“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 7
English Language Arts

Narrate
(Poem)

The Tale of a Leaf
Background Information

Writing Sample Title:
The Tale of a Leaf

Text Type and Purpose: Narrate
Grade level/Content area: Grade 7 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Poem
Standards Addressed: (W.7.3), (W.7.MA.3.A), (W.7.4), (L.7.1), (L.7.2), (L.7.5)
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:
• Reveals a clear, sustained persona
• Includes vivid sensory imagery and figurative language
• Uses effective, precise vocabulary and an elevated style
• Exhibits organization and style appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience

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:  
Information not provided

Assignment Description:  
Information not provided

Intended Audience:  
Family members, friends, classmates, and teacher

Time:  
Unknown

Writing Process:  
Information not provided

Materials:  
Information not provided

Writing Standards:  
Grade 7, Standard 3 (W.7.3)  
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.  
EXAMPLES:  
A  
B

Writing Standards:  
Grade 7, Standard MA.3.A (W.7.MA.3.A)  
Write short narratives, poems, scripts, or personal reflections that demonstrate understanding of the literary concepts of mood, tone, point of view, personification, or symbolism.  
EXAMPLES:  
C

Writing Standards:  
Grade 7, Standard 4 (W.7.4)  
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.  
EXAMPLES:  
D

Language Standards  
Grade 7, Standard 1 (L.7.1)  
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.  
EXAMPLES:  
E

Language Standards  
Grade 7, Standard 2 (L.7.2)  
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.  
EXAMPLES:  
F

Language Standards:  
Grade 7, Standard 5 (L.7.5)  
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.  
EXAMPLES:  
G

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

A swift, chapping breeze runs through the maple tree, making a soft rustling noise like gentle waves in the sea.

The writer introduces a first person narrator and creates an easy-to-follow event sequence, beginning with the leaf embarking on its journey (And I, the oldest, gently detach and twirl towards the ground,) and ending with the leaf’s reflections on its experiences (The stories I will tell of my daring escapade and a new spirit I have found, For here I twirl round this breathtaking sunset, the truest joy of fall, ‘round, ‘round, ‘round!).
The leaves of my majestic tree are crinkly and browned, and I, the oldest, gently detach and twirl towards the ground.

As I near the musty forest floor covered in red, orange, and yellow, the king buck of the forest emits a loud bellow.

The writer uses sensory language effectively (...a soft rustling noise... loud bellow... sending shivers... taste of crisp, fresh air...spectrum of rubies and orange sapphires, and amazing sight...).

Writing. Grade 7, Standard MA.3.A:

C W.7.MA.3.A
Write short narratives, poems, scripts, or personal reflections that demonstrate understanding of the literary concepts of mood, tone, point of view, personification, or symbolism.

C1 C Examples: 1 · 2
The writer uses carefully placed alliteration (...twirl towards... forest floor...).

C2 C Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4
The writer incorporates in each stanza a rhyme scheme similar to that found in stanza one (tree/sea... browned/ground).

C3 C Examples: 1 · 2 · 3
The writer uses simile (...a soft rustling noise like gentle waves in the sea...), personification (I fly high above my maple tree...), and metaphor (...travel into a spectrum of rubies and orange sapphires...) to create images that contribute to the mood and tone of the poem.
A swift breeze pulses through the peaceful air,

Sending shivers down a gray squirrel’s soft tufts of hair.

And me, the aged, brown, pockmarked leaf,

I fly high above my maple tree, above rooftops, above an eve,

The taste of crisp, fresh air surrounds me as I rise into the sky,

And sail oh so very high.
Ah, me, the ancient, frail leaf, in this epic flight,
I sigh as it travel into a spectrum of rubies and orange sapphires, and amazing sight,
The stories I will tell of my daring escapade and a new sprit I have found,
For here I twirl ‘round this breathtaking sunset, the truest joy of fall,
‘round, ‘round, ‘round!

**Writing. Grade 7, Standard 4:**

**D** W.7.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**D1** Overall text reference
Establishes a clearly delineated stanza form.
*Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.*

**D2** Overall text reference
Entertains and informs the reader through the easy-to-follow epic flight of the personified leaf.
*Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.*

**Language. Grade 7, Standard 1:**

**E** L.7.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

**E** Overall text reference
The writer makes few errors in grammar and usage, and they do not detract from the clarity of the text.
*Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.*
Language. Grade 7, Standard 2:

F L.7.2.a
Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives.

F Examples: 1, 2
The writer inserts commas between coordinate adjectives (…the aged, brown, pockmarked leaf… the ancient, frail leaf…).

Language. Grade 7, Standard 5:

G L.7.5
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

G Examples: 1, 2, 3
Throughout the poem the writer utilizes words precisely to convey nuanced descriptions of events (…breeze runs through the maple tree… The king buck of the forest emits a loud bellow… a gray squirrel’s soft tufts of hair.).