"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 6 **English Language Arts** 

Narrate

(Poem)





Sailing

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Writing Standards in Action Project www.doe.mass.edu/candi/wsa

Page 1

SAMPLE A6-7 (Narrate-Poem)

# **Background Information**



# FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

#### **Writing Sample Title:**

Sailing

**Text Type and Purpose:** Narrate

**Grade level/Content area:** Grade 6 English Language Arts

Type of Assignment: Poem

Standards Addressed: (W.6.3), (W.6.4),

(L.6.3), (L.6.5)

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

### **Highlights:**

This sample of student work exceeds grade level standards. It demonstrates the following attributes of effective writing.

The sample:

- · Demonstrates effective use of rich poetic language
- · Exhibits skillful use of poetic techniques
- · Includes sophisticated organization that captures and brings clarity to a complex experience

#### **Instructional Practices:**

The teacher used the following practices:

- · Opportunities for teacher and peer feedback
- Opportunity for reflection by the writer
- · Models of effective writing
- Explicit instruction in elements of effective poetry

CONTINUED



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# 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:** 



# 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:** 



# 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



# **Background Information**



# FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

### **Assignment Description:**

This is a "free verse poem" in which the teacher asked students to write a poem that contains the following criteria from the Free Verse Poem Guideline Rubric provided with the assignment:

- Strong lead—Does the poem start inside an experience, feeling, observation, or memory?
- Strong ending—Does the poem leave the reader with a feeling, idea, image or question?
- Line breaks and stanzas—Are lines/stanzas of the poem broken on nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs?
- Cut to the bone—Is the poem elegant shorthand? Are all the words used necessary?
- Use repetition (optional)—If repetition is used in the poem, does it stress an important word, phrase, idea or theme? (Repetition should not sound awkward.)

#### **Intended Audience:**

Teacher, students, parents

#### Time:

Unknown

#### **Writing Process:**

Pre-writing; drafting; self-editing; peer-editing/peer response; teacher-student conference; revising

#### **Materials:**

Free Verse Poem Guideline Rubric (see criteria)

#### Please note:

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

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END OF BACKGROUND

# **Writing Standards:** Grade 6, Standard 3 (W.6.3)

Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, relevant descriptive details, and wellstructured sequences.

**EXAMPLE:** 







# **Writing Standards:** Grade 6, Standard 4 (W.6.4)

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

EXAMPLE:



# Language Standards: Grade 6, Standard 3 (L.6.3)

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

**EXAMPLE:** 





# **Language Standards** Grade 6, Standard 5 (L.6.5)

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

**EXAMPLE:** 





# FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

# STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

# In this sample...

The writer conveys the experience of being alone in a sailboat on the ocean through a free verse poem. The reader can envision the experience of being on the ocean waters through the lens of sophisticated figurative and sensory language that reveals all the activity that is happening around the writer. Organization is skillful and subtle. The poem completes a full circle by beginning and ending with the strong sense of solitude.

# Sailing





A1 Sailing.





I hear the waves lapping against my boat.

It is just me. (A1

It is magical. (A2









The glossy water is now wrinkled by the wind, B2

Like a blue tablecloth that was never ironed.



begin section

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Writing Standards in Action Project www.doe.mass.edu/candi/wsa



# 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, substandards 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:

marks the beginning and 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.

### Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3:

W.6.3.a

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative seauence.

A1 Examples: 1

The writer clearly establishes in the opening of the poem the situation of being alone on the ocean (Sailing. I hear the waves lapping against my boat. It is just me.).

A2 Examples: 1

The writer gives the poem a sense of immediacy and underscores the significance of details mentioned by writing in the first person (I hear the waves lapping against my boat. It is just me. It is magical.).



A3 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer continues to develop the progression of the experience of being on the water with vivid descriptions (the glare of the sun, the depths of the water, The blue of the sky...It's a new world.).



# FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

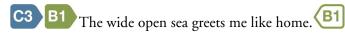
Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

# STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY



calling from way up there,

to their friends.





the depths of the water,

the blue of the sky. A3

C1 I hear the luff of my sail, C1

the call of the seabirds.

and my small wake bubbling behind me.

The wind makes my eyes water.

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Writing Standards *in Action* Project www.doe.mass.edu/candi/wsa



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

The writer conveys a love of the sea and the sensation of sailing through keenly attuned description that draws on examples from personal experience to address the topic (The

wide open sea greets me like home.).

B2 B2 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer uses strong figurative language to develop the experience of sailing for the reader. Examples demonstrate the writer's ability to convey how it feels to be on the sea (*The glossy water is now wrinkled by the wind ... The sea mixes itself all together, like making a cake*).

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3 AND Language. Grade 6, Standard 5:

C W.6.3.d AND C L.6.5

W.6.3.d

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, figurative and sensory language, and techniques such as personification (e.g., "the fog crept in") to convey experiences or events.

L.6.5

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

C1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer uses sensory language to great effect by identifying sensations from each of the senses (All I see is the glare of the sun... I hear the luff of my sail... I smell salt spray,...This feels like nothing I've done before.).

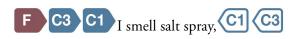


# FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

# STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3 AND Language. Grade 6, Standard 5:

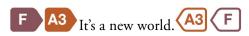


and fuel from a passing fishing boat.

C1 This feels like nothing I've done before. C1

Only the giant grey-green abyss,

and me.



C2 Fish splashing,

Sail flapping. C2

C2

(continued)

C2 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer effectively initiates a personal response to sailing by using examples of onomatopoeia (Fish splashing, Sail flapping.) and alliteration (Seagulls soar) to create a rhythm in the poem's language.

**C3** 

C3 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer uses simile (The glossy water is now wrinkled in the wind, like a blue tablecloth that was never ironed.), metaphor (Only the giant grey-green abyss...), personification (The wide open sea greets me like home.), and sensory details (I smell salt spray) to bring alive the speaker's sea-going experiences.

# Language. Grade 6, Standard 3:

D

L.6.3.b

Recognize variations from standard or formal English in writing and speaking, determine their appropriateness for the intended purpose and audience, and make changes as necessary.

D

D Examples: 1

The writer's awareness of graphic elements, such as capitalization, line length, and the formation of words enhances the depiction of the experience. The isolation of each word in alone... in... the... ocean in a line of its own highlights the writer's sensation of solitude.



WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

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# FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

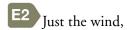
# STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

The sea mixes itself all together,

like making a cake. B2



Only this is better.



the waves,

and my sailboat



in

the







END OF WRITING SAMPLE



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

### Writing. Grade 6, Standard 4:

W.6.4

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



E1 Examples: 1

The task was to write a free verse poem that contained both a strong lead and ending. The writer creates a clear and strong opening by strategically using the single word Sailing and then clearly sets the scene by writing (I hear the waves lapping against my boat. It's just me. It is magical.).



E2 Examples: 1

The writer addresses the second part of the task with a strong ending. The poem comes full circle, effectively conveying the sensation of being alone on the ocean, by closing with an image that mirrors the opening lines (Just the wind, the waves, and my sailboat, alone, in, the, ocean.).

# Language. Grade 6, Standard 3:



L.6.3.a

Maintain appropriate consistency in style and tone while varying sentence patterns for meaning and audience interest.



F Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer mixes single words, sentence fragments, and sentences of varying lengths and types. This contributes to the poem's effective style and to the vivid picture the poem paints (Sailing... I smell salt spray, and the fuel from a passing fishing boat.... This feels like nothing I've done before. Only the giant grey-green abyss, and me... ... It's a new world.).

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