

“What should 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.

Writing Standards *in Action*

Grade 3 English Language Arts

Inform/Explain (*Informational Essay*)

The Fort



Background Information

GRADE
3

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

Writing Sample Title:

The Fort

Text Type and Purpose: Inform/Explain

Grade level/Content area: Grade 3 English Language Arts

Type of Assignment: Informational Essay

Standards Addressed: (W.3.2), (W.3.4), (L.3.1), (L.3.3)

*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:

- Includes a clear introduction and conclusion
- Has a clear and logical structure
- Provides varied reasons to support the stated opinion
- Incorporates details, examples, and imagery in support of reasons
- Demonstrates effective use of a variety of sentence types

CONTINUED ►



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 (2017)* 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:

- Mini-lessons within a writing workshop format
- Use of a graphic organizer

Assignment Description:

Students engaged in a writing workshop to write an informational essay on the teacher-supplied topic that asked students to describe their favorite place.

Intended Audience:

Teacher, classmates, and school community (by means of a display)

Time:

Several class periods

Writing Process:

Alone; in class; pre-writing; organizing; drafting; revising; self-editing; teacher feedback; teacher-student conference; publishing

Materials:

Graphic organizer; chart paper for brainstorming ideas; several teaching publications for reference

Writing Standards:

Grade 3, Standard 3 (W.3.2)

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

EXAMPLES: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Writing Standards:

Grade 3, Standard 4 (W.3.4)

Produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

EXAMPLES: **E**

Language Standards:

Grade 3, Standard 1 (L.3.1)

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking; retain and further develop language skills learned in previous grades.

EXAMPLES: **F** **G**

Language Standards:

Grade 3, Standard 3 (L.3.3)

Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

EXAMPLES: **H**

Please note:

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

END OF BACKGROUND ■



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

In this sample...

The writer provides a relatively strong example of informational writing that develops the assigned topic with three reasons, as specified by a graphic organizer. Adhering to that plan, the writer creates a logical, somewhat repetitive, organizational pattern with a single, clear focus. A variety of sentence structures that contain words and phrases chosen for effect demonstrate the writer's enthusiasm for the topic. Relevant details are elaborated with pertinent, meaningful examples and figurative language. Further development may have been possible through a planning process less dependent on the limitations of a graphic organizer.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary

The student writing sample that begins on this page includes in this column standards-based commentary describing how the writing meets the standards in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2017)* and other content frameworks, when applicable. Where they apply, sub-standards marked by letters are included.

Evidence for the commentary is noted in the text of the student writing using color-coded, numbered 'begin' and 'end' arrows.

For example:

A1 marks the beginning and **A1** marks the end of the relevant section in the text.

Please note that the labeled arrows in the text do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order.

The Fort

A1 My favorite place is my fort. **A1** **F** **C** **A2** I love

hiding **F** in my fort and having secret meetings. The sunset

looks beautiful from my fort. It's fun to make snowballs and hit my

friends. **A2** **C**

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES 



Writing. Grade 3, Standard 2:

A W.3.2.a

Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

A1 A1 Examples: 1

The writer introduces a topic (*My favorite place is my fort.*).

A2 A2 Examples: 1

The writer presents three reasons for the choice of topic. The requirements of the graphic organizer contribute to a somewhat formulaic approach to topic development. Next steps for an additional revision of this sample could include more choice in the number of reasons offered as well as further development of those selected.

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

C My fort is in a secret spot **C** **B** on top of some rocks near (name of park). **E1** It is fun to hide in my fort and have top secret meetings. **F** (Name of friend), my friend, and I talk **F** about exploring my yard and finding interesting objects like creepy bugs. **B** **E1**

E1 **C** Watching the **H1** golden sunsets **H1** is easy because **C** **B** I'm on a hill. **H2** **F** The clouds turn purple **F** and pink like pearls. **H2** I marvel at the sun **H1** when it turns yellow, orange, **H1** and then goes down. **B** **E1**

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



Writing. Grade 3, Standard 2:
(continued)

B W.3.2.b

Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.

B B Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer develops each reason with clear details and examples examples (...on top of some rocks near [name of park]. It is fun to hide in my fort and have top secret meetings. [Name of friend], my friend, and I talk about exploring my yard and finding interesting objects like creepy bugs... I'm on a hill. The clouds turn purple and pink like pearls. I marvel at the sun when it turns yellow, orange, and then goes down... Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.).

C W.3.2.c

Use linking words and phrases (e.g., also, another, and, more, but) to connect ideas within categories of information.

C C Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer makes explicit connections between reasons presented in the introduction and examples that develop each one (I love hiding in my fort... My fort is in a secret spot...; The sunset looks beautiful from my fort... Watching the golden sunsets is easy because...; It's fun to make snowballs and hit my friends... Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight.).

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

E1 My fort is a great place to hide. **G F C B**

Once, (name of friend) came over and we had a humongous snowball

fight. **C** I hid in my fort for protection. **F** While I was in my

fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him. **B E1 G**

D1 If I'm either having meetings, watching the sunset, or getting

soaked in a snowball fight, **D1 D2** I'm always having fun. **D2**

D3 My fort is my most favorite place in the world! **D3**

Writing. Grade 3, Standard 2:
(continued)**D W.3.2.d**

Provide a concluding statement or section.

D1 D1 Examples: 1

The writer provides a concluding paragraph that reviews the reasons for the choice of topic. The requirements of the graphic organizer contribute to a somewhat formulaic approach to the conclusion, listing the reasons stated in the body of the essay. Nevertheless, the writer has exceeded these requirements by also including another reminder of the writer's enthusiasm for the topic.

D2 D2 Examples: 1

The writer offers a generalization that links the three reasons and further justifies the choice of topic (*I'm always having fun.*).

D3 D3 Examples: 1

The writer amplifies the choice of topic by making it superlative and ending with an exclamation mark (*My fort is my most favorite place in the world!*).

begin section **end**

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

Writing. Grade 3, Standard 4:**E W.3.4**

Produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

E1 E1 Examples: 1 • 2 • 3

The writer develops the chosen topic logically with clear details and brief examples (*It is fun to hide in my fort and have top secret meetings. [Name of friend], my friend, and I talk about exploring my yard and finding interesting objects like creepy bugs... Watching the golden sunsets is easy because I'm on a hill. The clouds turn purple and pink like pearls. I marvel at the sun when it turns yellow, orange, and then goes down... My fort is a great place to hide. Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.*).

E2 Overall text reference

The writer follows the repetitive structure of a graphic organizer. This makes the sample's logical organization and development somewhat predictable and formulaic. As noted before, next steps for an additional revision of this sample could include more choice in the number of reasons offered as well as further development of those selected.

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

begin section end



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

Language. Grade 3, Standard 1:**F L.3.1.c**

Use verbs in the present, past, and future tenses and choose among them depending on the overall meaning of the sentence.

F F Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer correctly uses simple present and past tenses (*I love hiding... [name of friend], my friend, and I talk... The clouds turn purple... Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection.*).

G L.3.1.a

Produce, expand, and rearrange complete simple, compound, and complex sentences.

G G Examples: 1

The writer forms a variety of sentences: complex, compound, and simple (*Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.*).

Language. Grade 3, Standard 3:**H L.3.3.a**

Choose words and phrases for effect.

H1 H1 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer chooses sensory words to describe the sunset effectively (*golden sunsets... when it turns yellow, orange...*).

H2 H2 Examples: 1

The writer makes use of a cleverly crafted and placed simile (*The clouds turn purple and pink like pearls.*).

begin section end

