“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 Sample Title:
The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street

Text Type and Purpose: Inform / Explain
Grade level/Content area: Grade 7 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Response to a Text-Based Question
Standards Addressed: (RL.7.1), (RL.7.2), (RL.7.3), (W.7.2), (W.7.4), (W.7.9), (L.7.3), (SL.7.2)

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:
• Illustrates a theme in a literary text through well-chosen details and examples
• Exhibits skillful paraphrasing
• Demonstrates focus and conciseness in response to an on-demand assignment
• Conveys information clearly through use of sophisticated syntax
• Expresses ideas subtly with precise vocabulary
• Creates and maintains a matter-of-fact tone to convey the suspense and urgency that lead to the horror at the end

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:
• Explicit instruction and practice in writing this type of response
• Use of rubrics and graphic organizers

Assignment Description:
The assignment asked students to answer the following question:
Choose one of the themes below and explain how Rod Serling illustrates that theme in his teleplay, “The Monsters are Due on Maple Street.” Use specific and relevant evidence from the play to support your answer.
• Prejudice can be as dangerous as any weapon
• Fear can turn human beings into monsters
• When we let prejudice and suspicion control us, we become our own worst enemy

Intended Audience:
Teacher

Time:
Unknown

Writing Process:
Alone; in class

Materials:
District-provided text and related instructional materials, teacher-generated materials, including a PowerPoint on writing responses in this genre, rubrics, graphic organizers, trade books, online materials

Reading Standards for Literature:
Grade 7, Standard 1 (RL.7.1)
Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.
EXAMPLES: A

Reading Standards for Literature:
Grade 7, Standard 2 (RL.7.2)
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of a text.
EXAMPLES: B

Reading Standards for Literature:
Grade 7, Standard 3 (RL.7.3)
Analyze how particular elements of a story, poem, or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
EXAMPLES: G

Writing Standards:
Grade 7, Standard 2 (W.7.2)
Write informative/explanatory texts (e.g., essays, oral reports, biographical feature articles) to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
EXAMPLES: A C D E

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: F

Writing Standards:
Grade 7, Standard 9 (W.7.9)
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research, applying one or more grade 7 standards for Reading Literature or Reading Informational Text as needed
EXAMPLES: G
**Language Standards:**
Grade 7, Standard 3 (L.7.3)
Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

**Examples:**

**Speaking and Listening Standards:**
Grade 7, Standard 2 (SL.7.2)
Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, test, or issue under study.

**Examples:**
The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street

Question: Choose one of the themes below and explain how Rod Serling illustrates that theme in his teleplay, “The Monsters are Due on Maple Street.” Use specific and relevant evidence from the play to support your answer.

- Prejudice can be as dangerous as any weapon
- Fear can turn human beings into monsters
- When we let prejudice and suspicion control us, we become our own worst enemy

The author has crafted a clear, efficient response to an on-demand class assignment. It responds directly to the prompt, stating its focus in the first sentence and supporting it with well-chosen examples. The writing is concise, using precise language and formal, sophisticated syntax to convey the writer’s grasp of the concept of theme through a logical interpretation of the main action supported by specific evidence drawn from the text.

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

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.

A1 Examples: 1 - 2

The writer paraphrases clearly key parts of the text explaining how, for example, an irrational fear transforms the community into a mob (They instantly begin accusing their neighbors, who were once their friends... The peaceful members of suburbia transform into a bloodthirsty mob of monsters, all because they are scared of a mere possibility.).
The theme “Fear can turn human beings into monsters” is expressed flawlessly and clearly in this play. At the start of the play, a blast of screeching sound and illuminating light descends from the sky. It strikes fear and terror into the hearts and minds of the people on Maple Street. They assume, with barely any proof, that it is a meteor. As fear engulfs them, a theory is given, by just a child, that there are aliens, and the terror of this foreign invasion causes them to go to such extremes as believing their friends to be aliens, determined to overtake planet Earth... The fear pushes people so far that a person would end someone’s life...
that they are disguised as humans on Maple Street. In their
desperation for some sort of explanation, they believe him.

They instantly begin accusing their neighbors, who were
once their friends. The terror of this foreign
invasion causes them to go to such extremes as believing
their friends to be aliens, determined to overtake planet
Earth. The peaceful members of
suburbia transform into a bloodthirsty mob of monsters,
all because they are scared of a mere possibility.
The fear drives them so mad,
that one of the people, Charlie, kills another human, because of the slight chance he could be an alien. The fear pushes people so far that a person would end someone's life out of horror. It’s monstrous. That is how this theme is expressed in “The Monsters are Due on Maple Street.”

Writing. 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.

F Examples: 1. 2. 3. 4

The writer writes concisely and focuses on textual evidence that show awareness of the purpose—answering a text-based question; the writer also demonstrates awareness of the audience—the teacher as assessor (The theme “Fear can turn human beings into monsters” is expressed flawlessly and clearly in this play... The peaceful members of suburbia transform into a bloodthirsty mob of monsters... The fear drives them so mad, that one of the people, Charlie, kills another human... That is how this theme is expressed in “The Monsters are Due on Maple Street.”).

Writing. Grade 7, Standard 9 AND Reading Literature.

Grade 7, Standard 3:

W.7.9 AND G RL.7.3

W.7.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research, applying one or more grade 7 standards for Reading Literature or Reading Informational Text as needed.

RL.7.3

Analyze how particular elements of a story, poem, or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
Writing. Grade 7, Standard 9 AND Reading Literature. Grade 7, Standard 3:
(continued)

G1 G1 Example: 1
The writer uses principles of character development to explain the motivations behind seemingly irrational acts (*The terror of this foreign invasion causes them to go to such extremes as believing their friends to be aliens...*).

G2 G2 Example: 1
The writer notes examples of characters’ flawed reasoning (*They assume, with barely any proof, that it is a meteor.*).

Speaking and Listening. Grade 7, Standard 2:

H SL.7.2
Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

H1 H1 Examples: 1 - 2
The writer analyzes the main idea (*The fear drives them so mad that one of the people, Charlie, kills another human because of the slight chance he could be an alien.*) and mood (*It strikes fear and terror into the hearts.*) of a play performed in class.

H2 H2 Example: 1
The writer explains how ideas developed in the play support the theme, “Fear can turn human beings into monsters” (*The peaceful members of suburbia transform into a bloodthirsty mob of monsters, all because they are scared of a mere possibility.*).