“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.

Grade 7

English Language Arts

Narrate

(First Person Narrative)

The Great Escape—From The Amazing Adventures of Bunny Foo Foo
Background Information

Writing Sample Title:
The Great Escape—
From The Amazing Adventures of Bunny Foo Foo

Text Type and Purpose: Narrate
Grade level/Content area: Grade 7 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: First Person Narrative
Standards Addressed: (W.7.3), (W.7.4), (L.7.1), (L.7.2), (L.7.3), (L.7.5)

Highlights:
This sample of student work meets grade level standards. It demonstrates the following attributes of effective writing.
The sample:
• Reveals a consistent point of view
• Incorporates vivid verbs
• Displays an appropriately playful tone
• Has a clever title
• Uses dialogue to further the narrative
• Develops a clear sense of the narrator’s voice with clever internal monologue
• Includes a strategic variety of sentence structures
• Employs elements of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling for dramatic effect

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:
• Modeling Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Tell-Tale Heart* to illustrate that a writer can create a first person narrator who is not the writer
• Presentation of mini-lessons on point of view, leads, dialogue, and transitions
• Use of an organizer to help with initial planning
• Reading to the class a sample first person story the teacher had written

Assignment Description:
Students were to write a fictional first person account. The goal of the assignment was for the students to realize that an author can create a first person narrator who is not necessarily the author.

Intended Audience:
Teachers and peers

Time:
Information not provided

Writing Process:
Information not provided

Materials:
Graphic organizer, models of first person narrative writing

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

The writer creates a short, playful first person narrative that turns the routine event of feeding a pet into a humorous story about a foiled "great escape." The writer adopts a distinct and separate persona and maintains it consistently. Skillful organization gives the reader a clear picture of the abortive adventure and of the personality of Bunny Foo Foo. Internal monologue as well as precise word choice and imaginative capitalization, punctuation, and spelling make the story particularly engaging and entertaining.

The Great Escape

From the Amazing Adventures of

Bunny Foo Foo

I wake up and I am stretched out underneath my fiddle sticks house, facing out toward the bars of my cage. I wonder when they will be out to bring me a carrot. I stretch and hop outside into my rabbit run around.
Oh! Yay! I think I hear them coming with my carrot. Here they come! Right a-b-o-u-t NOW! Anytime now … wait for it … wait for it … okay, so never mind, maybe it wasn’t them. Errrrr! What’s taking them so long? It’s the same routine every day. I’m starting to get sick of this same old, same old. I want to have an adventure! I think I’ll escape and run out of the garage when they have my door open. Meanwhile, I’ll have my breakfast of dry oatmeal and Bunny 16, with some hay on the side.
A while later: They have finally come. I am now fiercely nibbling at the carrot the little girl gave me. Now she is cooing and patting my head. The lady has opened the garage door now to dump the extra hay that fell onto my bottom tray. Ah! Here is my chance to make the great escape! The little girl is inside filling my water so no one will notice. Quick as a rabbit, well... I am a rabbit; I hop out of the door of my cage and run for the yard. Yes! I’ve made it; I’m free to hop anywhere I want.

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

Writing. Grade 7, Standard 3: (continued)

B2 Examples: 1

The writer uses inventive capitalization, punctuation, and spelling to depict and pace an event illustrating Bunny’s frustration (Here they come! Right a-b-o-u-t NOW! Anytime now...wait for it...wait for it...okay, so never mind, maybe it wasn’t them. Errrr!).

B3 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer quickens the pace of the story with short paragraphs that begin with strategically placed key phrases (Quick as a rabbit... Foo Foo... Oh no!).

B4 Examples: 1

The writer makes strategic use of a combination of short sentences and brief exclamations to portray Bunny’s quick movements and great excitement at having escaped (Quick as a rabbit, well... I am a rabbit; I hop out of the door of my cage and run for the yard. Yes! I’ve made it; I’m free to hop anywhere I want. Mmm! Smell the fresh air, look at the grass! Oh! This is so exciting!).

W.7.3.c

Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.

C Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer effectively uses temporal words and phrases to sequence events (I wake up... A while later... in an instant... Maybe next time...).
Narrate | GRADE 7

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

Writing, Grade 7, Standard 3: (continued)

D W.7.3.d

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and figurative and sensory language to establish a mood that evokes an emotion, to capture action, and to convey experiences or events.

D1 Examples: 1, 2

The writer uses vivid verbs to precisely describe characters’ actions (I am now fiercely nibbling at the carrot the little girl gave me. Now she is cooing and patting my head…) and in an instant I am in the little girl’s arms being carried back to the garage.

D2 Examples: 1

The writer develops the character of the rabbit and entertains the reader with humor expressed in the rabbit’s own thoughts (Quick as a rabbit, well…I am a rabbit…).

E W.7.3.e

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

E Examples: 1, 2

The writer fashions a conclusion that provides an ironic summing up of the rabbit’s mixed feelings (So much for the great escape! Maybe next time, though I don’t really like the idea of hawks and stuff.) and that suggests more action to come (I wonder what I’ll do next.).

Mmm! Smell the fresh air, look at the grass! Oh! This is so exciting!

“Foo Foo! What are you doing, you silly bunny? The outdoors is no place for you.”

Oh no! Swoop, and in an instant I am in the little girl’s arms being carried back to the garage.

“You know there are coyotes, foxes, hawks, and all sorts of things that might try to eat you outside. There is no one who will come to pet you, bring a carrot, or clean your litter box.”

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B1 Oh well! E So much for the great escape! C

Maybe next time, though I don’t really like the idea of hawks and stuff. B1 E H A3 Maybe I do have a better life in the garage where people bring me food, clean me, and pat me. H G E I wonder what I’ll do next. E G

Language. Grade 7, Standard 3:

F L.7.3.a
Maintain appropriate consistency in style and tone while varying sentence patterns for meaning and audience interest.

F Examples: 1 2 3 4
The writer maintains a consistently playful tone (Oh! Yay… Ah! Here is my chance to make the great escape… Oh! This is so exciting… What are you doing, you silly bunny?).

Writing. Grade 7, Standard 4:

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

G Examples: 1 2
The writer develops a clear plot from beginning (Did you think that would make him look cool? I want to have an adventure!) to end (I wonder what I’ll do next.).

Language. Grade 7, Standard 1:

H L.7.1.c
Recognize that changing the placement of a phrase or clause can add variety, emphasize particular relationships among ideas, or alter the meaning of a sentence or paragraph.

H Examples: 1 2 3
The writer adds to the overall effect of the narrative by correctly placing within sentences a variety of phrases and clauses (I think I hear them coming with my carrot… I am now fiercely nibbling at the carrot the little girl gave me… Maybe I do have a better life in the garage where people bring me food, clean me, and pat me.).
Language. Grade 7, Standard 2:

L.7.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Overall text reference

The writer demonstrates a sophisticated command of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling that enhances the overall effect of the narrative.

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

Language. Grade 7, Standard 5:

L.7.5.c

Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., refined, respectful, polite, diplomatic, condescending).

J Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer uses words with subtle connotations to sharpen the focus of portions of the narrative (…stretched out… fiercely nibbling… cooing… Swoop…).