

“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.

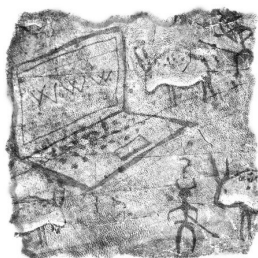
Writing Standards *in Action*

Grade 8 English Language Arts

Narrate (Poem)

(A poem that emulates the poetic structure and form of a model)

Before on Stone



Background Information

GRADE
8

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

Writing Sample Title:	Before on Stone
Text Type and Purpose:	Narrate (Poem)
Grade level/Content area:	Grade 8 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment:	A poem that emulates the poetic structure and form of a model
Standards Addressed:	(W.8.3), (RL.8.4), (L.8.1), (L.9-10.1), (L.8.3), (L.8.5) <i>See descriptions of these standards in the right column of the next page.</i>

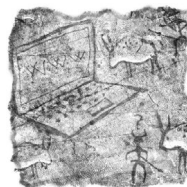
Highlights:

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

The sample:

- Traces a central theme by emulating and adapting the narrative structure of an anchor poem
- Maintains a coherent, carefully paced flow of ideas with parallel structures and clear, chronologically-arranged descriptions
- Creates an ironic turn developed by a purposefully ordered series of well structured event sequences
- Uses transitional words and a deliberate change of verb tenses to indicate a significant time shift
- Suggests the speaker's voice with consistent use of plural pronouns and verbs in the active voice
- Integrates figurative language effectively

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 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:

- Students read a variety of poems and analyzed the techniques and structures used by their authors.
- After detailed analysis of a model poem, students wrote an original poem emulating the structure of the model.

Assignment Description:

- Students analyzed the model poem, *Once on Yellow Paper* by S. Chbosky, from the book, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. They examined the structure of the story told by the poem, as well as such elements as style, recurring details, mood, and effect. Students then wrote original poems that to some degree followed the style and structure of the model.
- Students selected between two options for writing their poem. They could give advice to the author of *Once on Yellow Paper*, addressing the internal conflict of the poem, or students could select a societal element or experience to trace through time. The author of this sample chose the latter option.

Intended Audience:

Teacher, other grade 8 students

Time:

2 weeks

Writing Process: *(select from the choices given)*

Alone; with a partner; in class; as homework; pre-writing; organizing; drafting; revising; self-editing; peer-editing/peer response; teacher feedback; teacher-student conference; publishing

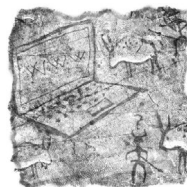
Materials:

The model poem, guiding questions

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 8, Standard 3 (W.8.3)**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

EXAMPLE: **A B B C E E**

Reading Standards for Literature:**Grade 8, Standard 4 (RL.8.4)**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, or mood, including the impact of allusion and irony.

EXAMPLE: **B**

Language Standards:**Grade 8, Standard 1 (L.8.1)**

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: **A**

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: **B**

Language Standards:**Grade 8, Standard 3 (L.8.3)**

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

EXAMPLE: **A**

Language Standards:**Grade 8, Standard 5 (L.8.5)**

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

EXAMPLE: **D E**

Narrate (Poem)

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STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

In this sample...

The writer adapts the form of the poem, “Once on Yellow Paper,” to create a new poem with an easy to follow progression of ideas that traces the evolution of writing through time. Purposeful choice of pronouns and use of verbs in the active voice clearly communicate the writer’s reflections on the topic. Effectively placed transitions help to pace the development of the theme and to indicate a significant time shift that brings the poem to a strong conclusion. The use of parallel structure and carefully conceived figurative language contribute to the poem’s style and tone. Notwithstanding some awkward constructions, this poem creates a clear narrative with an original perspective.

Before on Stone

Before,

On **C1** hard stone, **C1** with symbols, they had conversations.

A They only used symbols,

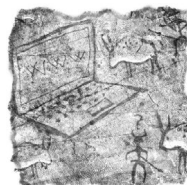
But they all understood.

And they would carve all day, **A**

Just to say a few words.

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



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.

Writing. Grade 8, Standard 3 AND Language. Grade 8, Standard 1 AND Language. Grade 8, Standard 3

A **W.8.3.a** AND **A** **L.8.1.b** AND

A **L.8.3.a**

W.8.3.a

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.

L.8.1.b

Form and use verbs in the active and passive voices and the indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, and subjunctive moods to communicate a particular meaning.

L.8.3.a

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

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

And then they would respond with more symbols,

Sometimes taking a long time to answer back.

Before,

On **C1** dingy paper, **C1** with ink, **A** they wrote sentences.

D Words developed like babies in the womb, **D**

And had conversations.

They would write for hours, **A**

Only having one shot at getting the words right.

Then they would deliver it,

And wait for a response.

The response would take a few hours to write,

And a few days to deliver.

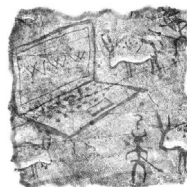
Writing. Grade 8, Standard 3 AND Language. Grade 8, Standard 1 AND Language. Grade 8, Standard 3
(continued)

A A Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

With consistent usage of plural pronouns and verbs in the active voice, the writer creates a distinct speaker, a plausible commentator on the development of writing and its implied effects (*They only used symbols, But they all understood. And they would carve all day... they wrote sentences. Words developed like babies in the womb, And had conversations. They would write for hours... They used long sentences, And wrote letters. They would write for many minutes... We use intelligent words, And send emails. We write for a few minutes...*).

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



Narrate (Poem)

GRADE
8

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
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STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

Before,

On **C1** white paper, **C1** with pencils, they wrote paragraphs.

A They used long sentences,

And wrote letters.

They would write for many minutes, **A**

Erasing any mistakes.

They would mail it,

And await the reply.

By tomorrow the response letter is there.

Reading Literature.

Grade 8, Standard 4 **AND**

Language. Grade 9-10, Standard 1 **AND**

Writing. Grade 8, Standard 3

B **RL.8.4** **AND** **B** **L.9-10.1.c** **AND**

B **W.8.3.b** **AND** **B** **W.8.3.c**

RL.8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, or mood, including the impact of allusion and irony.

L.9-10.1.c

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

W.8.3.b

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

W.8.3.c

Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.

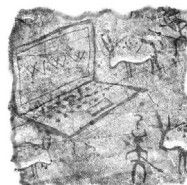
B Overall text reference

This combination of standards reflects the writer's ability to produce a clear, coherent, and effective progression of complex ideas that is succinct and easy to follow. The writer exceeds the grade level standard by using a modified version of the parallel structure of the anchor poem to intensify the impact of clear, chronologically arranged stanzas. Prominently placed transition words and carefully differentiated descriptions pace events—illustrating how writing has moved gradually from a thoughtful, time consuming process to an instantaneous and almost thoughtless act. The final transition word, as well as words and phrases that indicate a time shift, contribute to the poem's ironic conclusion.

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

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES 



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

E Now,
 On **C1** glowing screens, **C1** with **C2** touch screen **C2** letters,
 we write e-mails,
A We use intelligent words,
 And send emails.
 We write for a few minutes, **A**
 Having **C2** Spell Check **C2** correct our mistakes.
 We **C2** click send **C2**,
 And **D** the e-mail is off like a racehorse. **D**
 Within minutes, we get a reply. **E**

Writing. Grade 8, Standard 3**C W.8.3.d**

Use precise words and phrases and relevant descriptive details to convey a tone (the writer's attitude toward the subject: e.g., humorous, serious, or ironic) and to convey experiences or events.

C1 C1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

In the first line of each stanza, the writer provides a precisely chosen phrase that suggests the time period addressed by each stanza (*hard stone... dingy paper... white paper... glowing screens*).

C2 C2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer accentuates the time shift in the poem with carefully chosen words and phrases that refer to contemporary technology (*touch screen... Spell Check... click send*).

Language. Grade 8, Standard 5**D L.8.5**

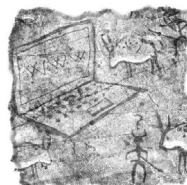
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

D D Examples: 1 · 2

The writer creates effective similes (*Words developed like babies in the womb... the e-mail is off like a racehorse*).

begin section end

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

**Writing. Grade 8, Standard 3 AND
Language. Grade 8, Standard 5**

**E W.8.3.c AND E W.8.3.d AND
E L.8.5.a**

W.8.3.c

Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.

W.8.3.d

Use precise words and phrases and relevant descriptive details to convey a tone (the writer's attitude toward the subject: e.g., humorous, serious, or ironic) and to convey experiences or events.

L.8.5.a

Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context.

E E Examples: 1

The writer concludes the poem with a distinct turn, an ironic implication that some contemporary writing, even with its technological advances, has become less thoughtful than more primitive earlier writing (*Now, On glowing screens, with touch screen letters, we write e-mails, We use intelligent words, And send emails. We write for a few minutes, Having Spell Check correct our mistakes. We click send, And the e-mail is off like a racehorse. Within minutes, we get a reply.*).

begin section end

