

“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.

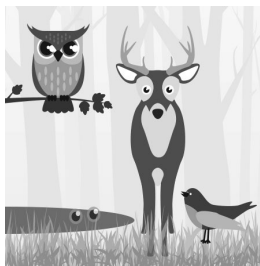
# Writing Standards *in Action*

## Grade 12 English Language Arts

### Narrate

*(Poem)*

The Hidden Places



# Background Information

GRADE  
12

## FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework  
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

<b>Writing Sample Title:</b>	The Hidden Places
<b>Text Type and Purpose:</b>	Narrate
<b>Grade level/Content area:</b>	Grade 12 English Language Arts
<b>Type of Assignment:</b>	Poem (Broad Topic Assigned by the Teacher—Genre Chosen by the Writer)
<b>Standards Addressed:</b>	(W.11-12.3), (W.11-12.4), (L.9-10.1), (L.11-12.3), (L.11-12.5) <i>See descriptions of these standards in the right column of the next page.</i>

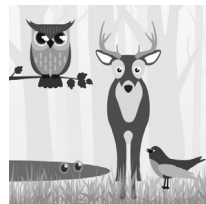
### Highlights:

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

The sample:

- Presents an effective poetic treatment of a universal theme
- Relates the experiences of an observant and reflective speaker
- Develops the speaker's personal view of the natural world within a coherent progression of experiences, observations, and reflections
- Builds toward a poetic turn from concrete events to the writer's vision of nature
- Maintains a consistent style and tone
- Varies syntax for effect
- Includes a variety of effective rhetorical devices

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 the 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 the student work

EXAMPLE: **A**

**2. Colored 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:**

- In preceding units, the teacher provided students with practice writing in a variety of modes: memoir, flash fiction, and persuasive/op-ed pieces. This assignment was an opportunity for students to discover and express their opinion in a genre that felt right for their own style and topic.
- Before the final draft was due, the teacher introduced students to the *American Earth* anthology, pointing out specific topics and styles and encouraging students to explore the text for inspiration.
- For additional inspiration, the teacher prepared and shared with students a packet of poems.
- During the unit, the teacher provided students with workshop time, reading time, writing group process time and individual conferencing time.

**Assignment Description:**

Students were asked to recognize, organize, and articulate a personal view of nature. They each focused on a single central idea or theme and produced a finished piece of 2-3 pages, written in a style and genre of their choice.

**Intended Audience:** Teacher, classmates, family

**Time:** 2 weeks

**Writing Process:**

In class; as homework; brainstorming; organizing; drafting; revising; self-editing; informal peer-editing; peer response in classroom writing groups

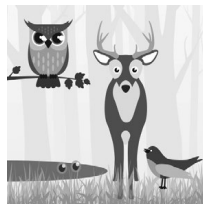
**Materials:**

- Assignment sheet
- Timeline
- Assessment checklist
- Anthology—*American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*
- Teacher-prepared packet of poems
- Guidelines for the Writing Group Process

**Please note:**

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

END OF BACKGROUND ■

**Writing Standards:****Grade 11-12, Standard 3 (W.11-12.3)**

Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.

EXAMPLE: **A A B C C D**

**Writing Standards:****Grade 11-12, Standard 4 (W.11-12.4)**

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

EXAMPLE: **C**

**Language Standards:****Grade 9-10, Standard 1 (L.9-10.1)**

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.

EXAMPLE: **F**

**Language Standards:****Grade 11-12, Standard 3 (L.11-12.3)**

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

EXAMPLE: **E**

**Language Standards:****Grade 11-12, Standard 5 (L.11-12.5)**

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

EXAMPLE: **D**

# Narrate

GRADE  
12

## FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework  
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

### 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 normally 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 labeled arrows in the text do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order.

#### In this sample...

The writer uses a series of specific natural events to develop the foundation of a personal view of nature. The fluid style and coherent organization of the poem make the progression of ideas easy to follow. Vivid details, effective figurative language, and skillful manipulation of syntax contribute to the poem's development and tone. In the final stanza, parallel structures indicate a significant shift from reflection on concrete experiences to presentation of an abstract personal view of the natural world.

### The Hidden Places

**A** A robin makes her nest in the wreath on our front door. **A**

The mailman discovers the speckled eggs,

**B** bending his bad back sideways to peer at them.

Tender in a way I hadn't expected. **B**

**A** Two weeks later the babies appear overnight

**D1** nut-brown and sticky and wailing **D1** **A**

**D4** still shaking off pieces of shell and stars. **D4**

I lie on the other side of the door,

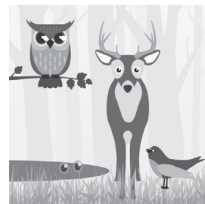
**A** my ear pressed to the **D1** cool wood **D1**

listening to the **D5** thump and murmur **D5** of new life. **A**

\*\*\*\*\*

**begin** section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



#### Writing. Grade 11-12, Standard 3

**A** **W.11-12.3.a** AND

**A** **W.11-12.3d**

#### W.11-12.3.a

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or event.

#### W.11-12.3.d

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and figurative and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or character.

## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

In the morning,

I walk to the edge of the pond.

I slip off my socks, and my white **D2** winter toes **D2**

blink in the light.

**D2** The littlest fish with gaping **D1** yellow mouths **D1**

are glad to see me— **D2**

**D3** my pinky toe is a wonder of the world!

I am the spectacle of the sandy bottom! **D3**

Out of the corner of my eye

under the branches that cluster by the shore

**D4** I see the **D2** sleek stony back **D2** of something slide under

the surface

and sink sighing into the dark. **D4**

**E** Into water too deep

for me to follow. **E**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Writing. Grade 11-12, Standard 3**  
(continued)

**A** A Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer introduces a speaker who is curious and keenly alert to small wonders of the natural world (*A robin makes her nest in the wreath on our front door.... Two weeks later the babies appear overnight / nut-brown and sticky and wailing... my ear pressed to the cool wood / listening to the thump and murmur of new life.*).

**Writing. 11-12, Standard 3**

**B** W.11-12.3.b

**W.11-12.3.b**

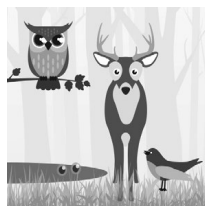
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**B** B Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer uses the speaker's reflections to develop experiences and observations (*bending his bad back sideways to peer at them. / Tender in a way I hadn't expected.... I imagine he is warm / and full of meat. / I imagine he hums to himself / and bats his enormous eyes.... a meeting of creatures, / who knows what, / swathed in dark.... This is / all that we do not see— / all that we cannot see / to preserve what is tender / and what is sacred...*).

**begin** section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

One night,  
I hear the singing  
friendly and low  
of the owl that lives in the trees nearby.

**B** I imagine he is warm  
and full of meat.

**D4 D2** I imagine he hums to himself **D2 D4**  
and bats his enormous eyes. **B**

Abruptly, the fur on my dog's haunches swells.

Hissing rises from the yard below—

**B** a meeting of creatures,

who knows what,

**D2** swathed in dark. **D2 B**

The owl is quiet now,

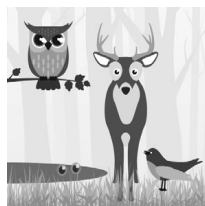
so the dog and I wait in the silence

for his swinging song to begin again.

\*\*\*\*\*

**begin** section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



**Writing. 11-12, Standard 3 AND**

**Writing. 11-12, Standard 4**

**C W.11-12.3.c AND**

**C W.11-12.3.e AND**

**C W.11-12.4**

**W.11-12.3.c**

Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).

**W.11-12.3.e**

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

**W.11-12.4**

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

**C Overall text reference**

The writer renders a reflective vision of nature in a simple, mostly fluid style and wondrous tone. A coherent sequence of well-developed events builds toward a turn to an image-rich concluding section.

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



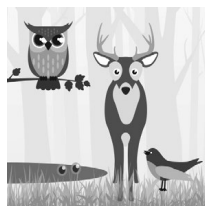
## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

On the back patio,  
my cat shakes a mouse between her jaws  
and **D5** snaps **D5** his front leg between her teeth.  
She bats him into the air four **D1** sharp, humiliating times **D1**  
then leaves him  
to drag himself away  
through a crack in our fence—  
to find a warm and private place,  
under some rock,  
where he will curl inwards  
and let his small body stiffen  
and cool.

\*\*\*\*\*

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



**Writing. Grade 11-12, Standard 3 AND Language. Grade 11-12, Standard 5**

**D W.11-12.3.d AND D L.11-12.5**

**W.11-12.3.d**

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and figurative and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

**L.11-12.5**

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

**D1** D1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer uses sensory language to make the speaker's observations vivid (*nut-brown and sticky and wailing... cool wood... yellow mouths... sharp, humiliating times*).

**D2** D2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6

The writer provides clarity and depth to the speaker's observations, experiences, and reflections with metaphor (*winter toes... sleek stony back... swathed in dark...*) and personification (*The littlest fish with gaping yellow mouths / are glad to see me... I imagine he hums to himself... the aspens, with their great dark eyes, / blinking at one another in the night.*).

**D3** D3 Examples: 1

The writer uses hyperbole to intensify and make remarkable one of the speaker's experiences (*my pinky toe is a wonder of the world! / I am the spectacle of the sandy bottom!*).

**D4** D4 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer uses sophisticated patterns of alliteration that intensify the effect of the speaker's experiences, observations, and reflections (*still shaking off pieces of shell and stars... I see the sleek stony back of something slide under the surface / and sink sighing into the dark... I imagine he hums to himself*).

**D5** D5 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer uses uses onomatopoeia to illustrate the sound "of new life" (*thump and murmur*) and a breaking leg (*snaps*).

## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

**E** There will always be  
a warm and private place,  
water too deep,  
silence,  
a door. **E**

**B** This is  
**F** all that we do not see—  
all that we cannot see **F**  
to preserve **F** what is tender  
and what is sacred: **F** **B**  
dew settling in the early morning  
the wet and panting birth of a deer  
**D2** the aspens, with their great dark eyes,  
blinking at one another in the night. **D2**

**Language. Grade 11-12, Standard 3****E L.11-12.3.a**

Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte’s *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

**E** E Examples: 1 • 2

The writer isolates words and phrases for emphasis (*Into water too deep / for me to follow.... There will always be / a warm and private place, / water too deep, / silence, / a door.*).

**Language. Grade 9-10, Standard 1****F L.9-10.1.c**

Use parallel structure as a technique for creating coherence in sentences, paragraphs, and larger pieces of writing.

**F** F Examples: 1 • 2

The writer uses rhythmic parallel structure to efficiently recapitulate what has come before (*all that we do not see— / all that we cannot see... what is tender / and what is sacred*).

begin section end

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■

