GRADE 6

**FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:**
Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (**2017**)

"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

## Opinion /Argument
*(Letter to an Author)*

Dear Mr. Spinelli

Massachusetts Department of ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

# Background Information

GRADE 6

## FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

**Writing Sample Title:**

Dear Mr. Spinelli

**Text Type and Purpose:** Opinion/Argument

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

**Type of Assignment:** Letter to an Author

**Standards Addressed:** (W.6.1), (W.6.2), (W.6.4) (W.6.9), (RL.6.1), (RL.6.2), (L.6.2), (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 meets grade level standards. It demonstrates the following attributes of effective writing.

The sample:

- Makes a clear claim
- Provides evidence that supports the claim with sophisticated analysis and reflection
- Uses a clever metaphor to provide unity to the sample and clarity to personal reflections and responses
- Addresses task, purpose and audience effectively
- Contains precise language that adds clarity and depth to the writer's reflections
- Exhibits a sophisticated style, strong voice, and consistent tone
- Analyzes a theme from the source text and establishes the writer's strong personal connection to it

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 (2011)* 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)

## Background Information

GRADE 6

## FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

**Instructional Practices:**

The teacher used the following practices: Unknown

**Assignment Description:**

This letter was written for submission to the national contest, Letters about Literature. The contest invites students to write a letter to an author in response to a work by that author that has particularly impacted them in a personal way. The challenge is for students to write a personal, reflective letter - not a fan letter, book report, or summary.

**Intended Audience:**

The panel of state and national judges for the Letters about Literature Contest

**Time:**

Unknown

**Writing Process:**

Unknown

**Materials:**

*Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli

**Writing Standards:**
**Grade 6, Standard 1 (W.6.1)**

Write arguments (e.g., essays, letters to the editor, advocacy speeches) to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

EXAMPLE: A B C

**Writing Standards:**
**Grade 6, Standard 2 (W.6.2)**

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.

EXAMPLE: D

**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: E

**Writing Standards:**
**Grade 6, Standard 9 (W.6.9)**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research, applying one or more grade 6 standards for Reading Literature or Reading Informational Text as needed.

EXAMPLE: F

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

END OF BACKGROUND ■

STANDARDS ADDRESSED LIST CONTINUES ▶

## Background Information

GRADE 6

## FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

**Reading Standards for Literature: Grade 6, Standard 1 (RL.6.1)**

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.

EXAMPLE: F

**Reading Standards for Literature: Grade 6, Standard 2 (RL.6.2)**

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of a text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

EXAMPLE: G

**Language Standards Grade 6, Standard 2 (L.6.2)**

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

EXAMPLE: H

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

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

EXAMPLE: I

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

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

EXAMPLE: G

END OF STANDARDS ADDRESSED LIST ■

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

# Opinion/Argument

GRADE 6

**FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:**
Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy (2017)

## In this sample...

The writer of this reflective letter reveals to the author of *Maniac Magee* her personal connection to his novel. She skillfully meshes her own experiences with those of Maniac Magee, incorporating the significant personal experience of wearing hijab into her analysis of the book. Careful organization around a compelling metaphor provides an effective structure for this examination of a theme relating to discrimination and hope for the future. The metaphor, developed through strategic references to the writer's own experiences and those described in the book, provides coherence to the writer's internal debate and brings the letter to a meaningful conclusion. With careful word choice and varied sentence structures, the writer maintains a formal, yet personable and reflective, tone. The letter's concise concluding statement reveals how the writer's interpretation of the character of Maniac Magee has influenced her personal evolution.

## 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 (2011)* 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.

## Dear Mr. Spinelli

Dear Mr. Spinelli,

I G2 A1 Hector Street – the long divide. I

A2 Until now, I can still imagine a long, wide, and desolate divide because sometimes I feel like I am standing there. A1 A2 G2

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

### Writing. Grade 6, Standard 1

**A W.6.1.a**

**Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly in paragraphs and sections.**

**A1 A1 Examples: 1**

The writer opens the piece with a powerful metaphor and claim from which the rest of the letter flows *(Hector Street – the long divide. Until now, I can still imagine a long, wide, and desolate divide because sometimes I feel like I am standing there.)*.

G1 In your novel, Maniac Magee, only a few had the courage to cross from one side to the other. F2 Those were the characters that did not recognize or accept any difference between races.

I Outward appearance meant nothing. F2 I

G2 A2 For Jeffrey Magee and Amanda Beale and her family, the divide was invisible. A2 G1 G2

D1 Last year, I started wearing a head cover, or hijab. Of course, D2 it was my choice. D2 Naturally, as a Muslim D2 I was excited to cover. D1 D2 I could see myself growing up.

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

**Writing. Grade 6, Standard 1**
(continued)

**A2** A2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5

With further strategic references to the metaphor of "the divide," the writer provides a framework for the development and resolution of her internal debate *(Until now, I can still imagine a long, wide, and desolate divide because sometimes I feel like I am standing there… For Jeffrey Magee and Amanda Beale and her family, the divide was invisible... Many times, I wished that my divide was invisible, but as I walk through the mall in my head cover, I sensed the divide... It was like he took a big bite out of the long divide... Realistically, I do not think my divide will disappear anytime soon...).*

**B** **W.6.1.b**

**Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.**

**B1** B1 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer supports the claim with clear reasons *(…no one ever told me that others will judge me based on my religious beliefs. Many times I wished that my divide was invisible, but as I walk through the mall in my head cover, I sensed the divide…Sadly, discrimination is real.)*.

**B2** B2 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer supports the reasons with relevant evidence *(…I didn't know how to interpret the less than friendly stares. Then the comments began; "Aren't you hot?"…some people went from smiles to disapproval.).*

D1 My modesty and identity were D2 all wrapped up in this elegant piece of material. D2 My older friends were already wearing hijab, and they looked so beautiful. I Wearing hijab as a young Muslim woman D2 ensures D2 that people will respect me for my mind and not my appearance. D1 I There was just one problem; B1 no one ever told me that others will judge me based on my religious beliefs. G2 A2 Many times I wished that my divide was D2 invisible, D2 but as I walk through the mall in my head cover, I sensed the divide. A2 B1 G2 I At first I was

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

**Writing. Grade 6, Standard 1**
(continued)

### C W.6.1.e

**Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.**

**C1** **C1 Examples: 1**

In a strong concluding statement, the writer acknowledges the influence of *Maniac Magee* on the hopeful resolution of her internal debate *(Realistically, I do not think my divide will disappear anytime soon, but Mr. Spinelli, your courageous story allowed me to see that not all people discriminate. I found hope.).*

**C2** **C2 Examples: 1**

The writer ends the letter with a concise statement of how the novel has impacted her perspective on her own circumstances *(Now as I look through the crowds, I believe there are some people who mirror the characters in your book. I am always looking for the Jeffrey Magees or the Beales, but no matter who I see, I smile and hope they smile back. Like Maniac, I choose to throw caution to the wind.).*

D2 innocent; D2 B2 I didn't know how D2 to interpret the less than friendly stares. D2 I Then the comments began; "Aren't you hot?" B2 Lastly, the changes in behavior; B2 some people went from smiles to D2 disapproval. B2 D2 B1 Sadly, discrimination is real. B1

F1 Maniac Magee was white, F1 F2 but I don't think he ever considered that a problem even while in a black neighborhood. F2 F1 He judged people based on their character alone. F1 I just loved it when F1 he took a big bite out of Mars

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

## Writing. Grade 6, Standard 2

**D W.6.2.b** AND **D W.6.2.d**

### W.6.2.b

**Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.**

### W.6.2.d

**Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.**

**D1** D1 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer explains her desire to wear hijab *(Last year, I started wearing a head cover, or hijab. Of course, it was my choice. Naturally, as a Muslim I was excited to cover... My modesty and identity were all wrapped up in this elegant piece of material. My older friends were already wearing hijab, and they looked so beautiful. Wearing hijab as a young Muslim woman ensures that people will respect me for my mind and not my appearance.)*.

**D2** D2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8

With precise language, the writer provides clarity and depth both to her explanation of her desire to wear hijab and to her reactions to the harsh judgments of others *(...it was my choice... I was excited to cover... all wrapped up in this elegant piece of material... ensures...invisible... innocent... to interpret the less than friendly stares... disapproval.)*.

## Writing. Grade 6, Standard 4

**E W.6.4**

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

**E** Overall text reference

In a personal, reflective, appropriately formal letter, the writer coherently expresses to Mr. Spinelli the influence of his novel on the resolution of her internal debate.

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

Bar's chocolate. F1 G2 A2 It was like he took a big bite out of the long divide. A2 G2 F1 Maniac breaks all the rules. F1 I Actually, he lives by the rules that I believe to be important. I

F2 When you decided to write this story you must have sensed that this was a common problem. F2 G2 C1 A2 Realistically, I do not think my divide will disappear anytime soon, A2 but G1 Mr. Spinelli, your

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES

**Writing. Grade 6, Standard 9** AND **Reading Literature. Grade 6, Standard 1**

**F W.6.9** AND **F RL.6.1**

**W.6.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research, applying one or more grade 6 standards for Reading Literature or Reading Informational Text as needed.

**RL.6.1:** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.

**F1** **F1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4**

The writer provides explicit textual evidence from *Maniac Magee* to inform her internal debate and to support her analysis of the novel *(Maniac Magee was white... He judged people based on their character alone... he took a big bite out of Mars Bar's chocolate... Maniac breaks all the rules.)*.

**F2** **F2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3**

The writer makes reasonable inferences based on textual evidence from *Maniac Magee* to advance her internal debate and to develop her analysis of the novel *(Those were the characters that did not recognize or accept any difference between races. Outward appearance meant nothing... but I don't think he ever considered that a problem even while in a black neighborhood... When you decided to write this story you must have sensed that this was a common problem.)*.

courageous story allowed me to see that not all people discriminate. I I found hope. C1 G1 G2 I C2 Now as I look through the crowds, I believe there are some people who mirror the characters in your book. I G1 I am always looking for the Jeffrey Magees or the Beales, but no matter who I see, I smile and hope they smile back. I Like Maniac, I choose to throw caution to the wind. C2 G1

Thank You,

(writer's name)

begin section end

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■

**Reading Literature. Grade 6, Standard 2** AND **Language. Grade 6, Standard 5**

**G RL.6.2** AND **G L.6.5**

**RL.6.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of a text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

**L.6.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

**G1** G1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

Through particular details from the text, the writer describes how the theme of Maniac Magee is conveyed and how the theme is relevant to her circumstances *(In your novel, Maniac Magee, only a few had the courage to cross from one side to the other. Those were the characters that did not recognize or accept any difference between races. Outward appearance meant nothing. For Jeffrey Magee and Amanda Beale and her family, the divide was invisible... Mr. Spinelli, your courageous story allowed me to see that not all people discriminate. I found hope... I am always looking for the Jeffrey Magees or the Beales, but no matter who I see, I smile and hope they smile back. Like Maniac, I choose to throw caution to the wind.).*

**Reading Literature. Grade 6, Standard 2** AND **Language. Grade 6, Standard 5** (continued)

G2 G2 Examples: **1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5**

The writer adeptly employs the metaphor of "the divide" to illustrate the influence of the novel's theme on her perceptions of and responses to the reactions of some observers to her hijab. The metaphor is modeled on the artificial dividing line of Hector Street in *Maniac Magee*. *(Hector Street - the long divide. Until now, I can still imagine a long, wide, and desolate divide because sometimes I feel like I am standing there… For Jeffrey Magee and Amanda Beale and her family, the divide was invisible... Many times, I wished that my divide was invisible, but as I walk through the mall in my head cover, I sensed the divide... It was like he took a big bite out of the long divide... Realistically, I do not think my divide will disappear anytime soon, but Mr. Spinelli, your courageous story allowed me to see that not all people discriminate. I found hope.).*

**Language. Grade 6, Standard 2**

H **L.6.2**

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

H Overall text reference

The writer's sophisticated control of the conventions of standard English contributes to the effective style of her letter.

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

begin section end

## STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

**Language. Grade 6, Standard 3**

**I L.6.3.a**

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

**I** **I Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7**

The writer begins with a purposeful fragment and goes on to mix sentences of varying lengths and types; this contributes to the sophistication of the letter's style, voice, and tone *(Hector Street – the long divide... Outward appearance meant nothing… Wearing hijab as a young Muslim woman ensures that people will respect me for my mind and not my appearance... At first I was innocent; I didn't know how to interpret the less than friendly stares... Actually, he lives by the rules that I believe to be important... I found hope... I am always looking for the Jeffrey Magees or the Beales, but no matter who I see, I smile and hope they smile back.)*.

begin section end