

About Narrative Nonfiction Writing

What Is Narrative Nonfiction Writing?

Nonfiction narratives can be found somewhere between fiction novels and the newspaper in the world of literary creations. The “narrative” suggests the writing is a story, and the “nonfiction” makes clear that the story is the truth. The genre is versatile because while the information is based on fact, writers can use some of the elements of fiction writing to present the information in captivating and fascinating ways.

Categories of Narrative Nonfiction Writing

This book will help the teacher to explore personal narratives and biographical narratives. Personal narratives include writings in which authors share true stories about themselves. In biographical narratives, authors write stories about real people and real events.

Personal Narrative Nonfiction Writing Lessons

Lessons 1–4 are designed to assist students with the development of their skills at writing about themselves, their histories, and their experiences. The lessons focus on selecting an organizational pattern, on providing adequate details, on including oneself as a character, and on unifying the beginning and the end of their pieces.

Biographical Narrative Nonfiction Writing Lessons

Lessons 7–10 are designed to enable the students to apply the skills they have developed at writing about themselves to writing about other people. The students will learn interviewing techniques, quoting, writing about someone they know personally, and writing about historical figures.

Using Media and Visual Aids

The demands of technology today have made it necessary for all students to learn how to effectively create and select the most appropriate visual aids for their writings. Students must be able to determine when to add photos, illustrations, maps, and diagrams. Lessons 5–6 are designed to help students know when and how to add photos and illustrations. Lessons 11–12 are designed to assist students in understanding maps and to help students in their selection of maps and diagrams.

The Key to Writing Good Narrative Nonfiction

The emphasis in narrative nonfiction writing should be on facts, accurate details, and truth. The quality of the word choice, the development of the subject as a character, the use of setting and time, and so on, can truly enhance the quality of a narrative nonfiction piece, but they cannot make it successful. Students must be engaged in information gathering, interviewing, researching, and meticulous note-taking in order to immerse themselves in their subject and present the truth.

Personal Narrative Nonfiction Writing Rubric

Use this five-level rubric to assess each student's personal narrative nonfiction writing.

Level 4 — Exceptional

- The student uses the best organizational sequence to present the narrative.
- The student organizes information in a well-unified manner.
- The student provides just the right level of detail.
- The main character and auxiliary characters of the narrative are fully developed.
- The student uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas.
- The student uses language that is appropriate for the work and audience.
- The writing engages the reader.
- The student demonstrates an intended purpose in writing.

Level 3 — Capable

- The student uses an organizational sequence to present the narrative.
- The student ties together the beginning and the end of the narrative.
- The student provides a good level of detail.
- The main character and auxiliary characters of the narrative are developed.
- The student uses some descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas.
- The student uses language that is mostly appropriate for the work and audience.
- The writing engages the reader.
- The student demonstrates a purpose in writing.

Level 2 — Developing

- The student attempts to use an organizational sequence to present the narrative.
- The student's unifying technique is weak.
- The student provides details but some extraneous and/or too few details.
- The main character and auxiliary characters of the narrative are somewhat developed.
- The student uses some descriptive language but does not clarify nor enhance ideas.
- The student uses language that is somewhat appropriate for the work and audience.
- The writing is somewhat engaging to the reader.
- The student has a purpose in writing, but it is only partially clear.

Level 1 — Beginning

- The organizational pattern prevents the reader from understanding the story.
- The student does not organize information in a unified manner.
- The student attempts to include details.
- The student uses language that is inappropriate for the work and audience.
- The main character and auxiliary characters need further development.
- The student uses little description.
- The writing does not engage the reader.
- The student's purpose in writing is unclear.

Level 0

- The student offers no writing or does not respond to the assignment as presented.

Parent Letter: Introduction to the Culminating Project

Dear Parents,

Research shows that real learning occurs when students are required to find a real world application for their acquired skills. Enabling students to publish their finished work makes the writing and work involved more important because they become more aware of their audience. Your child has been learning the skills involved in writing narrative nonfiction for the past several weeks, and all of the students in the class are about to embark on a very challenging journey.

Each student is required to complete a culminating activity called “Mystory—A Personal Reaction to an Historical Event.” This activity incorporates almost all of the concepts, ideas, and skills to which the students have been introduced while they have been learning how to write personal and biographical narrative nonfiction. Asking a student to synthesize a number of skills can be very challenging, so the purpose of this letter is to inform you and to enlist your support.

The culminating activity requires that the students write about the details of an historical event. This will require the students to interview a person who remembers the event when it was current. This activity will incorporate a number of specific requirements. The students have been working on learning how to use the following elements to create better narrative writing. The students are required to include the following:

- Research about the historical event from three sources
- Direct and indirect quotes from the subject of the interview
- A balance of actual events and their subject’s perspective on the events
- A characterization of their subject
- A unifying organizational structure
- An adequate level of detail
- Correct citations of sources

Your task is to support your child as he or she works on this very difficult task. Encourage lots of brainstorming and prewriting. Provide your child with a well-lighted, comfortable and suitable workspace. Encouraging words will help your child to believe that it is possible to achieve his or her goal.

You can also support your child by providing him or her with ideas of people you know who might have an interesting perspective on an historical event. If you and your child do not know anyone who can be the subject of the interview, please notify me, and I will arrange for a person to work with your child.

When the activity is completed, the subject of the interview will receive a collection of all of the stories in book form. This should encourage all of the students to work their hardest.

Thank you for all of the support you give.

Sincerely,

Graphic Organizer: Picture Perfect

Who is in the picture? Describe the people.	
What are they doing? What do you see?	
Where is the setting? Describe the scene.	
When did the events happen? How do you know?	
How does everyone in the scene appear? What may be going on behind the scene?	
Why do you think this event happened this way?	

Selecting the Best Organizational Sequence

Objective

The student uses an appropriate organizational structure to tell a story.

(Standard I, Benchmark G, Skill 11; Standard I, Benchmark K, Skill 5; Standard I, Benchmark L, Skills 4-5; Standard IV, Benchmark G, Skill 1)

Materials

- copies of Narrative Nonfiction card 1, “The Navajo Nation Fair”
- markers or chalk
- pens/pencils
- whiteboard or blackboard
- blank paper
- copies of the graphic organizer, “Time Line” (page 20)
- Student Writing Sample (page 74)



Vocabulary

- accompany
- butcher
- traditional
- reunions

For definitions, see page 26.



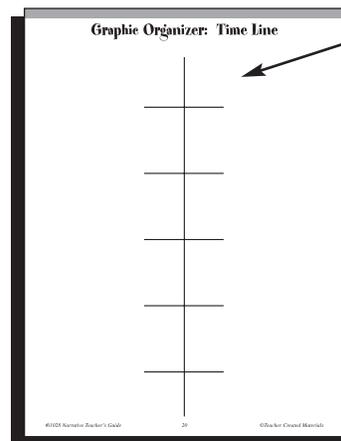
Reader's & Writer's Response Suggested Answers

See page 26.



Procedure

1. **Distribute copies** of Narrative Nonfiction card 1, “Navajo Nation Fair,” to the students. Ask the students to read the story.
2. As students read, point out the order of the events in the story **by making a time line on the board.**
3. Ask the students to **number the events in the story** in order of most powerful and interesting to least powerful and interesting.
4. **Explain that writers often reorder events** in order to make the story more interesting. Writers either place the most powerful and interesting events first, or they can save them for last.
5. **Distribute copies of the graphic organizer, “Time Line,”** found on page 20.

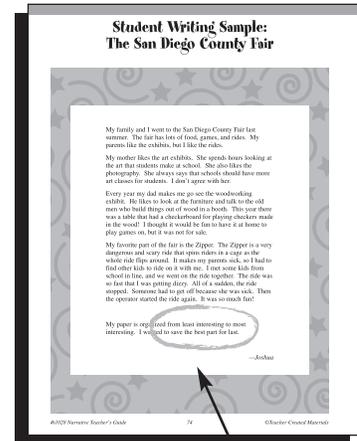


Place the first detail here.

Notice there's room for ten details. Add more as needed.

Procedure (cont.)

6. Invite the students to make a **time line** for a visit they made to a state fair, an amusement park, a national park, the beach, or another place. Ask the students to provide a few details for each event.
7. Place the students in pairs. Instruct the students to work together to help **order the events of their stories** to either begin with the most powerful and interesting event or end with it.
8. Using the steps of the writing process, have **students write their personal narratives**.
9. Once completed, ask the **students to explain their organizational pattern** in their own words.



Notice how the writer organized his visit to the fair.



Nonfiction/Fiction and Poetry

This card can be used with Fiction and Poetry card 5, “Coyote and Blue Fox.” Both cards were written about the Southwest. Students can make a time line of the tale. Discuss the moral of the tale with your students.

Assessment

Assess the graphic organizers for evidence of successful peer collaboration. Check the different stages of the writing process for progress. Be sure to see if students reordered the events to build to the most exciting moment or if they grabbed the reader’s interest immediately. Use successful student work as models in class. See pages 9–14 for rubrics and other assessment assistance.

Cross References

For additional thematic support, you may supplement the lesson with the following resources:

Exploring Writing: *Level 4:* Expository card 9, “A Celebration of Native America”; Expository card 11, “A Land of their Own”

Writer’s Notebook: *Level C:* Drafting, pages 24-25.

Exploring Nonfiction: *Level 3:* Social Studies card 4, “Native Americans Today: Proud To Be Mohawk”

Nonfiction Readers: *Things to Do, Things to Make, Holidays* (Upper Emergent)

Selecting the Best Organizational Sequence *(cont.)*

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been to a state or county fair? Describe some of the things you might see.
2. Do you like to dance? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever been to a reunion? What was it like?



Reader's and Writer's Response Suggested Answers

Reader's Response

1. Responses will vary, but students should support their answers.
2. Responses will vary, but students should mention some aspects of the culture such as food, handicrafts, music, dancing, and other traditions that are seen at the fair.
3. Responses will vary, but students should select at least one aspect that the writer described and explain why that feature is most appealing.

Writer's Response

1. The author used sensory details to give readers the feeling of being right in the middle of the action. Sensory details are very appealing and add a lot of color to the writing.
2. The writer makes the comparison to state fairs because it is a personal connection to which her readers may also be able to relate.



Vocabulary Definitions

1. **accompany**—to go with
2. **butcher**—to kill, cut up, and prepare the meat of an animal for food
3. **traditional**—based on a well-established custom or belief that has been passed down from generation to generation
4. **reunions**—a gathering of people who have been separated

Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics

Instruct students to complete page 27, “Common and Proper Nouns.” For additional practice of this skill, see pages 11–12 of the *Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics* book.

Common and Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are the names for specific *persons, places, and things*. All other nouns are common nouns.

Proper Nouns

the South

Europe, European style

Sister Mary Alice

Aunt Michele

God (used as a name)

Lake Ontario

World War II

Common Nouns

a southern state

foreign

my sister

my aunt

a god

a lake

a war

.....

Directions: Circle the proper nouns in the following paragraph. Underline the common nouns. Correct the capitalization on the proper nouns, as well.

Last summer, my family and I went to chicago, illinois. My mom, dad, sister and I went. From our hotel room on michigan avenue, we could see lake michigan and the stanley field museum. One night we walked along the avenue, and we saw the chicago art institute. It is an art museum. All of the buildings in chicago are very tall. Many skyscrapers have been built by famous architects. My dad really liked seeing the robie house, built by frank lloyd wright. I really liked our trip to chicago.

About Expository Writing

What Is Expository Writing?

While narrative text is perhaps the most comfortable and familiar for student writers, expository text is the most commonly required writing in schools. In its simplest form, expository writing serves to explain. It is, in fact, the backbone of nonfiction writing as seen in the real world. The outlining of directions, the retelling of events, or the description of processes are all examples of expository text. It is found everywhere we look, from recipe directions to the recapping of the world's events in the newspaper.

Expository writing differs from narrative text in its structure, content, and function. One must approach expository writing with a structural plan. This requires careful planning and conscious organizational thought. Often information from several sources must be pulled together to form a cohesive whole, and these resources must be appropriately cited. (For information on citing resources, see page 7.)

Categories of Expository Writing

Expository writing generally falls within two primary categories—informative and descriptive. Informative expository writing imparts news or information. Descriptive expository writing relates information in a way that creates sensory impressions. Certainly, there is tremendous crossover between the two and most informative pieces contain descriptive elements. Generally, though, descriptive writing is a component of other genres rather than a complete form of writing on its own.

Informative Expository Writing Lessons

Lessons 1 through 6 will develop your students' informative expository writing skills. Informative writing presents facts to readers. Several resources may be utilized and cited. Examples of this type of writing include news reports, essays, instructions, charts, graphs, time lines, advice columns, and biographies. Also included in this category are textbooks, magazine articles, nonfiction books, reference works, and historical reports. In addition, thousands of Web sites present information in a frequently-asked-questions format.

Descriptive Expository Writing Lessons

Lessons 7 through 12 will develop your students' descriptive expository writing skills. Descriptive expository writing is informative writing that speaks to the reader's sensory perception by building images in the mind. This includes songs and poetry based on real events, people, or things as well as advertisements, pamphlets, posters, and speeches.

Expository Formula

All good expository writing follows a formula. First, the main idea must be clearly and directly stated, or if implied, it must be clearly identifiable. The main idea must be thoroughly supported by relevant facts that are verifiable. These facts must be presented in a logical, organized, and clear structure. When students carefully consider the structure, purpose, and supports used in their expository pieces, their written work is sure to be a success.

Expository Writing Rubric

Use this rubric as a guide when doing an assessment of an expository piece. If you prefer, use the more detailed rubrics on pages 12 and 13 designed specifically for informative or descriptive expository writing.

Competent

- The student independently writes compositions that convey an intended purpose.
- The student independently uses resources to gather information for topics.
- The student independently writes for an audience.
- The student independently organizes ideas.
- The student independently varies sentences and makes good word choices.
- The student independently follows the conventions of print.
- The student independently cites sources used.

Emergent

- The student requires some help to write compositions that convey an intended purpose.
- The student requires some help to use resources to gather information for topics.
- The student requires some help in writing for an audience.
- The student requires some help organizing ideas.
- The student requires some help with sentence variety and word choice.
- The student requires some help with the conventions of print.
- The student requires some help to cite sources used.

Beginner

- The student needs help to write compositions that convey an intended purpose.
- The student needs help to use resources to gather information for topics.
- The student needs help in writing for an audience.
- The student needs help organizing ideas.
- The student needs help with sentence variety and word choice.
- The student needs help with the conventions of print.
- The student needs help to cite sources used.

Introduction to Expository Writing

Dear Parents,

Nonfiction makes up the bulk of what we read and write daily. Therefore, our language arts curriculum includes a strong nonfiction component. Your child will participate in reading and writing expository (nonfiction) text this year.

You are a vital force in your child's education. As such, I'd like to enlist your assistance. Here are some ways for you to strengthen your child's ability to write expository materials:

- Always praise and comment on the *message* in your child's writing, instead of concentrating on its form, spelling, or grammatical errors. Writing is first and foremost a communication experience. The most important thing is creating a comprehensible message. The technicalities will be worked addressed in school.
- Have your child write procedures (for your benefit) for a game or activity for which he or she has particular expertise.
- Correspond with your child, exchanging letters with each another (ie. put a message in your child's lunch bag and ask your child to leave a response on your nightstand).
- Let your child write the captions for the photos in an album or items in a scrapbook.
- Ask your child to keep a log of a family outing or vacation. This has the added benefit of enhancing cherished memories years later.
- Encourage your child to develop correspondence (traditional mail or e-mail) with an out-of-town family member or friend.
- Read nonfiction text to your child on any topic of interest (such as the care of a potential family pet). Children who listen to expository text have a much easier time reading and writing it.
- Have your child help you compose a letter to the editor about a topic that interests both you and your child. Watch for it to be published. Seeing one's own ideas in print is a powerful motivator.

Your support will help your child become a competent nonfiction writer. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Graphic Organizer: It All Adds Up

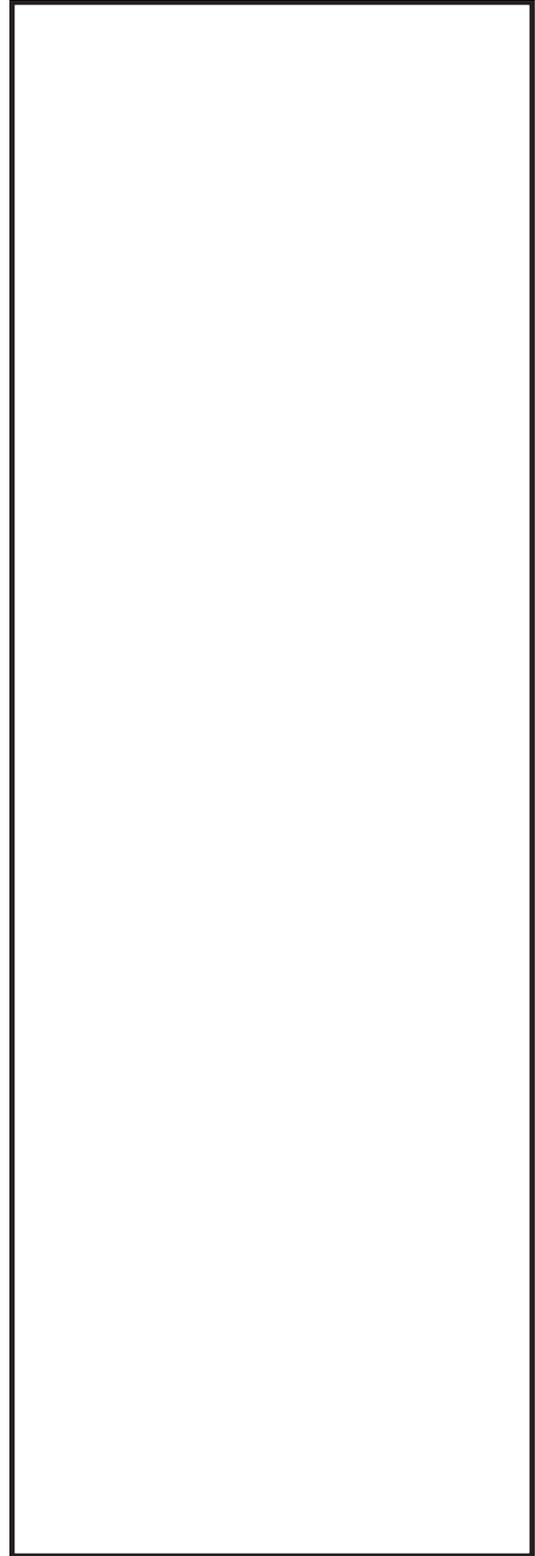
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Using Accurate Information

Objective

The student will research and write an obituary for an historical figure, using accurate information.

(Standard I, Benchmark I, Skill 1; Standard I, Benchmark K, Skill 6; Standard III, Benchmark K, Skill 4; Standard IV, Benchmark B, Skill 8; Standard IV, Benchmark D, Skill 3)

Materials

- overhead transparency of Expository card 1, “Big Jobs, Little Workers”
- student copies of Expository card 1
- highlighter pen for each student
- overhead projector and wipe-off marker
- overhead transparency or student copies of student writing sample (page 72)
- large, lined index cards
- access to encyclopedias or Internet
- short biographies about important historical figures



Vocabulary

- toil
- estimates
- plantations
- wages

For definitions, see page 24.



Reader's & Writer's Response Suggested Answers

See page 24.

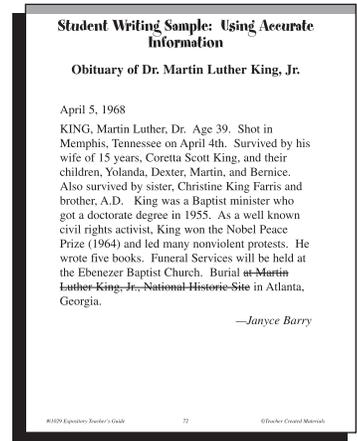


Procedure

1. **Ask the students** if they do chores for money. About how many hours a week do they work? What do they earn? What is enjoyable about these tasks? What is not enjoyable?
2. **Display the overhead transparency** of Expository card 1 and read it aloud as your students follow along.
3. **Define facts** as statements that are true and can be proven. As a class, identify and highlight all of the facts in the article.
4. **Guide students to see how the facts (statistics) support the article.** Would the article be as convincing without the statistics? How important are accurate facts to this article?
5. Tell the students that they are going to **write an obituary** (death notice) for a deceased famous person from history. Assign a famous person to each student or brainstorm a list and allow students to select a name. Be sure that each child selects a different person.
6. **Provide each student with the sample obituary** on overhead or individual photocopies. This will provide them with an appropriate model. Discuss the types of things included in an obituary.
7. **Provide the students with resources** to locate information about famous people. Encourage them to use multiple sources. **If students find conflicting information, tell them to use the information found in the majority of sources.** Since obituaries never include sources, students should not credit their sources for this project.

Procedure *(cont.)*

7. Provide the students with resources to locate information about famous people. Encourage them to use multiple sources. **If students find conflicting information, tell them to use the information found in the majority of sources.** Since obituaries never include sources, students should not credit their sources for this project.
8. Be sure to point out that **the obituary** would be written within two days of the person's death and **can include only those facts that were known at the time the death notice appeared.** For example, in the student sample, information about the historic site was removed because it became official twelve years after his death. This requires critical thinking that may cause some difficulty for most students.
9. Have students **take notes** of the information gathered **and submit their completed obituaries on the index cards.**
10. Have the students **read aloud** their completed obituaries to the class. This is a great way to introduce students to important historical figures. It also helps the students to see them as real people.



Nonfiction/Fiction and Poetry

Expository card 1 can be used in conjunction with Fiction and Poetry card 12, “Bread and Roses.” Make a T-chart with the headings “Alike” and “Different.” As a class compare and contrast the conditions of working children in Ecuador today and the early US. Information that is only relevant to the early US *or* Ecuador today is written in the “Different” column. Factors that are the same for both are written in the “Alike” column.

Assessment

Evaluate each student's obituary, looking for the use of accurate information gathered through research. See pages 9–13 for rubrics and other assessment assistance.

Cross References

For additional thematic support, you may supplement the lesson with these resources:

Writer's Notebook: Using References, page 34; Using Capital Letters, page 71

Exploring Nonfiction: *Grade 4:* Social Studies card 2, “Martin Luther King, Jr.”

Time For Kids Nonfiction Readers: *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Fluent); *George Washington* (Fluent); *Susan B. Anthony* (Fluent), *Mohandas Gandhi* (Fluent Plus); *Roberto Clemente* (Fluent Plus)

Informative

Using Accurate Information *(cont.)*

Class Discussion Questions

Pose these questions to stimulate student discussion about the article:

1. What are some dangers these working children face?
2. How would the children benefit by spending their days in school instead of working?
3. The USA has a law requiring kids to stay in school until they are at least 16 years old and another law not letting them work for pay before the age of 15. Why?



Suggested Answers to Reader's and Writer's Response Questions

Reader's Response

1. Because their families need the money to feed the family.
2. The author suggests that higher wages for banana workers would make it possible for children to go to school. Americans might have to pay higher prices for bananas.
3. Nations that have unions pay their workers more than nations without unions.

Writer's Response

1. The lead helps get the reader interested in the story and helps the reader identify with Wilbur because he, like the reader, is a child.
2. The United Nations, Human Rights Watch, interviews banana workers themselves. Answers will vary, but the two organizations have accurate statistics, and the interview with the banana workers helps give a human perspective.



Vocabulary Definitions

1. **toil**—work hard for a long time
2. **estimates**—rough guesses or calculations
3. **plantations**—large farms that grow crops in warm climates
4. **wages**—money earned by working

Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics

Discuss with students the proper nouns in Expository card 1 and in the student sample of the obituary (names, geographic names, dates, book titles, award title). Define types of proper nouns and discuss examples. Then have students complete Capitalizing Proper Nouns on page 25. For additional practice of this skill, see pages 11–12 of *Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics*.

Capitalizing Proper Nouns

Proper nouns such as these are always capitalized:

- names of people
- specific places
- dates (months, days, but *not seasons*)
- important words in titles (books, songs, paintings)
- holidays
- company/organization names

Directions: Use a highlighter to mark the letters that need to be capitalized in the sentences below.



1. did shatara atkinson get a job at graystone public library?
2. next thursday todd's company, videorite, may win the best new business award.
3. 2004 george w. bush America's president in 2005.
4. last summer we visited mount rushmore in south dakota.
5. turn right onto sixth avenue and at the second stoplight, turn left onto fairview street.
6. michaelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the sistine chapel is considered a masterpiece.
7. would you like to go see the movie *the world's greatest adventure*?
8. we're collecting money for a charity called mothers against drunk driving.
9. his office isn't open on memorial day, the fourth of july, labor day, or christmas.
10. did dustin rawley sing *raindrops keep falling on my head* at the spring concert?
11. their daughter's birthday is september 18.
12. If you enjoy fantasy, read *harry potter and the order of the phoenix* by j. k. rowling.
13. has jake williams already moved from mississippi to new hampshire?
14. hannah wants to name her white pet rat icicle.
15. last october kaitlyn was in the musical *south pacific*.

About Persuasive Writing

What is Persuasive Writing?

Persuasive writing is a powerful form of communication. The intention of a persuasive piece is to influence the reader to change the way in which he or she thinks or acts. The writer attempts to convince the reader through argumentation, advice, or pure entreaty to believe or do as the writer desires. This is heady business requiring careful thought and craft.

In persuasive writing, the author states and supports an opinion and then tries to sway the reader into agreement and perhaps action. In this way, the goal of persuasive writing is active. It is also dependent upon the reader in a way that is far more concrete than with any other writing genre.

Persuasive Structures

The most common persuasive structures include the following:

Letters: Persuasive letters are usually in business form, although they can also be friendly. Their goal, as with any other persuasive writing, is to convince the reader to think or act as the writer desires. A persuasive letter might take the form of a complaint with a call for reparation or as a request for a personal favor.

Editorials: Editorials are articles that clearly express an opinion on the topic. Without the opinion (or slant), the writing will be expository. The author's bias is the basis for the persuasion. It is the goal of editorials to convince the reader to think or act as the writer does.

Reviews: Reviews can be found in most newspapers and many magazines, and they do just as their name suggests: they review (examine or evaluate) a film, television show, book, play, story, concert, and so forth. Reviews state an opinion of the item being reviewed with the intention of swaying the reader to see (read) or to avoid the item.

Persuasive Components

The structure of different persuasive pieces may vary, but each will have some basic components.

Topic: This is the subject of the writing. It must always be stated directly for the writing to be sensible.

Opinion: This is the author's perspective about the subject. The author may not state his or her opinion expressly, but the opinion will be clear through the whole of the writing.

Reader suggestion: This is the author's suggested course of action or thought for the reader. It is not always expressly stated, but it is, at least, implied.

The Key to Good Persuasive Writing

The most important thing to remember about persuasive writing is that the goal is to affect the reader's thoughts and/or actions. Language, structure, examples, corresponding graphics—each of these must be chosen with persuasion in mind. Of course, the writing must be accurate as well so that the effects of the persuasion are not based on inaccuracies or worse, fabrication. The writer of a truly worthy persuasive piece must always maintain his or her integrity.

Editorial Writing Rubric

Use this five-part rubric to mark each student's editorial writing.

Level 4—Exceptional

- The student develops a controlling idea that conveys a judgment.
- The student arranges details, reasons, and/or examples persuasively.
- The student excludes information and arguments that are irrelevant.
- The student supports arguments with evidence.
- The student cites sources of information whenever necessary.
- The student takes and maintains a position.

Level 3—Capable

- The student states a controlling idea that conveys a judgment.
- The student usually arranges details, reasons, and/or examples persuasively.
- The student excludes most information and arguments that are irrelevant.
- The student usually supports arguments with evidence.
- The student cites some sources of information.
- The student takes and usually maintains a position.

Level 2—Developing

- The student states a topic.
- The student arranges one or more detail, reason, and/or example persuasively.
- The student includes some information and arguments that are irrelevant.
- The student offers some support for arguments.
- The student uses at least one outside source of information.
- The student takes a position.

Level 1—Beginning

- The student states a general topic or none at all.
- The student offers no persuasive details, reasons, and/or examples.
- The student includes random information and arguments.
- The student offers little or no support for arguments.
- The student uses no outside source of information.
- The student does not take a position.

Level 0

- The student offers no writing or does not respond to the assignment.

Introductory Parent Letter

Dear Parent,

As you know, reading and writing are important components of your child's education. Children typically spend most of their time reading and writing fiction, but in the real world, the majority of the reading and writing we do throughout our lives is nonfiction. For this reason, we will spend time focusing on nonfiction genres, including nonfiction narrative, expository, and persuasive. I encourage you to support this nonfiction focus at home in the following ways:

Reading Nonfiction

- Take trips to the library to find and check out nonfiction books of interest to your child.
- Encourage your child to read nonfiction magazines and newspapers.
- Have a family game night and ask your child to read the game instructions aloud.
- Have your child follow a recipe and help prepare a meal for the family.

Writing Nonfiction

- Encourage your child to write letters to out-of-town family members or friends.
- Provide your child with a journal (or notebook and paper) and encourage him or her to write daily entries.
- Before going on errands, ask your child to list the stops that need to be made and tasks that need to be accomplished in the most logical order.

Using Nonfiction Reference Materials

- Make use of maps when discussing vacations, political issues, and world events.
- Make use of dictionaries and encyclopedias. You can purchase reference software, make use of those at your local library, or access online reference materials. (Search for "online dictionary" or "online encyclopedia".)
- Spend time with your child reading online nonfiction Web sites related to topics of interest to both you and your child.
- View nonfiction videos or DVDs with your child. Your local library most likely will have many of these that are of interest to your child.

By participating in the activities above, you will model to your child that nonfiction reading and writing is important and has a place in everyday life. Your support will ensure your child's increased reading and writing success!

Sincerely,

Survey Organizer

Ask your classmates a question. Write the choices in the “Options” column below.

Make tally marks for the number of students who choose each option in the “Number of Students” column.

Write your survey question:

Options	Number of Students

Getting to the Point

Objective

The student writes to the point.

(Standard I, Benchmark B, Skill 8)

Letters

Materials

- transparency of Persuasive card 1, “Yes, There Are ETs”
- overhead projector
- chart paper and marker
- student copies of Support Your Opinion, page 20
- writing paper and pencils
- Fiction and Poetry card 3, “Alien Limericks”



Procedure

1. **Explain** to the students that **when an author writes an article, it is important for him or her to get to the point** and not drag the story on and on.
2. **Display the overhead transparency of Persuasive card 1.** Ask students to review the editorial. What was the author’s purpose for writing this letter?
3. As a class, **look at each paragraph of the letter and identify its purpose.** Write your students’ responses on chart paper. For example:

Paragraph 1: briefly explains the author’s purpose for writing the letter—there is life on other planets

Paragraph 2: presents research about life existing in unlikely places on earth

Paragraph 3: explains that astronomers have discovered hundreds of planets

Paragraph 4: evidence of water once on Mars, an indication of life

Paragraph 5: explains that one of Jupiter’s moons has an ocean of water—there could be life there

Paragraph 6: author restates first paragraph, saying that there is life on other planets

4. **Draw the students’ attention to the letter’s format.** The author states an opinion, gives information to support his or her opinion, and sums up by restating the opinion. Note that the author doesn’t go off track. He simply states information that supports his opinion that life exists on other planets.

5. **Divide the students into pairs** or small groups.



Vocabulary

- doubt
- microbes
- exist
- evidence

For definitions, see page 26.



Reader’s & Writer’s Response Suggested Answers

See page 26.

Getting to the Point *(cont.)*

Procedure *(cont.)*

6. Have students **discuss the NASA space program**, answering the following questions:
 - Is research about space important? Why or why not?
 - Should we continue space research? Why or why not?
 - Do you think that research about space benefits us? Why or why not?
7. Have each student **develop an opinion** about space research.
8. **Distribute student copies of the Support Your Opinion** graphic organizer on page 20.
9. **Each student records his or her opinion and then ideas that support this opinion.** Each of these ideas will be developed into supporting paragraphs.
10. Once the graphic organizers are complete, **instruct the students to write their own letters to the editor. Have them follow the format used by the author** (state opinion in first paragraph, offer one or two paragraphs, and close by restating the opinion).



Nonfiction/Fiction and Poetry

This card can be used with Fiction and Poetry card 3, “Alien Limericks.” Have your students try out their skills at creating limericks about space.

Assessment

Review each student’s graphic organizer and letter for an opinion paragraph, a few supporting paragraphs, and a paragraph restating the opinion. Note each student’s ability to stay on track with the main issue. See pages 8–15 for rubrics and other assessment assistance.

Cross References

For additional thematic support, you may supplement the lesson with these resources:

Exploring Writing: *Level 4:* Narrative card 2, “Shooting Stars”

Writer’s Notebook: Time to Write Nonfiction, page 32; Including Main Ideas and Supporting Details, page 35; Writing a Paragraph, page 70

Exploring Nonfiction: *Level 4:* Science card 7, “Great Ball of Fire”; Math card 12, “The Earth: Inside and Out”

Time for Kids Nonfiction Readers: *Outer Space* (Early Fluent Plus); *The Solar System* (Early Fluent Plus); *Space Exploration* (Fluent Plus); *Living in Space* (Fluent Plus)

Getting to the Point *(cont.)*

Class Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the author wrote this letter to the editor?
2. Who do you think the author wants to persuade?
3. Does the author do a good job supporting his opinion? Why or why not?



Reader's and Writer's Response Suggested Answers

Reader's Response

1. The presence of liquid water is one condition most scientists agree is important to life on a planet.
2. The writer does not give any solid proof. He lists reasons to expect that life might be possible on other planets.
3. Answers will vary. Encourage your students to support their arguments with reasons.

Writer's Response

1. In the first paragraph, the writer says that “without a doubt,” there is life on other planets. In the last paragraph, the writer says that “there’s no doubt about” this conclusion. In both statements, the writer shows that his opinion is very strong.
2. The author includes these reasons to believe that life exists on other planets include: there are trillions of planets in the universe so it seems likely that more than one has life; living things have been found in very harsh places on Earth; astronomers have found a planet that is similar to Earth; there is evidence that there was once liquid water on Mars; there is also water on one of Jupiter’s moons (Europa).

Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics

Relate abbreviations to Persuasive card 1 by asking your students to give an abbreviation for September (in third paragraph) and a courtesy title for the signature (Mr.). Have the students complete page 27, *Let's Abbreviate*. For additional practice of this skill, see pages 49-50 of the *Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics* book.



Vocabulary Definitions

1. **doubt**—hesitation
2. **microbes**—microorganisms
3. **exist**—be present
4. **evidence**—proof

Let's Abbreviate

An *abbreviation* is a short way to write a word.

Always capitalize an abbreviation that stands for a proper noun.

Use a period after most abbreviations.



Directions: Write the abbreviation for each underlined word. Two examples have been done for you.

1. mister Johnson Mr. Johnson

2. missus Jones Mrs. Jones

3. Fifth Avenue _____

4. Wednesday _____

5. 918 Elm Street _____

6. doctor Kade _____

7. Tuesday _____

8. Abbreviate the first month of the year. _____

9. Lindsey Boulevard _____

10. Abbreviate the month we celebrate Thanksgiving. _____

11. Saint Nicholas _____

12. Abbreviate the name of your state. _____

About Fiction and Poetry

What is Fiction and Poetry?

Fiction and poetry are creative writing. The intention of fiction and poetry writing is to express the thoughts and feelings of the author. It is also meant to inspire and entertain the reader. While most of the reading and writing children and adults do is nonfiction, many of the elements of fiction writing can help students to be better nonfiction readers and writers.

Types of Fiction and Poetry

The most common forms of poetry and fiction include the following:

Poetry: There are many different types of poetry. The poetry included in this book are a basic poem, a cinquain, and a limerick. Students need instruction on how to write each type of poem.

Fables: All fables are written with a purpose. A fable is written to share a moral or lesson. The moral or lesson is not stated until the end of the fable. Animals play a prominent role as characters in fables.

Adventure Stories: Adventure stories are written to entertain and captivate the reader. Writing an action story requires focusing on the key elements of the story and using figurative language and literary devices to weave the story together. An adventure story should be just that...an adventure to read!

Historical Fiction Stories: Historical fiction stories are much like adventure stories. They need to be written well in order to entertain and pull the reader in. Historical fiction stories also have a specific responsibility to a certain time period. For a story to be plausible, events and actions need to be accurate within the time period the story portrays. Special care and attention should be given ahead of writing the story to research the time period. This will ensure that the setting and events are accurate to that time in history.

Fiction and Poetry Components

The structure of different fiction and poetry pieces may vary, but each will have some basic components.

Topic: This is the subject of the writing. The purpose of writing fiction and poetry will change. Keeping the message clear and focused will make fiction and poetry easier and more interesting to read.

Story Elements: The elements of a story include the characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. It is important to develop an interesting story that includes a theme.

Creativity: This type of writing is the author's opportunity to be creative and expressive. The writing expresses thought and depth that entertains and inspires.

The Key to Writing Good Fiction and Poetry

It's important to remember when writing a poem or story that the goal is to inspire and entertain the reader's thoughts and emotions. Figurative language, structure, examples, and plot all play a role in keeping the attention of the reader. Of course, the writing must be easy to read as well as interesting. A good hook at the beginning with a well planned middle and end can be just the thing an author needs to keep the reader's attention throughout the whole piece.

Poetry Rubric

Use this rubric to evaluate each student’s poem by matching it to the description that fits the best.

Level 4—Exceptional

- The poem has a clear organizational structure.
- The poet presents information logically in the poem.
- The poem conveys a thought, idea, feeling, or picture.
- The poem demonstrates correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
- The poem includes many strategies such as figurative language to clarify and enhance the ideas.
- The poem captures the reader’s attention and engages the reader.

Level 3—Capable

- The poem has an adequate organizational structure.
- The poet usually presents information logically in the poem.
- The poem shows an attempt to convey a thought, idea, feeling, or picture.
- The poem demonstrates most forms of correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
- The poem includes more than one writing strategy such as figurative language to clarify and enhance ideas.
- The poem exhibits an awareness of the audience.

Level 2—Developing

- The poem portrays some evidence of organizational structure.
- The poet attempts to present information logically in the poem.
- The poem doesn’t really convey a thought, idea, or feeling.
- The poem demonstrates some forms of correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
- The poem includes too few writing strategies such as figurative language to clarify and enhance ideas.
- The poem exhibits a vague awareness of the audience.

Level 1—Beginning

- The poem lacks organizational structure.
- The poet doesn’t present information logically in the poem.
- The poem doesn’t convey a central thought.
- The poem demonstrates irregular forms of correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
- The poem doesn’t include a writing strategy such as figurative language to clarify and enhance ideas.
- The poem does not exhibit an awareness of the audience.

Level 0

- The student offers no poem or does not respond to the assignment presented.

Culminating Parent Letter

Dear Parents,

We have just completed an exciting unit on fiction and poetry. Your child has learned how to effectively write different types of fiction and poetry. Some of the assignments have included writing cinquains, fables, adventure stories, and historical fiction. I am sending home a fiction and poetry book that has been designed and written by your child. Please read, review, and discuss the poetry, fables, adventure stories, and historical fiction story. Celebrate the success your child has had with learning to write creatively.

Here is a list of some of the skills your child has been introduced to and learned throughout our Fiction and Poetry writing study:

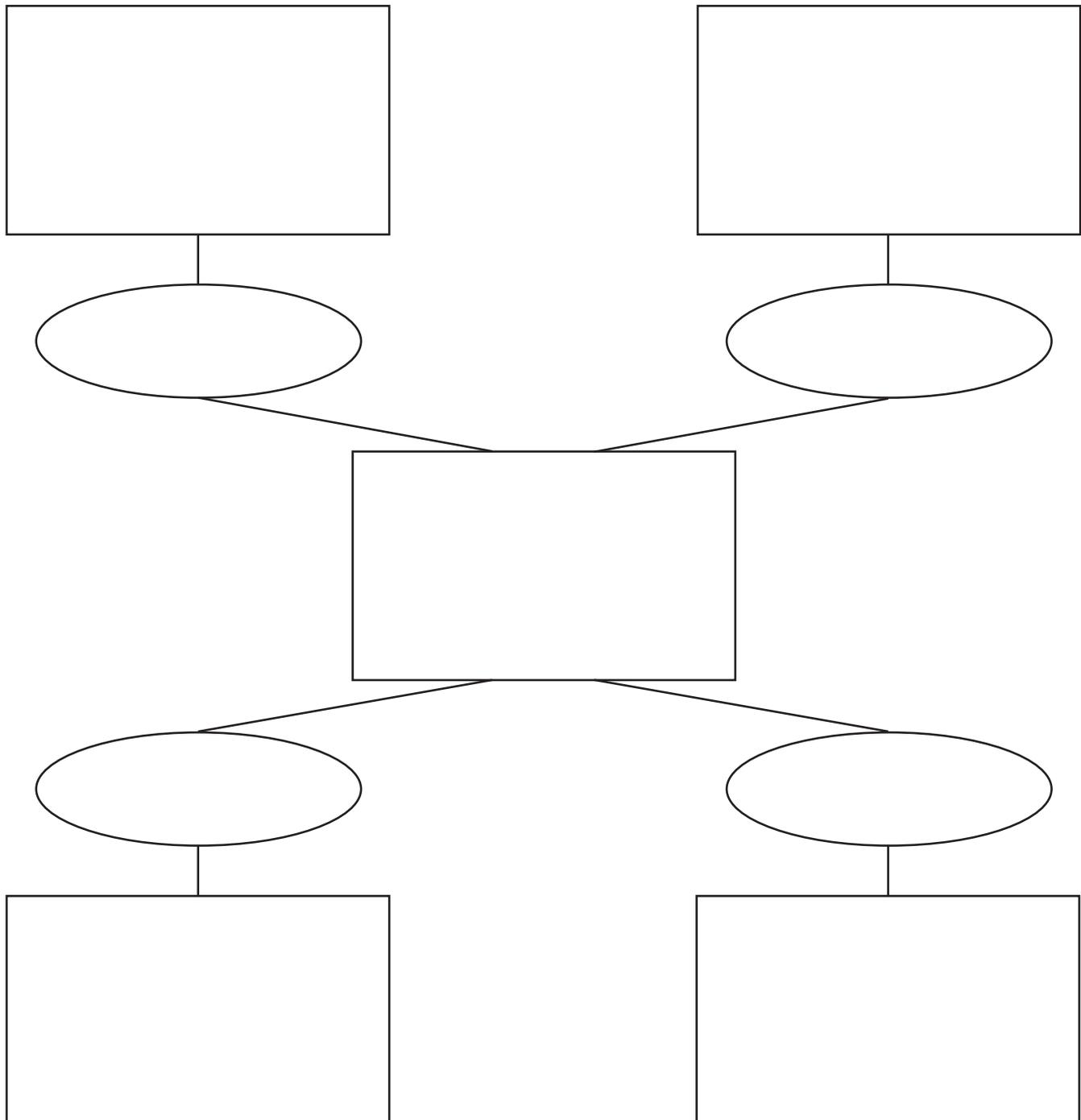
- Understands the characteristics of a poem, limerick, cinquain, fable, adventure story, historical fiction story
- Uses the proper poetry format
- Organizes a poem for a specific audience
- Understands how to write a moral at the end of a fable
- Excludes information that is distracting and irrelevant
- Brainstorms for ideas
- Connects ideas to develop focus
- Establishes a setting
- Develops characters with substance
- Includes a beginning, middle, and end in a story
- Hooks the reader at the beginning of a story
- Understands and uses figurative language in creative writing pieces
- Understands and uses humor in creative writing pieces
- Revises and edits for meaning
- Tells a story using details and description
- Shows insight into the character, setting, conflict and resolution in the story
- Creates an interesting plot
- Determines an appropriate title for stories and poems
- Uses a variety of words and sentences
- Writes an organized story that follows a natural sequence of events
- Uses thoughtful transitions
- Creates an intriguing and interesting ending

I am also sending home a portfolio filled with other fiction and poetry writing completed by your child. We hope you will help celebrate the accomplishments of your child. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Adventure Graphic Organizer

Directions: Use this graphic to organize the parts of your adventure story. The inner rectangle contains the name of characters. The ovals contain the main events of the story. The outer rectangles record the description and feelings regarding each event. Please record the details of the event here. The ovals and rectangles become paragraphs in your story.



Fables

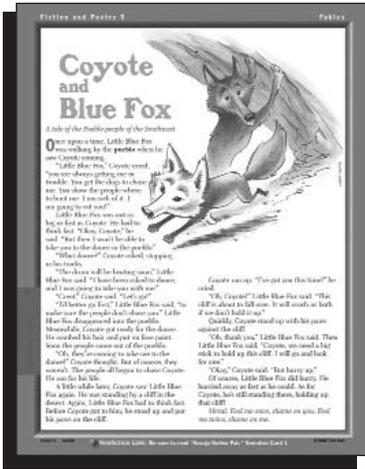
Using Humor

Objective

The student will write a fable that includes humor. (Standard 1, Benchmark B, Skill 9; Standard I, Benchmark D, Skill 4; Standard I, Benchmark I, Skills 1–5; Standard I, Benchmark N, Skill 3)

Materials

- transparency of Fiction and Poetry card 5, “Coyote and Blue Fox”
- overhead projector
- chalkboard or whiteboard
- chalk or whiteboard marker
- writing paper/pencils



Procedure

1. Write the word *humor* on the board.
2. Hold a discussion with the students on how humor can be a useful tool in writing.
3. Ask the class to identify examples of when humor can effectively be used in writing. Here are some ideas:
 - Humor can be used to gently persuade others.
 - Humor can be used in writing to entertain.
 - Humor can be used to try and get a point across.
 - Humor can be used when writing about a sensitive subject.
4. Explain that humor can be used effectively when writing a fable.
5. Display transparency of Fiction and Poetry card 5.
6. Read Fiction and Poetry card 5 aloud while students follow along.
7. Instruct the students to locate examples of humor that were used in the fable. The examples in this fable are subtle. Humorous parts might include the following: 1) *Instead of being eaten, the Little Blue Fox is able to convince Coyote that he was going to ask him to a dance. Silly!* 2) *The Little Blue Fox cons the Coyote into thinking that the cliff is going to fall over if they don't hold it up. Silly!* 3) *The Little Blue Fox is teasing and tricking Coyote over and over. Coyote seems gullible.*
8. Brainstorm with the students a list of morals to the story. The morals to the story will be the subject of future fables.



Vocabulary

- pueblo

For definitions, see page 42.



Reader's & Writer's Response Suggested Answers

See page 42.

Procedure *(cont.)*

9. **Make a list of the morals to the story on the board.** Some examples may include: *it's better to be safe than sorry; slow and steady wins the race; never count your chicks before they hatch; don't cry over spilt milk.*
10. **Instruct the students to select one of the ideas** on which to write a fable.
11. **Instruct the students to write a fable using humor** somewhere within the fable.
12. When finished, **have the students exchange papers with a partner.** Have the partner read the fable and underline the examples of humor within the fable.
13. **Collect all the fables.** Read the fables aloud to the students. The students should identify the humor and the moral to the story. They will match one of the morals on the board with one of the fables.



Fiction and Poetry/Nonfiction

This card can be used in conjunction with Narrative Nonfiction card 1, “Navajo Nation Fair” Discuss with the students the theme of this narrative. The skill of using humor in writing is important in fiction as well as nonfiction. Discuss these questions with the students: Are there any examples of humor used in Narrative Nonfiction card 1? How does reading this card add insight to your understanding of Fiction and Poetry card 1, “Coyote and Blue Fox?”

Assessment

Read and assess the fables using the rubric on page 12 to determine the level of writing for each fable. Locate examples of humor being used within the fable. Write a note of encouragement to the student for his or her use of humor in the fable. See pages 10–14 for rubrics and other assessment assistance.

Cross References

For additional thematic support, you may supplement the lesson with these resources:

Exploring Writing: *Level 4:* Narrative Nonfiction card 1, “Navajo Nation Fair!”; Fiction and Poetry card 4, “Jabuti’s Shell”; Expository card 9, “A Celebration of Native America”

Writer’s Notebook: Time to Write, pages 6–12; Getting Started, pages 14–15; Time to Write Fiction, pages 28–29; Story Checklist, page 31; Making Your Writing Better, page 54; Need a Better Title? page 55; Rules for Writing, page 64; Check Your Spelling, pages 74–75

Exploring Nonfiction: *Level 3:* Social Studies card 4, “Proud to be Mohawk”

Time for Kids Nonfiction Readers: *Mammals* (Fluent), *Death Valley Desert* (Fluent Plus)

Fables

Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics

Sentence variety is one of the techniques writers use to keep their writing interesting. Knowing the different types of sentences and how to use them is an important skill to learn. Have the students complete page 43, “The Different Sentences.” For additional practice of this skill, see pages 1–2 of the *Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics* workbook.

Using Humor *(cont.)*

Class Discussion Questions

1. What can you learn about the Pueblo people of the Southwest after reading this fable?
2. Why do you think humor is often used in fables and folktales? What is the purpose of a fable?
3. Can you think of another fable you have read about animals? Was there humor involved?
4. What is the moral to the story of this fable? Do you think that the fable matched the moral? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think that Coyote was so easily fooled? Why do you think the Coyote would want to eat Little Blue Fox?



Reader's and Writer's Response Suggested Answers

Reader's Response

1. Coyote is big and strong but not very bright. He has long fur and paws. (Some students may know that a coyote is similar to a dog.) Blue Fox is small and clever. He also has paws.
2. Responses will vary. Possible answer: Small and smart is better because someone who is smart can think faster than the other guy and get out of all kinds of danger.

Writer's Response

1. The writer tells that Coyote is bigger and faster than Blue Fox and that Coyote could eat Blue Fox if he could corner and catch him.
2. Possible answer: The writer adds that Coyote “is still standing there, holding up that cliff!” Of course, that isn't really possible, but it is funny because it shows just how easily Coyote can be fooled.



Vocabulary Definitions

1. **pueblo**—Spanish word for home or dwelling

The Different Sentences

There are four types of sentences. These sentences are called *declarative*, *interrogative*, *imperative*, and *exclamatory*.

Declarative Sentence

Declarative sentences make a statement. *Example:* The dolphin swims in the ocean.

Interrogative Sentences

Interrogative sentences ask a question. *Example:* Is there a ruler of the animals?

Imperative Sentences

Imperative sentences make commands. *Example:* Only make promises you can keep.

Exclamatory Sentences

Exclamatory sentences communicate a strong feeling, emotion, or surprise. *Example:* That lion better run!

Directions: Write a *declarative*, *interrogative*, *imperative*, and *exclamatory* sentence on the lines below.

Declarative: _____

Interrogative: _____

Imperative: _____

Exclamatory: _____

Directions: Read and identify the sentences below. Write *declarative*, *interrogative*, *imperative*, and *exclamatory* in the space provided.

1. The people of the Southwest lived in a pueblo. _____
2. Help, the pan is on fire! _____
3. Come here right now. _____
4. Why are you holding on to the cliff? _____

Locate examples of the four different sentence types in Fiction and Poetry card 5. Write and identify these examples on the back of this paper.

The Navajo Nation Fair

When I was a kid growing up in Arizona, I loved to go to the state fair. My favorite things to visit were the shows and displays of the Navajo people. I could watch the traditional dancing for hours.

Today, the Navajo people have a fair of their own. It's held every September in Window Rock, a town in northeastern Arizona. Last year I had a chance to go, and it was even better than I remembered.

Drums and Dancing

The first thing you hear at the Navajo Nation Fair is the drumming. The beat never stops. Most of the time it's to **accompany** the dancers. One of the dances is the Jingle dance.



JACK KURTZLUMA/PRESSNEWS.COM

The dancers' **traditional** costumes are decorated with metal cones that jingle as they move. There's also the Aztec dance. The Aztec dancers wear costumes made of grass. Like most of the audience, I found myself tapping my feet. I had to keep myself from taking part. Besides the dancing, there's also a rodeo. But my favorite event was the Miss Navajo contest. This was no regular beauty contest. The contestants were judged on their knowledge of the Navajo language and how well they could **butcher** sheep. This is an important skill to people who have been shepherds for hundreds of years.

Mutton and Fry Bread

As I walked around the fair, with the drumming always in the background, I was amazed at the size of the event. It's the largest all-Indian fair held anywhere. More than 200,000 people visit it every year. Native Americans come from tribes all over the country, and many non-Indians also visit. So many Navajo have **reunions** at the fair, you feel like it's one big family gathering, even if it's not your family!

If you visit the fair, make sure you hit the food booths where roast mutton is one of the main treats. I tried some with fry bread and green chilies. It was even better than a hot dog with the works!

Above: A boy takes a "Woolly Ride" at the Navajo Nation Fair. **Left:** This woman was named Miss Navajo Nation.



ROBERT HARDING / WORLD IMAGERY/ALAMY

Reader's Response

- 1 Would you like to go to the Navajo Nation Fair? Why or why not?
- 2 What do you think you might learn there that you don't already know?
- 3 What do you think you would like most about the fair? Why?

Writer's Response

- 1 The author gives descriptions that appeal to your senses of sight, hearing, and taste. Why do you think she did this?
- 2 Why does the author compare the Navajo Nation Fair to the state fairs of her childhood?

Be the Writer

TIME FOR KIDS has asked you to write an article about something you have done that will interest the magazine's readers. Consider places you have visited, people you have met or experiences you have had. Choose one and write the article. Remember to use words that appeal to the senses.

Words to Know

accompany butcher
traditional reunions

From the Writer

Narratives tell a story or describe an experience. As with all writing, you want to give some thought to organizing your narrative so it will make sense to readers.

The most common way to organize a narrative is time order. This means starting with what happened first, then telling what happened after that, and so on. The author signals time order with time words, such as *first*, *next*, *later*, and *finally*.

Another common method is spatial, or "space," order. Writing in spatial order is like making a written "map" of the place. It describes the first location, then the next, and so on. The author signals this kind of organizational structure with words that tell location: *behind*, *beside*, *in*, *near*, *beyond*.

The author of "The Navajo Nation Fair" uses yet another organizational style. She writes about the fair topically, which means telling everything she wants to say about one subject before moving on to another. She tells about the drumming, the dancing, other events, and, finally, the food. The author does not tell when or where each activity took place, but she gives the reader a good sense of the day she spent at the fair.

Think about your purpose for writing. Do you want to tell a straightforward story? Do you want your reader to know about a place you visited? Do you want to tell what you learned about different subjects through your experience? Answering these questions helps you choose the best structure for your article.

Big Jobs, Little Workers



ZOE SELSKY

A 12-year-old boy pulls banana stalks along a metal runner after other workers have stripped off the fruit. He works 12 hours a day at a banana packing plant.

Ten-year-old Wilbur Carreno is less than four feet tall and weighs only 50 pounds. He is small for his age. That's exactly what makes him good at his job.

Wilbur climbs banana trees four times his height. He ties the heavy bunches of bananas so the trees won't droop from the weight of the fruit. "I've been working since I was eight," he told TIME FOR KIDS. "I finish school at noon. Then I go to the field."

Wilbur lives in Ecuador, a country in South America. One in every four children in Ecuador works. Officials say that about 69,000 kids **toil** on banana farms. Kids working there come into contact with dangerous chemicals. Children also pull loads twice their weight. And kids must use sharp, heavy knives.

Do Kids Belong on the Job?

Ecuador is just one country where kids work. The United Nations estimates that 250 million children around the world have jobs. Many nations don't have laws against child workers.

In 2002, a group called Human Rights Watch did a study of Ecuador's banana **plantations**. They found that most children begin working on plantations around age 10. The average workday lasts 12 hours. By age 14,

six out of 10 kids no longer go to school. Many families face the hard choice of sending their children to school or having enough food.

Alejandro Sinchi, 12, works beside his father, Eduardo, on a plantation. "I don't want my kids to work," Mr. Sinchi says. But he has nine children and makes \$6 a day. "It isn't even enough for food, let alone school, clothes, transportation."

Hard Work for Little Pay

One reason pay is so low is that Ecuador doesn't allow workers to form unions. In some nations, unions are allowed, so some banana workers there make \$11 a day. Also, these nations have fewer child workers.

Better pay means parents can afford to keep their kids in school. What if banana workers everywhere had higher **wages**? Then U.S. shoppers would have to pay a few cents more for bananas. Would Americans be willing to pay the higher price if more kids could stay in school? That's the big question.

Reader's Response

- 1 Why are children sent to work in some countries?
- 2 What is one solution the author offers to the problem of child workers? How might this solution affect Americans?
- 3 Name one way in which countries that allow workers' unions are different from countries that do not allow unions.

Writer's Response

- 1 The author begins the article by describing Wilbur Carreno. Why do you think the author does that?
- 2 Name three sources of information the author uses. Do you think these are good sources for the information in the article? Why or why not?

Be the Writer

Reformers, or people who work for social change, fought hard to improve conditions for young workers in the United States in the early 1900s. Find out more about reformers of that time, such as Jane Addams or Lewis Hine. Write an article describing how the work of reformers improved children's lives.

Words to Know

toil **wages**
plantations

From the Writer

In a courtroom, witnesses are asked to tell “the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” Good expository writing requires the same. The key to getting accurate information is using the right sources. To find out whether a source is good, ask several questions:

Is this source *reliable*? A reliable source is one that you can expect to be careful, accurate, and up-to-date with its facts. Most current reference books (encyclopedias, atlases, almanacs, and so on) are reliable. Websites with addresses that end in *.gov* or *.edu* are often more reliable than other sites.

Is this source *authoritative*? An authoritative source is one that can be expected to know a lot about the subject.

Is this source *biased*? *Bias* means someone already has an opinion about what the facts mean. It does not make the source a bad one, but information from a biased source should always be checked.

For “Big Jobs, Little Workers,” the author uses different sources. Interviews provide first-hand information about life on a banana plantation. The United Nations gives reliable information about international issues. Human Rights Watch provides data from a careful study. Together, these sources give a clear picture of the situation of many child workers.

Whether your writing is serious, silly, or something in between, you want your reader to “get it.” Starting with accurate information is the best way to reach this goal.

Yes, There Are ETs

To the Editor,

Is there life on other planets? The answer is, without a **doubt**, yes.

There are billions and billions of stars in the universe. There are probably trillions of planets around those stars. It does not make sense to think that there is life only on Earth.

Recent discoveries have shown that life can **exist** in all sorts of unlikely places. Scientists have found living **microbes** in the sands of the hottest, driest deserts. They have found them in the coldest place on Earth—Antarctica. They have also found life around the vents of underwater volcanoes, deep in the ocean. If there is life in all of these places, why can't it exist on other planets?

Astronomers have been able to spot a few planets around nearby stars. As of September 2004, they had discovered more than 100 planets. Most are not solid like Earth, but are big balls of gas, like Saturn or Jupiter.

Recently, however, astronomers found a planet around a star known as Gliese 436. That planet is closer to the size of Earth.

Scientists think there's one main condition for life on a planet. That's liquid water. Scientists have found **evidence** that water once flowed over parts of Mars. If there was once water on the Red Planet, then perhaps there was life there, also. Even if we don't find any life there now, it's possible we could find fossils of strange Martian animals from millions of years ago.

There's one other place in the solar system where we might find life. Europa is a moon of Jupiter. It's covered with ice, but below the ice is an ocean of water. Could there be life in that ocean? Jupiter is close enough to Earth that one day we may find out.

There's no doubt about it. Life is out there, on another planet. It may not look anything like life on Earth. We may not ever find it. But it's there.

Sincerely,
Ben Jones

This photo of Europa, Jupiter's moon, was taken by a space probe. Might there be some form of life on other planets besides Earth? Only time—and exploration—will tell!

NASA

Reader's Response

- 1 What one condition is most important for life on a planet?
- 2 Does the writer give any solid proof of life on other planets? Explain your answer.
- 3 Do you think there is life on other planets? Why do you think the way you do?

Writer's Response

- 1 How does the writer of this letter use the word *doubt* to strengthen his opinion?
- 2 How many reasons does the writer give for believing in life on other planets? Make a bullet chart, and list them in short phrases.

Be the Writer

Write a dialogue (conversation) between yourself and one other person. In your conversation, you can explain why exploring other planets is a good idea. The other person can offer reasons not to focus on that kind of exploration. Try to think of good reasons for each point of view.

Words to Know

doubt

microbes

exist

evidence

From the Writer

When you write to persuade, get to the point quickly and stick to it. If you don't, you may lose your audience. You want your audience—your readers—to follow your ideas to the end. If they do, you may be able to persuade them that your way of thinking makes sense.

Notice that the letter is written "To the Editor." That means the letter writer, Ben Jones, is probably responding to a newspaper article. Perhaps the article said that life on other planets is unlikely. The letter writer wants readers to understand that he is taking a stand on this issue. In the first sentence, he asks, "Is there life on other planets?" Next he answers, "without a doubt, yes." This writer got right to the point. He said what he'd be writing about (life on other planets) and gave his opinion (there is life on other planets). That makes a strong beginning.

Next, the writer must back up his opinion with evidence. The middle paragraphs should give evidence to support the writer's opinion. Ask yourself if this writer sticks to the point in each of these paragraphs.

A good writer restates, or tells again, his or her opinion at the end. Read the last paragraph in the letter. Notice that you could switch the first two sentences of this last paragraph with the first two sentences of the first paragraph. Ben has stuck to the point at the end as well as at the beginning.

King of the Hill

Beneath the hill, a giant lies,
On rocks and roots of trees he spies.
He hides from view, but underground
His fingers stretch without a sound.

He reaches out from tree to tree,
The ruler of the woods is he.
And in the fall of every year,
We see his mushroom crown appear.

Across the hillside grow the trees.
They think they rule with branch and leaves.
But down below, the **monarch** knows.
He feasts upon their roots and grows.

ARCOH.SCHULZ/ALAMY

Reader's Response

- 1 What is the only part of the fungus that can be seen aboveground? When does it appear?
- 2 Do you think the fungus and the trees help each other and both gain something or do you think that one or the other of these living things will take over the hill and kill the other? Explain your answer.

Writer's Response

- 1 What besides the fungus does the poet personify? Give an example from the poem.
- 2 How does the poet use pronouns to aid in personification?

Be the Writer

- Think about a thing that you see or use every day. How could you personify the object to describe it to someone else? Write a paragraph to express your ideas.
- Imagine what might happen to this king if the trees all die. What would the future be for this fungus? Write a new verse or two for the poem about the possible outcome.

Words to Know

spies

monarch

From the Writer

When you personify something, you describe it and give it actions as if it were a person. People personify their pets, their homes, their cars, their bikes—even their computers. Writers sometimes personify nonhuman things in their stories or poems to help us see them in a new light. We call this way of writing *personification*.

Read the poem “King of the Hill.” What is it about? A fungus, a lowly living thing. Think about how the poem describes the fungus. We are told that “a giant” lies beneath the hill. The giant is the poet’s special word for the fungus. What image does the word *giant* bring to your mind? Most likely, it is a picture of a very large human being. The fungus isn’t at all like a human. But it is huge. That’s personification at work.

Find a powerful image of personification in the fourth line. Think about qualities that are typically human. Did you select “His fingers stretch” as the image? The picture is of a hand with long fingers slowly and silently reaching out for something. A fungus certainly does not have fingers, as people do. However, a fungus does have threadlike parts that push outward. Thinking of them as stretching fingers creates a picture in our minds that we, as readers, can understand and remember. Look for other examples of personification as you read and reread “King of the Hill.” Personification gives your readers a great picture to hang on to as they read.