“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 6
English Language Arts

Narrate
(Short Narrative)

Feelings of Fall
Sailing

Text Type and Purpose: Narrate
Grade level/Content area: Grade 6 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Short Narrative
Standards Addressed: (W.6.3), (L.6.1), (L.6.2), (L.6.3)

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.

- Engages the reader with a strong lead
- Utilizes internal and external dialogue to describe the central conflict and adjust the pacing at key points in the narrative
- Maintains a clear, consistent focus
- Incorporates a variety of sentence patterns
- Demonstrates strategic word choice appropriate to audience and purpose

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:

• Student choice of topic
• Instruction and discussion of elements of fiction
• Discussion and brainstorming of topics as a class and in small groups
• Teacher and peer feedback
• Guidelines and scoring rubric for writing narratives that include criteria for: organization, content, style, grammar/mechanics
• Time to develop multiple drafts and a final essay

Assignment Description:
The assignment asked students to write narratives or scripts incorporating some of the basic elements of fiction studied.

Intended Audience:
Teacher and peers

Time:
Unknown

Writing Process:
Pre-writing; organizing; drafting; revising; peer-editing/peer response; teacher feedback

Materials:
Guidelines and scoring rubric for writing narrative

Writing Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 3 (W.6.3)
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

EXAMPLE: A B C D E

Language Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 1 (L.6.1)
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

EXAMPLE: F

Language Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 2 (L.6.2)
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

EXAMPLE: G

Language Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 3 (L.6.3)
Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

EXAMPLE: H

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

Vanessa woke up with a yawn. Annoyed, she thought, “Oh no, not another day that I’ll probably miss my bus.” She was late. Actually, she had only three minutes until her bus came to her bus stop.

The writer organizes the narrative around a conflict that takes place over raking leaves during a cold November. However, the piece moves beyond simply recounting the action to reveal the evolution of the main character’s thinking. The strategic use of both internal and external dialogue slows the pace of the narrative at key moments and focuses the reader’s attention on the central conflict of the narrative. The dialogue, coupled with the efficient use of vivid details and carefully crafted transitional phrases, also supports the development of the characters and marks the path to a natural conclusion.
As she was running to her bus stop, she noticed that the weather was getting colder. Since it was already November, the colorful leaves were almost all on the ground by now, and the squirrels were gathering nuts for the winter.

As she boarded the bus, Vanessa could see her icy breath in the foggy air. She was surprised that she actually didn't miss the bus.

As the bus drove on and on picking students up, Vanessa thought, “Grandpa will probably ask me to rake the leaves again… “Huh! I already raked for you yesterday.” the girl said to her grandpa.

The day passed by slowly. Finally, Vanessa got on her bus.

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3:
(continued)

B W.6.3.b
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

B1 Examples: 1 · 2
The writer depicts Vanessa’s attitude toward helping Grandpa rake leaves through brief but effective internal and external dialogue that serves to slow the pace and highlight the central conflict of the narrative. (…Vanessa thought, “Grandpa will probably ask me to rake the leaves again… “Huh! I already raked for you yesterday.” the girl said to her grandpa).

B2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5
The writer keeps the narrative moving over a two-day time period by organizing the story around important moments in time. In the process, the writer provides vivid details and reveals salient aspects of the personalities of Vanessa and Grandpa (Vanessa woke up with a yawn. Looking at her clock, she thought, “Oh no, not another day that I’ll probably miss my bus.” She was late…; As the bus drove on and on picking students up, Vanessa thought, “Grandpa will probably ask me to rake the leaves again… “; When the girl got off her stop, her grandpa was waiting there. “Could you please help me rake the leaves today, Vanessa?” Grandpa Joe stood there with his rake in his hand and some leaves in his hair and pocket, looking at her. “Huh! I already raked for you yesterday.” the girl said to her grandpa…; The next day, when Vanessa was in science class… She decided that she was going to try not to complain about raking leaves anymore…; Vanessa ran home happily that day… and started raking the leaves that were piled up in heaps in her yard… she actually raked the leaves without even having Grandpa Joe ask her to.)
to go home. B2 When the girl got off her stop, her grandpa was waiting there. F “Could you please help me rake the leaves today, Vanessa?” Grandpa Joe stood there with his rake in his hand and some leaves in his hair and pocket, looking at her. C1

B1 “Huh! I already raked for you yesterday.” the girl said to her grandpa, B1 B2 but when she came home, she still helped him, although unwillingly.

B2 The next day, when Vanessa was in science class, she learned about how people didn’t experience Fall or Winter, because of where they lived. She kind of felt bad for always whining about raking

to go home. B2 When the girl got off her stop, her grandpa was waiting there. F “Could you please help me rake the leaves today, Vanessa?” Grandpa Joe stood there with his rake in his hand and some leaves in his hair and pocket, looking at her. C1

B1 “Huh! I already raked for you yesterday.” the girl said to her grandpa, B1 B2 but when she came home, she still helped him, although unwillingly.

B2 The next day, when Vanessa was in science class, she learned about how people didn’t experience Fall or Winter, because of where they lived. She kind of felt bad for always whining about raking
leaves, when others, didn’t even have beautiful, colorful, leaves in September, October, and November. The writer decided that she was going to try not to complain about raking leaves anymore, and enjoy the nice weather until the leaves were covered with snow, and not seen until next Spring. Vanessa ran home happily that day. Oh, how beautiful the brightly colored leaves looked to her. She glanced at her neighbors’ neatly raked yards. When the girl came home, she dropped off her

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**Language. Grade 6, Standard 1:**

- **L.6.1.a**
  Ensure that pronouns are in the proper case (subjective, objective, possessive).

  **F Examples:** 1
  The writer correctly uses subjective, objective, and possessive pronouns in a succinct and vivid rendering of Grandpa’s request for help with raking leaves (“Could you please help me rake the leaves today, Vanessa?” Grandpa Joe stood there with his rake in his hand and some leaves in his hair and pocket, looking at her.).

**Language. Grade 6, Standard 2:**

- **L.6.2**
  Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

  **G Examples:** 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5
  The writer demonstrates control of punctuation, especially with respect to the following:
  1. Placement of commas associated with quotation marks (As the bus drove on and on picking students up, Vanessa thought, “Grandpa will probably ask me the rake the leaves again.”).
  2. Correct use of commas after introductory clauses (As she was running to her bus stop,… Since it was already November,… When the girl came home,…).
  3. Correct use of an apostrophe to mark the possessive plural case (She glanced at her neighbors’ neatly raked yards.).

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Writing Standards in Action Project
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books, and started raking the leaves that were piled up in heaps in her yard.

After her hard work, she was sweating, but Vanessa was proud of herself. For a first, she actually raked the leaves without even having Grandpa Joe ask her to. From now on, Vanessa would try to not be grumpy and also look at things in a good way (like raking leaves).

**Language. Grade 6, Standard 3:**

- **L.6.3.a**
  Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.

  **H Examples:** 1 · 2 · 3

  The writer switches from longer, more complex sentences to shorter, simpler sentences that create emphasis at key points in the narrative (“Oh no, not another day that I’ll probably miss my bus.” She was late;… She decided that she was going to try not to complain about raking leaves anymore, and enjoy the nice weather until the leaves were covered with snow, and not seen until next Spring. Vanessa ran home happily that day; Oh, how beautiful the brightly colored leaves looked to her. She glanced at her neighbors’ neatly raked yards.).