"What does good student writing at this grade level look like?"

The answer lies in the writing itself.

The Writing Standards in Action Project uses high quality student writing samples to illustrate what performance to grade level standards looks like—in action.

Grade 5
English Language Arts

Narrate
(Personal Narrative)

King-Da-Ka
Writing Sample Title:
King-Da-Ka

Text Type and Purpose: Narrate
Grade level/Content area: Grade 5 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Personal narrative
Standards Addressed: (W.5.3), (W.5.4), (W.5.5), (L.5.1), (L.5.2), (L.5.3)

See descriptions of these standards in the right column of the next page.

Highlights:
This sample of student work meets grade level standards. It demonstrates the following attributes of effective writing.
The sample:
• Develops suspense through focused description of one aspect of a single experience
• Focuses on particular details to effectively slow down the action
• Uses well-placed sensory details

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

The student writing sample that follows includes standards-based commentary. The commentary found in this column describes how the writing meets the standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2011) and other content frameworks when applicable.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary

1. Grade-specific standards addressed are:
• Listed in the column to the right of student work by strand, grade, and number (or number and letter, where applicable)
• Marked by a colored block with a letter code, also in the column to the right of student work
EXAMPLE:  A

2. Colored arrow blocks beneath each standard in the right column:
• Are of the same color and letter code as the block that marks the standard being addressed
• Mark standards-based commentary related to the standard being addressed
• Appear in alphabetical order
EXAMPLE:  A1

3. Corresponding colored arrow blocks within the text:
• Set off sections of student work to which commentary applies
• Do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order—but where evidence of a particular standard exists
EXAMPLE:  (begin) A1 section A1 (end)
Instructional Practices:
The teacher used the following practices to prepare students:

- Mini-lessons on aspects of effective writing
- Conferring
- Sharing
- Publishing

Assignment Description:
Write an account of a personal experience

Intended Audience:
Peers and teacher

Time:
Unknown

Writing Process:
Alone; in class; as homework; with teacher feedback; topic chosen by student

Materials:
Unknown

Please note:
The samples may contain inaccuracies in wording and content or shortcomings in the use of standard English conventions.

END OF BACKGROUND
King Da-Ka

It was a hot windy day. My dad and I were at Six Flags Great Adventure, one of the greatest amusement parks in the world and it was my birthday. We were there to do one thing that day, go on the tallest fastest roller coaster in the world. King-Da-Ka! At 128 miles per hour and the height of 458 feet it would be by far the most exciting ride I would ever go on. We got right in line and I already felt incredibly anxious. We would have to wait two hours to be up and down the hill and back at the station. Every minute you could...
hear loud fearsome screams and the screeching of the tracks as all the frightened people took off into the air. It was such an abstract structure. The colors on it blinded me because of the reflection of the sun, purple, green and orange.

We walked into a big patch of dry heat and I was sweating. Every so often we would come upon a fan, drifting the smell of fried dough and popcorn into my nose. I asked my dad if he was scared. I anxiously waited for his answer, only a little scared he said. Everyone in line was so cramped together. I smelled their scent in the air, perfume, cologne, I wrinkled my nose.

After a long half hour more of waiting we reached the 15 minute point. My nerves rose and I panicked. What if we fall backwards? What if I can’t breathe? What if my shoulder bar pops up? My heart pounded like a drum in my chest.

Writing. Grade 5, Standard 3: (continued)

B W.5.3.b
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

B1 B1 Examples: 1
The writer uses internal dialogue in the form of rhetorical questions to enhance the suspense about riding King Da Ka. (What if we fall backwards? What if I can’t breathe? What if my shoulder bar pops up?).

B2 B2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3
The writer paces the story by making reference to specific time periods during the long wait for a seat on King Da Ka. (We would have to wait two hours... we reached the fifteen minute point... as we entered the 5 minute zone.).

C W.5.3.d
Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

C1 C1 Examples: 1 · 2
The writer uses sensory detail to create images for the reader (My heart pounded like a drum in my chest... I watched dizzily as all the frightened faces took off and all the smiling faces came back.).

C2 C2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7
The writer uses vivid verbs (screeching...drifting...cramped...pounded...quickeneded...eased...churned).
My breath quickened as we entered the 5 minute zone. I watched dizzily as all the frightened faces took off and all the smiling faces came back. It was our turn. We went through the gate, click! My body shook as I lowered myself into the hard plastic orange and green seat. I lowered my shoulder belt down and so did my dad. Clack, clack, clack. I put on a fake smile but I knew my dad could still see fear in my eyes.

The cart slowly eased itself out of the station like it was alive. My grin widened now because I actually was feeling excited. The track made a strange hissing sound sssss. I counted down from 5! 5…4…2…1….AAAHH! The wind felt like it was blowing my face off. We slowed down before we reached the base of the hill and then up we went. I looked into the clouds and the sun made me squint my eyes shut. We almost stopped as we reached the top and my stomach churned. We dropped. My hands flew up. The wind and the great excitement put such a big grin on me it felt like my face was...
going to snap in half. We went up a small hill for our speed to decrease after our exasperating drop. My heart started to beat regularly and the moment was lost.

I yanked up my shoulder belt jumped out of my seat and spun around 3 times. If I ever went again it would never be the same as the first time around.

**Language. Grade 5, Standard 1:**
L.5.1.c
Use verb tense to convey various tones, sequences, states, and conditions.

F Examples: 1
The writer switches away from past tense verbs to create looming, hypothetical scenarios that express a state of anxiety and anticipation about what might happen during the ride (My nerves rose and I panicked—past tense example followed by switch away from past tense—What if we fall backwards? What if I can’t breathe? What if my shoulder bar pops up?).

**Language. Grade 5, Standard 2:**
L.5.2.e
Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.

G (overall text reference)
The writer spells most words correctly.

Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.

**Language. Grade 5, Standard 3:**
L.5.3.a
Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.

H1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4
The writer uses sentences of various structures and lengths to enhance the flow of the narrative (It was a hot windy day... We got right in line and I felt incredibly anxious... It was our turn... We slowed down before we reached the base of the hill and then up we went.).

H2 Examples: 1 · 2
The writer needs further instruction in the conventional use of commas before coordinating conjunctions in compound and compound complex sentences (I put on a fake smile but I knew my dad could still see fear in my eyes.). (Please see L.4.2.c.)