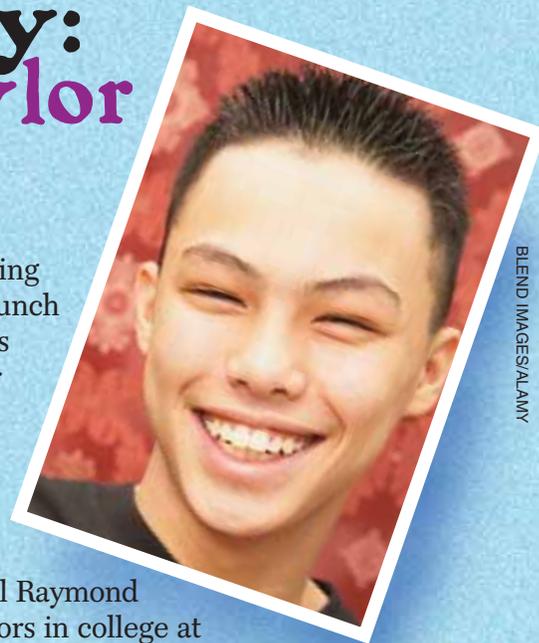


My Personal History: Benjamin Wang Taylor



BLEND IMAGES/ALAMY

My mother says I came into this world screaming for something and it wasn't until I was 11 that she figured out what I wanted: a bunch of video games. Of course, my mom is kidding. A sense of humor is one thing I inherited from her side of the family. My mom and her brother, Xiao, are hilarious.

You might be surprised to learn my mom is from China. For some reason, lots of people are somewhat shocked to find out that Chinese people can be humorous. I guess they're stuck on the stereotypes about Asians being **studious** and serious all the time.

My mother, Cui Ping Wang, is from Beijing, China. My dad, Paul Raymond Taylor comes from Gorman, Texas. They met when they were seniors in college at Texas A&M University. They were both in the library studying one night. My dad fell asleep and my mom woke him up because his snoring was bugging her. The rest is history.

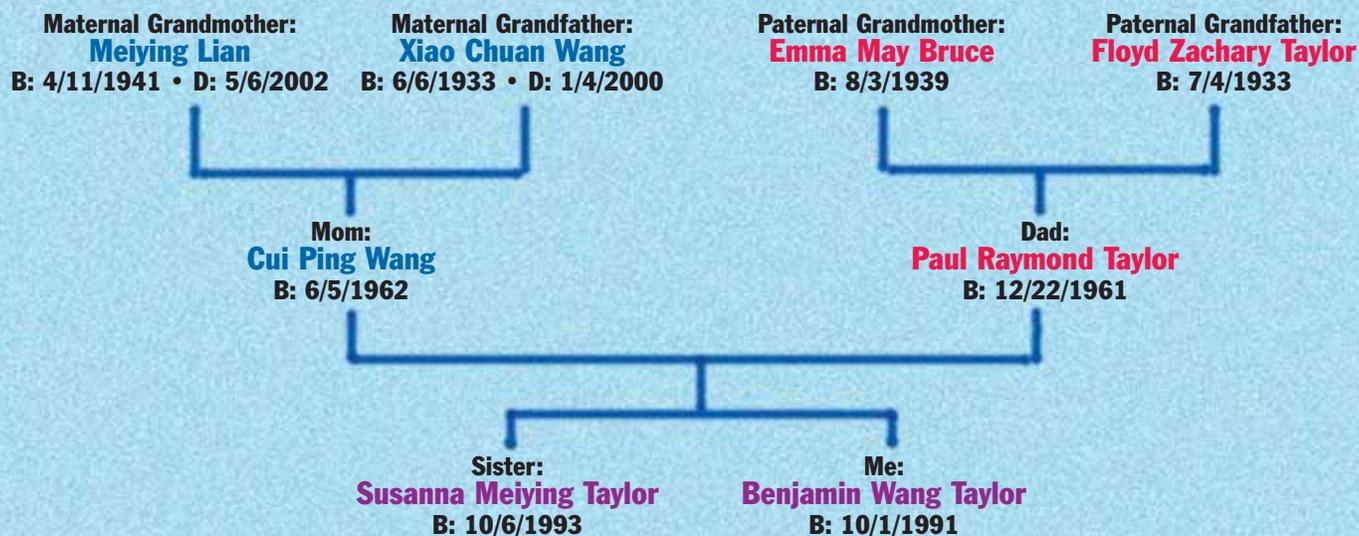
I was born on October 1, 1991, and my sister, Susanna, arrived two years later. We live in Dallas, Texas.

My dad, who is an engineer at an oil company, was the first person in his family ever to go to college. His parents were peanut farmers and so were his grandparents. My mom comes from a family of farmers, too—wheat farmers. She and her brother were also the first in their family to **attend** college. She won a **scholarship** to study in the United States. Now, my mom writes joke books for kids.

I like being from a family with such a mixed background. After my parents met, my dad learned Chinese. My sister and I speak it, too.

Dinner at our house is always an adventure. One night, it will be something like chicken-fried steak with boiled peanuts. The next it will be pork lo mein with Chinese broccoli. Once we had Peking Duck for Thanksgiving!

Here is my family tree:



Reader's Response

- 1 What stereotypes does Benjamin mention? How do you think these affect him personally?
- 2 Why does the writer describe dinner with his family as an “adventure”?
- 3 What cultures influence your family life? Are these the result of your national origins, where you live, or other factors?

Writer's Response

- 1 Do you think the introductory paragraph is an effective way to start a personal history? Tell why you think as you do.
- 2 Describe the tone and voice of this report. What can you tell about the writer's personality from it?
- 3 How does the family tree support or add to the report?

Be the Writer

We usually get more than just physical traits from our parents. How have your parents, grandparents, and other adults in your family “rubbed off” on your personality? Which of their character traits do you see in yourself? Which would you like to have? Write a two-page reflection paper about the influence of your family in your development.

Words to Know

studious **scholarship**
attend

From the Writer

One saying goes, “You can’t know where you’re going unless you know where you’ve been.” Our family histories and family relationships shape us and have a great effect on who we grow up to be. Family histories tell us a lot about ourselves, so they are at least as important as knowing about all the kings and battles of past centuries (and probably much more so).

You don’t have to dig back a hundred generations to gain a lot of insight about your family. Start in your generation! What is your history, the events you have lived through, the people you have known? How are you like your siblings or cousins? How are you different from them? Where did those differences come from?

Then go back to the generations you’ve known—parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents. Where are they from? What are their backgrounds, beliefs, education? Do you have your grandma’s nose? Your dad’s sense of humor? Your mom’s smile?

Think about how people and places have affected your life. Constructing a family tree is a simple project that can help you begin digging into your personal history. Ask the adults in your family for details, and listen to their stories. You may be surprised at the rich history there.

An important thing to remember in writing a personal history is that it is about a unique person: you! Enjoy getting to know a great person even better as you write about your family and yourself.

Personal History with Family Tree

Objectives

The student writes a story conveying the personal importance of family history. (Standard I, Benchmark G, Skill 12)

Materials

- overhead transparency of Social Studies card 1, “My Personal History: Benjamin Wang Taylor”
- student copies of the Family Tree graphic organizer (page 22)
- overhead transparency of My Family History student writing sample (page 74)
- overhead projector
- student copies of Social Studies card 1
- student copies of the Family Tree graphic organizer (page 22)
- overhead transparency of My Family History student writing sample (page 74)
- writing paper and pencils

Social Studies 1

My Personal History: Benjamin Wang Taylor

My mother says I came into this world screaming for something and it wasn't until I was 11 that she figured out what I wanted, a bunch of video games. Of course, my mom is kidding. A sense of humor is one thing I inherited from her side of the family. My mom and her brother, Steve, are hilarious.

You might be surprised to learn my mom is from China. For some reason, lots of people are somewhat shocked to find out that Chinese people can be hilarious. I guess they're stuck on the stereotype about Asians being serious and serious all the time.

My mother, Cai Ping Wang, is from Beijing, China. My dad, Paul Raymond Taylor, moved from Geneva, Texas. They met when they were seniors in college at Texas A&M University. They were both in the library studying one night. My dad left school and my mom took him up because his name was Benjamin, but the rest is history.

We were on October 1, 1991, and my sister, Susanna, arrived two years later. We live in Dallas, Texas.

My dad, who is an engineer at an oil company, was the first person in his family ever to go to college. His parents were peasant farmers and so were his grandparents. My mom comes from a family of farmers, but—oh! farmer. She and her brother were also the first in their family to attend college. She won a scholarship to study in the United States. Now, my mom works plus books for a living.

I like being from a family with such a mixed background. After my parents met, my dad learned Chinese. My sister and I speak it too.

Dinner at our house is always an adventure. One night, it will be something like chicken-fried steak with baked potatoes. The next it will be pork lo mein with Chinese broccoli. Once we had Peking Duck for Thanksgiving!

Here is my family tree.

Maternal Grandparents:	Paternal Grandparents:	Paternal Grandparents:
Brookline Liao b. 01/20/1911 • d. 06/20/2002	Shan Chuan Wang b. 02/03/20 • d. 1/24/2000	Geneva Ray Drake b. 02/29/20
Mom Cai Ping Wang b. 05/19/62	Dad Paul Raymond Taylor b. 12/22/1961	
Susanna Beatrice Taylor b. 10/01/1993	Benjamin Wang Taylor b. 10/01/1991	



Procedure

1. **Ask the students to reflect on the members of their extended families.** Ask the students leading questions, such as: *What do you know about your aunts, uncles, and grandparents? What do you know about your parents' childhood experiences?*
2. **Explain that Social Studies card 1 presents an article written by a young man about his parents' backgrounds.** This kind of story is called a *personal history* and conveys the author's family history.
3. **Distribute student copies of card 1** and allow the students time to read the article and peruse the family tree.
4. **Display the overhead transparency** of Social Studies card 1 and draw the students' attention to the new vocabulary words in boldface text. Discuss the meanings of these words.
5. **Ask the Class Discussion Questions** on page 32.
6. **Ask the students to think about the information Benjamin shares** about his parents' differing backgrounds; then ask students to think about what they know about their parents' lives. Where did they grow up? What were their families like?
7. Divide the class into small groups, and **invite the students to share stories** they know about their families.
8. Ask the students if they are now curious about their parents' backgrounds. Instruct each student to **create a list of questions** to ask one or both parents. Be sure to have the students include questions about grandparents or great grandparents, including their full names and maiden names. (These interviews should take place before completing the writing task in this lesson.)



Vocabulary

- **studious**
- **attend**
- **scholarship**

For definitions, see page 32.

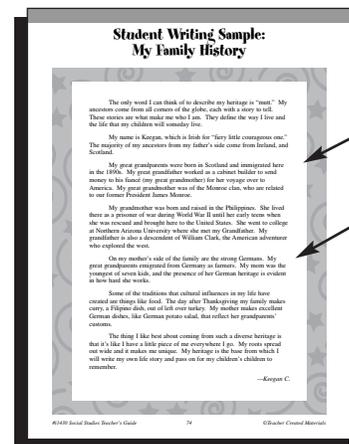


Reader's & Writer's Response Suggested Answers

See page 32.

Procedure (cont.)

9. Draw the students' attention to the family tree on Social Studies card 1. Ask the students to **identify how this visual aid adds to the article.**
10. **Distribute student copies of the Family Tree graphic organizer.**
11. Have each student **complete the graphic organizer** with information about as many family members as possible.
12. After completing the graphic organizer, instruct each student to **write notes** about his or her family background. Point out to the students that Benjamin carefully selects information to share about his family. He doesn't give information about every one of his family members, but rather narrows the information to specific information about his mother and father. Tell the students that they should each think of information that makes his or her family unique.
13. After creating notes about his or her family, instruct each student to **use the notes to write an article** that will accompany the family tree he or she created.
14. **Display the overhead transparency of My Family History** student writing sample for students to use as a model.
15. Encourage pairs or small groups of students to **share their articles** with one another, answering classmates' questions and clarifying information.
16. If necessary, have students **revise their articles** in order to present the information as clearly as possible.



Note the student's interesting facts about both maternal and paternal grandparents.

Assessment

Review each student's article and family tree. Pay close attention to the student's ability to focus on unique aspects of his or her family. See pages 10–14 for rubrics and other assessment assistance.

Cross References

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

Exploring Writing: *Level 6:* Narrative card 2, “Korean as Kimchi”; Narrative card 3, “She’s a Regular Cheese Whiz!”; Narrative card 7, “Her Deepness”; Narrative card 8, “Flavia Bujor, Teen Writer”; Narrative card 10, “She Never Stopped Fighting”; Narrative card 11, “They Were There First”; Narrative card 12, “The Son of ‘Summer’”

Writer’s Notebook: Common Forms of Student Writing, pages 54–59; Narrative Essay, pages 56–59

Exploring Nonfiction: *Secondary Language Arts: People, Places, and Events* card 1, “The Genius of Maya Ying Lin”

Personal History with Family Tree *(cont.)*

Class Discussion Questions

1. What does Benjamin say is surprising about his mother?
2. What do most people expect of his mother? Why do they have this expectation?
3. What is a stereotype? What stereotypes do you recognize?



Reader's and Writer's Response Suggested Answers

Reader's Response

1. Ben mentions stereotypes that Asians are studious and serious all the time. The answers for how these stereotypes affect him personally will vary.
2. They eat both American and Chinese cuisine.
3. Answers will vary.

Writer's Response

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.
3. It provides a visual aid that helps the reader to understand the author's family background.

Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics

Have students complete page 33, entitled "Noun or Verb?" For additional practice of this skill, see pages 9–16 and 17–30 of the *Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics* book.



Vocabulary Definitions

1. **studious**—serious about academics
2. **attend**—go to
3. **scholarship**—money awarded for attending college

Noun or Verb?

Sometimes a word that is a noun can also act as a verb. For example:

How much water does it take to water a lawn?

Water as a *noun*: a liquid

Water as a *verb*: to put water on something



Directions: In each sentence below, find the word that is used as both a noun and a verb. Circle the noun and underline the verb.

1. Don't trip when you are on your trip.
2. I dream that my dream will come true.
3. I will walk quickly on my walk.
4. Duck when the duck flies overhead.
5. The guard will carefully guard the building.
6. I treasure the treasure I found in the ocean.
7. The poison is dangerous and can poison a person.
8. Use the cover to cover the plants.



Directions: For each of the following words, write a sentence using the word as both a noun and a verb.

drain

pool

question

Parent Letter: Introduction to Social Studies Writing

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As you know, writing is an important skill for students to learn in school. Writing nonfiction is particularly important, since this is the kind of writing we use most often in everyday adult life. Students are expected to write in nearly all of their courses, and Social Studies is no exception. Writing in the Social Studies class involves the use of many different genres, such as expository, persuasive, and narrative writing.

Expository writing is writing used to explain and inform. This kind of writing is used when giving directions, outlining instructions, describing a process, and retelling events. Expository writing can be found in newspapers, maps, cookbooks, informational books, and Web pages.

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. Students can read examples of persuasive writing in newspaper and magazine editorials and letters.

By middle school, students should be very familiar and comfortable with narrative writing. In Social Studies, the students will learn that real personal and biographical experiences are, in fact, nonfiction narratives.

I encourage you to support your child by asking about the writing skills he or she is learning in school. As these writing assignments come home, take the time to review and discuss them.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

LAB WRITE-UP: BARN OWL PELLET DISSECTION

Purpose The purpose of this lab is to learn to **dissect** a barn owl pellet and to identify the prey **consumed** by the owl that produced the pellet.

Background Barn owls are birds of prey. They live off of mammals and small birds, which they catch and kill at night using their sharp talons (claws). Barn owls swallow their prey whole. Enzymes in their stomachs break down the soft parts of the prey, but owls cannot digest fur, bones, or feathers. Instead, they throw them up as a solid pellet about 20 hours after a meal.

Materials

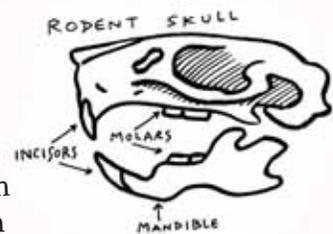
- owl pellet
- paper plate
- tweezers
- egg carton
- rodent-skull diagram



owl pellet

Procedure I weighed and measured my pellet. Next, I put it on a paper plate and carefully broke the pellet in half. I saw that it was made of fur, bones, and a few tiny teeth. I used tweezers to separate the bones and teeth from the fur. I put the bones in one pile and the teeth in another.

Next, I tried to sort the bones into the following categories: skulls, vertebrae, leg bones, and other. There were two skulls in my pellet. The skulls looked similar to each other, though one was about a half-centimeter longer than the other. To try to figure out which animal the skulls came from, I compared them to the diagrams in the handout. I stored the skulls and bones in egg cartons. I plan to try to reconstruct the skeletons later.



Conclusion I think that one of the skulls from my pellet came from a house mouse. In that skull, one of the upper molars was bigger than the second and third molars combined. According to the diagram, the house mouse is the only rodent commonly eaten by barn owls with teeth like that. Therefore, the barn owl that produced my pellet definitely ate house mice.

I could not identify the other skull because its teeth were missing, and the teeth were necessary for identification. However, the skull looked almost identical to the house mouse skull. I **suspect** it also belonged to a house mouse.

Reader's Response

- 1 What is an owl pellet?
- 2 How is a rodent-skull diagram used in this lab?
- 3 Are the writer's conclusions logical? Explain.

Writer's Response

- 1 Why does the writer include the purpose and background information in this write-up?
- 2 Who is the intended audience for this report? How can you tell?
- 3 Describe the organization of the lab write-up. Why do you think the writer ordered the report this way?

Be the Writer

Locate a simple experiment or other procedure (you could even use a recipe) to do. Follow the organization of the lab write-up on this card as a guide for writing a report about your chosen procedure. Be sure to describe not only the materials and steps but also what you observe happening during the procedure.

Words to Know

dissect **rodent**
consumed **suspect**

From the Writer

Science writing is not creative writing, at least not in the sense of creating fiction. However, it is very creative in the sense that it must document specific, vivid details of subjects or experiments to create a clear picture of the facts. Great scientific discoveries and technological advances are often the result of these details. Early naturalists (people who observed plants and animals to learn more about them) drew very detailed pictures of what they observed, which enabled scientists to learn about new species. Thomas Edison observed his experiments and made tiny adjustments over and over to finally arrive at his great inventions, such as the light bulb.

After careful observation, the responsibility for communicating these kinds of details falls to you as the writer. One key to creating the best word picture is to use precise words. Notice that the writer of the owl pellet write-up didn't just refer to the teeth of the rodent. He identified the molars; that word tells about both size and location in the mouth. He further tells exactly which molars he had found. Notice that these specific details are what enabled the author to pick out the type of skeleton he uncovered, because only one type of mouse could have had those teeth in those positions.

Paying attention to the details isn't enough unless you write about them with the same precision with which you look for them. Who knows? Your detailed written observations could lead to the next great discovery.

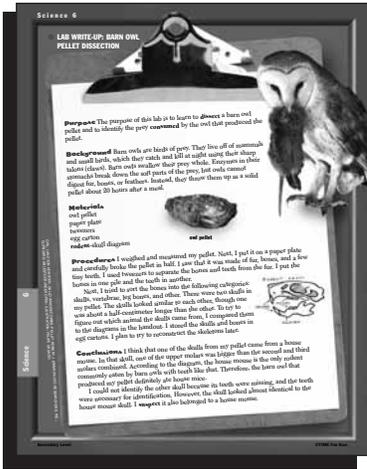
Experiment Observations and Notations

Objective

The student writes detailed observations and makes necessary notations when writing technical text (Standard I, Benchmark U, Skill 3; Standard II, Benchmark A, Skill 7).

Materials

- overhead transparency of Science card 6, “Lab Write-up: Barn Owl Pellet Dissection”
- overhead projector
- electric mixer
- about 6 egg whites (3 per demonstration)
- stopwatch
- copies of the “Comparison Chart” graphic organizer (page 28)
- thesauri
- copies of Revision Checklist (page 16)



Vocabulary

- dissect
- consumed
- rodent
- suspect

For definitions see page 54.



Reader's & Writer's Response Suggested Answers

See page 54.



Procedure

1. **Display the overhead transparency** of Science card 6 for the class to read. Point out to the students that the procedures are written up to include observations and notations.
2. **Conduct a demonstration** for the class to observe. Beat egg whites using the electric mixer. Pause during the process at moments when the egg whites change in color or consistency and allow the students to discuss what they observe.
3. **Distribute copies of the graphic organizer** to the students. Ask the students to use the graphic organizer to write descriptions while they observe the egg-white foaming demonstration.

Graphic Organizer: Comparison Chart

Time: before mixing	Time: soft peaks
Time: stiff peaks	Time: dry peaks

Use a stopwatch to note the time.

Students should write their descriptions here.

Procedure (cont.)

4. **Conduct the demonstration a second time**, but this time ask students to write down descriptions of what they observe. Ask them to use the stopwatch to note how much time passes during the foaming process of the egg whites.
5. **Place the students in small groups** and invite them to share their notes and phrases. **Ask the groups to share the best descriptions** with the class.
6. **Allow students to use the thesauri** to find illustrative words to describe their observations.
7. **Allow the students adequate time to think** about the demonstration and complete a write-up of the procedures and observations. **Encourage the students to describe what they observe** by using exact detail and by comparing the egg white foam to other substances. Note: Students do not need to complete the conclusions portion of a lab write-up for this lesson.
8. **Distribute copies of the Revision Checklist** to the students. **Ask the students to trade their Observation Write-ups** with each other and use the Checklist as a guide for improving their write-ups.
9. **Use the student writing sample, “Egg Foaming,” as a model** for final drafts of the write-up.

**Student Writing Samples:
Egg Foaming Observation**

Purpose: The purpose of this observation is to note the transformation egg whites undergo as they are whipped. Understanding the different stages of egg white foaming is very important in cooking.

Materials: electric mixer; three week-old eggs, room temperature; stopwatch.

Procedure: Mrs. Sherwin cracked the eggs and used her hands to separate the egg yolk from the egg white. She held the yolk in her hand as the egg white slipped through her fingers. When the egg whites were placed in the bowl (at 10:11), I noted that they were clear with a very slight yellow hue to them. They appeared to be dense, like clear mucous or plasma when it has hardened.

At 10:15, the egg whites appeared to be full of tiny bubbles and resembled Ivory dishwashing soap as it is whisked but has a bit of transparency.

At 10:45, the egg whites reached the soft-peak stage and resembled foam, like the foam on top of a cappuccino, but didn't rise as far. The glossy foam edges had some shape but drooped and did not cling to the bowl. The egg whites still appeared to be "fluidly" but were more solid.

At 1:05, the egg whites appeared firmer but they were still glossy as they reached the stiff-peak stage. The foam edges have shape and do not droop. When Mrs. Sherwin stopped the mixer to show how the eggs cling to the beater, they resembled shaving cream. As the eggs continued to be whipped, the foam was contained in between, and the egg whites began to lose their sheen.

At 1:25, the egg whites foam is firm and seems dull, dry, and a bit crumbly in consistency. The appearance reminds me of the white meringue cookies my grandmother makes.

—Sofia R.

Note the comparisons the student uses. The student describes the texture as well as the appearance.

Assessment

Informally assess the students when they share their descriptions. Collect and assess the graphic organizers after students have completed the write-ups of their observations. Check the students' procedures for clarity of instructions and for detailed descriptions. Use the rubric on page 19 to assess the students' ability to write observations. See pages 17–22 for rubrics and other assessment assistance.

Cross References

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

Writer's Notebook: Body Builders, pages 49–50; the “Sense” of a Story, page 57; Words, page 114

Exploring Nonfiction: *Secondary Language Arts:* Reference Materials and Documents card 1, “Writing an Outline”; Reference Materials and Documents card 9, “Thesaurus”; *Secondary Social Science:* Geography card 3, “My Own Story of the Orbit”; *Science:* Chemical Science card 12, “Going Through Changes”; Life Science card 2, “Science Activity”; Life Science card 8, “The Bone Zone”

Experiment Observations and Notations *(cont.)*

Class Discussion Questions

1. How is studying the material an animal vomits useful to researchers?
2. What other animals expel indigestible material? Why do they do this?
3. Would you like to dissect an owl pellet? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever dissected an animal? If so, what did you think of the experience?
5. Do you think students should be required to dissect animals or should they use the Internet for virtual dissections?



Reader's and Writer's Response Suggested Answers

Reader's Response

1. An owl pellet is an oval-shaped solid vomit mass of indigestible materials.
2. The diagrams allow the writer to identify to which animal the skull belongs through comparison.
3. The writer's conclusions are logical because he or she uses specific details about the teeth to identify the first skull. The writer admits that the second skull is not identifiable due to the missing teeth, but that it is almost identical to a house mouse.

Writer's Response

1. The writer includes the purpose and background information in the write-up to provide a context for the observations and conclusions for the reader.
2. The intended audience for the report might be a teacher or another student because the writer includes so much detail about his or her process.
3. The lab write-up is organized with the headings *purpose*, *background*, *materials*, *procedures*, *conclusions*, and *measurements* because it allows the reader to follow the process of dissection in the same order the writer conducted his or her work.



Vocabulary Definitions

1. **dissect**—cut open to examine
2. **consumed**—ate
3. **rodent**—small animal, such as a mouse, rat, or squirrel
4. **suspect**—believe

Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics

Students will need to use adjectives to adequately provide specific detail to the observations and notations. Review with the students how to use adjectives to add more detail and ask them to complete page 55, "Adjectives." For additional practice of this skill, see pages 31–32 of the *Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics* workbook.

Adjectives

Directions: Complete this description of a cave by writing one or more adjectives on each line. Be creative!

Moaning Cavern, California

Moaning Cavern, _____ located right near Yosemite in _____

California, holds the state's largest public vertical chamber. Visitors can view the

_____ cavern on a tour that is _____ for the entire family.

More _____ adventurers can repel 165-feet down the _____

cavern walls. The regular tour begins with a _____ walk down 234 stairs

to the _____ depth of 165-feet below the ground. On the way down,

_____ viewers can enjoy the _____ geology of the

_____ cavern. The _____ highlight of the tour is

experiencing total darkness when all of the lights are _____. Only in a

_____ cavern can a person know what _____ darkness is. It

is truly _____!

Try This!

Take a look at the newspaper or a book you have been reading. Find ten appealing adjectives and write them down on the other side of this paper.

Revision Checklist for Science Writing

Writer _____ Reviewer _____

As you read your partner's paper, please check the items below. If there is a problem with one or some of the skills, be sure to make suggestions by writing on your partner's paper.

- The writing is clear.
- Every sentence flows smoothly.
- The audience would be interested.
- The writing has a title.
- The writer provides a context for the writing.
- The writer has chosen a strong topic.
- The writer provides information.
- The writer uses research to support ideas.
- The writer provides an explanatory conclusion.
- The information is in order.
- There are enough details, facts, and statistics.
- The writer cites his or her sources effectively.
- The details are convincing.
- The writer uses effective word choice.
- The writer includes analogies or similes to describe.
- The writer uses sensory details.
- The writer uses strong nouns.
- The writer uses vivid verbs.
- The writer uses active voice verbs.
- The writer uses enough adjectives.
- The writer uses enough adverbs.
- The writer employs parallel structure.
- The writer uses quotations correctly.

Graphic Organizer: Comparison Chart

Time: _____
before mixing

Time: _____
soft peaks

Time: _____
stiff peaks

Time: _____
dry peaks