trimmings.

Lupe, the protagonist in Gary Soto's short story, "The Marble Champ," works hard to overcome her difficulties.

Then Judah began to imagine how her bullet points might go. Did she want to write about the kinds of work Lupe does? To write about the reasons Lupe works so hard to become a marble champ? Or did she just want to provide examples—which would have been a much simpler option. Elaborating on the kinds of hard work, or the

reasons for her work, would require Judah to develop supportive ideas. Here is Judah's next draft of her thesis (see Figure 4-2).

This thesis set up the reason-based (idea-based) topic sentences that Judah then developed: Lupe overcomes her difficulties through hard work; Lupe also overcomes her difficulties by believing in herself. Notice that in each of her subordinate points, Judah presents an idea (not just an example) and in each one, she repeats the stem of her thesis.

The fact that Judah realizes on her own that it would be hard to write supporting reasons for many of these thesis statements suggests that I have helped her develop the eyes to see potential tough spots of her own writing.

As you confer with students, bear in mind that it is far easier for a youngster to develop an essay by citing lots of parts of the text that illustrate the one central thesis. It is another step forward for that child to think about how those parts of the story illustrate the central thesis, categorizing them under subordinate ideas. Parker, for example, had written this when I pulled a chair alongside him.

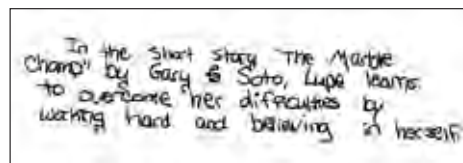


FIG. 4-2 Judah's draft thesis statement

I think Gloria is the type of character who makes friends easily because she and Julian became friends quickly.

Parker had rewritten his thesis a few times and starred "Gloria is the type of character who makes friends easily." In an effort to produce supportive ideas, he'd written:

*For example, she tried to teach him something fun.*

*Another reason how she makes friends easily is that she made some funny jokes.*

*Finally, they made wishes which they weren't allowed to talk about.*

When I conferred with Parker I reminded him that in the personal and persuasive essay unit, he'd worked on "boxes and bullets." That work involved taking an idea, a thesis, and then attaching reasons to it, using the transition word *because*. I showed him what the template might look like for his current work.

*Gloria is the type of character who makes friends easily*

- *because A,*
- *because B,*
- *and most of all, because C.*

Teachers, I'm teaching Parker to write a literary essay that is structured in a boxes-and-bullets fashion. This is the most common structure for an essay, and it's one that children know well from their prior essay writing.

When he started again, Parker wrote:

*Gloria is the type of character who makes friends easily  
 . . . because she tries to teach Julian something fun.*

I could have pointed out that actually, his first “reason” is truly an example. Instead what I said was that the reason needed to be big enough so that it could be an umbrella over more than one piece of evidence. “It will be hard to fill a whole page on this one reason—Gloria makes friends easily because she teaches Julian something fun.” I told him. Parker quickly revised his thesis so that it started:

*Gloria makes friends easily  
because she does fun things*

I nodded and said, “So you have your first reason,” and I read it aloud to him. “Gloria is the type of character who makes friends easily because (1) she does fun things.” I then asked, “And what’s the next reason?” and then to prime the pump I reread what he’d written. At that point, Parker was off and running (see Figure 4–3). “Because she makes funny jokes?”

Teachers, it is important to know when it is time for you to exit a conference. You’ll want to look for signs that the writer is starting to grasp what you have taught. Don’t stay too long and don’t aim for the student’s first independent efforts to be flawless. Accept approximation. Otherwise you teach dependence and your conferences last too long.

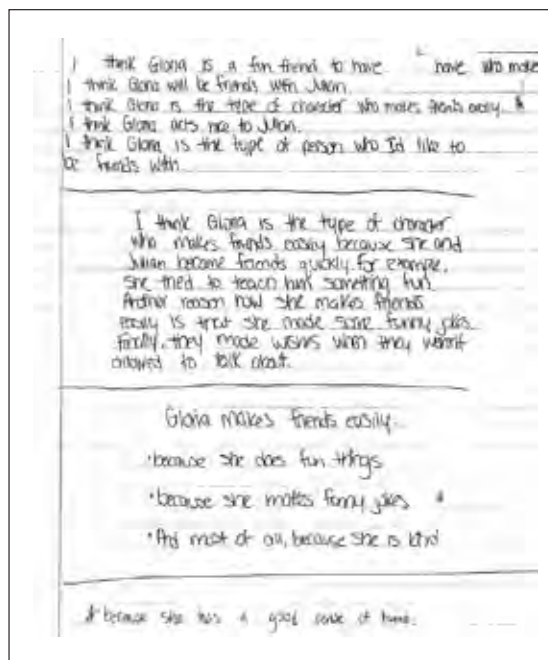


FIG. 4–3 Parker working on his thesis and reasons



## SHARE

# Developing Systems to Collect Essay Materials

**Congratulate children on their work with thesis statements, and remind them that they need to set up a system for collecting and sorting the evidence they'll gather to support their thesis statements.**

"Today marks a momentous day in our unit. Drumroll please." I clapped my hands on my lap to create the sound of a drumroll and encouraged the children to do the same. Then I said, "Today, you have settled upon your thesis and supporting ideas, and you are about to collect evidence and begin drafting.

"Writers have all sorts of ways to celebrate the choosing of a thesis. I often open up a fresh box of pens, giving myself the treat of a brand-new one. Other writers switch to new writing spots or pull out a fresh stack of their favorite paper. Another writer I know cleans her desk so her space is clean and tidy for the new stage in her writing process. The rituals don't matter so much as getting ready matters. As a writer, it is important for you to anticipate what you'll need next and then set yourself up to do that.

"During our earlier essay unit, you each developed your own systems for developing an essay. Some of you collected supportive stories and quotes and thoughts on half-sheets of notebook paper that you stored in folders (one for each of your supporting ideas), and some of you did the same sort of collecting in little booklets (again, one for each of your supporting ideas). Others of you collected your ideas in your writer's notebook and then duplicated those pages in the end so you could scissor them apart.

"If you have a system that works well for you, you can, of course, use that. But because writing literary essays is new (and I know how much sorting and cutting and pasting it will involve!), I'm recommending that you all use booklets for the first round of essay writing. I'll show you how a booklet can be particularly helpful for collecting the quotes and stories you'll need to prove your thesis.



**Introduce booklets as a system to collect and organize writing. Demonstrate how booklets work using your own as an example.**

"Let me show you my booklets." I showed children the cover of my first booklet. "On the cover of each booklet, there is a box, and inside that box I have written my thesis and first supporting idea—my first bullet." I read it aloud.

Dog is a good friend

- because he is caring.

"Do you notice in my first bullet, I included the words from my box, 'Dog is a good friend' at the beginning?" Writers call this the stem of their thesis, and it is important to write it before each new supporting idea. That way, we make sure to always hold in our mind the *whole* idea that we are trying to support.

"After that first page is a lot of paper, so that I can collect and try out different ways the information can go."

I flipped through the blank pages and said, "This is the end of booklet one. Now let me show you booklet number two." I showed the class that, again, on the cover there was the stem of my thesis and my second bullet. I read it aloud.

Dog is a good friend

- because he doesn't give up.

I flipped through the blank pages of the second booklet, to show them all the space available for writing and revising evidence. Then I picked up the last booklet and again talked through the words on the cover.

Dog is a good friend

- because he sees the good in people.

①  
Gloria makes friends  
easily because she does  
fun things.

②  
Gloria does fun things  
- she does cartwheels.  
- she looks at robin eggs.  
- she plays games.  
- she makes kites.  
- she makes wishes.  
  
Gloria makes friends easily because she does fun things. She doesn't sit around and play dolls, but she likes to do cartwheels and teach people how to do them. She is really good at cartwheels and Julian who isn't could learn from her & how to do them. She makes it seem fun. She also wanted to play games with Julian. She is up for anything. But the most fun thing she does is show Julian to make a wish kite. These are all the things that Gloria does that show why she makes friends easily.  
  
Quote:  
"I know the best way to make wishes."  
"The kite stayed up for a long time."

③  
Gloria also does fun things like look at robin eggs. Gloria is the kind of friend who will do what someone else suggests. Julian said, "I know where there's a bird's nest." Gloria was like great let's go see the nest. Maybe she didn't even want to go wasn't interested but I don't think so. She likes to do fun and clever things. She doesn't do get things, but things that are things like. She seems like she is open to doing anything and that makes her a fun friend to have. So now I'm realizing it isn't just that Gloria does fun things, but she will try anything. Friends who will try anything are the best kind of friend. Gloria seems to me to be a really nice.

④  
When Julian and Gloria make the wish kites they are having fun and enjoying each other's company. Julian was so curious and excited to make them. He said, "I didn't know what she was planning, but I had in the house and got pencils and paper." You can tell he is enjoying himself because he gets the pencils and paper so they could write their wishes. He also shows he is having fun because he eagerly fires his wishes to the kite. He also believes or maybe wants his wishes to come true.

FIG. 4-4 Parker's first booklet

"Writers, each of these booklets allows me to gather information that will help me write my first draft. They allow me to add more pages or take away a page and revise it as I am collecting material for my first draft. So take three booklets as I pass them out, and begin right away setting up your booklets so that tomorrow you can begin gathering the evidence for each bullet or subsection of your essay. But, of course, if you have a system that works well for you, you can use that instead."

## SESSION 4 HOMEWORK

### CRAFTING THESESES QUICKLY USING A TEMPLATE

Think of a fairy tale you know well. For now, let's take "Little Red Riding Hood." Quickly write the story line. Remember that it helps to think of the main character, what he or she wants, what gets in the way, how this is resolved.

Now think, "What might this story really be about?" or "What life lessons does the character learn?" For "Little Red Riding Hood," you might write, "The story is really a reminder that evil lurks along our pathways, and we need to be less naïve, more suspicious."

Tonight try using this template to produce an instant thesis about a fairy tale you have in mind: "Some people think (the fairy tale you've chosen) is a story about (story line), but I think it is also a story about (life lesson the character learns)." For example, my Little Red Riding Hood thesis might be "Some people think "Little Red Riding Hood" is the story of a girl, dressed in a red hood, who wants to give cookies to her grandma but instead is nearly eaten by a wolf. I think, however, this is also a story of a girl who goes into the woods thinking she knows more than her mother, and nearly dies as a result."



## Session 5

# Using Stories as Evidence

**IN THIS SESSION**, you'll teach students ways that essayists select mini-stories as evidence to support their ideas.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ Charts from the *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* unit, available for students to refer to during the minilesson
- ✓ "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart (see Connection)
- ✓ "How to Angle a Story to Make a Point" chart (see Teaching)
- ✓ Mentor text, *Fox*
- ✓ Transition words chart from Session 11 of the *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* unit (see Share)
- ✓ "When You Want to Give an Example" chart (see Share)

**T**HIS SESSION IS THE FIRST IN A SEQUENCE of lessons that remind students of the ways they can gather evidence to support each of the supporting ideas (or reasons for their opinion) in their literary essay. It is fitting that the first method for collecting evidence involves children rereading the stories they are writing about to locate key moments, then retelling and using those moments to support the ideas in their essays. They'll be retelling those moments to explore their relationship to the central ideas in the text. This is one of several ways youngsters will learn to shift between abstract ideas and concrete details.

Throughout the year, your children will have written about emblematic moments in ways that convey big meanings. My stories about seeing my father leave early on Christmas morning to serve waffles at the hospital or sailing with him at the end of the summer and learning about his excitement over the prospect of returning to work convey both my appreciation for his commitment to his work and my own youthful yearning to carve out a meaningful place for myself in the world. Stories can be powerful vehicles for conveying big ideas. It makes sense, therefore, for readers to collect stories that represent ideas that seem to them to be central to texts.

You may need to reteach lessons from the earlier units to remind your students to bring to this unit what they know about writing effective stories. Above all, they will need to be reminded that there is a giant difference between merely summarizing an event and storytelling that same event. Although there are appropriate times to summarize within an essay, today you will emphasize the value of storytelling key moments from a story. A big part of this will be helping students to draw on all they know about angling a story to illustrate an idea.

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD:** W.4.1.b,c; W.4.3.a,b; W.4.9.a, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, SL.4.1, SL.4.4, L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.6



## MINILESSON

# Using Stories as Evidence

### CONNECTION

**Remind children that when writing personal and persuasive essays, they collected evidence to support each of their topic sentences. Suggest that they'll need to do that also when writing literary essays.**

"Writers, you'll remember that during our essay unit, after you wrote your thesis statements and planned your supports for your thesis statements—your reasons—you each became a researcher, collecting the evidence that would allow you to make your case. So it won't surprise you to hear that you need to do similar work now. In fact, you can look back on charts from the essay unit and remind yourself of materials you collected then to back up your supporting ideas—your topic sentences. Many of you will decide that one of the best ways to provide evidence for the supporting ideas in your essay is to select moments in the story that capture the idea you are putting forward." As I spoke, I unveiled our anchor chart, with the new bullets added.

#### How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
  - Use thought prompts.
  - Ask questions of texts.
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions.
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence.
  - micro-stories

### ◆ COACHING

*Interestingly enough, in our minilessons, we as teachers are constantly required to do just what we're teaching children to do. That is, we are frequently called upon to retell a story, angling it to make one point or another. We therefore have a repertoire of strategies to bring out our angle (or our interpretation). For example, we may highlight the point we want to make by mentioning counterexamples, saying something like, "Donald Crews didn't write about his whole summer down south—no way! Instead, he wrote about just one episode on the train tracks." This is a technique children can learn to use as well. Children can also angle their stories by starting with an overarching statement that orients listeners: "Listen to what I do." "Notice especially . . ." Children, too, can learn to preface their stories with comments that establish their angles.*

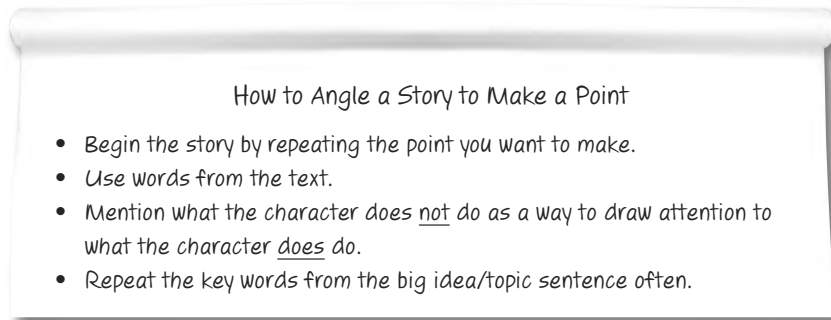
❁ **Name the teaching point.**

"Today I want to remind you that when you are telling a story in the service of providing evidence for an idea, you need to angle that story to highlight the way it supports and connects to your thesis."

## TEACHING

**Demonstrate that before a literary essayist can tell a story to illustrate a topic sentence, he or she must reread the text and identify bits that could serve as evidence.**

"Usually you will have grown your thesis by looking closely at moments from the text. To help others see your convincing evidence, you essentially need to take your reader by the hand, bring him or her to the same moments that you studied, and help the reader come to the conclusion you came to." I revealed the following chart.



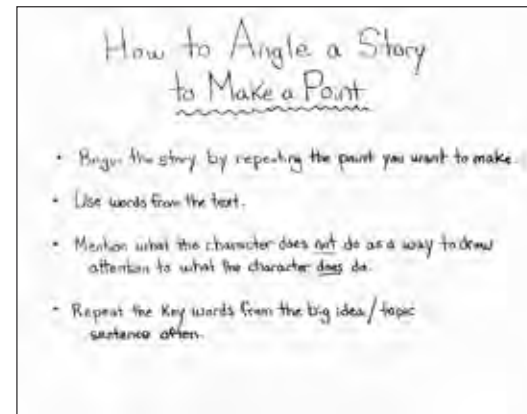
*How to Angle a Story to Make a Point*

- *Begin the story by repeating the point you want to make.*
- *Use words from the text.*
- *Mention what the character does not do as a way to draw attention to what the character does do.*
- *Repeat the key words from the big idea/topic sentence often.*

"As you can see from our chart, there are a few ways writers do this. When you want to angle a story, you can begin the story by saying the point you want to make, mention what the character does *not* do to draw attention to what he or she does do, and repeat your key points again and again. For example, let's take our bullet, or reason: Dog is a good friend because he sees the good in others. First, we need to think, "What moments in the story led me to this conclusion? What moments illustrate this point for other readers?"

Using a document camera to show an enlarged version of *Fox*, I quickly skimmed the first part of the book, adding stars in the margins of the text whenever I found a potential story. The children joined in identifying that the passage in which Dog meets Fox is one that illustrates well Dog's tendency to see the good in others.

*I let children know when the teaching point contains a reminder of something they learned earlier. Obviously there will be times when we teach children to use a strategy they learned earlier, and there is no reason to pretend differently. Ideally, we will add a new layer of complexity, as I try to do in this instance.*



*How to Angle a Story  
to Make a Point*

- *Begin the story by repeating the point you want to make.*
- *Use words from the text.*
- *Mention what the character does not do as a way to draw attention to what the character does do.*
- *Repeat the key words from the big idea/topic sentence often.*

*If you don't have access to a document camera, then you'll want to use either a chart-sized version of the first portion of *Fox* or individual copies for each child.*



**Ask children to watch as you tell one portion of the text as a story. Highlight the steps you take.**

After settling upon this passage, I said to the children, “Let’s write the story of this first bit of evidence together so that I can show you how to angle it. You can then practice using the same techniques to write a second moment that illustrates this idea about Dog.

“I find it helps to reread the text and clarify the timeline of what happened. When we are working with a short story, finding and storytelling small moments from a text can be a challenge because often you are zooming in on a teeny tiny part of the story and telling it in a really stretched-out way. For example, the episode in which Dog saw the good in Fox only took a tiny bit of time in real life. I’ll really need to stretch it out so that it works as a story. I might tell about how first,” and I put one finger up, “Fox comes to the bush. And then,” I put up a second finger, “Magpie is scared but Dog says, ‘Welcome. We can offer you food and shelter.’” I put up a third finger and continued. “Then, Fox compliments Dog and Magpie on their running. Finally,” I put up a fourth finger, “Dog beams with excitement.

“But here is the thing—I don’t just tell what actually *did* happen first, then next, then next. The challenge will be to tell this in ways that pop out the fact that Dog sees the best in others.

“I’m going to try my story again. But this time I’m going to begin by saying the point I want to make.” I wrote-in-the-air:

*Dog is the kind of character that sees the best in others. For example, one day, a fox came to the bush where Dog and Magpie lived. Fox moves through the trees sneakily, like a tongue of fire. Magpie trembles at the sight of him. But Dog doesn’t see the bad in Fox.*

I looked at the chart. “I can use words from the text and I can also mention what Dog *didn’t* do to highlight what he did do. Let’s see.”

*Dog does not tremble like Magpie. He is not scared by Fox’s haunted eyes. Instead, he is excited that Fox has come to visit their cave, and Dog welcomes him in for food and shelter.*

“And then, of course, I want to repeat my idea, what I’m trying to show.” I picked up my pen and quickly added:

*Dog only sees the good in Fox.*

**Invite youngsters to help you debrief, extracting the sequence of what you have done to tell an angled mini-story as evidence for one of your claims about the text.**

“Will you tell your partner what you saw me do just now? You might think specifically about the ways I told the story to bring out my idea about Dog. And be sure to use our chart to help you name some of what you saw.” I allowed the children a few minutes to talk and then called them back together. “Chloe, what did you and your partner notice?”

Chloe began, “You made the fox sound really scary.” I interjected, “Yes, good observation.” I looked out at the children. “But *how* did I do this?”

SESSION 5: USING STORIES AS EVIDENCE

*When children retell portions of a novel to make a point, the text itself is long enough that it’s not challenging to cull a sequence of events. When writing about a very short text such as Fox, however, the entire text is so abbreviated that writers must really zoom in on micro-events to extract a sequenced story. But a sequence is necessary to create a story.*

*You might be saying to yourself, “Wait a minute. This is an inquiry. The children are supposed to notice what the teacher is doing and name it for themselves!” And you’d be right to point this out. I do take the liberty of naming the moves I make, showing the children how I consciously implement as many of the strategies as possible. I am guiding children to notice certain things. Then too, I am harnessing the power of repetition. By hearing the strategies repeated again and again, I hope children will have ready access to them and that the strategies will become second nature to them as they get to work on their own stories.*

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Raffi added on, “You used words from the text like *haunted eyes*.”

I signaled for others to add on. “And you did that thing about saying what Dog didn’t do. You said he didn’t act scared like Magpie,” added John. “Yeah, you wrote that instead he said ‘Come in! Welcome!’” added Parker.

“So, writers, what you are noticing is that I told this story in a way that really *showed* what I most wanted to say, and I did that by using strategies from our chart. I began by saying the point I wanted to make, I repeated the point often, I used words from the text, and I even said what Dog *didn’t* do to highlight what he did do.”

## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

**Tell children you plan to collect a few stories to support each topic sentence, and ask them to do the same with their own texts.**

“Okay, writers, who’s ready to try this using their own stories?” The children nodded and raised their hands, and I began again. “First, you’ll need to find a part of your story that fits with your first bullet, or reason, written on the first page of your first booklet. For example, Celia is going to go back to ‘Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend’ and look for a small part of the story that illustrates her first bullet, ‘Julian and Gloria are going to be best friends because they get along.’”

The children took a moment to locate a mini-story. As they worked, I voiced over. “You are probably asking yourself, ‘What part of the story *best* shows this part of my thesis?’ When you are ready, put a circle around the part of the story that you’ll use to support your thesis.” When children were ready, I called for them to begin telling their stories. I coached them as they retold. “You just told a bit about what happened in the story. Don’t forget, repeat your idea often!” And later, “What could the character have done but didn’t do? What did he do instead?”

“Writers, all eyes on Celia. She is going to tell a mini-story that highlights Julian and Gloria getting along. Let’s listen to see if Celia was able to bring out that they get along.”

Celia took a big breath, and began.

*Julian and Gloria are going to be best friends because they get along. For example, on the day that Gloria moved onto Julian’s street, she asked him if he could do a cartwheel, and then she turned and did two perfect cartwheels in a row. Julian didn’t admit he couldn’t and tried really hard to do exactly as Gloria had done, but he fell over. He wasn’t very good, but Gloria didn’t laugh or brag that she was better. Instead, she said that cartwheels took a lot of practice. There was no teasing or bickering—just two friends getting along.*

I said, “Thumbs up if you think Celia’s mini-story brings out that Julian and Gloria get along.” Many thumbs went up, and I noted who didn’t think Celia had told an angled mini-story.

*If you feel your children would profit from extra support during the active engagement, you could retell only two thirds of a story and then ask them first to retell the story you’ve just told and then to continue, adding on the rest of the story. This, of course, would provide them with much more scaffolding than the request to proceed in a similar way, retelling an entirely new small story.*

*When retelling a sequence of events to make a particular point, children are apt to abbreviate the start of the event instead of starting the story at the climax, because it is usually the section that most pertains to the idea the child wants to advance. I try to remind children that even mini-stories must have a beginning, a middle, and an end.*

*I deliberately call on Celia here because I know she’s fairly adept at this, and I want her to provide yet another demonstration. If none of your students are able to angle their stories well enough that their work can become a demonstration, you can provide a second demonstration yourself.*

## LINK

**Remind writers that essayists collect mini-stories to advance their point, collecting several stories for each booklet—or topic sentence—within a single day.**

“So, writers, you already know that when you are writing an essay you need to fill up your booklets with evidence to support each of your topic sentences, and you already know that essayists often collect stories as evidence. Today you’ve seen how writers of literary essays reread, finding portions of the text that can be told as stories, and then how they angle those tiny stories to support the point they want to make.

“Today I know each of you will collect several stories. You’ll likely be able to collect a few stories for each of your booklets. The challenge will be to angle those stories to highlight the idea you are advancing, just as Celia did in her story about Gloria.”

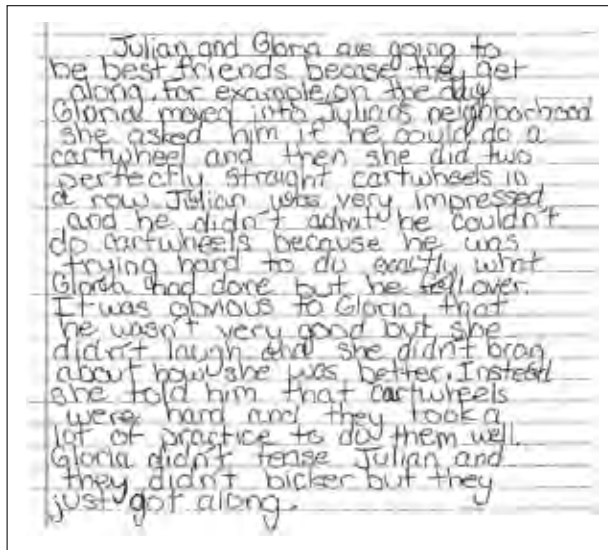


FIG. 5-1 Celia's work after the minilesson

*Just before sending them off to work, I remind children of the productivity goals for today.*



## CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

# Collecting and Angling Stories to Support Ideas

**T**ODAY'S MINILESSON TEACHES A CHALLENGING CONCEPT. Chances are that you notice students struggling a bit during the active engagement section of the minilesson. Whenever this is the case, your teaching needs to become especially forceful. For this reason, you'll probably want to conduct table conferences today. You may not have the luxury of being able to invest lots of time in research. You can count on the fact that children will profit from help, and you can anticipate the sort of help they'll need.

For starters, children will need help seeing the micro-stories they can extract from these short texts. For example, if a child is writing about "Eleven" and wants to make the point that Rachel is silenced by Mrs. Price, she is apt to see only one possible story that might illustrate this, and that story encompasses the whole text of "Eleven." (Mrs. Price says she's seen Rachel wearing the sweater. Mrs. Price doesn't listen to Rachel's protests and moves on to math. Mrs. Price makes Rachel put on the sweater. Mrs. Price acts as if it is no big deal when the sweater turns out not to be Rachel's.)

You can show children that they can also regard "Eleven" as containing several different episodes, each of which shows Mrs. Price's disregard for Rachel. For example, early in the story Mrs. Price asks whose sweater it is, and even when Rachel sputters, "Not mine," Mrs. Price listens to Sylvia and not Rachel. There are other micro-stories. A bit later, Rachel tries to protest, but Mrs. Price turns to math as if the sweater question is now resolved. Even though Rachel is about to cry, Mrs. Price doesn't notice.

Then, too, children will need help retelling a sequence of actions as a story. Many will be apt to cut to the chase, summarizing rather than storytelling the event. For example, a child might write:

*When Rachel tried to tell Mrs. Price the sweater wasn't hers, Mrs. Price ignored Rachel.*

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Using Precise Words**

"Writers, can I stop you for a moment? What you've all come to realize today is that the point you want to make alters the way that you tell a story. When parts of a story match your thesis, you stretch out those parts.

"You already know that details are everything, but the point is that you retell details from the story that connect to and provide evidence for your topic sentences and thesis. If you are writing a story and want to show that a place is gloomy, and meanwhile you see that the author has described the place by saying that dark storm clouds hung low, you'd mention that detail."

You will want to let this writer know that he has just summarized—or told—rather than spinning a story—or shown. Although essayists *do* sometimes summarize pertinent bits of a text to defend a point, a wise writer recognizes the difference between a summary and a story and can produce either one.

Above all, children will need help angling their stories. A great way to build this skill, and most writing skills, is with repeated practice and revision. In this case, that will mean trying their angled story a few times. Remind kids that this is the reason they have all those pages in their booklet—for practicing and playing and trying things different ways! Each time they write, help them pause to look at what they've written, make a plan for how it could be even better, and then in their next revision try to write that better version.

Children (and teachers!) should not think of revision just as something that they save for the end of the writing process, but something that they can use before they draft

to help them develop the important parts of their essay. It can be emotionally difficult for students to make significant changes once they have a full draft in their hands, and one way to ease this difficulty is to have much of the revision happening earlier in the process, when the essay still feels flexible and open to change.

When I got to Harrison's table I walked around, looking over the shoulder of each child so I could read what they'd written so far. I noticed that most of the children had made passing references to sections of the text that supplied their ideas but they had not seemed to read those passages closely, or to think and write analytically about them. They merely said, "This part goes with my idea" without helping readers understand that the passage illustrated the claim.

Don't hesitate to ask a cluster of children to stop what they are doing to watch you work with one child. For example, I asked children to watch while I worked with Harrison, who had decided to retell the story of Lupe's dinner conversation to support the idea that Lupe overcame her difficulties through the support of her family. The excerpt from "The Marble Champ" that Harrison wanted to story-tell goes like this.

*"I'm going to enter the marbles championship."*

*Her father looked at her mother and then back at his daughter. "When is it, honey?"*

*"This Saturday. Can you come?"*

*The father had been planning to play racquetball with a friend Saturday, but he said he would be there. He knew his daughter thought she was no good at sports and he wanted to encourage her. He even rigged some lights in the backyard so she could practice after dark. (Baseball in April, Soto 2000)*

Harrison had initially written:

*For example, one dinner Lupe asks her father to come to the marble competition. "When is it?" her father asks. She said, "This Saturday." The date wasn't good for him but he decided to come anyway.*

I said, "Harrison, when I reread my stories to check whether I've angled them to support my thesis, I do this: I underline the parts of my rough draft story that directly show my big idea. Right now, could you underline the parts of your micro-story that show that Lupe overcame her difficulties through the support of her family?"

Harrison reread his writing and didn't underline anything. Then he said, "I don't know what part to underline." I asked Harrison to read each line and then stop and ask, "Does this show Lupe's family being supportive?" I turned to the rest of the group and asked them to give a thumbs up or down as Harrison reread each line, registering their vote. When Harrison finished reading, he realized that neither he nor his classmates had given a thumbs up sign to show that yes, this supported his claim. Harrison paused and said, "I get it. I need to add on to the part about the dad switching his plans to support her." In the end, this is what Harrison wrote.

*Lupe overcomes her difficulties through the support of her family. For example, one dinner, Lupe asks her father to come to the marble competition. Her father drops his fork and drops into deep thought. He had finally planned to spend that very day playing racquet ball, his favorite activity. But he looked into Lupe's eyes, thought about how important it was that she was risking entering a sports competition, and announced he would be there. Lupe grinned.*

I debriefed for the observing children. "Do you see that after Harrison realized that his point wasn't clear, he revised his writing? This time he added what he believed the characters were thinking and made sure that the micro-story goes with his claim—his idea." Then I asked each of them to reread their writing line by line, pausing to ask themselves, "Does this show my idea?" I explained to them, "This will help each of you to make sure your micro-stories, your elaboration, matches your idea." I sent them all back to work, reminding them that it may take them three to four tries.





## Connecting Stories to Big Ideas

Show students the work of a classmate, highlighting how that child moved seamlessly from storytelling to exposition.

“You already remember from our personal and persuasive essay unit that to use a story as evidence for an idea, it is important not only to angle the story, but also to unpack it. Let’s look back at Julia’s personal essay to remind ourselves how she did this so expertly. Remember, her idea was that you should seize opportunities to be courageous. Watch how the stories she includes in even just the first part of her essay all go with that idea. Here’s what she wrote in that paragraph.” (See Figure 5–2.)

*A lot of times in a lifetime you have a chance to be courageous. And when that comes to you, use it. One day, in November, my science teacher had a snake in a glass cage.*

*“Cool!” everyone said aloud.*

*“No.” I moaned secretly.*

*After class, my science teacher made me stay and at least touch the snake. I was so scared I could feel my heart pulsing in my chest.*

*“You can’t run from your fears—you have to face them,” he said. I touched the snake gently.*

*“It doesn’t seem too bad,” I thought to myself. And after a good fifteen minutes, I ended up holding the snake! Mr. Dutt passed away just a few weeks later and I was glad I had the chance to learn that important lesson from him.*

*When you use your time in the best way possible, you use it courageously.*

“Do you notice the way Julia told her story in way that popped out the point she is trying to make, but then she also told that point? She came right out and said it. You learned earlier that essay writers show *and* tell.”

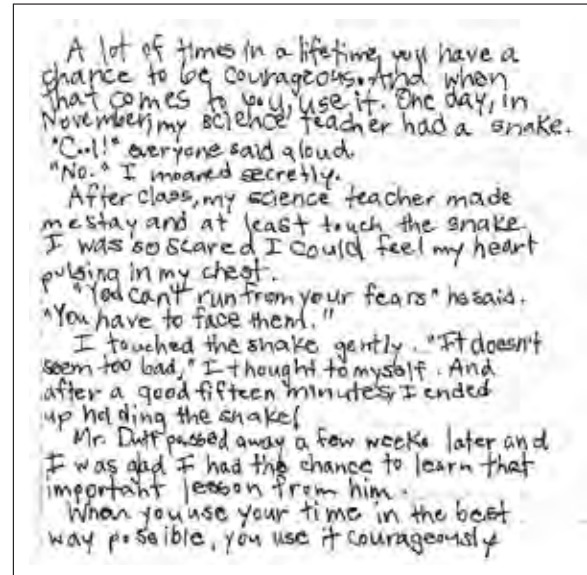


FIG. 5–2 This start to an essay from an earlier unit shows Julia using evidence to support a claim—work that can transfer to literary essay.

**Give children a few moments to try this work with their own stories, restating the main point at the end of one or two.**

"Right now, will you pull out one or two of the mini-stories you wrote today? You have probably shown your reader why the moment is important. Now *tell* your reader what you hope this moment shows. Start by saying something like 'This shows that . . .' or 'This is evidence that . . .'"

I added a bullet to the chart from our last essay unit with our new sentence starter.

When you want to give an example:

- An example that shows this is . . . or this shows that . . .
- For instance . . .
- One time . . .
- This is evidence that . . .

Raffi turned to Marie and read his mini-story.

*Gabriel is more caring than he thinks. Even though he's sitting on the stoop thinking about running away and living alone, as soon as he hears a cry he got up and started to look. When he heard it again, he walked faster. Some people would just ignore it and keep worrying about themselves, but Gabriel didn't even think about doing that. He just jumped straight up to help.*

After a second, he paused and then added,

*"This is evidence that . . . Gabriel is caring even though he acts at first like he's just tough."*

After a couple minutes of listening in and noting which students found quick success with this and which would need more practice, I called their attention back to me. "Remember that it is important to be using all you know to constantly revise your writing about the evidence. Tomorrow, as you continue writing, remember to make sure that you don't just give examples from the story to support your idea but that you come right out and *tell* your reader what you think and what the story is evidence for."

 STUDYING A LITERARY ESSAY

When writing a literary essay, it helps to be able to imagine the sort of text you're hoping to make. For homework, then, study Jill's essay on "Eleven."

*Literary Essay on "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros written by Jill*

*In my life, not everything ends up like a fairytale. I like to read books where characters are like me. They don't live fairytale lives. We have the same kinds of problems. Many people read Sandra Cisneros's essay "Eleven" and think it's about a girl who has to wear a sweater she doesn't want to wear. But I think the story is about a girl who struggles to hold onto herself when she is challenged by people who have power over her.*

*When Rachel's teacher, Mrs. Price, challenges Rachel, Rachel loses herself. One day Mrs. Price puts a stretched-out, itchy, red sweater on Rachel's desk saying, "I know this is yours. I saw you wearing it once!!" Rachel knows that the sweater isn't hers and tries to tell Mrs. Price, but Mrs. Price doesn't believe her. Rachel reacts to Mrs. Price's actions by losing herself. "In my head, I'm thinking . . . how long till lunch time, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the school yard fence, or leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it over the alley?" This shows that Rachel loses herself because she's not listening to her teacher, she's dreaming about a whole other place. It is also important to see that Rachel has all this good thinking about the sweater but when she wants to say the sweater isn't hers, she squeaks and stammers, unable to speak. "But it's not," Rachel says. "Now," Mrs. Price replies. Rachel loses herself by not finding complete words to say when Mrs. Price challenges her.*

*When Rachel's classmates challenge Rachel, Rachel loses herself. Sylvia Saldivar puts Rachel on the spot light when she says to Mrs. Price, "I think the sweater is Rachel's." Sylvia is challenging Rachel, she is being mean and she makes Rachel feel lost. Rachel cries to let her emotions out. Rachel feels sick from Sylvia. Rachel tries to cover herself up by putting her head in her sleeve. Tears stream down her face. She doesn't feel special like it's her birthday. Instead she feels lost in Sylvia's challenge.*

*In "Eleven" Rachel is overpowered by both Mrs. Price and Sylvia Saldivar and this causes her to lose herself. I used to think that when people turn eleven they feel strong and have confidence but I have learned that when your eleven you're also 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1.*

Read and reread Jill's essay. Try to let it mentor you by studying the way her micro-stories illustrate her big idea. You might start by circling Jill's thesis statement and her topic sentences. Notice where they are in her essay. Then you'll want to notice the way in which everything she writes is channeled to support the thesis and topic sentence. Notice the specific word choices she makes to help her angle her micro-stories to illustrate her big idea. And notice that after Jill tells a story from the text, she writes a sentence discussing how the story addresses her topic sentence. This sentence begins, "This shows that . . ."

Finally, look again at the micro-stories you wrote today and revise them, using what you learn from Jill's essay to help you. Be sure that, like Jill, you include a sentence that discusses how your evidence addresses your topic sentence. Your sentence, like Jill's, can begin, "This shows that . . .," and it needs to refer back to the topic sentence.





## Session 6

# Citing Textual Evidence

**IN THIS SESSION,** you'll teach students that writers use direct quotes to support their claims about a text. You'll teach them ways writers are discerning, choosing only the quotes that best support their ideas.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ Students' booklets, to be brought to the carpet, along with a pen or highlighter
- ✓ "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart (see Teaching)
- ✓ Three quotes from the mentor text that could support one of your reasons, written on separate pieces of chart paper. We use the following sentences for our essay on *Fox*:  
"And so Dog runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through Summer, through Winter." "In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other's company."  
"Magpie tries to warn Dog about Fox. 'He belongs nowhere,' she says. 'He loves no one.'" (see Teaching)
- ✓ "When Choosing a Quote, Essayists Ask . . ." chart (see Teaching)
- ✓ "Ways to Bring Quotes into an Essay" chart (see Share)

**S**KIERS HAVE DOZENS OF DIFFERENT WORDS for snow: new, fluffy snow that's perfect to ski on is called *powder*, melting snow that you slip and slide on is *mush*, hard icy snow that will cut your legs if you fall is called *crust*, and so on. Since the quality or type of snow impacts skiers' rides down the slopes, it makes sense that they have all these specialized terms for it. Children will need specialized terms for their essay writing as well. When children first learn to write about literature, they will probably talk often about the need to cite evidence (or examples) from the text. The goal will be to "give evidence." Most of your students will not yet know that, just as skiers might call on a specific set of words and phrases to refer to snow, literary essayists draw on a set of terms to help state claims and make cases in different ways. Literary essayists have a vocabulary—and a system—to help them incorporate evidence from a text into an essay.

In the preceding session, children learned that they can find bits of a text that illustrate the idea they are advancing and then retell those bits as micro-stories. Today you'll help children learn that as literary essayists, they have a palette of options for referring to the text under study. They will sometimes choose to tell a story to make a point, but other times they'll quote a section of the text to provide evidence, using the exact words of the author. Quoting not only helps to bolster the essayist's claim, but it also works to enrich the essay with the beautiful language the author has used. It is almost as if the essayist is saying, "I cannot say this better myself, so let me tell you what the author has said, or how this part of the story goes, to show you what I mean." Quoting a text is also another way youngsters learn to shift between abstract ideas and concrete details.

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:** W.4.1.b,c; W.4.9.a, RL.4.1, RL.5.1, SL.4.1, SL.4.2, SL.4.4, L.4.1.e,f; L.4.2,a,b,c; L.4.3, L.4.6





## MINILESSON

# Citing Textual Evidence

### CONNECTION

**Contextualize today's lesson by helping children understand the power of quotes to express ideas.**

"When you graduate from high school, there will be what is called a yearbook that will contain a photo of each person in your graduating class. You may have seen your mother or father's yearbook. Traditionally, right under each person's photo, there is a quote—a sentence that comes from a book or a song or a poem—that captures the essence of that person.

"Sometimes the quote will be a beautiful saying about friendship or about the joy of working hard or the importance of family. For an athlete, the quote might be, 'It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.' For someone with a big imagination, it might be 'If you can dream it, you can do it.'

"The tradition could be different. The tradition could have evolved so that people put a little picture in that space in a yearbook, or a list of accomplishments. Instead, the tradition is to include a line or two of words that say something just right about you. If we were making a yearbook right now, what quote would go under your picture?" I left a pool of silence. "Any of you have an idea?"

"I'm talking to you about quotations because as you get older, you'll find there are more grown-up expectations on you and your writing. And one of those will be an expectation that you include more direct quotations in your writing. I'm pretty sure that if you were to write a story about something your family did together, you'd include the exact words that some of your family members said to each other. Using exact quotes makes a story come to life. So it shouldn't be surprising to you when I say that as you move toward middle school and high school, it becomes just as important, when writing about texts, to directly quote those texts.

"It goes without saying that choosing the quote is a really big deal—whether it is for your yearbook photo or for your literary essay."

### ◆ COACHING

*There are lots of ways we could talk about quotations without leaving the terrain of writing about literature, but part of the challenge is to keep your teaching lively. Bill Zinsser, the author of *On Writing Well*, says the most important quality of good nonfiction writing is surprise.*

*Of course, we shamelessly take every occasion we can find to cheerlead some of the values that matter to us—a beautiful saying about friendship or about the joy of working hard. We play the violin for the importance of family as well.*

❁ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that essayists work hard to find 'just-right' quotations to include in their essays. A passage is 'just right' for citing when it provides strong evidence for a claim, making readers say, 'I see what you mean.'" As I spoke this last part, I unveiled our anchor chart with this new bullet added.

How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
  - Use thought prompts.
  - Ask questions of texts.
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions.
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence.
  - micro-stories
  - quotes

~ How to Write a Literary Essay ~

- Grow ideas about a text!
  - Use thought prompts
  - Ask questions of texts
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions:
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence
  - micro-stories
  - quotes
  - lists
  - examples
- Organize the evidence by telling the reader what it shows, using prompts like:
  - This shows that...
  - This is evidence that...
- Add transitions to glue the evidence together.

## TEACHING

**Recruit children to help you weigh and choose between several possible quotes that could serve as support for your thesis about the book *Fox*. Explicitly teach two considerations you take into account when selecting citations.**

"So in my essay about *Fox*, my thesis is that Dog is a good friend. We found a lot of evidence of that, didn't we? Remember in *Strega Nona*, how Big Anthony's house overflows with magic pasta? In the same way, *Fox* overflows with passages that support the idea that Dog is a good friend. The important thing is always to weigh which of the quotes provides the strongest evidence for our ideas. I've hung a chart that I think will help us." I unveiled the following chart.

When Choosing a Quote, Essayists Ask . . .

- Can I point to specific words or actions that support my bullet?
- Can I explain exactly how these words or actions support my bullet?

"Let's start by looking at some of the quotes I found to support my first bullet, or reason: 'Dog is a good friend because he is caring.'" I showed children three quotes I'd copied onto separate pieces of chart paper (so that I could move their order around and remove some once they were eliminated from consideration.) "Let's weigh which provides stronger evidence."

- "And so Dog runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through Summer, through Winter."
- "In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other's company."
- "Magpie tries to warn Dog about Fox. 'He belongs nowhere,' she says. 'He loves no one.'"

**Explain and demonstrate how you go about selecting between a number of possible passages that you could cite, including showing how you use the questions mentioned above.**

"What I do is, I just reread the passages I could cite, thinking, 'Which would be the strongest? Next strongest?' Will you look with me and give me a thumbs up when you've decided?" I then read each one in turn to myself, mulling over the candidates. As I did this, I narrated my thought process, saying things like "That one looks really good—wait, I should read through all of them before I decide," and "Hmm, that's a good sentence, but let me check my claim again to see if it matches."

**Mess up, deliberately, so you can show students how you check your decisions. In this instance, discover that actually, the words on the cited passage didn't exactly make the point you wanted to make.**

By now, most of the kids had their thumbs up, so I numbered them myself, ranking, "In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other's company" as the strongest piece of evidence.

"This looks like pretty strong evidence for my thesis," I said. "It shows that they're relaxing and enjoying each other's company, so they're being good friends to each other. Thumbs up if you agree that this is the strongest support for our bullet." Some, but not all, thumbs in the room went up.

"Not everybody agrees, which reminds me that instead of just jumping to the conclusion that this statement works the best, I should ask those questions about it that I'd suggested you ask as well."

*A minilesson is always meant to spotlight a specific skill, showing how to do that skill. This means that the author of the minilesson always needs to decide what to skim past and what to teach in detail. Notice here that the passages have already been collected, and they are listed on chart paper. That part is backstory, occurring off stage before the drama of this minilesson begins.*

*Weighing or ranking evidence forces children to parse and analyze the quotes against each other to determine which are the strongest. A good essayist tosses aside the weakest evidence.*

*You'll notice that I attempt to make the process visible for children. As always, to do this, I slow down a process that actually happens quickly, under the radar. I make a show of thinking aloud, hoping to convey to children that this is not an easy, one-step process. Then too, I hope children will learn a thing or two from the questions I ask myself and the ways I try out many possibilities before settling on one quote.*

*One of the things to notice is the way that a chart threads its way through a minilesson and, indeed, through a unit. If we want charts to become part of kids' repertoire, we need to make sure this happens.*

### When Choosing A Quote, Essayists Ask . . .

- Can I point to specific words or actions that support my bullet?
- Can I explain exactly how these words or actions support my bullet?

“Let me first reread the quote to underline specific words.” I read aloud, “In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other’s company.”

“What should I underline? Hmm, the words show they’re enjoying each other’s company, but actually, hold on. My bullet is ‘Dog is a good friend because he is caring.’ I’m actually not sure that this part where they’re enjoying each other’s company proves that Dog is caring. Uh-oh! This isn’t really very strong evidence for my first bullet after all!” I moved the quote off to the side.

Then I went back to my quotes and sorted them again, more quickly this time, narrating my new choices. “This last quote on the list shows what *Magpie*, not Dog, does. So that definitely doesn’t show that Dog is a good friend because he is caring. How about this one: ‘And so Dog runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through Summer, through Winter’? The specific words that support my bullet are ‘every day,’ and they support the bullet because Dog is doing what makes Magpie happy every single day, even when it’s cold and he probably doesn’t want to, because he is caring.”

#### **Debrief in ways that are transferable to another text and another day.**

“So, as you can see, even a few minutes of working to sort quotes is helping us learn so much about how to find effective quotes. It helps to weigh which is best and to make sure there are specific words or phrases that match your bullet—your reason—and that you can explain how the passage supports your overall thesis.”

## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

### **Set students up to choose quotes for their own literary essays, repeating the same process you demonstrated to find the best supporting evidence.**

“So that you get a chance to practice weighing possible quotes, selecting one that best makes your case, why don’t you take one of the bullets from your essay and quickly skim your text to find and underline a few quotes that you might use as evidence for one of your bullets. Then, ask yourself those two questions,” I pointed to them, “so that you can choose from among the quotes the one you think provides the strongest evidence. After a few minutes, you will have a chance to share your thoughts with your partner.”

While students started this work, I moved among them, keeping an eye out for students who seemed as if they’d benefit from small-group instruction after the minilesson. As I did this, I also voiced over, saying things like, “As you underline,

*Almost always, when wanting to show students how to do something, it helps to mess up and self-correct because this allows for more explicit instruction.*

*If children are quoting whole paragraphs of text from the stories to support their claims, you may decide to teach the ways to use only exact, meaningful quotes to support their arguments. When children are first learning to quote, they may be tempted to replace their own writing with large portions of the text they’re writing about. Explain that using quotes often involves going back to the text and taking just bits of it to support, not replace, your argument. Often this involves a bit of summarizing, interspersed with portions of quotes.*

think to yourself, do you need all of that quote or only part of it?" "Great, a lot of you are already weighing your second quote." And "Ooh, I see Parker looking up at the chart! Don't forget to say *why* you think the quote supports your idea."

Seeing that most of the students were almost ready, I invited them to turn and talk. The children talked for a minute or so, explaining and justifying the choices they'd made.

## LINK

**Send writers off to work, reminding them of the full array of potential activities they can be deciding between.**

A few minutes later, I called them back together, saying, "So, writers, today some of you might still be filling your booklets up with angled stories. Others of you will be ready to start collecting quotes that support your bullets, or reasons. When you are doing this, remember that you don't have to settle for just any old quotes. You can choose really effective ones! One good strategy is to start by choosing a handful of possible quotes for each bullet and then to pick the best ones by thinking about which give the strongest evidence for that bullet and why."







## CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

# Evaluating Evidence for a Claim

WHEN YOU DO SOME QUICK ASSESSMENTS DURING THE MINILESSON, this allows you to intervene more efficiently to provide some children with the leg-up that they are going to need. During the minilesson, you found that some children would benefit from hands-on practice evaluating evidence for a claim. If you pull those children into a small group, you can use the students' own work as a forum for teaching. For example, you can start by writing one student's bullet onto a Post-it and then creating two columns under that Post-it: one labeled "supports" and one, "does not support." If you or the writer jots a few quotes from the story onto additional Post-its, those can then be categorized into the proper category, asking the students to discuss which category each quote fits. After students have the hang of doing this, you can divide the categories into: "strong support," "some support," and "no support."

As you confer, consider the problems kids are getting themselves into, and when you find a fairly widespread problem, use that as your mid-workshop teaching point. Jessica, for example, had found evidence to support her point: "Gabriel is lonely because he doesn't have company at home." The evidence was this sentence: "On the stoop of a tall building of crumbling bricks and rotting wood sat a boy." The problem was that the fact that Gabriel sat apart from the rest of the group didn't seem to prove her bullet.

I asked Jessica why she had chosen that quote, and she happily started to explain, "Well, okay, so Gabriel is sitting on crumbling bricks and rotting wood, and that probably means his family is poor. And if his family is poor, they probably work a lot of hours to try to make money, so they probably are pretty tired at the end of the day and they don't have time to hang out with him. And he probably can't have friends over because he's too embarrassed about how his building is all falling apart and everything, so that would make him extra lonely when he's at home."

I complimented the way she had stuck to her bullet, focusing her thinking around ways to support her idea and not letting herself get distracted or off-topic in her thinking. "But can I give you a tip?" I asked, and she nodded.

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

#### Making Sure Evidence Speaks for Itself

"Writers, can I have your eyes and ears? Jessica and I were just talking, and we just realized that sometimes you find a passage from the text that can, in a way, sort of, kind of, be used to support a claim. For example, you *might* be able to stretch things to say that the passage that describes Dog and Magpie relaxing in the mouth of the cave *sort of* supports the reason that Dog is a good friend to Magpie because he's caring. After all, Dog wouldn't sit with Magpie if he didn't care for her, and being a caring friend is linked to caring for someone, in a way, kind of.

"But if it takes a whole lot of explaining and fancy footwork to show that a passage from the text illustrates a concept, then that passage is not the best possible one to cite. So, writers, right now, can you look back at the quotes you've chosen to support your bullets and check to make sure they are strong enough evidence that they don't require a whole boatload of explaining?"

I told her, "When writers look for effective quotes, they try to find ones that don't need a string of *maybes* and *probably statements* to explain why they support the bullet. Your explanation for why the sentence matches your reason had a lot of steps where you were guessing, and they were guesses that made sense, not just random crazy guesses. But still, someone else could say that maybe his family isn't poor, maybe they just live in an old house. Or maybe they are poor because they don't have jobs at all, so they have lots of time to spend with him. And if they said that, you wouldn't be able to prove them wrong. So, when explaining why a quote is effective, one *maybe* or *probably* is fine, but having a whole series of them should caution you that maybe you've strayed too far into guessing. Can you find another quote to use as evidence that you could explain without needing so many *maybes* or *probably statements*?"

After a moment of looking, Jessica decided on "His name was Gabriel and he wished for some company" as more effective evidence that Gabriel was lonely at home. I gave her a thumbs up, and she copied it into her booklet for later use.



SHARE

## Transitional Phrases for Introducing Quotes

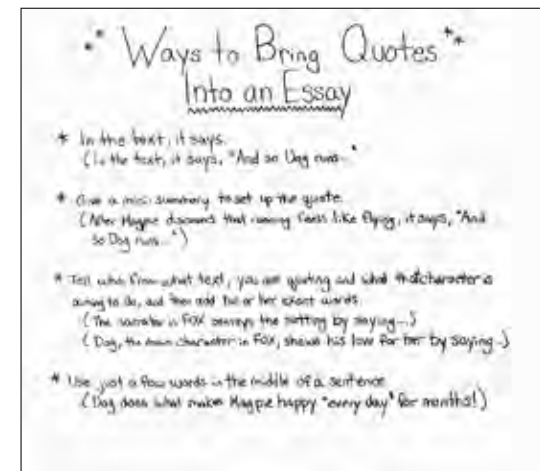
Show students that they can introduce quotes into their texts in a variety of ways by offering them many different options.

"You've been doing delicate, careful work, finding and selecting quotes. They're like jewels because they add so much sparkle to an essay. And like jewels, part of the work is to build a setting for each quote so that you show it off in your essay. Many of you have a phrase that you use as a setting for each of your quotes. Each time you want to reference the text, you say the same phrase to lead into the quoted passage—like perhaps you say, each time, 'In the text, it says . . .' That's a great setting for a quote.

"But here is the thing. You seem much more professional if you don't use the same setting for each quote since each quote connects to what you are trying to say in a different way. So while 'In the text, it says . . .' should be in your list of options, it makes a big difference if you have a few other options as well." I revealed a chart of transitional phrases and asked one child to read it aloud while giving children a minute to read it over.

### Ways to Bring Quotes into an Essay

- In the text, it says . . .  
(In the text, it says, "And so Dog runs . . .")
- Give a mini-summary to set up the quote.  
(After Magpie discovers that running feels like flying, it says, "And so Dog runs . . .")
- Tell who, from what text, you are quoting and what that character is aiming to do, and then add his or her exact words.  
(The narrator in Fox conveys the setting by saying . . .)  
(Dog, the main character in Fox, shows his love for her by saying . . .)
- Use just a few words in the middle of a sentence.  
(Dog does what makes Magpie happy "every day" for months!)



Ask students to try out the transitional phrases you've given them with their own quotes, sharing how they might introduce quotes in their essays.

"Right now, in your booklets, try out one of these strategies for setting a quote into your essay. Be ready to share your work in a minute!"

A minute later, I conducted a symphony share, tipping my imaginary baton toward one student, then another, starting with a few students whose work would, I knew, be exemplary and set the tone for the others.

Celia read, "Julian tried a cartwheel and fell over. He was embarrassed. He looked at Gloria to see if she was laughing but she wasn't. 'It takes practice,' she said."

John was next. "In the text, Clover says, 'I wonder why that girl always sits on that fence.'"

Then Emily read, "The narrator showed that Lupe did not give up by saying that Lupe 'tried again and again.'"

After a handful of kids had shared, I addressed the group again. "There are lots of other ways to set a quote into an essay. If you invent another way, would you add it to our list of possibilities? And remember that as you get older, you are going to be expected to quote directly from texts that you read—and that will add as much to your essays as quoting from characters, or making people talk, has added to your stories."

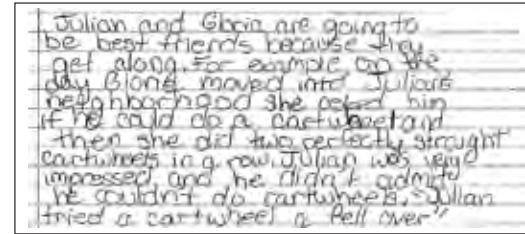


FIG. 6-1 Celia adds a quote.

## SESSION 6 HOMEWORK

### ● USING QUOTATIONS AS EVIDENCE

Read Jill's essay again and notice that she has used a quotation that is a complete sentence—it doesn't rely on Jill's words to prop it up. It stands alone, even though it has ellipses showing that a section of the sentence has been left out. Jill could have *instead* written with a partial quote, lifting just a phrase from "Eleven," like Rachel thought it was disgusting to put on a sweater that was "full of germs" that weren't even hers. That phrase, *full of germs*, isn't a full sentence. It is just a few words that support Jill's claim. As you saw today in our share, essayists use both kinds of quotations.

Tonight, take a few of the quotes that you have copied into your booklets today. For each quote, try at least two different possibilities for how you could put it into your essay. At least one should use the full quote, with a sentence before or after to set it up or explain its importance, and at least one should use just a few words of the quote, like the "Eleven" example above.

## Using Lists as Evidence



**W**HEN THIS NATION WAS YOUNG, rhetoric was part of each school's core curriculum. Children grew up with as firm a foundation in oration as in multiplication. In school, they learned to articulate their ideas loudly and clearly, using their voices to gather and command attention and to rally listeners to action. And now, in the age of the Common Core State Standards, there is a heightened awareness that students must not only write well, but also speak well.

In the past, children delivered their essays at speaking contests and learned to write in ways that would appeal to the ear. Perhaps for this reason, parallelism is a crucial part of many essays—and many speeches. Think of the greatest, most memorable speeches you can, and you'll probably find yourself remembering lines that were repeated: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country" and "I have a dream."

Essay writing remains inexorably linked to public speaking. "As new weight is given to the presentation of knowledge and ideas, students will increasingly be asked to write in ways that are memorable and powerful for both a reader and a listener."

Today's work with lists invites children to use the parallelism of the list structure to bring rhetorical power to their writing. This session also invites children to write with attentiveness to sound as well as to meaning.

**IN THIS SESSION,** you'll teach students that writers not only use stories and quotes as evidence, they also use lists to support their claims.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart (see Connection)
- ✓ Song snippets from [www.jango.com](http://www.jango.com) (see Connection)
- ✓ Song lyrics (see Connection)
- ✓ Student's essay that includes several different lists (see Teaching)
- ✓ Your own essay on the mentor text, with a sample sentence that could be the start of a list (see Active Engagement)
- ✓ Students' booklets, to be brought to the meeting area for the share

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:** W.4.1.b,c; W.4.9.a, RL.4.1, SL.4.1, SL.4.3, SL.4.4, L.4.1.d,f; L.4.2, L.4.3



## MINILESSON

# Using Lists as Evidence

### CONNECTION

Put today's minilesson into context by saying you'll teach students about a third ingredient they can put into their essays. Along with stories and quotes, they can write with lists.

"Writers, you've already learned about two things you can put into your essays—mini-stories and quotes. Today I'm going to remind you about a third ingredient. (I feel like we're making pizza and I'm teaching you the different toppings—tomato sauce, pepperoni, and cheese.) From your study of personal and persuasive essays, you should already know that in addition to writing with stories and quotes, you can write with lists!" I unveiled our anchor chart, with this new item added.

### ◆ COACHING

Connections that begin with reviewing the work that the class has been doing are important but can be dull. The reference to pizza makes this connection more memorable for children. If I felt my students weren't engaged in my lessons I could have asked, "Doesn't it feel like we're making pizza?" That would invite a response from them. Sprinkling in little ways for children to be more active is important.

#### How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
  - Use thought prompts.
  - Ask questions of texts.
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions.
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence.
  - micro-stories
  - quotes
  - lists

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  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence.
  - micro-stories
  - quotes
  - lists
  - examples
- Organize the evidence by asking the evidence what it shows, using prompts like:
  - This shows that
  - This is evidence that
- Add transitions to glue the evidence together.



"And the good news is that you already know a lot about lists. Do you know the Charlie Brown sayings? Happiness is a warm puppy. Happiness is learning to whistle. Happiness is two kinds of ice cream. Happiness is . . . what?"

"Or do you know that song from *The Sound of Music*, about a few of my favorite things?" I began singing the first verse to them. Or Pink's song, 'Perfect,' has a repeated refrain so it's a bit list-y. How does it go?" I started in on the first line of the chorus, and quickly the students joined in.

"As a writer, it is your job to ask, 'How did authors do it?' I mean—we could look around this room and list stuff we see: I see desks, chairs, a rug, books, papers. Somehow, I don't think the list we just wrote will be one that millions of people know by heart. What's so special about the Charlie Brown list, the *Sound of Music* list, and the list in the refrain of 'Perfect'? What makes a list effective?"

"You already know that in a list, there are words that repeat: 'When the dog bites, when the bee stings.' There are also, usually, teeny tiny details: Happiness is a warm puppy."

### ❁ Name the teaching point.

"But today I want to teach you that lists, like songs or poems, are written for both the ear and the heart. They need to sound good *and* mean a lot. Writers say them aloud as they write to make them sound good. And the writers think, 'How can I bring together a surprising combination of items so that the whole list makes an effect on the reader?'"

## TEACHING

### Point out that lists are powerful, so they are best used to emphasize important ideas.

"Because lists are powerful, you wouldn't want to include lists in your essay that are about tangential, unimportant things. You might want to list all the ways that Dog is a good friend. This way, your list would help you to further the point you wanted to make, providing evidence for your claim."

### Give an example of a child who used lists in several ways and places within an essay, suggesting how the lists were made as well as sharing the finished lists.

"In Celia's essay about the story 'Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend,' Celia knows that it is important to show that the two characters respect each other to provide evidence for her claim that Julian and Gloria are going to be best friends, so she used a list to emphasize that point. She thought of all the times when they show respect for each other. She then wrote a sentence about one of those times and copied some parts and changed other parts of that sentence to make a short list."

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SESSION 7: USING LISTS AS EVIDENCE

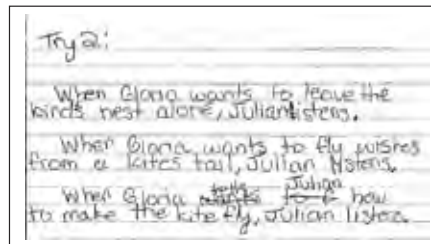


FIG. 7-2 Celia's second attempt at a list

You could also play a snippet of the song. You can get songs from the *Sound of Music* from [www.jango.com](http://www.jango.com)

Of course, you'll want to reference a song that is popular with your children. Often song lyrics have a repeating line that ends with a list. You can search online for song lyrics and print them out. Having the lyrics on hand is also good if you are shy about singing in front of your students!

This session introduces a skill that has turned out to be more challenging for youngsters than I ever anticipated. You'll invent your own adaptations.

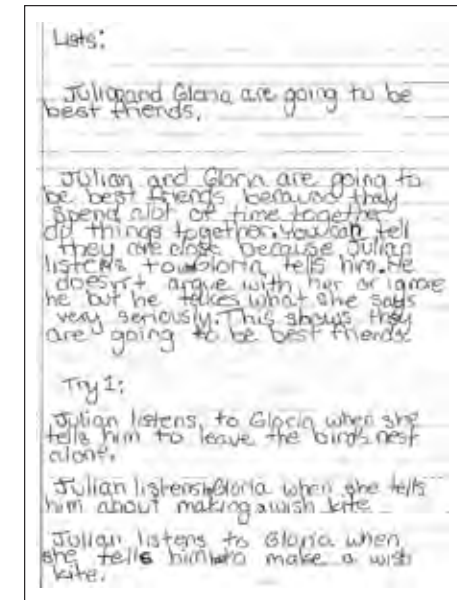


FIG. 7-1 Celia's first attempt at a list

"Celia also wanted to show that the two children do lots of things together, which is her next bullet, so she wrote a list about that. Again, she sort of made a pile of examples of things they did together, and then Celia wrote a first sentence and worked from there, repeating a lot of the sentence, trying to make it sound right. In the end, she wrote:

*Gloria and Julian peek at the bird's nest together, get red Kool-Aid mustaches together, fly a kite together, and wish to be best friends together.*

### Debrief by emphasizing the process of writing a list.

"The trick to writing lists within your literary essay, then, is to first decide on what the message is that you really want to say, and then collect tiny specific examples that will provide evidence for whatever it is that you want to say. Then start writing, usually writing a whole sentence about the example that comes first in the book. After you write that first sentence, read it aloud to yourself and try to figure out how to turn the one sentence into a list that sounds good.

"For example, this sentence conveys an important idea—that Gloria is happy when she is with Julian—which is another reason that supports the claim that Julian and Gloria are going to be best friends."

*Gloria seems happy to be seeing a bird's nest with Julian.*

"We could then collect other tiny examples of what makes Gloria happy when she is with Julian and just say the starting phrase (Gloria seems happy . . .), then add one tiny example and then another."

## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

### Recruit students to write a list for the essay on the class mentor text, scaffolding their work in writing the first sentence.

"Now, let's try out how this would go for our Fox essay. One of our bullets, or reasons, is 'Dog is a good friend because he doesn't give up on his friends.' Let's try to build a list to support the claim that Dog is a good friend because he doesn't give up on his friends.

"Let's all think for a bit and when you have an idea put your thumb up." I waited until about half the class had their thumbs up and then I asked, "Will someone start us off with one example, and then we'll build off that one example?"

One child piped up with, "Dog is a good friend because he doesn't give up on his friends. He doesn't give up on Magpie when he realizes that she'll never fly again."

"Hmm . . . How shall we write that?" I paused, allowing the children to think along with me and then I wrote. "Dog is a good friend because he doesn't give up on Magpie when he realizes she'll never fly again." I underlined the first portion of it, saying "So we'll repeat this part, and we'll need a list of specific examples that can follow the repeating

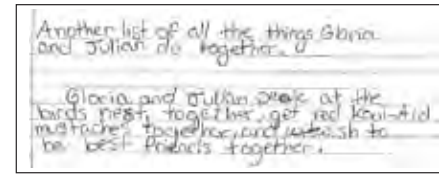


FIG. 7-3 Celia's third attempt at a list

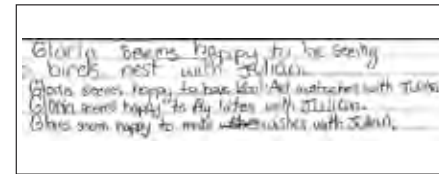


FIG. 7-4 Celia's final and best list

*Much of education includes learning to apply what one already knows to new situations. When children learn to plan an essay by considering whether they could support their thesis statement with reasons and evidence, they can apply this to lots of different situations.*

part. Can you and your partner brainstorm some examples, and then try saying them aloud, remembering that a good list not only makes sense, but it also sounds good so that it has an effect on the reader?"

Soon afterward I called on some children and before long, we'd constructed the list.

*Dog is a good friend because he doesn't give up on his friends. He doesn't give up on Magpie when he realizes that she'll never fly again. He doesn't give up on Magpie when she sleeps for a week. He doesn't give up on being Fox's friend even when Magpie warns him.*

## LINK

**Remind the students of the options they have when collecting materials to support their thesis.**

"Writers, today and whenever you write literary essays, you'll draw on lots of different options as you gather material in your booklets. Some of you may draft and revise stories, rewriting those stories so they are angled to make your point. Some of you will spend time collecting quotes and setting them, like jewels, into your essays. Others of you will try your hand at writing lists for each of your supporting ideas. Or you might even want to look for specific examples to use as evidence. I'm going to add *examples* to our chart as well so you have the full range of your options displayed on our anchor chart."

### How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
  - Use thought prompts.
  - Ask questions of texts.
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions.
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence.
  - micro-stories
  - quotes
  - lists
  - examples



## CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

# Asking and Answering Questions on the Page

THE FACT THAT CHILDREN ARE WRITING ABOUT THEIR READING doesn't change the nature of your conferences. You'll still tend to begin the conference by researching what the youngster is already working on for you to decide what aspect of that work you want to support and what aspect you want to extend. When I drew a chair alongside Richard, who was writing an essay on Cynthia Rylant's story "Slower Than the Rest," he showed me his booklet and explained to me, "I am proving that Leo matches the turtle 'cause they are both slow. I'm not sure if it is a summary or a story because it is a little of both." I knew what he was referencing—the story is about a child—Leo—who is a slow learner and about Leo's relationship with a turtle, Charlie, with whom he identifies. Richard showed me what he had written (see Figure 7-5), and I read it, thinking, "What is this young writer trying to do?"

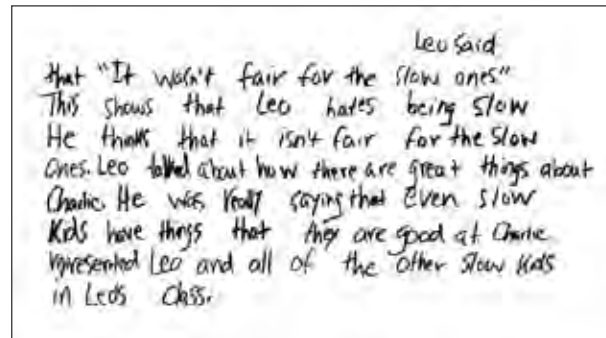


FIG. 7-5 Richard's notebook entry

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Deciding on the Weak Spots in an Argument and Collecting to Strengthen Those Spots**

"Writers, can I have your eyes and your attention please? The writer Philip Lopate said something I want to share with you in his preface to a book entitled *Best Essays of 1999*. Lopate read thousands of essays to select the very best for his anthology, and from all that reading, he learned that very few things can be said about *all* essays. Essays are different, one from another. Some contain long narratives; some take inventory (like a shopkeeper takes inventory of merchandise, listing what he or she has). But Lopate does say that *all* essays are both arguments and collections.

"I've been thinking about that because you guys are natural at doing both things. Just yesterday, you argued very convincingly for an extra-long recess. And you are born collectors—that's clear from the pins and badges on your backpacks.

"Because there are two things all essayists do—collect and argue—and because you are all good at both of those things, I was thinking that you might want to look over the booklets of material you have collected around each of your supporting ideas,

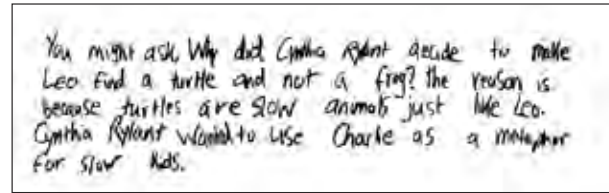
and you might want to think, 'What *else* could I collect that might help me make my case?' And you might want to think, 'Have I aced my argument? Have I provided so much supporting evidence that no one would dream of trying to counter my claim?'

"The interesting thing is that actually, arguing and collecting are parts of the same thing. In the end, an essayist is like a trial lawyer like on the TV show *Law and Order* or movies like *Legally Blonde*. You will go before a jury (yours will be a jury of readers), and you will argue for your claim. Adam will argue that Mrs. Price took her fury out on Rachel. Celia will argue that Julian and Gloria are en route to becoming BFFs. Whatever your argument, each of you will need to present evidence to be convincing. To get that evidence, to win your argument, you need to collect: to collect ideas, facts, information, observations. Your time for collecting is almost over. You'll soon be going before your jury. Quickly reread the booklet of material you have gathered in support of each of your claims, and decide where the weak spots are in your arguments, and decide on your plan of action going forward."

I asked Richard what he thought of what he'd written, and he said it was good, but he had more stuff to say and hadn't figured out how to put it—whether it was a list or a summary or whatever. Clearly, Richard was torn between wanting to simply write his ideas and wondering what form or genre he was working within.

"Richard," I responded, "I'm really glad that you are saying to yourself, 'What is this that I'm writing? Because you are right that this is not really much of a story, is it? If it was a story, then you'd be telling about what one character did first, next, next—and you aren't doing that, are you? The other thing is that it *does* help to always have a sense of the kind of thing you are writing, because then you can think, 'How does a person do that kind of thing well?' For example, if you were writing a list now, you'd know what makes a good list. So you are right to wonder, 'What *am* I making?'"

"And the truth is that you are making something we haven't talked about yet in this class, but it is a kind of writing that essayists do a lot. I think what you are doing is you are having a conversation with yourself on the page. And specifically, you are asking thoughtful questions and then answering them. And to me, it looks like the question you are asking is 'Why did the author put the turtle, Charlie, in the story? What does the turtle have to do with the story about Leo and other slow kids?'"



You might ask Why did Cynthia Rylant decide to make Leo find a turtle and not a frog? The reason is because turtles are slow animals just like Leo. Cynthia Rylant wanted to use Charlie as a metaphor for slow kids.

FIG. 7-6 Richard is having a conversation with himself on the page.

"That's an important question that a reader can ask: Why did the author do this? And it seems to me that you have asked that question, and you are sharing your answer to it as well. You could even come right out and ask that on the paper: 'Why did Cynthia Rylant decide to make Leo find a turtle?' Essayists do that. They take questions and put them right into their essays." This is what Richard eventually wrote (see Figure 7-6).

Later, when I saw Richard's work, I brought his work to a small group to let them know that conversations with oneself can also go into essays and that it often helps to ask and then answer provocative questions, like "Why might the author have . . . ?"







## SHARE

# Reading Lists Aloud

**Ask children to practice reading a list they've written to themselves and then to a partner.**

"Writers often read their work aloud, so they can hear the words they've written, to hear how they sound—and lists especially are meant to be read aloud. So let's do this share like a symphony. Each of you, and your lists, will be a part of the music we create. So take a second to look through your booklets and find a list you wrote today that you really like.

"First, you need to practice reading one of your lists in your head, reading your list aloud *really* well. You won't want to read it like this." I read the first part of my list very quickly, running the words together as if they were one word: "'Gabriel is lonely when he sits on the stoop outside his building. Gabriel is lonely when he eats his butter sandwich at school.' Instead, I will want to read my list as if the words are worth a million dollars." This time I read my list slowly and rhythmically, giving each word weight.

"Would you work with your partner? Give each other help and advice, so each person's words sound as wonderful as they can be.

"Writers, here's the thing. As you read your list aloud, it very often happens that you find ways to change it so the words sound even better. So read it again, this time with pen in hand, and if you find a way to make the list sound even better, then change it around. If not, move on to another list."

*Not only is this share lovely and exciting for students, but it also helps them develop a felt sense for parallelism in structuring language. Developing this felt sense makes teaching parallelism later much easier. Often, powerful language and powerful structures are easier to feel than to explain.*

*You may find that one child's list resembles another's. This is not surprising, considering they are working with the same short texts.*

## SESSION 7 HOMEWORK

### ● SAYING ESSAYS ALOUD

Singers warm up by singing some scales. And writers warm up by talking in the voice, the persona, they want to assume. Sometimes before I write a minilesson or a letter to your parents, I practice by saying the words aloud to myself. When you wrote personal narratives, you practiced by storytelling to each other, and now that you will be writing a literary essay, you need to practice by using your professor voice.

Tonight, write your thesis and your first topic sentence. Then use your professor voice to fast-write a little lecture on that topic. Do the same for your second topic sentence. As you do this, pretend you are actually giving a little course on your topics. Bring your papers to school. They will be first drafts of your essay!

## Session 8

# Putting It All Together

## *Constructing Literary Essays*



**W**HEN I WAS YOUNGER, a singing group named the Byrds sang a song—“Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season)”—and the refrain talked about the turning seasons and how there is a time for everything.

That sentiment means a lot to those of us who are writers—because in writing, as in farming, there is a rhythm to our work. The farmer plants, waters, weeds, and harvests, and the writer plans, gathers, outlines, drafts, revises, and edits. This ancient rhythm is in our bones; we remember it like a river remembers its seasonal rise and fall.

I hope the rhythm of writing is in your students’ bones now as well. I hope that your students remember it and can sense that the time has come to turn, turn, turn. Today you’ll help your children perform that miracle of miracles. They’ll begin with a pile of notes and that will turn, turn, first into a writer’s draft. “Which piece of evidence best matches my claim?” they’ll ask. “What stays? What goes?”

From reading over their notes, writers will begin to develop an image of their finished essay, but that image will come also from writers engaging in that special kind of reading that writers do. They’ll read the work of another author—one who has written something similar to the essay they’ll be writing. As they read, they’ll ask, “How has she constructed this text? What has she done with her text that I, too, can do with mine?” And they will annotate that text for themselves.

Throughout the room, your children will tack their material together. With scissors and tape, they’ll place one entry next to another, constructing an essay. They have a feel for how to do this by now. It’s in their bones.

Today, then, students engage in a hands-on manipulative process of constructing an essay. Soon they’ll abbreviate this process, with most of the work happening in the mind’s eye. Soon students will go from reading and thinking to outlining and writing an essay. But for now, you support the physical, manipulative process of constructing meaning.

**IN THIS SESSION**, you’ll teach students some of the ways that writers create drafts out of collections of evidence. You’ll also teach children ways to study published literary essays to find structures for their own literary essays.

### GETTING READY

- ✓ An sample literary essay written by another student, perhaps an older student, or one that you’ve written, to use as a mentor text (see Teaching and Active Engagement)—one for each student
- ✓ “How to Write a Literary Essay” chart (see Teaching, Active Engagement, and Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- ✓ “When You Want to Give an Example” chart from Session 5 (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- ✓ Enlarged copy of the Opinion Writing Checklist, Grades 4 and 5 📄
- ✓ Individual copies of the Opinion Writing Checklist, Grades 4 and 5, one for each student
- ✓ Scissors and tape

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:** W.4.1.a,b,c,d; W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.10, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, SL.4.1, SL.4.3, L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.6



## MINILESSON

# Putting It All Together

## *Constructing Literary Essays*

### CONNECTION

**Celebrate that children are ready to construct their literary essays, and remind them that they already know how to check and organize the materials in their folders or booklets.**

“Writers, today’s the day! Essayists look over all their materials, select the parts that will work best, and then decide how to cut and combine those parts so they fit together to make an essay. Do you remember that when I wanted to write an essay about my father being my best teacher, I reread a story I’d written and chose the parts that especially showed my father being a good teacher?”

“Do any of you remember doing similar work—rereading some evidence that you’d collected and thinking, ‘If I want to use this story or this example to make my point, which part is especially compelling and convincing?’ Do you remember thinking, ‘I can cut this passage down because just this one bit relates.’ We spent a lot of time, during that personal and persuasive essay unit, underlining the parts of stories, examples, and lists that seemed like they were the best evidence for the case we were putting forward.”

“You all know a lot about how writers take raw materials and piece those materials together to form a draft. Before you begin to piece together your essay, let’s look at another author’s essay and examine how it is constructed.”

### ❖ Name the question that will guide the inquiry.

“Today, instead of a regular minilesson, we will do an inquiry. Remember we did this earlier in the year when we wondered what made for good freewriting? Today the question we will be researching is what makes for a good literary essay? And what, exactly, does a writer do to be a powerful essayist?”

### ◆ COACHING

*It is efficient to recall prior instruction, allowing students to stand on the shoulders of that learning and to connect what they know already with what they are learning. Whenever you can do this, it is wise to do so.*

*It is a bit hard to rally children to step into the role of being literary essayists. Still, it’s important to try to help children know that they are not just producing a text; they are also becoming the kind of person who makes this sort of text.*

## TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Set up writers to study a mentor text, letting them know that they should be thinking about the inquiry question.

"I'm going to suggest that you do that special kind of reading that writers do before they make a draft, looking over this draft of a literary essay and asking, 'What has she done that I, too, could do?' This essay is written by a sixth-grader, Katherine, and many teachers have said that it is a very effective essay. It is worth studying." I distributed Katherine's essay to each child and displayed an enlarged copy on the overhead projector. "Writers, you'll notice that Katherine has written an essay off of *Fox* also." It will be interesting to study an essay off of a text we all know so well.

"Writers, while I read the essay aloud, notice the different components, or parts, of the essay, labeling what you notice. Partner 1, will you specifically study the bits the author has tacked together to construct her introduction and last body paragraph? And Partner 2, will you do the same for the middle portion of the essay? Think, 'What did the author do that I could try?' and afterward we'll talk about it."

I read with intonation that highlighted the thesis and its relationship to the supporting ideas as well as the link between evidence and an idea. (The emphasis, in the essay below, is our own.) After reading just a paragraph, I paused to say, "Annotate—mark up—your text."

In the book, *FOX* by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks, the character, Dog, is a good friend. He is a good friend because he is caring, because he never gives up on his friends, and because he sees the good in people.

One reason Dog is a good friend is because he is caring. Dog cares for Magpie's body when she is hurt during the fire, he cares for her emotions when he tries to cheer her up, and he cares for Fox when he needs a place to stay. At the beginning of the book, Dog is a caring friend to Magpie when her body is hurt from a fire. For example, Dog holds Magpie in his mouth, and his mouth is described as "gentle." Dogs' mouths contain sharp teeth that are normally used to rip birds apart. But Dog instead uses his mouth to carry Magpie to safety. This shows he is caring, not hurtful. Also, the text says "Magpie does not want his help," but Dog stays and helps to tend her burnt wing anyway. All of this evidence shows that Dog is a caring friend.

Dog is also a good friend because he doesn't give up on his friends. Dog tries many times to help Magpie. For instance, when Dog first saves Magpie, they both know she will never fly again. Dog tries to cheer Magpie up by saying, "I am blind in one eye and life is still good." Magpie rejects his kindness by saying "An eye is nothing" and going off to hide in the shadows of the cave. But Dog does not give up on Magpie. Later in the story, when she wakes from her long sleep, he "persuades her to go with him to the riverbank." Magpie sighs because she does not want to go, but Dog convinces her. This shows that he won't give up on trying to make her happy!

SESSION 8: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

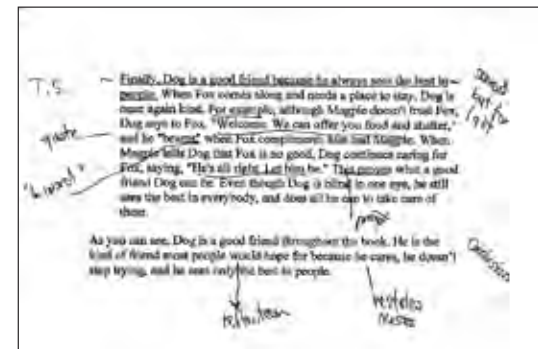
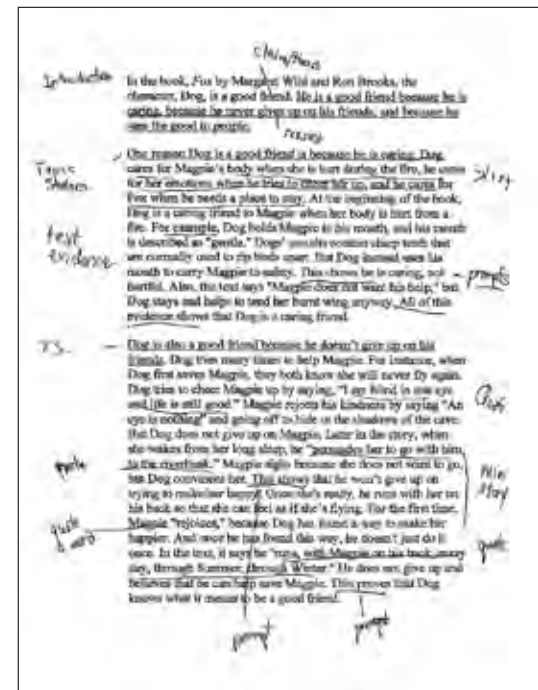


FIG. 8-1 Students annotate Katherine's essay.

Once she's ready, he runs with her on his back so that she can feel as if she's flying. For the first time, Magpie "rejoices," because Dog has found a way to make her happier. And once he has found this way, he doesn't just do it once. In the text, it says he "runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through Summer, through Winter." He does not give up and believes that he can help save Magpie. This proves that Dog knows what it means to be a good friend.

Finally, Dog is a good friend because he always sees the best in people. When Fox comes along and needs a place to stay, Dog is once again kind. For example, although Magpie doesn't trust Fox, Dog says to Fox, "Welcome. We can offer you food and shelter," and he "beams" when Fox compliments him and Magpie. When Magpie tells Dog that Fox is no good, Dog continues caring for Fox, saying, "He's all right. Let him be." This proves what a good friend Dog can be. Even though Dog is blind in one eye, he still sees the best in everybody, and does all he can to take care of them.

As you can see, Dog is a good friend throughout the book. He is the kind of friend most people would hope for because he cares, he doesn't stop trying, and he sees only the best in people.

**Cull from students their observations of the mentor text, marking the component parts of the text (thesis, list, topic sentence, etc.).**

I marked my own copy of the essay, signaling that I expected children to be doing the same. After a moment, I channeled students to share and listened in as partners talked to each other.

Richard announced to his partner, "I noticed quotes." Celia nodded.

"Guys, if you look closely at a quoted section of the text, you can notice *how* the author quoted that part," I said.

Soon the children were noticing instances when the cited text was just a word and other instances when it was several sentences. "What ideas do you have for why Katherine would quote the parts that she did?" I asked, and the children launched into a discussion of that. I gestured for them to think more and left to crouch down next to another group.

**Collect students' observations.**

After a bit, I called the writers back together and asked a few students to say, quickly, what they noticed.

Harrison shared, "I noticed that the essay included a list." When I gestured for him to elaborate, he read from the essay, "'Dog cares for Magpie's body when she is hurt during the fire, he cares for her emotions when he tries to cheer her

*Of course, literary essayists often structure essays differently than this one. For example, essayists often entertain points of view other than their own, writing—"Some might argue differently . . ."—and then providing a counterargument. Then, too, essayists often compare and contrast one text to other texts or to life. The actual components you teach aren't especially crucial, and I encourage you to make your own decisions. And make your own sample for children to study!*



up, and he cares for Fox when he needs a place to stay.” And then he added that he noticed that Katherine included important, not unimportant things, in the list.

Interested, I said to the rest of the class, “Thumbs up if you noticed that too.” and as students put their thumbs up, I murmured, “I’ll label this part of the essay with the word *list*,” and then I said, “Are there other lists?” and scanned the paper.

After deciding that no, there weren’t other lists, I gave a marker to half a dozen other students, asking them to jot what they noticed in the margins of the essay. Soon the essay bore the labels of text evidence that matched reason, topic sentence(s), mini-story, quote, thesis statement, elaboration, and conclusion. We also added to our “How to Write a Literary Essay” anchor chart by including how a writer unpacks her evidence for a reader.

*Teachers, notice that I have decided to have students share their ideas, which I know can consume a lot of time. My biggest priority is to protect writing time, so I make a big effort to keep the discussion focused.*

### How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
  - Use thought prompts.
  - Ask questions of texts.
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions.
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence.
  - micro-stories
  - quotes
  - lists
  - examples
- Unpack the evidence by telling the reader what it shows, using prompts like:
  - This shows that . . .
  - This is evidence that . . .

### ~ How to Write a Literary Essay ~

- Grow Ideas about a text!
  - Use thought prompts
  - Ask questions of texts
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis!
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  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect Evidence
  - micro-stories
  - quotes
  - lists
  - examples
- Unpack the evidence by telling the reader what it shows, using prompts like:
  - This shows that . . .
  - This is evidence that . . .
- Add transitions to glue the evidence together!

## LINK

**Send writers off to make a plan for how their essay will go and then write a draft.**

“Before Katherine wrote her essay, she wrote a quick outline that she followed as she wrote. She sketched out how her essay would go, jotting key words such as *introduction, thesis, new paragraph, topic sentence, list from page 3 of booklet, or example from page 2 of booklet.*”

“The start of her outline for her essay looked something like this.”

Introduction:

Thesis

Body paragraph 1:

Topic sentence

List from page 3 from my booklet

An example with a quote p. 2

Write more about it (prompts)

“So, writers, once you have your essay planned, spend the bulk of today writing your draft. Remember always that one way you can get ready to draft is to read the work of other writers, asking, ‘What has she done that I, too, could do?’”





## CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

# Making Parts into a Cohesive Whole

**D**ON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOU FEEL you have to hustle among your children today, helping them plan their outlines and draft their essays. You'll want to remind children to draw upon prior experience with personal and persuasive essays. You might say, "Remember, you have to make sure that your evidence actually matches your reason." Or "If it is hard to find a way to use some writing you've done in your draft, it might be that your writing is great but that it doesn't advance the claim you are putting forward in your essay. It can be a great bit of information and yet not 'go.'"

In addition to saying prompts and reminders to the whole class, you can also influence what the whole class does by identifying selected students who are doing what others could be doing and then making a fuss over them. For example, you might hear a student saying aloud a planned paragraph, trying the information following one sequence and then another. "I look at the way Jessica is rehearsing how one of her body paragraphs might go. She's saying the paragraph in one way, then in another way. I bet that will make her writing stronger."

Chances are good that some of your students will need help letting go of some of the evidence they've collected. Sometimes students think that the longer the essay, the better it is, but actually they can include so much elaboration that their major points get overwhelmed. "Choose the most compelling, best-written material," I might say. "Decide which evidence will be especially convincing."

As you touch base with one table full of youngsters after another, be on the lookout for writers who find it difficult to outline their planned essay. If a few children are laboring the outline, you may decide to help them produce one quickly, because the last thing you want is for energy for the draft to be detoured into the outline. You might say to a small group of children, "Read over what you collected for your first body paragraph and star the best-written material from the collection. Now label the things you have starred, #1, #2, and so forth, based on the order in which you plan to write that material. That'll work fine as an outline." No matter what, you won't want the process of making an outline to require more than five minutes or so of a writer's time.

SESSION 8: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

### MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Piecing Together Evidence**

"Writers, a predictable problem that writers encounter when they draft is how to piece together their evidence. Harrison and I were just talking about transitional words like *Another example . . .*, *Not only did she . . . but she also . . .*, *Furthermore . . .* that helped him move from one piece of evidence to another. I remembered this chart on transitional words and phrases that helped us." I held the chart up and read it to the class.

#### When You Want to Give an Example

- An example that shows this is . . .
- For instance . . .
- One time . . .
- This is evidence that . . .

"So, writers, remember, you can use this chart for help with elaboration or transitions as you write your drafts today. And I'm going to add to our 'How to Write a Literary Essay' anchor chart so that we don't forget that essayists glue their evidence together using transitions. Remember, time is ticking away, so push yourselves to get as much done as you can on your draft today."

(continues)

83

When children are cutting and pasting pieces together from across their booklets to make their body paragraphs, it is predictable that they won't use transitional sentences to flow from one piece of evidence to another, or from a list to a micro-story. Therefore, you'll need to show them how to write sentences that link their bits into a cohesive whole.

You may choose to carry Katherine's essay with you as you confer and work with small groups. You can bring the essay out to help students by suggesting they study her first body paragraph. Ask them to look for and underline the transitional words she uses. Explain to these writers that transitional words and phrases smooth the connections between thoughts. Readers don't feel tossed from one idea to the next. Students could also make a list of transitional words or phrases (*otherwise, so, therefore, on the other hand, but, and however*). Remind them of transitional words or phrases they used in this unit and in the personal essay unit (*for example, another example, one time, for instance, in addition to, another, and this shows that*). Then have the children look at their own writing and revise by adding those very important transitions.

*One reason Dog is a good friend is because he is caring. Dog cares for Magpie's body when she is hurt during the fire, he cares for her emotions when he tries to cheer her up, and he cares for Fox when he needs a place to stay. At the beginning of the book, Dog is a caring friend to Magpie when her body is hurt from a fire. For example, Dog holds Magpie in his mouth, and his mouth is described as "gentle." Dogs' mouths contain sharp teeth that are normally used to rip birds apart. But Dog instead uses his mouth to carry Magpie to safety. This shows he is caring, not hurtful. Also, the text says "Magpie does not want his help," but Dog stays and helps to tend to her burnt wing anyway. All of this evidence shows that Dog is a caring friend.*





## SHARE

# Rereading as a Means to Revise and Then Setting Goals

**Advise children of some predictable problems writers encounter when constructing essays. Ask children to help each other reread and revise with their checklists as guidance.**

“Would you and your partner look at first one person’s writing and then the next person’s writing? Reread the sections that you assembled today and, as you read, check for a couple of the predictable difficulties that essayists often get themselves into.

“First of all, sometimes essayists find that they have collected so much evidence that each paragraph in their essay could be three pages long! Harrison, for example, has at least two pages of evidence showing that Lupe overcame her difficulties through hard work. If you’re in Harrison’s predicament, you can be very selective, choosing only the most compelling evidence.

“Meanwhile, however, keep in mind that you can write several paragraphs to support one of your ideas. So Harrison’s thesis is that Lupe overcomes her difficulties through hard work and support from her family. If he wanted to do so, Harrison could write one paragraph showing that Lupe got support from her family early on, and then another paragraph showing she got support again later. Or Harrison could tell in one paragraph about the support she received from her father, and in another paragraph about the support she received from her brother. So in the end, you may have two or three paragraphs supporting each of your topic sentences.

“Then, too, it is important to reread a draft checking for clarity. A stranger should be able to read the essay and understand it. Sometimes, for example, a reader will be

*The Opinion Writing Checklist, Grades 4 and 5 can be found on the CD-ROM.*

**Opinion Writing Checklist**

	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>STARTING TO</b>	<b>YES!</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>STARTING TO</b>	<b>YES!</b>
	<b>Structure</b>				<b>Structure</b>			
<b>Overall</b>	I made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support my reasons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I made a claim or thesis on a topic or text, supported it with reasons, and provided a variety of evidence for each reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Lead</b>	I wrote a few sentences to hook my readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information. I stated my claim.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I wrote an introduction that led to a claim or thesis and got my readers to care about my opinion. I got my readers to care by not only including a cool fact or jazzy question, but also figuring out what was significant in or around the topic and giving readers information about what was significant about the topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					I worked to find the precise words to state my claim; I let readers know the reasons I would develop later.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Transitions</b>	I used words and phrases to glue parts of my piece together. I used phrases such as <i>for example</i> , <i>another example</i> , <i>one time</i> , and <i>for instance</i> to show when I was shifting from saying reasons to giving evidence and <i>in addition to</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>another</i> to show when I wanted to make a new point.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I used transition words and phrases to connect evidence back to my reasons using phrases such as <i>this shows that . . .</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					I helped readers follow my thinking with phrases such as <i>another reason</i> and <i>the most important reason</i> . I used phrases such as <i>consequently</i> and <i>because of</i> to show what happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					I used words such as <i>specifically</i> and <i>in particular</i> in order to be more precise.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



unclear over the pronouns. ‘Who is *he*?’ the reader might wonder. Every writer needs to be able to shift from writing to reading, to reread your work looking for places that will be confusing, and then to revise those places for clarity.

“And, lastly, writers, you can also check your essay against the fourth- and fifth-grade Opinion Writing Checklist that you are very familiar with now, since you used it during our personal and persuasive essay unit. Remember that as you continue to draft and revise your essays, you should be thinking about all the qualities of this genre that your readers will expect you to have in your writing.

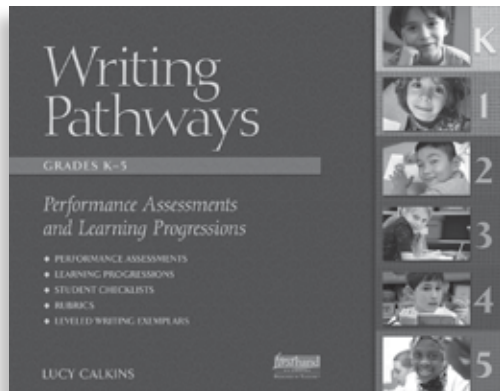
“So, writers, take some time to reread your own and each other’s work, checking to be sure you’ve selected the most compelling and pertinent evidence, written in well structured paragraphs, that you’ve been clear, and that your writing has the qualities of opinion writing that are on our checklist. Then you’ll spend some time alone setting goals for the work you will do tonight to revise your draft so that you can come in tomorrow with your essay finished and so that it represents all that you know how to do. Please make sure to write these goals and include them in your essay folders.”

## SESSION 8 HOMEWORK

### REVISING FOR STRENGTH AND CLARITY

Tonight you have an opportunity to revise the draft that you assembled in school today. Revise it first for power. You are writing an essay that aims to be persuasive. You’ll be most convincing if every portion of your essay is fresh, new, and compelling. So read over the bits of evidence you’ve collected, and decide whether some sections of it seem redundant or unnecessary. Do what any skilled writer would do—and cross those out. Then look at the evidence that is compelling and convincing enough to remain in your essay, and think, ‘How can I make this even stronger? Even more convincing?’ Finally, double-check your draft for clarity. Ask someone from home to listen, and read your draft aloud. Notice where you stumble as you read or when your words no longer feel like they are reaching your listener. Revise these places, aiming to be precise, clear, and convincing!





*Writing Pathways* is designed to help you provide your students with continuous assessment, feedback, and goal setting. Organized around a K–5 continuum of **learning progressions** for opinion, information, and narrative writing, this practical guide includes **performance assessment, student checklists, rubrics, and leveled writing exemplars** that will help you evaluate your students’ work and establish where students are in their writing development.

*“The assessment system that undergirds this curriculum is meant as an instructional tool. It makes progress in writing as transparent, concrete, and obtainable as possible and puts ownership for this progress into the hands of learners. This system of assessment demystifies the Common Core State Standards, allowing students and teachers to work toward a very clear image of what good work entails.”*

An exemplar piece of writing for each writing genre shows how one piece of writing could develop according to the learning progressions established by the Common Core State Standards.

## Grade 4

The writer began with a few sentences to “hook” the reader. He may have done this by asking a question, explaining why the topic matters, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information.

The writer separated sections of information using paragraphs.

The writer shows evidence of deliberate word and detail choice. He repeated and emphasized key words and used precise details to draw the reader into his line of thought.

The writer used a convincing tone.

The writer wrote an ending that doesn’t just restate, but reflects on the claim. It reminds the reader of his point and suggests a solution for the problem.

Many people think that recess is fun for kids no matter what but I think it is boring because there isn’t anything fun to do. Right now at recess a lot of kids just sit on the grass because they don’t want to swing or play jump rope.

The first reason why we should have football is because it is good exercise. When you play, you get to run, throw, and catch. For instance, when I was playing football last week Anthony had the ball and we all had to run after him and try to get the ball to make a touchdown. My football coach says, “Football is a great workout.” We should have football because it’s good exercise.

Another reason we should have football is because everyone can play football. I play with my brothers. Sometimes my sister plays. Sometimes my dog catches the ball! This shows that everyone can play. Also, if you don’t know how to play it is an easy sport to learn. You can just start playing. All you need is a ball and a yard. We already have a yard at recess, we just need a ball. Our class says that five of us have balls at home that we can bring in. This shows that everyone can play.

The last and most important reason that we should have football is because it is fun for everyone. Even people that are just watching have fun! For instance, last weekend at Central Park I saw a game going on and the players were running and catching and throwing and giving each other high fives. And the fans were jumping up and down and screaming their heads off. We should have football because it is fun for everyone.

Recess is supposed to be fun. If we have football at recess we will get more exercise, play more, and have more fun. When we were little we played on the swings or went down slides. But now everyone just sits around. It would be better if we could play football.

## Opinion Writing

The writer stated his claim.

The writer used words and phrases to glue parts of his piece together. He used phrases such as *for example, another example, one time, and for instance* (to show a shift from reasons to evidence) and *in addition, also, and another* (to make a new point).

The writer chose reasons that are convincing to the reader. He included examples and information to support those reasons. This information might be from a text, from personal experience, or from background knowledge.

The writer used periods to fix run-on sentences.

When writing long, complex sentences, the writer used commas to make them clear and correct.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Opinion Writing Checklist

	Grade 4	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!	Grade 5	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	<b>Structure</b>				<b>Structure</b>			
<b>Overall</b>	I made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support my reasons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I made a claim or thesis on a topic or text, supported it with reasons, and provided a variety of evidence for each reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Lead</b>	I wrote a few sentences to hook my readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information.  I stated my claim.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I wrote an introduction that led to a claim or thesis and got my readers to care about the topic. I got my readers to care by not only stating a fact or jazzy question, but also providing significant information in or around the topic that was important to the topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					I worked to find the precise words to support my claim; I let readers know the rest of my piece would develop later.			
<b>Transitions</b>	I used words and phrases to glue parts of my piece together. I used phrases such as <i>for example</i> , <i>another example</i> , <i>one time</i> , and <i>for instance</i> to show when I was shifting from saying reasons to giving evidence and <i>in addition to</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>another</i> to show when I wanted to make a new point.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I used transition words and phrases to connect evidence back to my reasons using phrases such as <i>this shows that . . .</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					I helped readers follow my thinking by using words such as <i>another reason</i> . I used phrases such as <i>because of</i> to show the relationship between my reasons.			
					I used words such as <i>order</i> to be more clear.			

Crystal-clear checklists that spell out the genre-specific benchmarks students should be working toward help students set goals and self-assess their work.

### Opinion Writing Checklist (continued)

	Grade 4	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!	Grade 5	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
<b>Ending</b>	I wrote an ending for my piece in which I restated and reflected on my claim, perhaps suggesting an action or response based on what I had written.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I worked on a conclusion in which I connected back to and highlighted what the text was mainly about, not just the preceding paragraph.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Organization</b>	I separated sections of information using paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I grouped information and related ideas into paragraphs. I put the parts of my writing in the order that most suited my purpose and helped me prove my reasons and claim.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Development</b>				<b>Development</b>			
<b>Elaboration</b>	I gave reasons to support my opinion. I chose the reasons to convince my readers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I gave reasons to support my opinion that were parallel and did not overlap. I put them in an order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Opinion Writing Checklist (continued)

	Grade 4	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!	Grade 5	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
<b>Craft</b>	I made deliberate word choices to convince my readers, perhaps by emphasizing or repeating words that would make my readers feel emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I made deliberate word choices to had an effect on my readers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	If it felt right to do so, I chose precise details and facts to help make my points and used figurative language to draw the readers into my line of thought.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I reached for the precise phrase, metaphor, or image that would convey my ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I made choices about which evidence was best to include or not include to support my points.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I made choices about how to angle my evidence to support my points.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I used a convincing tone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When it seemed right to do so, I tried to use a scholarly voice and varied my sentences to create the pace and tone of the different sections of my piece.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Language Conventions</b>				<b>Language Conventions</b>			
<b>Spelling</b>	I used what I know about word families and spelling rules to help me spell and edit. I used the word wall and dictionaries to help me when needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I used what I knew about word patterns to spell correctly and I used references to help me spell words when needed. I made sure to correctly spell words that were important to my topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Punctuation</b>	When writing long complex sentences, I used commas to make them clear and correct.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I used commas to set off introductory parts of sentences, for example, <i>At this time in history</i> , and <i>it was common to . . .</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I used periods to fix my run-on sentences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I used a variety of punctuation to fix any run-on sentences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					I used punctuation to cite my sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The units teach students the CCSS' grade-appropriate skills for both their own grade level and for the upcoming grade. That is, the fourth-grade opinion writing unit supports both the fourth- and the fifth-grade standards. This is done in part because the expectation level of the CCSS for middle school is exceedingly high. For an entire class of students to reach the sixth- and eighth-grade CCSS expectations when they reach those grade levels, teachers need to accelerate students' writing development in the early grades, when the Common Core Standards in writing do not keep the same fast pace as the reading standards.

Rubrics for each kind of writing establish clear learning benchmarks and help teachers monitor student progress throughout the stages of development.

	Grade 2 (1 POINT)	1.5 PTS	Grade 3 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 4 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 5 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
<b>STRUCTURE (cont.)</b>								
<b>Transitions</b>	The writer connected parts of her piece using words such as <i>also</i> , <i>another</i> , and <i>because</i> .	Mid-level	The writer connected his ideas and reasons with his examples using words such as <i>for example</i> and <i>because</i> . He connected one reason or example using words such as <i>also</i> and <i>another</i> .	Mid-level	The writer used words and phrases to glue parts of her piece together. She used phrases such as <i>for example</i> , <i>another example</i> , <i>one time</i> , and <i>for instance</i> to show when she wanted to shift from saying reasons to giving evidence and <i>in addition to</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>another</i> to show when she wanted to make a new point.	Mid-level	The writer used transition words and phrases to connect evidence back to his reasons using phrases such as <i>this shows that</i> . . . . The writer helped readers follow his thinking with phrases such as <i>another reason</i> and <i>the most important reason</i> . To show what happened he used phrases such as <i>consequently</i> and <i>because of</i> . The writer used words such as <i>specifically</i> and <i>in particular</i> to be more precise.	
<b>Ending</b>	The writer wrote an ending in which he reminded readers of his opinion.	Mid-level	The writer worked on an ending, perhaps a thought or comment related to her opinion.	Mid-level	The writer wrote an ending for his piece in which he restated and reflected on his claim, perhaps suggesting an action or response based on what he had written.	Mid-level	The writer worked on a conclusion in which he connected back to and highlighted what the text was mainly about, not just the preceding paragraph.	
<b>Organization</b>	The writer's piece had different parts; she wrote a lot of lines for each part.	Mid-level	The writer wrote several reasons or examples why readers should agree with his opinion and wanted to at least	Mid-level	The writer separated sections of information using paragraphs.	Mid-level	The writer grouped information and related ideas into paragraphs. He put the parts of his writing in the order that most suited his purpose and helped him prove his reasons and claim.	
								TOTAL

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Rubric for Opinion Writing—Fourth Grade</b>								
	Grade 2 (1 POINT)	1.5 PTS	Grade 3 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 4 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 5 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
<b>STRUCTURE</b>								
<b>Overall</b>	The writer wrote her opinion or her likes and dislikes and gave reasons for her opinion.	Mid-level	The writer told readers his opinion and ideas on a text or a topic and helped them understand his reasons.	Mid-level	The writer made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support her reasons.	Mid-level	The writer made a claim or thesis on a topic or text, supported it with reasons, and provided a variety of evidence for each reason.	
<b>Lead</b>	The writer wrote a beginning in which he not only gave his opinion, but also set readers up to expect that his writing would try to convince them of it.	Mid-level	The writer wrote a beginning in which she not only set readers up to expect that this would be a piece of opinion writing, but also tried to hook them into caring about her opinion.	Mid-level	The writer wrote a few sentences to hook his readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information. The writer stated his claim.	Mid-level	The writer wrote an introduction that led to a claim or thesis and got her readers to care about her opinion. She got readers to care by not only including a cool fact or jazzy question, but also figuring out what was significant in or around the topic and giving readers information about what was significant about the topic. The writer worked to find the precise words to state her claim; she let readers know the reasons she would develop later.	



	Grade 2 (1 POINT)	1.5 PTS	Grade 3 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 4 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 5 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>								
<b>Elaboration*</b>	The writer wrote at least two reasons and wrote at least a few sentences about each one.	Mid-level	The writer not only named her reasons to support her opinion, but also wrote more about each one.	Mid-level	The writer gave reasons to support his opinion. He chose the reasons to convince his readers.  The writer included examples and information to support his reasons, perhaps from a text, his knowledge, or his life.	Mid-level	The writer gave reasons to support her opinion that were parallel and did not overlap. She put them in an order that she thought would be most convincing.  The writer included evidence such as facts, examples, quotations, micro-stories, and information to support her claim.  The writer discussed and unpacked the way that the evidence went with the claim.	(X2)
<b>Craft*</b>	The writer chose words that would make readers agree with her opinion.	Mid-level	The writer not only told readers to believe him, but also wrote in ways that got them thinking or feeling in certain ways.	Mid-level	The writer made deliberate word choices to convince her readers, perhaps by emphasizing or repeating words that made readers feel emotions.	Mid-level	The writer made deliberate word choices to have an effect on his readers.  The writer reached for the precise phrase, metaphor, or image that would convey his	(X2)

\* Elaboration and Craft are double-weighted categories: Whatever score a student would get in these categories is worth double the amount of if student meets standards in Elaboration, then that student would receive 6 points instead of 3 points.

	Grade 2 (1 POINT)	1.5 PTS	Grade 3 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 4 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 5 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
<b>LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS</b>								
<b>Spelling</b>	To spell a word, the writer used what he knew about spelling patterns ( <i>tion, er, ly, etc.</i> ).  The writer spelled all of the word wall words correctly and used the word wall to help him figure out how to spell other words.	Mid-level	The writer used what she knew about word families and spelling rules to help her spell and edit.  The writer got help from others to check her spelling and punctuation before she wrote her final draft.	Mid-level	The writer used what he knew about word families and spelling rules to help him spell and edit. He used the word wall and dictionaries to help him when needed.	Mid-level	The writer used what she knew about word patterns to spell correctly and she used references to help her spell words when needed. She made sure to correctly spell words that were important to her topic.	
<b>Punctuation</b>	The writer used quotation marks to show what characters said.  When the writer used words such as <i>can't</i> and <i>don't</i> , she put in the apostrophe.	Mid-level	The writer punctuated dialogue correctly with commas and quotation marks.  While writing, the writer put punctuation at the end of every sentence.  The writer wrote in ways that helped readers read with expression, reading some parts quickly, some slowly, some parts in one sort of voice and others in another.	Mid-level	When writing long, complex sentences, the writer used commas to make them clear and correct.  The writer used periods to fix her run-on sentences.	Mid-level	The writer used commas to set off introductory parts of sentences, for example, <i>At this time in history, and it was common to . . .</i>  The writer used a variety of punctuation to fix any run-on sentences.  The writer used punctuation to cite his sources.	
								TOTAL

Teachers, we created these rubrics so you will have your own place to pull together scores of student work. You can use these assessments immediately after giving the on-demands and also for self-assessment and setting goals.

If you want to translate this score into a grade, you can use the provided table to score each student on a scale of 0-4.

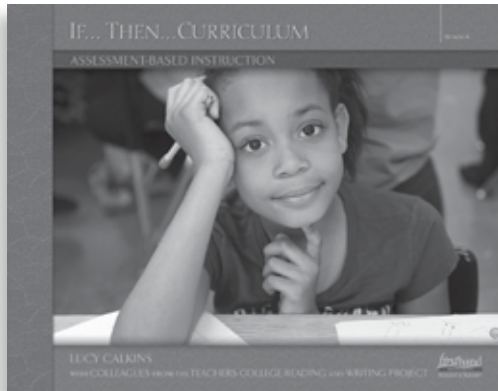
**Scoring Guide**

In each row, circle the descriptor in the column that matches the student work. Scores in the categories of Elaboration and Craft are worth double the point value (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 instead of 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, or 4).

Total the number of points and then track students' progress by seeing when the total points increase.

Total score: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Points	Scaled Score
1-11	1
11.5-16.5	1.5
17-22	2
22.5-27.5	2.5
28-33	3
33.5-38.5	3.5
39-44	4



In addition to the four units of study, the grade 4 series provides a book of if... then... curricular plans. *If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction, Grade 4* supports targeted instruction and differentiation with seven alternative units of study for you to strategically teach before, after, or in between the core curriculum based on your students' needs. This resource also includes If... Then... Conferring Scenarios that help you customize your curriculum through individual and small-group instruction.

***“The quality of writing instruction will rise dramatically not only when teachers study the teaching of writing but also when teachers study their own children’s intentions and progress as writers. Strong writing is always tailored for and responsive to the writer.”***

## **ALTERNATE UNIT**

### **Information Writing: Writing about Topics of Personal Expertise**

IF your students are struggling readers and writers or have not had much experience in writing about topics that require research, THEN you might want to teach this unit prior to *Bringing History to Life*.

**Information Writing**  
*Writing about Topics of Personal Expertise*

**RATIONALE/INTRODUCTION**

The Common Core State Standards highlight the importance of information (or explanatory) writing, describing this as writing that is designed to “examine a topic and convey information and ideas clearly.” In information writing, the driving structure is apt to be categories and subcategories: topics and subtopics that are signaled with headings and subheadings and with accompanying information portals, including glossaries; text boxes or sidebars; and diagrams, charts, graphs, and other visuals. If you have cycled through the second- and third-grade units on information writing, your students will now be well positioned to write information texts about topics that are research-based. The fourth-grade volume *Bringing History to Life* assumes your students have the body of knowledge in information writing to do the job of writing texts on the American Revolution—a job that requires the acquisition, processing, and restructuring of outside information.

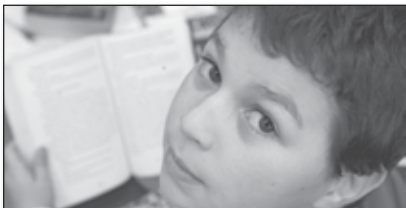
If your students, in an on-demand assessment, demonstrate that they cannot introduce a topic clearly, separate it into subtopics, and organize their writing so that appropriate information is grouped together inside their subtopics, then you may want to teach this unit before embarking on *Bringing History to Life*. In this unit, you’ll give children the opportunity to strengthen their information writing skills by writing about areas of personal expertise—their hobbies. In this way, you free yourself (and your teaching) to focus predominantly on the structuring of information texts, not research.

You’ll channel students to work toward creating lively, voice-filled, engaging information books about topics in which they are deeply invested.

Whatever the form of nonfiction writing, a key component of this genre is structure, and a good portion of your teaching will focus on this important element of writing. According to CCSS W.4.2a, fourth-grade information writers should be able to group related information in paragraphs and sections and include formatting (e.g., headings) when needed. Additionally, CCSS W.4.2c urges fourth-graders to work toward creating cohesive structures in their information writing by using linking words and phrases as a

INFORMATION WRITING

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## The Literary Essay

*Equipping Ourselves with the Tools to Write Expository Texts that Advance an Idea about Literature*

### RATIONALE/INTRODUCTION

The fourth-grade book *The Literary Essay: Writing about Fiction* is a unit of study designed to teach students to develop and defend ideas about literature. The unit helps students write literary essays that develop strong interpretive theses about literature, are well organized, use textual evidence efficiently to support a claim, and focus on characters and their traits. They progress from simpler, more straightforward literary essays to those built around more complex theses to compare-and-contrast essays.

The implications for this work are big, and if your state tests measure a child's ability to respond to literature, the stakes are high. It is far easier to write a well-structured, cohesive essay about a topic of personal expertise or interest than about literature. Writing to defend claims about literature requires close reading, attention to literary craft, and the ability to cite and defend relevant textual evidence. For this reason, many of you may decide to expose children to literary essay writing in two separate units, beginning first with this unit (a shorter, more basic introduction to the literary essay) and then moving to *The Literary Essay: Writing about Fiction*.

This unit aims to make reading a more intense, thoughtful experience by equipping them with tools they need to write expository essays that analyze a piece of literature. This unit relies on children's prior experiences with writing, suggesting they do similar work—only this time, they'll work to defend an essay about a text.

### MANDATES, TESTS, STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards emphasize the importance of reading closely to determine what a text says not only explicitly but also implicitly. By fourth grade, students are expected to draw inferences and details from citing specific details and examples to support that claim (RL.4.1).

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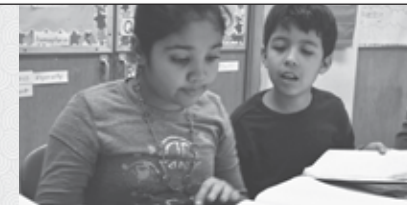
IF ... THEN

### ALTERNATE UNIT

#### The Literary Essay: Equipping Ourselves with the Tools to Write Expository Texts that Advance an Idea about Literature

IF your students have not had a lot of experience writing about what they've read, THEN you will want to teach this unit after *Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays* and before *The Literary Essay: Writing About Fiction*.

## Journalism



### INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE

Teachers who have taught this unit report to us with glee the remarkably high engagement of their students, as well as their productivity and increased focus as writers. You could teach a unit on journalism in such a way as to achieve a variety of goals. This particular spin on the unit helps students learn to write information texts quickly, to revise purposefully and swiftly, and to write from positions of thoughtful observation within their community. The unit imagines that you will teach your class first to write concise, focused reports that tell the who, what, where, and when with a sense of drama. A typical news report might feature headlines such as "Spider Gets Loose from Science Lab" or "Tears During Dodgeball."

Later in the unit, you'll support students writing news stories with more independence, helping them get a firm grasp on this, and then you'll up the ante, setting your students up to become involved in deeper investigative journalism projects. Within this portion of the unit, you'll teach them to conduct interviews and collect observation notes, to ask questions, to ponder the meaning of everyday happenings, and to write in ways that suggest significance. Investigative pieces, in contrast to news stories, may have titles such as "Spiders Get a Bum Rap at P.S. 4" or "Dodge Ball Teaches Toughness."

### A SUMMARY OF THE BENDS IN THE ROAD FOR THIS UNIT

**In Bend 1 (Generate News Stories)**, children will learn the basics of journalism writing. They'll learn that journalists observe a newsworthy story and then report on it by telling the "who," "what," "where," and "when." They'll learn the importance of choosing precise details that convey the facts of the story while also hooking the reader, and they'll have a chance to revise their writing, paying attention to word count and word choice and aiming to write lean accounts.

JOURNALISM

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### ALTERNATE UNIT

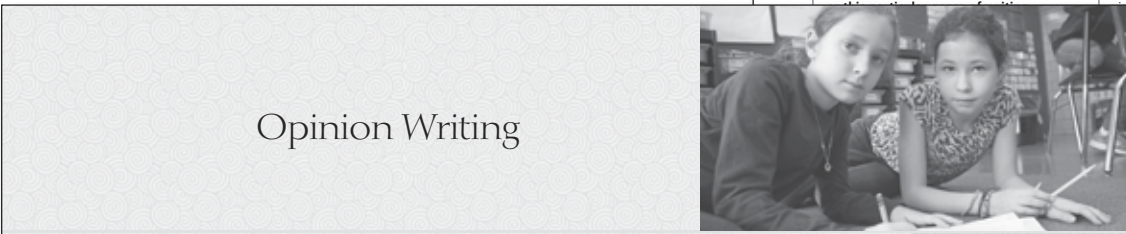
#### Journalism

IF your students are ready for more challenging work in opinion writing, THEN you may want to teach this unit, giving your students the opportunity to hone their skills at writing articles, observing, and gathering information before selecting carefully what they put on the page.



*“Despite the uniqueness of each child, there are particular ways they struggle, and predictable ways you can help. We can use all we know about child development, learning progressions, writing craft, and grade-specific standards to anticipate and plan for the individualized instruction our students are apt to need.”*

If ...	After acknowledging what the child is doing well, you might say ...	Leave the writer with ...
<p><b>Supports are not parallel or equal in weight.</b> This writer has developed a thesis and supports. While all the supports may support the writer's overall claim, they are not parallel. For instance, when arguing that "dogs make great friends," the writer may have suggested that this is because (A) they always listen to you, (B) they play with you, and (C) one time I was sad and my dog cuddled with me. Supports A and B are both reasons or ways that dogs can make great friends. Support C is an example of <i>one time</i> a dog made a good friend. This writer needs help identifying places where one or more supports are not parallel and/or are not equal in weight to the others.</p>	<p>As a writer, you want each part of your essay to be about equal in weight. What I mean by this is that all your supports should prove your overall claim <i>and</i> they should be something you can elaborate on with several examples. Today, I want to teach you that writers look back over their supports and ask, "Are these all equal in size?" One way they test out this question is by checking to see if they can give two to three examples for each support. If they can't, they have to revise the supporting reason to make it bigger.</p>	<p>Do you have examples to prove each of your supports? Support _____ Example #1: Example #2: Support _____ Example #1: Example #2: Support _____ Example #1: Example #2:</p>
<p><b>The writer is new to the writing workshop</b></p>	<p>As a writer, it can be particularly hard to write well if you don't have a mental picture, of what you hope to produce. Today, I want to teach you that one way writers learn about the kinds of writing they produce is by studying mentor texts. They read a mentor text enjoying it as a piece of writing. Then, they read it again, this asking, "How do opinion pieces seem to go?" They label what notice and then try it in their own writing.</p>	<p>Writers use mentor texts to help them imagine what they hope to write. They:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the text and enjoy it as a piece of writing.</li> <li>2. Ask, "How do opinion pieces seem to go?"</li> <li>3. Label what they notice.</li> <li>4. Try some of what they noticed in their own writing.</li> </ol>
	<p>Paragraph is like a signal to a reader. It says, "I just made an important point. Now I'm moving on to something else." Paragraphs give writers an opportunity to take in evidence part by part, reason by reason. Readers expect that opinion writers will separate their reasons in paragraphs, with one section for each reason. Writers reread their work to make note of when they've moved from one reason to another, and to put a paragraph there.</p>	<p>Opinion writers use paragraphs to separate their reasons. Each paragraph has:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reasons + Evidence</p>



## Opinion Writing

If ...	After acknowledging what the child is doing well, you might say ...	Leave the writer with ...
<p><b>Structure and Cohesion</b></p> <p><b>The introduction does not forecast the structure of the essay.</b> The writer has made a claim and supported it with reasons, but there is no forecasting statement early on in the essay that foreshadows the reasons to come. Instead, it seems as if the writer thought of and wrote about one reason, then, when reaching the end of that first body paragraph, thought, "What's another reason?" and then raised and elaborated upon that reason. He is ready to learn to plan for the overarching structure of his argument and forecast that structure in the introduction.</p>	<p>You have definitely learned to make a claim in your essay and to support that claim with reasons. There is one big step you need to take, though, and that is to let your reader know how your essay will go from the very beginning, in the introduction. Today, I want to teach you that opinion writers forecast how their writing will go. They do this by stating their claim in the introduction and then adding on, "I think this because ..." Then they list the reasons that they will write about in the body of their piece.</p>	<p>Writers use the introduction to forecast how their opinion pieces will go.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State your claim. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I think ..."</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Tell your reader why your claim is true. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "One reason I think ... is because ..."</li> <li>• "Another reason I think ... is because ..."</li> <li>• "The final reason I think ... is because ..."</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Supports overlap.</b> In this instance, the writer has developed supporting reasons that are overlapping or overly similar. While this may pose few problems now, the writer will struggle when the time comes to find examples to support each reason (because the examples will be the same!). For example, if a student argues, "Dogs make the best pets," she may provide the following reasons: they like to play games, they cheer you up, and they are great at playing fetch. Playing fetch and playing games overlap, and you'll want to help this student find another, different, reason why dogs are great pets.</p>	<p>Sometimes, when writers develop supporting reasons for their thesis, they find that one or more of them overlap. What I mean by this is that they basically say the same thing! Today, I want to teach you that writers look at their supporting reasons with a critical eye, checking to see if any overlap. One way they do this is by listing the examples they'll use for each paragraph. If some of the examples are the same, then the reasons are probably too similar!</p>	<p>Are your supporting reasons too similar? Test them to find out!</p> <p>Support _____ Example #1: Example #2: Support _____ Example #1: Example #2: Support _____ Example #1: Example #2:</p>

IF... THEN... CURRICULUM, GRADE 4

If ...	After acknowledging what the child is doing well, you might say ...	Leave the writer with ...
<p><b>The writer is ready to consider counterarguments.</b></p> <p>This writer has shown evidence that she is ready to consider counterarguments. She may have written something like, "I know that not everyone agrees, but ..." or may have gone further and laid out the opposing argument that others might make. She is ready to learn to use counterarguments to bolster her own argument.</p>	<p>You are doing one of the hardest things there is to do when you are working to write an argument. You are imagining the people who might disagree with you and trying to see an opposite point of view from your own. Today, I want to show you how to raise the level of that work by teaching you to use counterarguments to <i>make your own argument stronger!</i> One way to do this is by showing that there are flaws or gaps or problems in the counterargument, and then show how your argument addresses those problems. So you might start by saying, "This argument overlooks ..." or "This argument isn't showing the full story."</p>	<p>Strong opinion writers expose the flaws, gaps, and problems in counterarguments and then show how their argument addresses those problems. They might begin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "This argument overlooks ..."</li> <li>• "This argument isn't showing the full story."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Elaboration</b></p>		
<p><b>The writer is struggling to elaborate (1).</b></p> <p>This writer has an opinion, as well as several reasons to support that opinion, but most reasons are stated without elaboration. He may have created a long list of reasons to support his opinion, but does not say more about any one reason or provide examples or evidence to support his reasons.</p>	<p>You know that when you give an opinion, you need to support it with reasons! But opinion writers don't just stop with reasons. Today, I want to teach you that when writers come up with a reason to support a claim, they then try to write a whole paragraph about that reason. One way to do this is by shifting into a mini-story. You can start your claim and reason and then write, "For example, one day ..." or "For example, in the text ..." and tell a mini-story that shows and proves your reason.</p>	<p>One way writers elaborate on a reason is by providing a mini-story to prove their point. They might write:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "For example, one day ..." (personal essay) or</li> <li>• "For example, in the text ..." (literary or argument essay)</li> </ul>
<p><b>The writer is struggling to elaborate (2).</b></p> <p>This writer has an opinion, as well as several reasons to support that opinion, but most reasons are stated without elaboration. She may have created an endless list of reasons to support her opinion, but does not say more about any one reason or provide examples and evidence to support it. She has learned to use mini-stories to support her reasons and is ready for a larger repertoire of evidence.</p>	<p>You know that when you give an opinion, you need to support it with reasons! But opinion writers don't just stop with reasons! They need to convince their readers that their claim is right to teach you that when writers come up with reasons to support a claim, they then try to write a whole paragraph about that reason. One way to do this is by adding facts, statistics, definitions that support your reason. Writers have to choose the evidence that makes the most sense for them.</p>	<p>Opinion writers support reasons using:</p>
<p><b>The writer's evidence feels free-floating or disconnected from the argument at hand.</b></p> <p>This writer has elaborated on reasons using evidence but has done little to explain that evidence to his reader. He'll often drop a fact or statistic into a paragraph and may even recognize that it feels awkward. He needs strategies for elaborating on evidence, specifically by learning to tie it back to the overarching claim.</p>	<p>You have elaborated by providing not only reasons to support your claim, but evidence as well. Sometimes, when writers use evidence, they incorporate facts and statistics and mini-stories that these feel awkward or disconnected from their own reasons. One way to fix this problem, and that is what I want to teach you today! One way writers make evidence particularly persuasive is by saying a bit about how that evidence relates to their claim. They might say, "This proves ..." or "This shows that _____ is true because _____"</p>	

OPINION WRITING

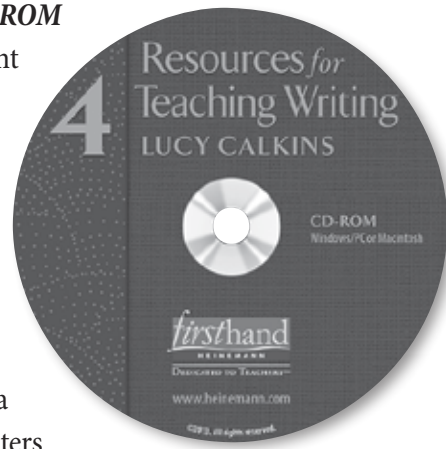
These charts will help you to anticipate, spot, and teach into the challenges your writers face during the independent work portion of your writing workshop. They lay out the specific strategy you might teach and the way you might contextualize the work for your writers.

If ...	After acknowledging what the child is doing well, you might say ...	Leave the writer with ...
<p><b>The piece is swamped with details.</b></p> <p>This writer is attempting to be convincing and knows that details matter. His writing is riddled with facts, details, quotes, and other forms of evidence in support of his thesis. Because the writing is so detail-heavy, the writer has likely struggled to fully integrate the evidence or explain it to his reader.</p>	<p>You are the kind of writer who knows that details matter. Today, I want to teach you that choosing the just-right details and cutting others can make your piece even better. One way to know what details to keep and what details to cut is to read each piece of evidence and ask, "Is that evidence the most convincing evidence I can give to convince my readers of my opinion?" Then you make some hard choices—keeping the best evidence and cutting the rest.</p>	<p>Opinion writers choose evidence carefully and critically!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at each piece of evidence and ask, "Is that evidence the most convincing evidence I can give?"</li> <li>• Then, keep the best evidence and cut the rest.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The writer has provided evidence, but it does not all support the claim.</b></p> <p>This writer has elaborated on her reasons with a variety of evidence, but not all of this evidence matches the point she is trying to make. It may be that a mini-story is unfocused and not angled to support a particular point. It may be that a quote or statistic does not connect directly to the claim. Either way, this writer needs help rereading her piece with a critical lens, checking to be sure that each sentence she has written helps to further her opinion.</p>	<p>As a writer, you know it is important not just to give a bunch of reasons for a claim, but also to spend time <i>proving</i> those reasons. You have already done this by including all sorts of evidence. Today, I want to teach you that after collecting evidence, writers go back to look at their writing with a critical lens. They ask, "Does this piece of evidence match my reason? Does it really prove what I am trying to say?" If it matches, they keep it. If not, they cut it out.</p>	<p>Opinion writers ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this piece of evidence match my reason?</li> <li>• Does this prove what I am trying to say?</li> </ul> <p>If so, they keep it! If not, they cut it!</p>
<p><b>Language</b></p>		
<p><b>The writer uses a casual, informal tone when writing.</b></p> <p>As you read this writer's opinion pieces, you are overwhelmed by a sense of casualness and informality. Likely this comes from a good place on the writer's part. He may be trying to communicate directly with his audience. ("Hey, wait, stop and think before you throw that piece of garbage on the ground.") He may also be attempting to be convincing. ("Littering is SOOOO bad for the environment and kills animals every day!!") There is nothing wrong with this, but you sense that this writer is ready to move toward more sophisticated forms of persuasion, beginning with the adoption of a more formal, academic tone.</p>	<p>As an opinion writer, your first and foremost job is to convince readers that your claim, your opinion, is correct. When you first start out as a persuasive writer, you learn fun little ways to do this, like talking to the reader or making exaggerations. But as you grow as a writer, the challenge becomes, "How do I make my writing equally as persuasive but do it in a way that sounds more sophisticated, more professional, more grown up?" Today, I want to teach you a few tricks for adopting a more formal tone in your writing. When writers want to sound more formal they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use expert vocabulary</li> <li>• Use sophisticated transition words and phrases</li> <li>• Incorporate startling facts from credible sources</li> </ul>	<p>Sound like an expert!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use expert vocabulary related to your topic.</li> </ul> <p>Example: When talking about the environment you might use words like, <i>biodegradable</i> or <i>ozone</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use sophisticated transition words to introduce insights, ideas, or examples.</li> </ul> <p>Examples: <i>alternately, additionally, furthermore</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate startling facts from credible sources.</li> </ul> <p>Example: "You may not have known that, according to recycling-revolution.com, recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to power a TV for three hours!"</p>

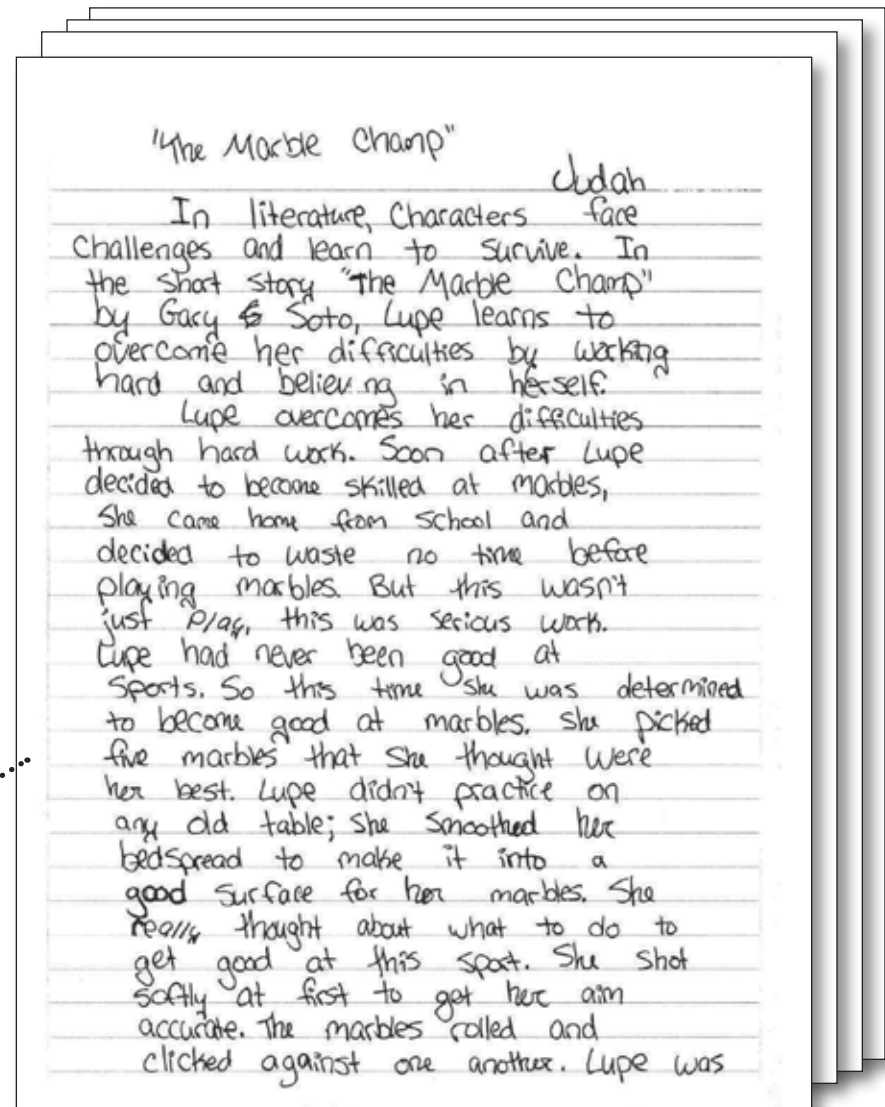


# Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM

The *Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM* for Grade 4 provides unit-specific print resources to support your teaching throughout the year. You'll find a rich assortment of instructional tools including **learning progressions, checklists and rubrics, correlations to the CCSS, paper choices, and teaching charts.** Offering daily support, these resources will help you establish a structured learning environment that fosters independence and self-direction.



Student writing samples illustrate different ways different students have exemplified the standard and highlight essential features of each writing genre.



***“The writing workshop needs to be simple and predictable enough that your youngsters can learn to carry on within it independently. The materials and teaching tools you provide students will help you establish such a predictable, structured learning environment.”***

# Let's write an essay!

Write it strong! Write it long!

(Thesis statement) because (reason 1), (reason 2), and most of all, because (reason 3).

- One reason that (thesis statement) is that (reason 1). For example, (evidence a), (evidence b), and (evidence c).
- Another reason that (thesis statement) is that (reason 2). For example, (evidence b), and (evidence c).
- Although (thesis statement) (reason 1) and because (reason 3), especially (thesis statement) (reason 3). For example, (evidence b), and (evidence c).

## Moves persuasive essay writers make that are also used in personal essay writing

- State a thesis
- Give logically ordered reasons
- Support reasons with a variety of evidence
  - mini stories, lists
- Start off by letting the reader know that this

## LITERARY DEVICES

- ◆ Comparisons (Metaphors & Similes)
- ◆ Sound effects
- ◆ Dialect or words from another language
- ◆ Alliteration
- ◆ Repetition
- ◆ Descriptive words or sentences
- ◆ Symbols or Images

... that is coming in the essay and phrases to connect

A wide range of fresh-from-the-classroom instructional charts model proven teaching artifacts that are easy to copy and customize.

# Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM

Checklists of genre-specific writing criteria support self-assessment and goal setting, as well as writing rehearsal, revision, and editing.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Opinion Writing Checklist

Grade 4

		NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
<b>Structure</b>				
<b>Overall</b>	I made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support my reasons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Lead</b>	I wrote a few sentences to hook my readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Transitions</b>	I stated my claim.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I used words and phrases to glue parts of my piece together. I used phrases such as <i>for example</i> , <i>another example</i> , <i>one time</i> , and <i>for instance</i> to show when I was shifting from saying reasons to giving evidence and <i>in addition to</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>another</i> to show when I wanted to make a new point.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ending</b>	I wrote an ending for my piece in which I restated and reflected on my claim, perhaps suggesting an action or response based on what I had written.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Organization</b>				
<b>Development</b>				
<b>Elaboration</b>	I gave reasons to support my opinion. I chose the reasons to convince my readers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I included examples and information to support my reasons, perhaps from a text, my knowledge, or my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Craft</b>	I made deliberate word choices to convince my readers, perhaps by emphasizing or repeating words that would make my readers feel emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	If it felt right to do so, I chose precise details and facts to help make my points and used figurative language to draw the readers into my line of thought.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I made choices about which evidence was best to include or not include to support my points.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I used a convincing tone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Language Conventions</b>				
<b>Spelling</b>	I used what I know about word families and spelling rules to help me spell and edit. I used the word wall and dictionaries to help me when needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Punctuation</b>	When writing long complex sentences, I used commas to make them clear and correct.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I used periods to fix my run-on sentences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### LIST OF PROMPTS

#### PUSHING OUR THINKING ABOUT READING

For example . . .	I think this is important because . . .
Another example is . . .	I noticed that section, too . . . and I think this connects to the whole story because . . .
To add on . . .	
This makes me realize . . .	I see (the item you are discussion), and then a similar thing happens (in this place); I think this is repeated because . . .

is important because . . .	
is giving me the idea that . . .	There is one thing doesn't "fit" for m
reason for this is . . .	This might be pres
her reason is . . .	In the beginning . . . Finally . . .
connects with . . .	In the beginning . . . At the end . . .
the other hand . . .	Many people thi
agree, but . . . because . . .	I used to think . . . realizing . . .
also be that . . .	
he reason for this be . . .	
similar to . . .	
fferent from . . .	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Editing Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	Edit for punctuation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for capital letters at the beginning of new sentences, when using proper nouns, or when giving someone's title.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check that known, high-frequency words are spelled correctly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read work aloud to check for fragments and run-on sentences.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reread work for comma usage.
<input type="checkbox"/>	



**Common Core State Standards Alignment**

Session	Writing Standards	Reading Standards	Speaking and Listening Standards	Language Standards
1	W.4.1, W.4.4, W.4.7, W.4.8, <b>W.4.9.a</b>	<b>RL.4.1, RL.4.4</b> , RL.4.10, RFS.4.4, RL.5.1	SL.4.1, SL.4.4	L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.4.a, <b>L.4.5.a,b</b>
2	W.4.1, W.4.7, W.4.8, <b>W.4.9.a</b>	RL.4.1, <b>RL.4.3</b>	SL.4.1	L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.6
3	W.4.3, <b>W.4.4</b> , W.4.5, <b>W.4.9.a</b>	<b>RL.4.1, RL.4.3</b>	<b>SL.4.1</b> , SL.4.3	L.4.1, L.4.2, <b>L.4.3.a</b>
4	<b>W.4.1.a,b</b> , W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.8	<b>RL.4.1</b> , RL.4.2, RL.4.3	<b>SL.4.1</b>	L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a
5	<b>W.4.1.b,c</b> , W.4.3.a,b, W.4.9.a	<b>RL.4.1, RL.4.3</b> , RL.4.4	SL.4.1, SL.4.4	L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.6
6	<b>W.4.1.b,c</b> , <b>W.4.9.a</b>	<b>RL.4.1, RL.5.1</b>	SL.4.1, SL.4.2, SL.4.4	<b>L.4.1.e,f</b> , <b>L.4.2.a,b,c</b> , L.4.3, L.4.6
7	<b>W.4.1.b,c</b> , <b>W.4.9.a</b>	<b>RL.4.1</b>	SL.4.1, SL.4.3, SL.4.4	L.4.1.d,f, L.4.2, L.4.3
8	W.4.1.a,b,c,d, <b>W.4.4</b> , W.4.5, <b>W.4.10</b>	RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3	SL.4.1, <b>SL.4.3</b>	L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3.a, L.4.6
9	W.4.1, W.4.7, W.4.8, <b>W.4.9.a</b>	RL.4.1, <b>RL.4.2</b>	SL.4.1	L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3, L.4.6
10	<b>W.4.1.a,b</b> , W.4.5	<b>RL.4.2</b>		
11	W.4.1, <b>W.4.4</b> , <b>W.4.10</b>	RL.4.1, RL.4.2		
12	<b>W.4.1.a,d</b> , W.4.5	RL.4.2		
13	<b>W.4.1.b</b> , <b>W.4.5</b>	RL.4.1, <b>RL.4.4</b>		
14	W.4.1, <b>W.4.5</b>	RFS.4.4		
15	W.4.1.b, <b>W.4.4</b> , <b>W.4.7</b> , <b>W.4.8</b>	RL.4.9		
16	<b>W.4.1.a</b> , W.4.4	RL.4.1, RL.4.2, <b>RL.4.9</b>		
17	<b>W.4.1</b> , W.4.5, W.4.10	RL.4.1, <b>RL.4.9</b> , RL.5.1		
18	<b>W.4.1.b,c</b> , <b>W.4.5</b>	RL.4.1, RFS.4.4		
19	W.4.4, W.4.5	RFS.4.4		
20	W.4.4	RFS.4.4		

\*Bold indicates major emphasis

Because writing workshop instruction involves students in writing, reading, speaking and listening, and language development, each session in each unit of study is correlated to the full Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

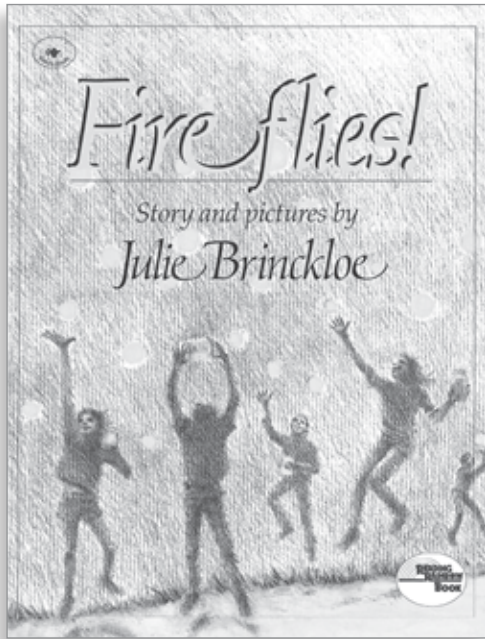
If/Then Conferring Scenarios help you assess student needs and differentiate instruction. Customizable conferring scenarios that can be printed on label paper provide students with artifacts from the day's lesson.

Opinion Writing



If ...	After acknowledging what the child is doing well, you might say ...	Leave the writer with ...
<p><b>Structure and Cohesion</b></p> <p><b>The introduction does not forecast the structure of the essay.</b></p> <p>The writer has made a claim and supported it with reasons, but there is no forecasting statement early on in the essay that foreshadows the reasons to come. Instead, it seems as if the writer thought of and wrote about one reason, then, when reaching the end of that first body paragraph, thought, "What's another reason?" and then raised and elaborated upon that reason. He is ready to learn to plan for the overarching structure of his argument and forecast that structure in the introduction.</p>	<p>You have definitely learned to make a claim in your essay and to support that claim with reasons. There is one big step you need to take, though, and that is to let your reader know how your essay will go from the very beginning, in the introduction. Today, I want to teach you that opinion writers forecast how their writing will go. They do this by stating their claim in the introduction and then adding on, "I think this because ..." Then they list the reasons that they will write about in the body of their piece.</p>	<p>Writers use the introduction to forecast how their opinion pieces will go.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your claim.                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I think ..."</li> </ul> </li> <li>Tell your reader why your claim is true.                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"One reason I think ... is because ..."</li> <li>"Another reason I think ... is because ..."</li> <li>"The final reason I think ... is because ..."</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Supports overlap.</b></p> <p>In this instance, the writer has developed supporting reasons that are overlapping or overly similar. While this may pose few problems now, the writer will struggle when the time comes to find examples to support each reason (because the examples will be the same!). For example, if a student argues, "Dogs make the best pets," she may provide the following reasons: they like to play games, they cheer you up, and they are great at playing fetch. Playing fetch and playing games overlap, and you'll want to help this student find another, different, reason why dogs are great pets.</p>	<p>Sometimes, when writers develop supporting reasons for their thesis, they find that one or more of them overlap. What I mean by this is that they basically say the same thing! Today, I want to teach you that writers look at their supporting reasons with a critical eye, checking to see if any overlap. One way they do this is by listing the examples they'll use for each paragraph. If some of the examples are the same, then the reasons are probably too similar!</p>	<p>Are your supporting reasons too similar? Test them to find out!</p> <p>Support _____</p> <p>Example #1: _____</p> <p>Example #2: _____</p> <p>Support _____</p> <p>Example #1: _____</p> <p>Example #2: _____</p> <p>Support _____</p> <p>Example #1: _____</p> <p>Example #2: _____</p>

# Units of Study Trade Book Pack

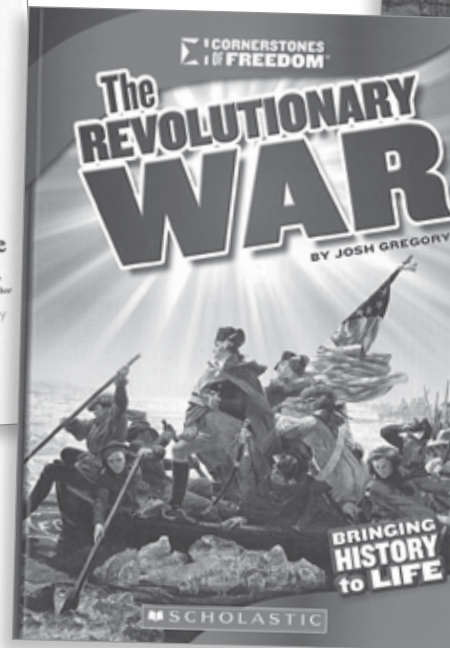
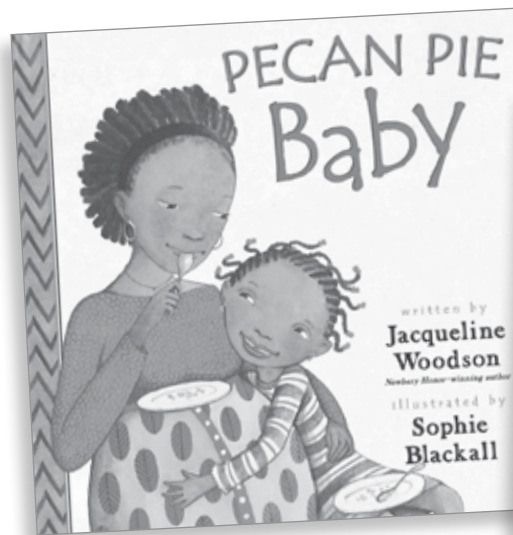


The **Grade 4 Trade Book Pack** includes four age-appropriate trade books that are used in the units to model effective writing techniques, encourage students to read as writers, and provide background knowledge.

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*Because some teachers may want to purchase class sets and others may already own these popular books, these are available as an optional, but recommended, purchase.*

*“ Any effective writing curriculum acknowledges that it is important for writers to be immersed in powerful writing—literature and other kinds of texts. Children especially need opportunities to read as writers. By studying the work of other authors, students not only develop a felt sense of what it is they are trying to make but also learn the traditions of that particular kind of text.”*





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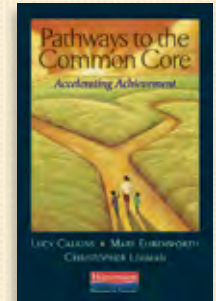
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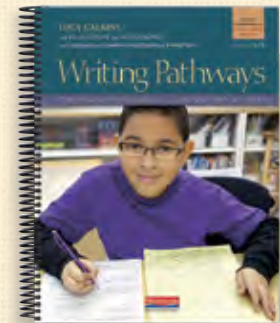


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# UNITS OF STUDY<sup>in</sup> Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing

## ABOUT THE GRADE 4 AUTHORS

**Lucy Calkins** is the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, where she has developed a learning community of teacher educators whose brilliance and dedication shine through in the Units of Study books, which are quickly becoming an essential part of classroom life in tens of thousands of schools around the world. Lucy is the Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College, Columbia University where she co-directs the Literacy Specialist Program. She is the author or coauthor of scores of books, including *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (Heinemann 2012), which was on the *New York Times* education bestseller list, *Units of Study in Opinion/Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grades K–8* (Heinemann 2013–14), and *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades K–5* (Heinemann 2015).



**Kelly Boland Hohne, EdD**, is a Writer-in-Residence and Senior Research Associate at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Kelly is part of the leadership team for a think tank sponsored by the Council of Chief School Officers, in which researchers from both CBAL (the research arm of Educational Testing Service) and TCRWP studied learning progressions in argument writing. Kelly is the author of several books in the units of study for reading and writing series, among them, *Changing the World* (Grade 3), *Boxes and Bullets* (Grade 4), and *Argument and Advocacy* (Grade 5). In all of her work, Kelly draws on her experience as a classroom teacher at PS 6, a TCRWP mentor school.



In addition to being a coauthor of one book in the Reading Units of Study series and three books in the Writing Units of Study series, **M. Colleen Cruz** is the author of several other titles for teachers, including *The Unstoppable Writing Teacher* (Heinemann 2015), *Independent Writing* (Heinemann 2004), and *A Quick Guide to Reaching Struggling Writers, K–5* (Heinemann 2008). She is also the author of the young adult novel *Border Crossing*, a Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award Finalist. Colleen was a classroom teacher in general education and inclusive settings before joining TCRWP, where she is a Senior Lead Staff Developer. She presently supports schools, teachers, and their students nationally and internationally.



**Cory Gillette** is the Literacy Coordinator for Darien Public Schools in Connecticut. She worked for the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project for over ten years as a Staff Developer and Researcher. Cory played a lead role, while at the Project, in a think tank on whole-book assessments, and was involved in developing performance assessments for nonfiction reading. Cory is the coauthor of two books in the Writing Units of Study series.



**Anna Gratz Cockerille** was a teacher and a literacy coach in New York City and in Sydney, Australia, and later became a Staff Developer and Writer at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. She served as an adjunct instructor in the Literacy Specialist Program at Teachers College, and taught at several TCRWP institutes, including the content literacy institute, where she helped participants bring strong literacy instruction into social studies classrooms. Anna also has been a researcher for Lucy Calkins, contributing especially to *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (Heinemann 2012), and *Navigating Nonfiction* in the Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades 3–5 series (Heinemann 2010). Anna is coauthor of *Bringing History to Life* in the Writing Units of Study series and also was a Supervising Editor for the grade-by-grade Reading Units of Study series.



**Alexandra Marron** is a Staff Developer, Researcher and Writer-in-Residence at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Her responsibilities include leading a yearlong study group for master teachers, presenting at conferences, teaching at summer institutes, and above all helping teachers and principals in dozens of schools lead state-of-the-art reading and writing workshops. She is coauthor of numerous books in the Reading and Writing Units of Study series including *Writing About Reading*; *The Literary Essay*; *Narrative Craft, Shaping Texts*; *Interpretation Book Clubs*; and *Reading Pathways*. Ali has played a leadership role in developing learning progressions in argument writing, and participates in a study group on the subject, sponsored by the Council of Chief School Officers, involving Educational Testing Service and TCRWP. Prior to this work, she taught at PS 6, and while there contributed to the book *Practical Punctuation: Lessons on Rule Making and Rule Breaking in Elementary Writing* (Heinemann 2008).



**Kathleen Tolan** is a Senior Deputy Director of the TCRWP. In that capacity, she has special responsibility for the Project's work with reading instruction. Kathleen organizes instruction for staff developers and the Project's four summer institutes, and plays a lead role in the Content Literacy Institute and the coaching institutes. She works closely with school principals, assistant principals, literacy coaches, and teachers to bring about schoolwide change in the teaching of reading and writing. She also provides staff development at schools in Brooklyn, Harlem, Manhattan, and Scarsdale, and each of those schools has become a TCRWP teaching site. Kathleen is the coauthor of four books in the Reading Units of Study series—*Building a Reading Life*, *Reading to Learn*, and *Research Clubs* (Grade 3) and *Interpreting Characters* (Grade 4); as well as two books in the Writing Units of Study series—*The Literary Essay* (Grade 4) and *The Literary Essay* (Grade 6). She is also featured in many of TCRWP's videos.

