

“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 4 English Language Arts

### Narrate

*(Personal Narrative)*

The Comeback



# Background Information



## FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

### Writing Sample Title:

The Comeback

**Text Type and Purpose:** Narrate

**Grade level/Content area:** Grade 4 English Language Arts

**Type of Assignment:** Personal Narrative

**Standards Addressed:** (W.4.3), (W.4.4), (L.4.3), (L.4.4), (L.4.5)

*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 strong lead to engage the reader’s interest
- Maintains a consistent focus on the topic
- Follows a logical, chronological sequence from beginning to end
- Incorporates a variety of sentence types, lengths, and beginnings
- Demonstrates a precise choice of words
- Builds the excitement to a climax through strategic description of major developments in the plot
- Includes a strong ending that contrasts with the image created in the beginning

## 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)  section  (end)

CONTINUED 



**Instructional Practices:**

The teacher used the following practices:

- Student choice of topic within the confines of a general writing prompt
- Writing workshop model, including on-going mini lessons on aspects of effective writing, followed by guided practice
- Teacher conferences with students to provide targeted instruction and feedback
- Sharing of personal narratives
- Development of a writing plan and first draft
- Revision and editing of the first draft
- Production of a final draft

**Assignment Description:**

As part of a two-day district writing assessment, the writer addressed the following prompt: *Everyone has a favorite thing to do. Write about a time that you had fun doing your favorite thing. Use everything that you know about good writing to show the reader about your favorite thing.* On day one the writer composed a first draft during the hour allotted; on day two, during a second hour allocated for rewriting, the writer revised and edited the first draft and produced a final draft.

**Intended Audience:**

Teacher

**Time:**

2 hours—one hour per day

**Writing Process:**

Alone; in class; pre-writing; organizing; drafting; revising; self-editing; production of a final draft

**Materials:**

Writing prompt, student-created web organizer

**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 4, Standard 3 (W.4.3)**

Write narratives in prose or poem form to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, descriptive details, and clear sequences.

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

**Writing Standards:****Grade 4, Standard 4 (W.4.4)**

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

EXAMPLE: **E**

**Language Standards:****Grade 4, Standard 3 (L.4.3)**

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

EXAMPLE: **F**

**Language Standards:****Grade 4, Standard 4 (L.4.4)**

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 4 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

EXAMPLE: **G**

**Language Standards:****Grade 4, Standard 5 (L.4.5)**

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

EXAMPLE: **H**

# Narrate

GRADE  
4

## FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework  
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

### STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

#### In this sample...

The writer captures the significance of a young bowler's attempt at a come-from-behind win. Skillful organization enables the reader to appreciate the narrator's apprehension, frustration, elation, and ultimate satisfaction. Carefully crafted sentences, idiomatic usage, and sophisticated sensory and subject-specific language amplify the strong voice of the narrator. The writer demonstrates awareness of the audience by helping the reader understand relevant bowling facts and scoring subtleties. From the well-crafted lead to the convincing ending, the writer constructs a vivid personal life experience.

#### 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 Comeback

**A** **E** "Mwahahaha!" **A** **C2** Jack bragged. **C2** **E**

**G** He had knocked down his last bowling pin on his last turn to make the score 57 to 72, and, **A** I was losing. **G** I was bowling with my friend, Jack, **A** and we both had a terrible game.

**begin** section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



### Writing. Grade 4, Standard 3:

#### **A** W.4.3.a

Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a speaker, narrator, and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.

#### **A** A Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer engages the reader with a taunting laugh (*Mwahahaha!*), sets the stage for unfolding the story with a significant hook (*I had one turn to catch up, and things weren't looking so good.*), and introduces the first person narrator and other main character (*I was losing. I was bowling with my friend Jack...*).

## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

**A** **B1** **E** I had one turn to catch up, and things weren't looking so good. **E** **B1** **A** **C1** **G** Just to let you know, on the last turn, if you get a spare or a strike on your second stroke, you get one extra stroke. **G** **C1** I was hoping for that right now.

**H** Jack was relaxing on a bench, and it looked like he had this game in the bag. **H** I threw the ball. **C2** **F1** Ah, the beautiful sound of pins clattering **C2** met my ears. **F1** **B2** But when I opened my eyes, I gasped in horror. **B2** **B3** The room felt small and far away. **C2** I fell to the ground and moaned. **C2** **B3**

**Writing. Grade 4, Standard 3:**  
(continued)**B W.4.3.b**

Use dialogue and description to develop experiences or events or show responses to situations.

**B1** B1 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer conveys characterization by skillfully balancing the outward actions of the main character and revealing internal thoughts and feelings (*I had one turn to catch up and things weren't looking so good... Jack snickered. I felt like I was going to blow up any second.*).

**B2** B2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer communicates the narrator's earnest voice, lending intensity to the narrative. (*But when I opened my eyes, I gasped in horror... Amazing!...My heart was thumping so loud, I could feel my whole body shaking.*).

**B3** B3 Examples: 1

The writer slows the pace at opportune times (*The room felt small and far away. I fell to the ground and moaned.*).

**B4** B4 Examples: 1

The writer creates a concisely expressed turning point (*I started dancing and Jack started mumbling.*).

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

**E** **G** The evil split was attacking! The two pins were really far apart. **G** **B1** Jack snickered. **E** I felt like I was going to blow up any second. **B1** **C1** **F2** The only way to knock a split down is to hit one of the pins from an angle, so it skids and knocks down the other pin. **C1** I aimed, shot, and closed my eyes. **C2** Pins clattered. **C2** I opened my eyes. **B2** Amazing! **F2** I knocked down a split! **B2** **F1** I jumped for joy. **F1** Jack was astonished. I got the extra stroke. If I knocked down six pins, I'd

**Writing. Grade 4, Standard 3:**  
(continued)**C** **W.4.3.d**

Use concrete words and phrases, figurative language such as similes and metaphors, and sensory details to convey experiences or events precisely.

**C1** C1 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer selects topic-specific bowling terms to add authenticity to descriptions of events (*Just to let you know, on the last turn, if you get a spare or a strike on your second stroke, you get one extra stroke ... The only way to knock a split down is to hit it from an angle, so it skids and knocks down the other pin.*)

**C2** C2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5

The writer conveys experiences vividly throughout the narrative with strong verbs (*Jack bragged... Ah, the beautiful sounds of pins clattering... I fell to the ground and moaned... Pins clattered ... One pin was wobbling.*)

**D** **W.4.3.e**

Provide a sense of closure appropriate to the narrated experiences or events.

**D** D Examples: 1 · 2

The writer crafts a conclusion that brings the narrative full circle, back to the heart of the story and the significance of the event (*I started dancing and Jack started mumbling...I was so excited, and from then on, Jack has been a little afraid to go against me in bowling.*)

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

win this game. **B2** My heart was thumping so loud, I could feel my whole body shaking. **B2** I aimed and shot again. The pins got hit. Four were down. **C2** One pin was wobbling. **C2** It fell and knocked down two pins! **E** Six pins were down. **B4** **D** I started dancing and Jack started mumbling. **D** **B4** **E**

**D** I was so excited, and from then on, Jack has been a little afraid to go against me in bowling. **D**

**Writing. Grade 4, Standard 4:****E W.4.4**

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

**E** E Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The task was to write a coherent narrative about having fun doing a favorite thing – in the writer’s case, bowling. The writer develops a suspenseful, coherent narrative about a close, exciting win over a friend gloating about his lead. (*Mwahahaha! Jack bragged... I had one turn to catch up, and things weren’t looking so good.... The evil split was attacking! The two pins were really far apart. Jack snickered... Six pins were down . I started dancing and Jack started mumbling.*).

**Language. Grade 4, Standard 3:****F L.4.3.a**

Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.

**F1** F1 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer uses precise words and phrases to convey satisfaction and to appeal to the reader’s senses. (*Ah, the beautiful sound of the pins clattering met my ears...I jumped for joy.*).

**F2** F2 Examples: 1

The writer crafts sentences of varying length that effectively convey the rise and fall of the action (*The only way to knock a split down is to hit one of the pins from an angle, so it skids and knocks down the other pin. I aimed, shot and closed my eyes. Pins clattered. I opened my eyes. Amazing! I knocked down a split!*).

begin section end

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■



## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

**Language. Grade 4, Standard 4:****G L.4.4.a**

Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

**G** G Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer provides context clues to help the reader understand bowling rules and terms (*He had knocked down his last bowling pin on his last turn to make the score 57 to 72, and, I was losing... Just to let you know, on the last turn, if you get a spare or a strike on your second stroke, you get one extra stroke... The evil split was attacking! The two pins were really far apart.*).

**Language. Grade 4, Standard 5:****H L.4.5.b**

Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.

**H** H Examples: 1

The writer demonstrates understanding of the meaning of an idiom by using it purposefully (*Jack was relaxing on the bench, and it looked like he had this game in the bag.*).

begin section end

