Informative/Explanatory Writing for Grades 4-5

Participants Manual
Reciprocity of Reading and Writing

There is a reciprocal relationship between reading and writing.

In any discussion of a processing system for reading, we must remember that we are really talking about a larger literacy processing system, one that includes both reading and writing of continuous text. While reading and writing are different processes, they are complementary. Readers and writers use the same sources of information and integrate them:

In reading – to recognize written signs (visible information) and connect them to the invisible information.

In writing – to use invisible information in a constructive way, producing a text of visual signs that will communicate to others or to self.

The process is not even as separated as those two bulleted points make it seem. Readers often think like writers. They notice how writers use language or give attention to new words and remember them later while writing. They may take notes or extend their understanding through writing. Writers reread what they have written so they can experience it another way and often revisit texts for ideas or to notice the writer’s craft. Through instruction, we can take advantage of this reciprocity, achieving higher-quality processing in both reading and writing.

Informative/Explanatory writing requires students to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately. The purpose of this type of writing is to demonstrate comprehension of a topic, concept, process, or procedure. Students write in response to a source, which may be a text or other media such as art, music, charts, or graphs. An effective response requires students to read the “text” closely, in order to demonstrate an understanding of the topic and locate evidence from the “text” to support their response.

How Argument and Informative/Explanatory Writing Differ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument Writing</th>
<th>Explanatory Writing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Seeks to make people believe that something is true or to persuade people to change their beliefs or behavior.</td>
<td>• Attempts to make the reader understand rather than to persuade him or her to accept a certain point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides information about causes, contexts, and consequences of processes, phenomena, states of affairs, objects, and terminology, and presents a case with the solid evidence, while acknowledging counterarguments on a debatable issue.</td>
<td>• Provides information about causes, contexts, and consequences of processes, phenomena, states of affairs, objects, and terminology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supports the writer’s claim(s) with sound reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</td>
<td>• Supports the writer’s thesis with evidence and supporting detail.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Connection to Close Reading

In order to write about a “text,” students must be able to understand a variety of texts and media formats. Close reading helps students make meaning of scientific, historical, or technical texts and art forms so they can identify the evidence that they need to write an effective informative/explanatory essay.

Related Vocabulary

Analyze: to examine, closely study, and evaluate a text by breaking down and examining its elements and components.

Concrete details: the specific facts, examples, and data that provide evidence for an informative/explanatory essay.

Formal style: writing that is free of slang, trite expressions, abbreviations, symbols, email shortcut language, contractions, and the use of the personal pronoun “I.” The writer does not speaking directly to the reader by using the word you.

Organizational structures

Cause/Effect shows why something happened, why certain conditions exist, or what resulted from an action or condition; shows the influence of one event upon another; uses logic and evidence to show the relationship between an event and its cause or an event and its outcome.

• Compare/contrast explores the similarities and differences between two or more subjects; addresses similarities and/or differences between/among topics; organized either to analyze or inform.

• Description shows what an item or place is like

• Problem and Solution presents a problem, and shows how it can be (or has been) solved.

• Chronological Order is organized from one point in time to another, also known as time order, sequence, or temporal order

Thesis statement addresses the writer’s intent; is based on the writer’s purpose; appears as the last sentence in the essay’s opening paragraph.

The length of a written response is determined by the task and its purpose. Every written response is not intended to be an essay.
Art: Write to Source- Self-portraiture
- Explain the choices you made as you developed ideas for your portrait. Consider the master artist examples viewed, the pose, the props, the lighting, and your choice of composition, color, and placement.

- Diagram the sequence of steps required to diagnose and troubleshoot malfunctioning equipment.

Career Technology Education: Write to Source- Journal Article
- Explain the conflicts that arose regarding the acceptance and use of HeLa cells in research.
- Compare and contrast health benefits and risks of Paleolithic vs. vegan diets.

English/Language Arts: Write to Source- Short Story
- Explain how Sandra Cisneros’s choice of words develops the point of view of the young speaker in her story “Eleven.” [RL.6.6]*

English/Language Arts: Write to Source- Diverse Media and Formats
- Analyze how the Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa in his film Throne of Blood draws on and transforms Shakespeare’s play Macbeth in order to develop a similar plot set in feudal Japan. [RL.9–10.9]*

Gifted and Talented: Write to Source-Primary Research Data
- Evaluate the usefulness of your original primary research data for supporting your hypothesis.

Health Education: Write to Source-Diverse Media and Formats
- After viewing the video, The Cat Who Drank Too Much, trace and explain the stages of alcoholism as they relate to the cat’s behavior.
- Compare and contrast two of the Decision Making Models that have been used in class.
- Explain one of the Decision Making Models and its strengths in facilitating a healthy decision.
- Explain how to determine the validity of a source of health information, products, or services.

Mathematics: Write to Source- Multiple Representations
Examine and explain the connections among the verbal model, graph, and equation of function.

Music: Write to Source- Marine Band Performance and School Band Performance
- After listening to recordings of two performances, identify strengths of each performance and give suggestions for improvement in our performance, considering tone, intonation, balance, and articulation.

Science: Write to Source- Diverse Media and Formats (video clip, laboratory data, selected readings)
- Trace the transformation of a rock through the rock cycle from sedimentary to metamorphic to igneous back to sedimentary. Be sure to explain the processes that affect each transformation.
- Using the data that you collected from the Photosynthesis by Chloroplast lab, explain the process of photosynthesis and how photosynthetic activity varies in different lighting conditions.

Social Studies: Write to Source-Diverse Media and Formats (maps, articles, first-person accounts)
- Explain how human actions contributed to the desertification of the Sahel region.

Social Studies: Write to Source- Primary Sources
- After reading primary source perspectives about slavery, compare Northern and Southern rationales for the ending or continuation of slavery. Use details from the documents to support your answer.
- Analyze the role of African American soldiers in the Civil War by comparing and contrasting primary source materials against secondary syntheses such as Jim Haskins’s Black, Blue and Gray: African Americans in the Civil War. [RH.9–10.9]*

Write to Source- Primary Sources
- Spanish II: Interview two adults about their childhood experiences and, in Spanish, compare them to experiences of children today.

World Languages: Write to Source- Diverse Media and Formats (newspaper clippings, movie posters, video clips)
- Italian IV: In Italian, define omertà by comparing the actions of Salvatore Giuliano, Jesse James, and Robin Hood and examining how each provides justice for the people.

*From Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Howard County Public Schools, 2012
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Structure</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Signal Words</th>
<th>Graphic Organizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cause and Effect</td>
<td>Ideas, events, or facts are presented as causes in conjunction with the resulting outcomes or effects</td>
<td>accordingly consequently may be due to so thus because for this reason nevertheless therefore as a result if...then consequently for this reason so therefore this led to since</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare and Contrast</td>
<td>Similarities and differences are presented between two or more topics or concepts</td>
<td>although but either...or in common similar to as opposed to compared with even though likewise yet as well as different from however not only</td>
<td>![Compare and Contrast Graphic Organizer]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Provides information about a topic</td>
<td>a number of characteristics in addition is like to illustrate appears to be for example in back of looks like as in for instance including such as</td>
<td>![Description Graphic Organizer]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem and Solution</td>
<td>Problem is presented followed by one or more solutions</td>
<td>a problem because in order to one reason for steps involved a solution for this reason leads/led to since this led to accordingly if...then may be due to so that thus</td>
<td>![Problem and Solution Graphic Organizer]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td>Events are described in numerical or chronological order</td>
<td>after before first initially next on (date) soon today while afterward during following later not long after preceding then until at last finally immediately meanwhile now second third when</td>
<td>![Sequence Graphic Organizer]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Inquiry Instruction Teaching Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gathering Texts</td>
<td>The teacher, sometimes along with students, gathers examples of the kind of writing students will do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the Stage</td>
<td>As the study gets underway, the teacher makes sure students know they will be required to finish a piece of writing that shows the influence of the study. All reading is done with an eye toward, “We’re going to write something like this....”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>The teacher and students spend time reading and getting to know the texts they’ll study. They make notes of things they notice about how the texts are written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Study</td>
<td>The class revisits some of these texts and frames their talk with the question, “What do we notice about how these texts are written?” Teacher and students work together to use specific language to say what they now know about writing from this close study. They record it somehow and, most importantly, they envision using what they have learned in their own writing. The teacher, through modeling, takes a strong lead in helping students envision possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Under the Influence</td>
<td>Students (and often the teacher, too) finish a piece of writing that shows the influence of the study in writing. Students are expected to show very specific ways in which the study influenced their writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Study Driven*, Katie Wood Ray, Heinemann, 2006
Text Structure Frames

Problem/Solution Text
× Sentence 1—tells who had the problem and what the problem is
× Sentence 2—tells what action was taken to try to solve the problem
× Sentence 3—tells what happened as a result of the action taken
________________________ had a problem because ________________________
Therefore, ________________________________
As a result, ________________________________.

Comparison/Contrast Text
________________________ and ________________________ are similar in several ways. Both __________________________ and __________________________ have similar ___________________________. Finally, both __________________________ and __________________________ are different in several ways. First, __________________________, while __________________________. Secondly, __________________________, but __________________________. In addition while __________________________, __________________________. Finally, __________________________, while __________________________.

Sequence Text
Here is how a ________________________ is made. First, __________________________. Next, __________________________. Then, __________________________. Finally, __________________________.

Cause/Effect Text
Because of __________________________, __________________________. __________________________ caused __________________________. Therefore __________________________. Finally, due to __________________________, __________________________. This explains why __________________________.

Descriptive Text
There are ___________ kinds of ____________________. The first kind of __________________________ is __________________________. It __________________________.
The second one is __________________________. It __________________________.
The third kind is __________________________. It __________________________.
Now you can recognize the __________________________ kinds of __________________________.
# Purpose and Forms of Informational/Explanatory Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Common Forms Informative/Explanatory Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To Describe  | Personal descriptions (wanted posters, missing posters, etc...)  
|              | Poetry  
|              | Scientific Reports about animals, plants and machines  
|              | Reports about Countries  
|              | Definitions  
|              | Letters  
|              | Illustrations  
|              | Captions  
|              | Labels |
| To Instruct  | Recipes  
|              | Rules  
|              | Directions  
|              | Experiments  
|              | Games  
|              | Lists  
|              | Maps  
|              | Letters  
|              | Illustrations  
|              | Captions  
|              | Labels |
| To Explain   | Scientific Explanations of how a phenomenon occurs  
|              | Personal narratives that explain how and why something happens  
|              | Elaborations  
|              | Reports  
|              | Letters  
|              | Illustrations  
|              | Captions  
|              | Labels |

*Adapted from “Is That a Fact?” by Tony Stead*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understands cause/effect relationships</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Craft (Structure, features, voice)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim or Goal</strong></td>
<td>Clearly explains to the reader cause/effect relationships related to the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>Group related information and use a logical sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses diagrams, labels, and pictures, when appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text /Language Features</strong></td>
<td>Uses signal words for cause and effect (if, so, so that, because)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes headings based on the topic if appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
<td>Uses an enticing introduction to engage the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able to express ideas using own language as opposed to copying down what others say or information from books they read</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses descriptive language that paints pictures for the reader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is able to state information in an effective manner</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graphic Organizer</strong></td>
<td>Is able to choose and use a graphic organizer effectively</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is able to locate and interpret information from books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is able to locate and interpret information from nonbook sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is able to present information</td>
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<tr>
<th>Surface Features (Mechanics) Appropriate to Grade Level Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handwriting neat and legible</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling is mostly correct</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Uses grammatically correct language</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of punctuation and capitalization is mostly correct</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Uses an appropriate publishing format (paragraphs)</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Cause and Effect Pre/Post Assessment

Pre-assessment instructions:
Prior to teaching the readwritethink ‘Exploring Cause and Effect Using Expository Texts About Natural Disasters’ lesson plan, it is necessary to give your students a pre-assessment. This pre-assessment will give you information to see what understanding they have about cause and effect writing.
Before you give the pre-assessment prompt to your students, you will need to build your students background knowledge on the topic of rainforests. First watch the video: Help Save the Rainforest. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_rfRoO70 Provide the students with a copy of the narration of the video, HO 20 and the lyrics to Don’t Cut Me Down, HO 21. Discuss the content of the video and the song lyrics with your students.
Assign the writing prompt on HO 22-23 to pre-assess your students.
After administering the pre-assessment prompt to your students, use the Assessment Rubric for Cause/Effect Writing to analyze your students work. The data you get from analyzing your students’ papers will help guide you as you plan needed mini-lesson topics.

Post-assessment instructions:
After teaching the readwritethink ‘Exploring Cause and Effect Using Expository Texts About Natural Disasters’ lesson plan and any additional lessons you taught on Cause and Effect Writing, it is necessary to give your students a post-assessment. This post-assessment will give you information to see what understanding they have gained about cause and effect writing.
Before you give the post-assessment prompt to your students, you will want to review the information on rainforests. First watch the Help Save the Rainforest video, and review the narration of the video and the song lyrics. Discuss this with your students.
After administering the post-assessment, use the same rubric you used to analyze the pre-assessment so you can measure individual student growth and understanding.
Assign the writing prompt on HO 22-23 to post-assess your students.
YOU TUBE Rainforest Video Narration

We are losing Earth’s greatest biological treasures just as we are beginning to appreciate their true value. One and one-half acres of rainforest are lost every second with tragic consequences for both developing and industrial countries.

Nearly one-half acres of rainforest are lost every second with tragic consequences for both developing and industrial countries. Nearly one-half of the world’s species, animals, and micro-organisms will be destroyed or severely threatened over the next quarter century due to rainforest deforestation.

Most rainforest are cleared by chainsaws, bulldozers, and fires for its timber value and then are followed by farming and ranching operations, even by world giants like Mitsubishi Corp., Georgia Pacific, and Texaco.

More than one-half of the world’s estimated ten million species of plants, animals, and insects live in the tropical rainforest. One-fifth of the world’s fresh water is in the Amazon Basin. The Amazon Rainforest has been described as the “Lungs of our Planet. It provides the essential environmental world service of continuously recycling carbon dioxide. More than 20% of the world’s oxygen is produced in the Amazon Rainforest.

Fewer rainforest means less rain, less oxygen for us to breathe, and an increased threat from global warming.

Do what you can do to help save the rainforest. Nothing is too big or too little.

Savetherainforest.org
Lyrics to “Don’t Cut Me Down”  
By: Olivia Newton-John

I’m tall. I need room to grow.  
I need the sun in my eyes.  
My home is the earth below.  
One day I know I will touch the sky.

Chorus:  
Don’t cut me down,  
For I am innocent.  
Don’t cut me down,  
I am your friend.

I sigh when the four winds blow.  
I cry when the cool rains fall.  
I shine in the moonlight’s glow.  
I am a home for the great and small.

Chorus

Give me a year.  
A year, another year.  
It takes me time for new life to appear.  
You cut me down  
Quicker than I can regrow.  
Give me a chance.  
I am the air you breathe.  
Imagine what life would be without me.  
I have been here  
Longer than you have, you know.  
Harvest the seeds you sow.

Chorus

I’m tall. I need room to grow.  
I need the sun in my eyes.  
My home is the earth below.  
One day I know I will touch the sky.

Chorus

For I will never mend  
Don’t cut me down.  
I am your friend.
You have viewed the video “Help Save the Rainforest,” and analyzed the script of the narration and the song lyrics.

Write a piece about the rainforest and what is causing the destruction of the rainforest, and why are these things happening.
### Strategy Based Mini-Lessons

**Student Learner Expectation:** The student will identify cause-effect relationships and record information on an appropriate graphic organizer.

**Explicit Lesson Focus:** Cause-Effect relationships

**Genre:** informational text

| Materials | Text: *Danger! Volcanoes* by Seymour Simon  
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------|

Often when one reads informational text, cause-effect relationships can be identified. Identification of causes and effects helps in better understanding the author’s message. When reading informational text, examine the structure for cause-effect relationships in order to better understand the information.

Build background knowledge by discussing some cause/effect scenarios. Have the students show how they would feel if they had eaten too much food. Have them discuss in small groups what would happen if the vehicle they were riding in did not stop at a stop sign or red light. Share out. Discuss how the graphic organizer is a way to help organize our thoughts and we don’t need to write a lot. We can use a few words or lists as we fill out the graphic organizer.

Now, today as I read *Danger! Volcanoes* by Seymour Simon, I am going to think about the effects of volcanoes. I will use this graphic organizer to record any cause-effect relationships that I find as I read. First of all, I will write the cause “volcano erupts” at the center of the web. In the outlying boxes, I will record effects of a volcanic eruption. *(Begin reading p.1 through sentence 1 on p. 2.) One of the effects of a volcanic eruption is that “lava shoots out of the ground.” I will record that information in one of the outlying boxes. *(Record information in box.) (Continue reading through p. 4, sentence 1.) Another effect of a volcanic eruption is that “many people have been killed” and “houses are destroyed.” *(Record information on the chart.) After reading pages 14-15, stop to view the video to build more knowledge on the “Ring of Fire”.*

I will continue to read and pause occasionally to allow you to identify more effects of a volcanic eruption. *(Read the rest of the page.) What other effects should we record on our chart? *(Students may mention “blasts of rocks, ash, and deadly gases,” “slides of lava, rock, ash, mud, and water,” “destroy cities,” “change weather,” etc. As you finish the book discuss the key words used in Cause/Effect that can be found in the text.*

As you read independently, look for cause-effect relationships and the key words that are used.
Cause and Effect
Compare and Contrast
Title_______________________

same

17
Problem and Solution

Problem
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Attempted Solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solutions</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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End Result
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
GRADE 4 LITERACY: JOHN MUIR

UNIT OVERVIEW
This task is the culminating task for a 2-3 week unit that uses the topic of human impact on environment as a means to teach students how to analyze and navigate informational texts. Students will write an essay at the end of the unit demonstrating their mastery of the content and their ability to make inferences within a specific text.

TASK DETAILS
Task Name: John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter
Grade: 4
Subject: Literacy

Task Description: Students write an essay using key details from the text to explain why John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts and describe the effect that his work had on preserving the beauty of nature.

Standards:
RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
RI.4.10 By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
W.4.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Materials Needed:
“John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter”
(http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/readingcomp/5th-muir.pdf)
The task and instructional supports in the following pages are designed to help educators understand and implement tasks that are embedded in Common Core-aligned curricula. While the focus for the 2011-2012 Instructional Expectations is on engaging students in Common Core-aligned culminating tasks, it is imperative that the tasks are embedded in units of study that are also aligned to the new standards. Rather than asking teachers to introduce a task into the semester without context, this work is intended to encourage analysis of student and teacher work to understand what alignment looks like. We have learned through the 2010-2011 Common Core pilots that beginning with rigorous assessments drives significant shifts in curriculum and pedagogy. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) support is included to ensure multiple entry points for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

**PERFORMANCE TASK: JOHN MUIR**

**UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) PRINCIPLES**

**RUBRIC**

**ANNOTATED STUDENT WORK**

**INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS**

**UNIT OUTLINE**

**SUPPORTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Acknowledgements: This unit was developed by Melody Lanzaro (CFN 303) with input from the Curriculum Designers Alignment Review Team.
John Muir Task

The prompt below is designed to be used with the text “John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter” (http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/reading-comp/5th-muir.pdf)

Read the article, "John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter". Then write an essay using key details from the text to explain (1) why John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts and (2) describe the effect that his work had on preserving the beauty of nature. Use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Be sure to:
1. Have an introduction that sets the context: the title and at least two sentences that summarize the article. (The author is Liana Mahoney)
2. Have a focus that describes the effect John Muir had on preserving the beauty of nature.
3. Have body paragraphs that have topic sentences and details to support each new idea.
4. Use simple and compound sentences.
5. Use examples from the text and descriptive words to elaborate on your ideas.
6. Use transitional words to connect your ideas.
7. Write a conclusion that connects to your focus.
8. Use correct punctuation and spelling.

Instructions for Teachers: This task could be given as a stand-alone task to assess student mastery of R1.4.1, R1.4.10 and W.4.2. Should you feel your students need additional support, we have also included a unit outline, some guidance around addressing text complexity in the article, and two essay planning handouts (“My Writing Checklist” and an essay planning concept map). There are additional supports for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.
Performance Task
Write an essay using key details from the text to explain why John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts. Describe the effect that his work had on preserving the beauty of nature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4     | The student provides a complete and accurate essay that answers all parts of the prompt. The response:  
  • shows thorough and insightful understanding of ideas and concepts  
  • shows logical inferences and uses valid reasoning  
  • connects ideas and elaborates in a coherent manner  
  • includes comprehensive text-based support with relevant and sufficient details; words or phrases copied from the text may be used to support an idea  
  • is well organized with clear focus  
  • uses effective vocabulary, which may be above grade level, and complex sentences  
  • contains grammar, spelling, and punctuation that is mostly correct with few minor errors that do not interfere with the reader’s comprehension  
  • provides a strong introduction, conclusion, and transitions (when the prompt specifies a paragraph or essay) |
| 3     | The student provides a mostly thorough and accurate essay that answers most of the prompt. The response:  
  • shows some insight, but also tends to show a literal understanding of some concepts  
  • shows mostly logical inferences but reasoning may not be as clear  
  • connects most ideas but there is less elaboration  
  • includes mostly relevant text-based support with some details; words or phrases copied from the text may be used to support an idea  
  • is well organized, but ideas may shift, which make the focus less clear  
  • uses grade level vocabulary, simpler sentences  
  • contains some grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors which may affect the reader’s comprehension but not significantly  
  • has introduction, transitions, and/or conclusion (where specified by prompt) that are not as strongly related to the body of the essay |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2     | The student provides an adequate and partially accurate response to part of the prompt. The response:  
• shows a mostly literal understanding of the text and little insight  
• shows some inferences that are unsupported or not logical  
• includes loose connections or unrelated ideas and little elaboration  
• includes modest text-based support with few details; some details are minor; words or phrases may be copied from the text but may not clearly support an idea or fit within the context of the response  
• is somewhat organized but focus shifts from one idea to another without explanation  
• Uses simple vocabulary and sentences  
• contains errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling that interfere with the reader’s comprehension  
• may have an introduction and/or conclusion (where specified by prompt) but they are loosely related to the topic; transitions do not link ideas |
| 1     | The student provides an incomplete and less-than-accurate response that only superficially responds to the prompt. The response:  
• shows minimal understanding or insight  
• contains incorrect or illogical inferences; some confusion  
• may convey some information about the text but has unrelated ideas; sentences may be fragmented; there is little, if any, elaboration  
• may contain a few accurate details to support statements; includes minor or irrelevant details; details may be repeated; words or phrases may be copied without connection to ideas in the response  
• lacks organization and appropriate focus  
• vocabulary and sentence structure are simple  
• contains many errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling that make comprehension difficult  
• lacks effective introduction, conclusion, transitions (where specified by prompt) |
| 0     | The student’s response is illegible, irrelevant, incoherent, or off topic. The student may have copied major parts of the text, but the response lacks an answer to the prompt in the student’s own words. |
Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir
Annotated Student Work

Student performance on the criteria within the rubric
The score for this essay is a 1.

The student demonstrates minimal understanding of the text. As a result, he/she attempts to write a clear and engaging introduction but struggles in stating a focus or developing that focus with supporting details and elaboration. The student also attempts a conclusion but has nothing to base it on since the body of the essay is missing.

Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student
A teacher would first want to investigate if there are any factors outside of the classroom preventing the student from attending class or completing reading and writing assignments. The teacher will need to support the student in developing reading comprehension through shared readings with the class and independent reading assignments for homework. Before focusing on issues of grammar, spelling, or language conventions, the student should practice summarizing ideas from a text and providing details to elaborate on an idea in his/her writing assignments.
Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir
Annotated Student Work

Student performance on the criteria within the rubric
This essay scored a 2.

While this essay demonstrates a basic understanding of the text (“He fought to keep nature beautiful and safe”), the writing demonstrates an overall lack of deep and precise reading comprehension. There is confusion over preserving farmland animals vs. forests, and an inaccurate reference to John Muir’s conservation efforts (“he wrote letters, newspapers, books, essays, articles and magazines”).

Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student
Giving this student multiple and varied opportunities to access complex text and express his/her ideas through writing will build this student’s fluency. Complex text will also provide the student with examples of good writing that he/she can analyze for organization and development of ideas.

The student could work separating ideas through the appropriate use of paragraphs. While the student is attempting to use transitions (One example . . . another way . . . the last way. . . ) they are used more like a list within a paragraph then a way to connect whole paragraphs. Therefore, the student could work on separating his/her ideas into distinct paragraphs with more elaboration and detail from the text. Continued support with accessing complex text will ensure that the student has access to enough ideas and evidence to elaborate more fully in his/her writing.

Work with academic vocabulary, domain-specific vocabulary, and context clues will help the student understand how the meaning of words change depending on context (e.g. farm animals and forest animals).
“John Muir”

Can you believe what one man could do? I read the article “John Muir the Conservationist on the Quarter” by Liana Mahoney. In the article I learned about a man named John Muir. John Muir was born on April 21, 1838. He was a man who loved nature the way it was. He walked more than a thousand miles across the country, through fields and woods admiring nature. John Muir devoted his life to conservation and also to preserving beauty of nature.

John Muir wrote about the problems too. He wrote that people were cutting down the trees for more farmland. He also wrote places he visited describing their beauty. Soon people started to listen. For example Theodore Roosevelt the president of the United States of America, was convinced that was a need to protect our land.

John Muir hard work paid off. After the visit from the president, president Roosevelt set aside 148 million acres of land for national forest and established five national parks. A law was also passed that says that people cannot build homes or businesses. Thanks to him we can enjoy the parks and all it’s natural beauty.

John Muir worked long and hard every day to keep things in nature just the way they are. Today people continued his work.
Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir
Annotated Student Work

Student performance on the criteria within the rubric
This essay scored a 3.

The student shows an adequate and literal understanding of the text and John Muir’s efforts to conserve land. The focus is clear and contains accurate factual information from the text. Like the writer for the essay that scored 4, this student includes background information to enhance their introduction (John Muir was born . . . ). However, there is less elaboration and detail within the body paragraphs.

Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student
To move this student from “3” work to “4” work, he/she could work on expanding his/her reasoning with more detail. For example, he/she could explain why it is problematic to cut down trees for more farmland.

The student could work on making logical inferences about John Muir’s life, thus demonstrating a deeper understanding of complex text. Continued exposure to varied complex text and continued support with accessing complex text that models inferential reasoning will help the student develop these skills.

The student could work on varying his/her use of pronouns. Also, the student could practice maintaining consistent verb tenses (“Today people continued his work.”).
A Tree’s Voice

Long ago there was a tree who could not speak...well not actually, it was John Muir who spoke on its behalf. John Muir was born in Scotland, April 21, 1838. Soon after, his family immigrated to America and bought a farm where John Muir spent many years admiring nature. In the passage, “John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter” by Liana Mahoney, we learn that even as a young man John loved nature. John Muir spent most of his life working to protect and conserve nature. His work also helped make changes to how was use our land.

John Muir loved nature. Even as a child he loved to watch nature. One thing that bothered him to the bottom of his soul was that trees were being cut in order to make farmlands for cattle and sheep to graze. He knew trees were important to forests, and the animals and even people. John Muir wrote essays, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and letters to convince people to protect nature. John Muir dedicated his life to his work.

John Muir’s work changed the way we see nature. The first step in John’s plan was to convince Theodor Roosevelt to see what he saw. John took Theodor on a 3-day camping trip to show the president the beauty of nature. Afterwards The president set aside 148 million acres of land for national forests and national parks. Then the U.S. Congress passed a law that no one can build homes or businesses there. So parks like Yosemite and Sequoia and national park must stay unchanged.

John Muir made us understand the beauty of the outside world. Since he saved Yosemite, Sequoia, and National Park we can now enjoy the beauty of these parks. John Muir died in California in 1914. But even if he died, the presidents’ law still lives on so we can see what John Muir loved.
Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir
Annotated Student Work

Student performance on the criteria within the rubric
This essay scored a 4.

The student shows a good understanding of the text and John Muir’s perspective on preserving the environment. This is apparent in the opening sentence, which is linked to the title of the essay. The last two sentences of the first paragraph contain a clear focus (“John spent most of his life working to protect to conserve nature. His work also helped make changes to how was use our land”).

The topic is developed and is supported with facts and details (“John Muir wrote articles . . . John took Theador on a 3-day camping trip . . . Afterwards the President set aside 148 million acres . . . ). The student connects ideas and elaborates with details from both the text and prior knowledge (“John Muir was born in Scotland . . . His family immigrated to America. . .”). Although use of prior knowledge is not required for the task, it is included appropriately and it supports the ideas. The student makes logical inferences (“. . . bothered him to the bottom of his soul . . .”). The essay shows good organization and development: the student presents the problem in the body of the essay and describes steps (“The first step in John’s plan. . .”) that Muir took to address his concerns and accomplish his goals.

The conclusion nicely sums up the lasting effects of Muir’s efforts. The student also uses domain-specific vocabulary such as “conserve” and academic vocabulary such as “on it’s behalf . . . bottom of his soul . . . cattle . . . graze . . . convince . . . dedicated.” The student’s conclusion connects the work of John Muir to its effects on our lives today (“We can now enjoy the beauty of these parks . . . we can see what John Muir loved”).

Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student
It is clear that the student made an attempt to write good transitions. However, the student could work on varying his/her transitions and not starting every body paragraph with, “John Muir . . .” A secondary focus could be on spelling, capitalization (e.g., “Afterwards The president...”), and proof-reading.
Resources

Online resources:
Audio and video links-
http://havefunteaching.com/songs/writing-songs/expository-writing-song/
This is the link to the expository writing song and lyrics. You may find this would be a fun way to inspire student writers.
http://www.pd360.com/index.cfm?ContentId=525
Arkansas IDEAS CID#1000473
PD 360 Reading in the Content Area (Elementary)
Segment: Identifying the Author’s Craft (Elementary)
This video focuses on “Author’s Craft” to help students as they are reading in the content areas. Teaching them how writers write, how writing is structured, how they organize information for writing will help students read and write.
http://www.pd360.com/pd360.cfm?contentId=437
Arkansas IDEAS CID#1000436
PD360 Assessments and Scoring Guides Based on Standards (Elementary Edition)
Segment: Introduction/Writing As a Tool for Assessment (Elementary)
This video focuses on writing as an assessment tool. Concepts include writing to learn, authentic writing assignments, and scoring writing assignments with consistency.
http://learnzillion.com
A resource for high quality animated video lessons aligned to the common core.

Professional articles-
The link above will take you to a resource document from Austin Public Schools curriculum department for teaching “Text Structures, Features and Organization. When teaching Informational/Explanatory Writing, look at: p.19-21, 31-33, 38.
Karin K. Hess, National Center for the Improvement of Education Assessment, in her article ‘Teaching and Assessing Understanding of Text Structures Across the Grades,’ she examines the research related to text structure and considerations for instruction.
http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/languagearts/secondary/writingacross
The North Carolina Standard Course of Study discusses writing across the curriculum, informational writing.
This document has strategies for teaching text structures, charts showing structures with questions and signal words, text structure posters, and paragraph frames. It also has a list of texts that exemplify the use of informational text structure.
Articles to use with students:
http://www.timeforkids.com/homework-helper/a-plus-papers
Time for Kids’ Homework Helper “A+ Papers” section had sample papers along with organizers that can be used along with that type of text structure.
http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngexplorer/1104/articles/mainarticle.html
This National Geographic article is a good example of a descriptive article.
http://www.readington.k12.nj.us/77141913151714/lib/77141913151714/Weather_Articles_5.17.11.pdf This document has one to two page informational text articles related to natural disasters.

Lesson plans:
http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writing-motivating-students-write-871.html
How-To Writing: Motivating Students to Write for a Real Purpose from the readwritethink website.
http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/used-words-paraphrasing-informational-1177.html
This lesson helps students to learn to write informational text in their own words by paraphrasing.
Teaching compare and contrast through modeling lesson plan.
http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/descriptive-video-using-media-1116.html
This multi-media lesson will enhance students ability to write a description of a video scene.

http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=11287
Introducing Text Structures in Writing-5th Grade from Utah Education Network
http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=11290
Using Cause and Effect to Write in Science from Utah Education Network
http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=11289
Using Compare and Contrast to Write in Science from Utah Education Network
http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=11288
Using Description to Write in Science from Utah Education Network
This multi-media lesson will enhance the student’s ability to write an informative/explanatory piece.

Text resources:
Duke, Nell and Bennett-Armistead, V. Susan (2003) Reading & Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades: Research-Based Practice. Scholastic