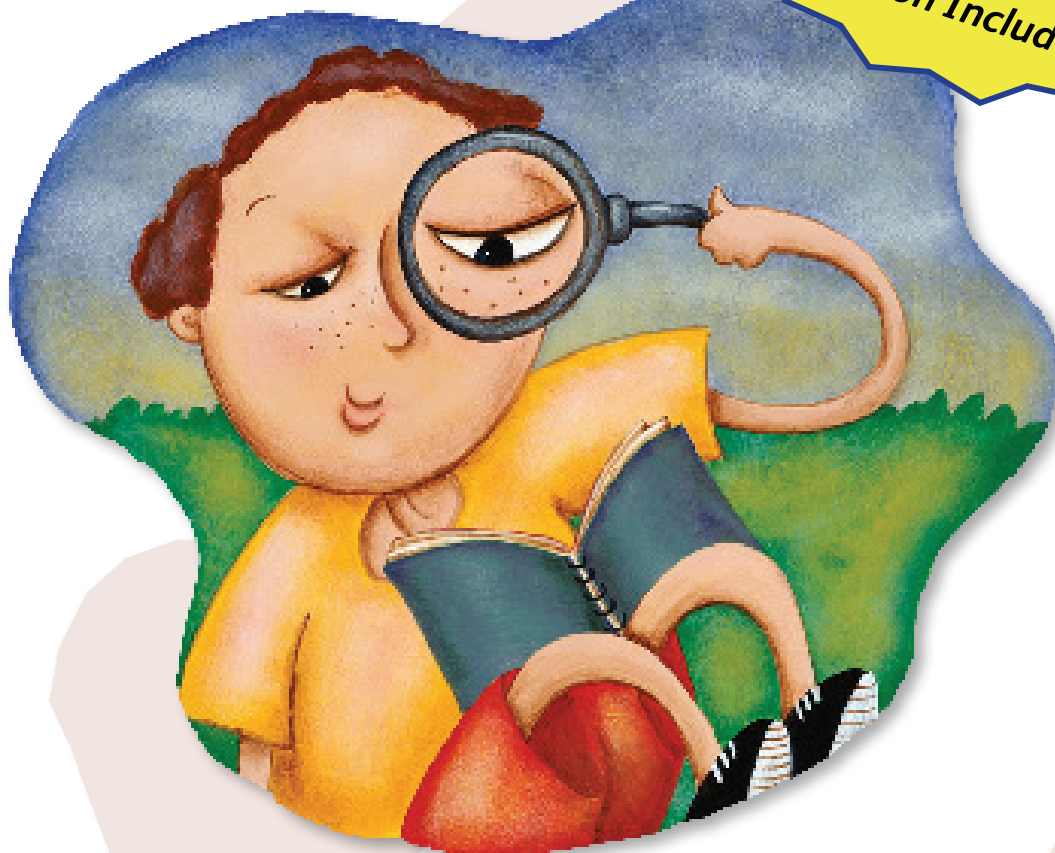


# Informational Writing

Deconstructing Text,  
Writing Essays, Reports,  
Response to Text

Expanded Edition  
Literacy Launch  
Section Included



Updated & Expanded Edition by Dea Paoletta Auray

**Empowering**<sup>®</sup>  
Writers

Write. Read. Succeed.

Students can make dramatic progress with their writing during the middle school years. Many will have the vocabulary, academic skills and body of general knowledge to make writing a meaningful way of communicating their interests and viewpoints. However, some will require significant support in all phases of the writing process and all will require ongoing review of the skills they need to organize their thoughts for writing, conduct effective research, and glean information from a variety of texts. Overall, the goal for the middle school years is to make writing a means through which students can effectively “show what they know.” Being able to do so is crucial for success in high school, college, and beyond.

**In the lessons that follow, your students will learn to:**

- Recognize and distinguish between genres (narrative, informational, opinion, and argument writing). They will be able to spot the subtle differences between informational and opinion writing as well as the more complex argumentative writing.
- Annotate and analyze text to become strategic readers.
- Organize information in a logical manner so that their writing is easily understood, cohesive, and effective.
- Develop broad yet distinct main ideas.
- Generate a variety of rich supporting details and fact-based evidence.
- Conduct effective research and enhance their writing with quotes, statistics, amazing facts, descriptive segments, and anecdotes.
- Write compelling introductions with powerful leads and clear topic sentences.
- Creatively restate their main ideas in conclusions that sum up the whole piece and end with decisive, memorable statements.
- Respond, in writing, to a variety of texts in order to demonstrate deep comprehension (including Short Constructed Response, Extended Constructed Response and Literary Analysis).

The lessons provided here were developed for grade 6, as students hone the writing skills they need to produce essays with multiple body paragraphs as well as effective introductions and conclusions.

Also included are a variety of more challenging activities that will guide more advanced students through the process of further developing and refining their writing skills. In each section you will find a variety of lessons to meet the needs of the range of students in your class. Some lessons are largely teacher directed; others require greater independence on the part of the students. This allows you to differentiate to best meet the needs of all students.

In addition to the multitude of writing opportunities included throughout this text, you will also find foundational lessons necessary to inform writing tasks. These critical thinking exercises (such as sorting details into main idea categories, recognizing fact from opinion, analysis of text, etc.) build the awareness level. Without this prior knowledge and experience, students cannot be expected to effectively complete writing tasks.

Lastly, given the demands of the latest standards and testing trends, it is critical for students to generate their writing in both the traditional pen to paper mode and on a computer or other device. It is important to note that research suggests that each modality stimulates the brain differently. Pen to paper is a slower, more multi-sensory process, which reinforces the assimilation of knowledge and skills in a wider variety of ways.

## The Skill Sections are as follows:

Literacy Launch\*

**Section 1:** Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas

**Section 2:** Elaboration

**Section 3:** Research

**Section 4:** Introductions and Conclusions

**Section 5:** Authentic Writing Tasks

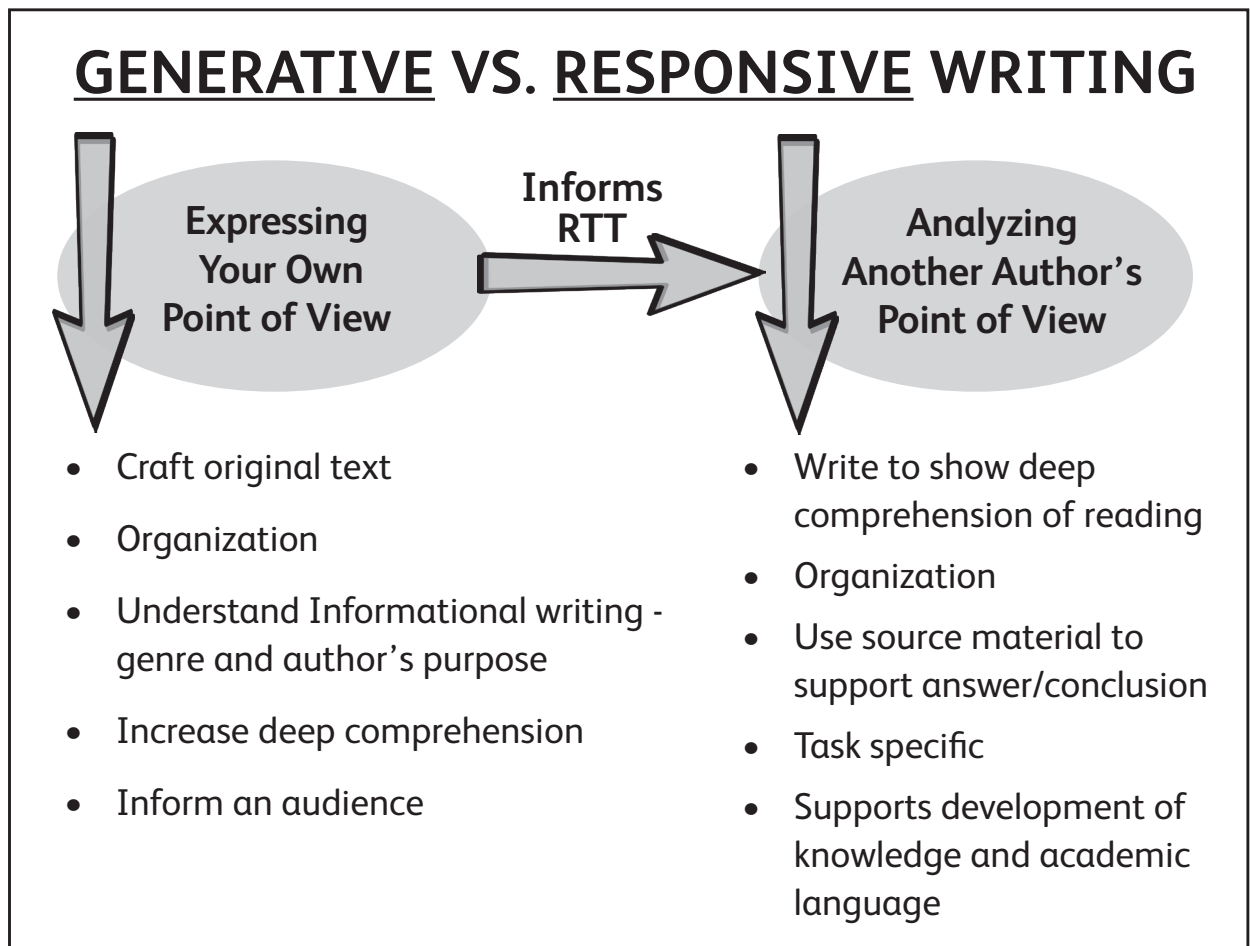
\*This essential jumping-off point to writing instruction and reading comprehension is the prerequisite to understanding all genres of writing and reading purposes. For that reason, we suggest that whatever genre you begin teaching, all students are first introduced to the Literacy Launch. Then, regardless of what genre they are interacting with, whether in reading or writing, there will be a necessary fundamental understanding. *(Note: The Literacy Launch is presented in the same manner in both our Informational Writing Guide and Narrative Writing Guide. It only needs to be taught once and when concepts are mastered, teaching can move directly to Section 1. If for example, you begin with Informational writing, when you move to Narrative, the Literacy Launch instruction does not need to be repeated. Instead, move right to Section 1.)*

Additionally, the foundational skills learned during the Literacy Launch provide students with the tools needed to address text-dependent and constructed response tasks. Note that Response to Text **(R)** activities are interspersed throughout this Guide. To find specific skills, see the Response to Text Index, pp. 345-346.



## Generative vs. Responsive Writing

In the real world, and now, more and more often in school, writing can be either motivated largely by the writer's interests, imagination, and personal experience (generative writing) or it can be in response to a source text or number of texts (responsive writing). Both approaches have value and one should not be overlooked at the expense of the other. Writing assessments in many places have moved away from generative writing in favor of responsive writing. **Ex.** A student must read several texts on a topic and then respond to what they read in an evaluative way, demonstrating not only literal comprehension, but critical thinking and personal reflection in response to a question or task. They must back their ideas, conclusions, or positions by citing evidence in the text. The challenge is that success in this type of task really is rooted in reading comprehension. Students who are challenged readers have a distinct disadvantage that they don't experience in many generative writing tasks. For these reasons we have included both generative and responsive writing tasks throughout the book. See chart below and note how one genre of writing informs the other.



## Four Common Types of Writing, at a Glance

### **NARRATIVE WRITING:**

- **Character/Problem/Solution**

Focus on Character

Main Character (Hero) struggles, grows, and changes

Purpose: to entertain an audience of others

Graphic Organizer - Narrative Diamond, RP 1

- **Personal Experience Story**

Focus on Experience, Activity, or Setting

Follows a beginning, middle, end sequence, is highly descriptive

Purpose: to entertain an audience of others

Graphic Organizer - Narrative Diamond, RP 1

### **INFORMATIONAL WRITING:**

Focus on a TOPIC

Follows an Introduction, Body, Conclusion sequence

Purpose: to give information

Graphic Organizer - Informational Pillar, RP 2

### **OPINION WRITING:**

Focus on a Point of View

Follows an Introduction, Body, Conclusion sequence

Purpose: to express a personal opinion

Graphic Organizer - Opinion Pillar, RP 3

### **ARGUMENT WRITING:**

Focus on a Point of View

Follows an Introduction, Body, Conclusion sequence

Purpose: to demonstrate the author's position in a reasoned, logical way

Graphic Organizer - Argument Pillar, RP 4

**TEACHING TIP:** Use this outline to create an anchor chart in your classroom. Refer to the chart EVERY time you read a book, article, text, or content textbook. In this way, you are reinforcing the concept of genre with every reading experience.



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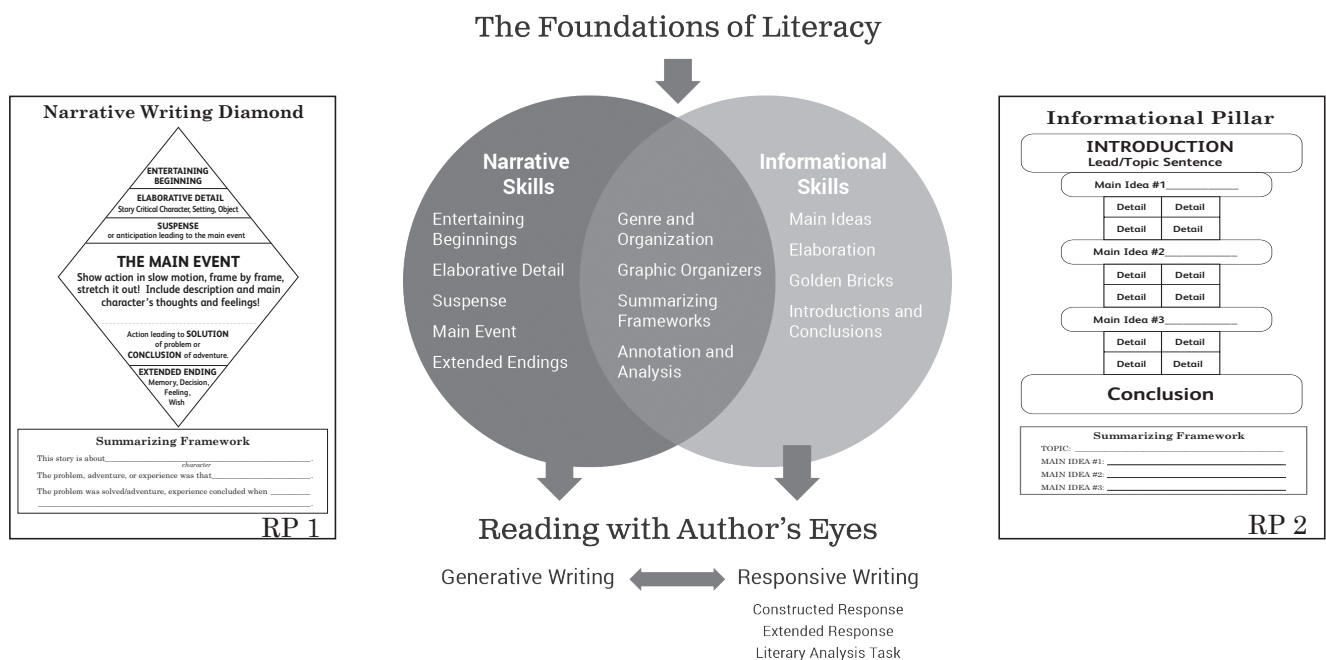
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## Where do we begin?

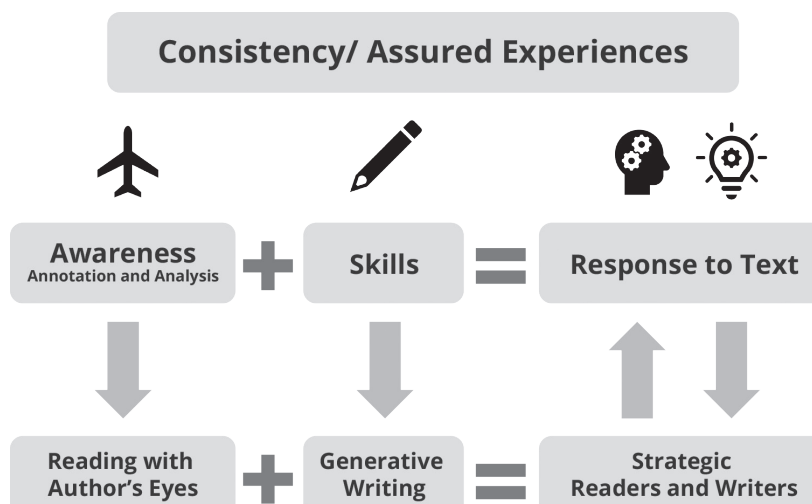
The Literacy Launch is the starting point! Before students can write or even read strategically, they need to be clear about genre and purpose. The lessons in this section help students develop the foundational concepts they need for both reading and writing. They'll be exposed to multiple genres of writing during this time frame, in much the same way as they are exposed to many types of text over the course of a day in content areas. They'll learn to recognize and identify the key characteristics of each genre, the organizational structure and author's purpose. You may worry that the time spent on these foundational skills might be better spent writing, pencil to paper. However, these core lessons are essential if students are to write with intention, a clear sense of purpose, with examples of strong writing to guide them. Too often we press students directly into writing tasks that overwhelm them because they don't have a clear understanding of how text is organized, nor do they have the skills to apply to the task. This will come in time but begins on the awareness level of understanding what authors do.

The Venn Diagram illustrates the Literacy Launch and the powerful writing-reading connection. The core of the diagram outlines the skills inherent in learning to recognize genre, organization, annotation and analysis, and the salient features of the various genres. By understanding how text is constructed, students can begin to read more strategically. We call this "Reading with Author's Eyes." Through the Literacy Launch, students are introduced to the graphic tools and summarizing frameworks first on the awareness level and then on the generative level. Students also learn to proactively interact with the text through the annotation and analysis process for each genre of writing and then apply that process to their independent reading. Each step in the foundational learning process creates a predictable approach to literacy that students can rely on and internalize.



# Teacher Background: The Literacy Launch

Once students have completed the foundational learning presented in the Literacy Launch, they can move seamlessly into narrative, informational, or opinion/argument writing. The discrete skills of each genre are broken down into manageable components and taught through the Empowering Writers methodology. This is presented in incremental steps that begin with the awareness level and then provides students with the capacity to generate and craft original writing, while also preparing them to respond in writing. The synergistic nature of the awareness level understanding, coupled with genre specific skill development allows students to respond to text and become strategic readers and writers. Once the Literacy Launch is completed, you'll move directly into skill development.



## Defining Genre

**Narrative Writing** - Narrative writing is written to entertain an audience of others through storytelling. The author's focus is on a main character in a setting who has a problem to solve or an adventure or meaningful experience to share. The main character typically grows or changes in some way as the story develops.

**Informational Writing** - The purpose of informational writing is to inform an audience of others. The organization is linear, typified by an introduction, several body paragraphs that include a main idea with supporting details, and a conclusion. The tone of the informational piece is usually straightforward and the author works hard to present information in an organized, sequential fashion. The focus of informational writing is on a topic.

**Opinion Writing** - The purpose of opinion writing is to share a personal opinion. The successful opinion author uses information strategically, showcasing facts that support the opinion. With an organizational structure similar to informational writing, opinion writing focuses on an issue or position that can be looked at from multiple perspectives. To do this, students must be able to distinguish between fact and opinion.



## Teacher Background: The Literacy Launch

**Argument Writing** - The purpose of argument writing is to organize and present a well-reasoned, logical argument demonstrating the writer's position, belief, or conclusion on an issue. The writer makes a claim and supports it with sound reasons and evidence. Additionally, the author must defend the claim using credible sources and address a counterargument. The organizational structure of argument writing mirrors informational writing with an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

**Response to Text Writing** - The purpose of this type of writing is to demonstrate deep comprehension of source material. There are two types of response to text - Short Constructed Response (SCR) and Extended Constructed Response (ECR). In SCR, the organizational structure is one paragraph with an introduction statement, several pieces of evidence that are either cited directly from the source text or paraphrased, and a conclusion statement. ECR is a multi-paragraph response to source text and takes the shape of informational writing with an introduction paragraph, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph. In both types of response writing, students must use the given source text(s) to support their answer to a question or task and provide their analysis.



## LESSON 2

### Objective

Students recognize and identify narrative, informational, opinion, and response to text paragraphs in terms of author's purpose and salient features.

### Procedure

1. Discuss genre with your students, using the definitions below.

**Narrative**: Purpose – to entertain (focus on a main character in a setting with a problem, adventure or interesting experience).

**Informational**: Purpose – to give information (focus on a TOPIC)

**Opinion**: Purpose – to share a personal opinion (focus on a point of view)

**Response to Text**: Purpose – to demonstrate deep comprehension as illustrated by evidence from the text (focus on one or more source texts)

Chart these definitions on a white board or a piece of chart paper as you complete the rest of the activity. You might want to use some of the fiction and nonfiction books in your classroom as examples.

2. Reproduce and distribute Narrative, Informational, or Opinion?, SP 1.

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class and Independent Activity

- Define genres.
- Read paragraphs and identify genre.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**NARRATIVE, INFORMATIONAL OR OPINION?**

Read the following paragraphs. Determine whether each paragraph is Narrative, Informational or Opinion. Circle your response.

1. The canoe started to rock back and forth as the wind swept it farther and farther from shore. "Paddle!" Darcy called from the beach. "Paddle harder, Rachel! Fight it!" I heard the panic in her voice and paddled as hard as I could, but it was a losing battle. I was no match for the powerful winds and rising white-capped waves that swept over the lake. One chilly gust later, I lost sight of shore.

Narrative      Informational      Opinion

2. I am opposed to competitive team sports like soccer and football. As everybody knows, the pressure to win makes it nearly impossible to enjoy the game. Many players have such a drive to win that they risk painful injuries such as torn muscles and fractured bones in their quest to score the next point. It is easy to understand how the overemphasizing focus on winning can lead to cheating. I much prefer taking long, relaxing hikes and bike rides.

Narrative      Informational      Opinion

3. While the Pony Express lasted less than two years, it was a truly amazing mail service for the early settlers of the American west. Young, tough and adventurous, the riders of the Pony Express traveled the 1,900 mile route from Missouri to California in 8-10 days. Even in the winter, traveling over the icy Rocky Mountains and the steep Sierra Nevada range, they made the journey in no more than 12 days!

Narrative      Informational      Opinion

SP 1

# Recognizing Genre

3. Project and read each example together. Identify each paragraph as either Narrative, Informational or Opinion writing. If students need guidance, ask the following questions:

- Is there a character in a setting? (If so, it is narrative.)
- Are you getting information, learning something about a person, place or thing? (If so, it's most likely informational.)
- Is the author stating and supporting a personal opinion? (If so, it's opinion.)
- Does the author refer to at least one source text? (If so, it's response to text.)

4. Point out the characteristics of each genre, as evidenced in the excerpt.
5. On another day, copy and distribute Informational, Opinion or Response to Text?, SP 2 and proceed similarly using the questions in the box above.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATIONAL, OPINION OR RESPONSE TO TEXT?**

Read the following paragraphs and determine whether each paragraph is an example of Informational, Opinion or Response to Text writing. Circle your response.

1. The remotest forests of Canada and the northern United States are the realm of the beautiful and secretive Canadian Lynx. Rarely spotted by human eyes, this medium-sized wild feline lives alone and hunts at night. While often confused with the more common bobcat because of its short tail, a lynx can be easily recognized by its lush coat and the long tufts of fur on both sides of its face. On overruled paws, the handsome cat moves silently and swiftly as it stalks its favorite prey, the snowshoe hare. The skillful hunter also has the benefits of great hearing and super sharp eyes that can spot a mouse from 250 feet away! Although the Canadian Lynx is hunted for its thick golden fur, the population of these reclusive predators is considered stable.

Informational      Opinion      Response to Text

2. The article, The Lives of the Mountain Gorilla, focuses on the keen intelligence of the Mountain Gorillas of central Africa. The author details an instance when the perceptive primates were observed working together to dismantle a snare set by poachers. Further, the text explains that these endangered mammals appear to have their own language. Communicating through grunts, howls and other vocalizations, the gorillas warn each other of danger and resolve conflicts. The author points out that these brains even seem to joke with and comfort one another. I've known for a long time that gorillas have the ability to learn sign language, but this article opened my eyes to the other amazing abilities of our closest cousins.

Informational      Opinion      Response to Text

3. If you are struggling with math or any other subject, I think you need to enroll in summer school this July. In my opinion, this is the best thing you can do to keep yourself from falling further behind when school starts up again in the fall. Summer school is especially valuable for middle school students as we prepare for our upcoming high school years. Nothing makes learning easier than individual attention from your teacher and you will receive just that at summer school, where the classes are almost always small. Of course, you're busy during the season of sunshine, but all responsible students make time for summer school. For sure, it's an invaluable experience!

Informational      Opinion      Response to Text

SP 2

Key:

Narrative, Informational or Opinion?, SP 1

1. Narrative 2. Opinion 3. Informational

Informational, Opinion or Response to Text?, SP 2

1. Informational 2. Response to Text 3. Opinion

## LESSON 5

### Objective

Students learn strategies for close reading that provide valuable information about organization that will later inform their writing.

Strategies include:

- Skimming and scanning for an overview of the entire text
- Recognizing the importance of headings, keywords, diagrams, illustrations
- Writing a summary based on information provided (text conventions)

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class Activity

- Introduce students to text conventions.
- Model skimming and scanning.
- Point out how cues improve reading.
- Summarize piece.

### IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

*title, topic, headings, bold-face print, italicized print, key words, diagram, photograph, illustration, caption*

### Procedure

1. Explain to the class that they will be reading a selection titled The Mayan Empire, SP 9-10 and that they'll be learning some strategies for how to read more effectively in order to glean the most information from the piece.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_


### The Mayan Empire

Imagine a city of stone in a tropical jungle, ruled by kings and building with brilliant, star-gazing astronomers and fierce warriors. That could be what a Mayan settlement looked like the earliest days of Mesoamerica, the southern regions of North America from the year 2000 BC until the early 1600s. As the native people of this region, the Maya created one of the best known civilizations of ancient times in what is now Mexico and Central America. Let's take a look at how the Mayan empire rose and fell, and the legacy left behind by this fascinating civilization.

#### Early Mayan Settlements

The Maya civilization probably began as small settlements of hunter-gatherers began trading with one another. These settlements got together and formed regional chiefdoms, an organized system of rule usually based on kinship. They became skilled farmers, clearing areas of rain forest to grow crops such as corn, squash, beans and tomatoes, a starchy vegetable that tastes like a sweet potato and grows in the tropical regions of the Americas. As their farms thrived and their

population grew, they set down roots. They began constructing vast cities of stone with tall pyramids that had steep stairs leading up the sides to the top where powerful rulers were laid to rest. Some of these pyramids still stand today. They also built palaces for their kahal ajaw or holy lords that were often situated on elevated stone platforms to keep them safe from seasonal flood waters. While the Maya were once considered a peaceful people, it is now believed that they were anything but. This inscription on the stone work they left behind shows that the Maya went to war with their neighbors often, fighting not only to protect their cities, but for the promise of victory and to take prisoners who became their slaves. Despite these bloody battles, the Mayan empire thrived for nearly 2,000 years.



SP 9

Student Page

### The Mysterious Fall of the Mayan Empire

In the 9th A.D., the Mayan empire had great leaders and mighty armies. Trade seemed to flourish, but the population began a slow decline. One hundred years later, many of the great Mayan cities had been abandoned and swallowed up by the jungle. What happened? There are many theories surrounding the mysterious decline of the Mayan civilization. One of the most recent and widely accepted is that drought and the process of dearing, but not replanting trees in a rainforest known as *deforestation*, brought it to an end. In a recent study, researchers at Indiana State University concluded that the great Mayan city of Chichen Itza was abandoned at a time when "severe reductions in rainfall were coupled with a rapid rate of deforestation." This makes sense when we consider that the Mayans used massive amounts of wood to fuel their fires. The rapid deforestation, combined with drought, depleted the soil of nutrients so that crops could no longer grow in the region. The people left the Mayan cities and dispersed into small villages. Centuries later, many were taken as slaves by Spanish conquistadors. In spite of the struggles of the past, an estimated 7 million Maya keep their colorful culture alive today in southern Mexico and Central America.

### The Legacy of the Maya

The Mayan people were among the most advanced and innovative of their time. Amazing mathematics, they developed the concept of zero. This first brilliance allowed them to work with more meaningful units and learn how to measure time. Simply by observing the stars and the cycles of the moon, they created an accurate calendar that is still used in some Mayan communities today. The Maya had their own complex language and kept their own historical records. They harvested rubber from the rubber tree and used it to make glue, water-resistant cloth and book bindings. If you're a chocolate lover, you'll surely appreciate the Maya's discovery and cultivation of the cocoa bean, with which they made a thick bitter version of the hot chocolate we enjoy today. It is interesting to note that the Maya people created one of the most complex forms for weaving cloth of the day, but they built their cities of stone without ever using as basic a tool as the wheel.

From its primitive beginnings to its unpredictable decline, the Mayan Empire made an indelible mark on world history and left us with a legacy of innovation. Without a doubt, it is fascinating to study the rich history and culture of the extraordinary Mayan people.

SP 10

### KEY VOCABULARY: FINDING INFORMATION WITHIN TEXT

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**  
Found at the front of the book, the table of contents lists the parts or chapters of a book.

**GLOSSARY**  
Usually found at the end of the book, a glossary defines words you will need to know to understand the text. In some books, short glossaries appear at the beginning of each chapter.

**INDEX**  
Found at the end of the book, the index is a listing of the topics in alphabetical order that are covered in the book and the pages on which you can read about those topics.

**CHAPTER TITLE**  
This tells you what the chapter or section of the book will be about.

**HEADINGS**  
Usually appearing in **bold-faced type** like this, headings sum up the main ideas of a section of text.

**KEYWORDS**  
Often in **bold-faced** or *italicized* type, these words are often defined in the glossary or within the text itself. To understand the text, you need to know the keywords.

**DIAGRAMS**  
Simple drawings that can help you understand the text. Charts and graphs are other visual ways to present information within text.

**ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS**  
These are another way to help you understand keywords or concepts. Unlike the diagram, the photograph or illustration is realistic and provides lots of specific detail. Captions appear underneath photographs or illustrations often in italics. They tell you about the picture.

**COPYRIGHT PAGE**  
Opposite the title page, the copyright page includes the copyright symbol ©, the owner of the copyright, publication date, and publisher. This is important in a bibliography.

RP 5

2. Distribute copies to the class and project it on the white board. *To build context and background, share a short video and/or discuss any background knowledge your students might have.* Read the piece aloud to give students a sense of what the text is all about.
3. Explain that before they read an informational piece, it's important to look for certain cues that can provide valuable information to aid the reader's understanding. Direct their attention to the piece and ask them to *annotate* it together, labeling the important parts. Use the guided questions from the teacher reference page Strategic Reading Guidelines, pp. 42-43 and Key Vocabulary: Finding Information Within Text, RP 5.

## Strategic Reading – Informed Writing

4. First, circle the **title**. Ask them what the *title* reveals. (the **topic**) Remind them that the topic tells the reader what the entire piece will be about. **Model** this for students and have them do the same.
5. Next, for reference purposes, number each paragraph.
6. Point out and underline the **headings**. Explain that the headings allow you to quickly skim and scan the piece and get a sense of the **main ideas** of the piece.
7. Ask them to help you fill in the Summarizing Framework based solely on the title and headings.

**TOPIC:** The Mayan Empire

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Early Mayan Settlements

**MAIN IDEA #2:** The Mysterious Fall of the Mayan Empire

**MAIN IDEA #3:** The Legacy of the Maya

Discuss how identifying the topic and headings can set a purpose for learning. As readers they already have a good idea what they'll be reading about, which aids in comprehension. Discuss how a summary such as this might be an excellent way for an author to begin. (Helps with organization and focus.)

8. Next, in each paragraph, have them locate all **bold-faced** or *italicized* words. Explain that these are key vocabulary words that might be new to the reader. These keywords are usually either preceded or followed by a definition to aid in understanding. Point out that these specially marked words indicate some of the important **details** in the piece.

**(Option:** For homework, have students create a key word vocabulary chart, listing each key word followed by a definition they craft from the information provided in the text.)

9. Point out the **map** and its **caption**. Ask students why both are important.
10. Model how to use the information on the summarizing framework to write an extended summary using the sentence starters coupled with informative verbs:

Example: This informational text provides information about *the Mayan Empire*. We'll trace its development from small early settlements to its mysterious fall and learn about the lasting legacy of the Maya.

**NOTE:** If appropriate at your school, you might want to work with your social studies department to create cross-curricular connections when you use this informational piece about the Mayan Empire for writing instruction.

11. Finally, have them read the text independently. Discuss how examining the following text conventions: **title, headings, bold or italicized key words, photographs** and **captions** guide their reading. Think about how much they've learned before they've even started reading! Also point out the way that the author organized the information made it more accessible to the reader. Save this text for use in the next unit.

**NOTE:** You can reinforce this lesson using any high quality magazine article or textbook chapter in the same way.

# The Mayan Empire

1.) Imagine a city of stone in a tropical jungle, ruled by kings and bustling with builders, star-gazing astronomers and fierce warriors. That could be what a Mayan settlement looked like the earliest days of **Mesoamerica**, the southern regions of North America from the year 2000 BC until the early 1500s. As the native people of this region, the Maya created one of the best known civilizations of ancient times in what is now Mexico and Central America. Let's take a look at how the Mayan empire rose and fell, and the legacy left behind by this fascinating civilization.

## Early Mayan Settlements

2.) The Maya civilization probably began as small settlements of hunter-gatherers began trading with one another. These settlements got together and formed regional **chiefdoms**, an organized system of rule usually based on kinship. They became skillful farmers, clearing acres of rain forest to grow crops such as corn, squash, beans and **cassava**, a starchy vegetable that tastes like a sweet potato and grows in the tropical regions of the Americas. As their farms thrived and their

population grew, they set down roots. They began constructing vast cities of stone with tall pyramids that had steep stairs leading up the sides to the top where powerful rulers were laid to rest. Some of these pyramids still stand today. They also built palaces for their **kuhul ajaw** or holy lords that were often situated on elevated stone platforms to keep them safe from seasonal flood waters. While the Maya were once considered a peaceful people, it is now believed that they were anything but. The inscriptions on the stonework they left behind show that the Maya went to war with their neighbors often, fighting not only to protect their cities, but for the prestige of victory and to take prisoners who became their slaves. Despite those bloody battles, the Mayan empire thrived for nearly 2,000 years.



*At its peak, the Mayan Empire covered about 37,000 square miles in southern Mexico and Central America.*

## The Mysterious Fall of the Mayan Empire

3.) In the 800s A.D., the Mayan empire had great leaders and mighty armies. Trade seemed to flourish, but the population began a slow decline. One hundred years later, many of the great Mayan cities had been abandoned and swallowed up by the jungle. What happened? There are many theories surrounding the mysterious decline of the Mayan civilization. One of the most recent and widely accepted is that drought and the process of clearing, but not replanting trees in a rainforest known as **deforestation**, brought it to an end. In a recent study, researchers at Arizona State University concluded that the great Mayan city of Chitzen Itza was abandoned at a time when “severe reductions in rainfall were coupled with a rapid rate of deforestation.” This makes sense when we consider that the Mayans used massive amounts of wood to fuel their fires. The rapid deforestation, combined with drought, depleted the soil of nutrients so that crops could no longer grow in the region. The people left the Mayan cities and dispersed into small villages. Centuries later, many were taken as slaves by Spanish conquistadors. In spite of the struggles of the past, an estimated 7 million Maya keep their colorful culture alive today in southern Mexico and Central America.

## The Legacy of the Maya

4.) The Mayan people were among the most advanced and innovative of their time. Amazing mathematicians, they developed the concept of zero. This feat of brilliance allowed them to work with once unimaginable sums and learn how to measure time. Simply by observing the stars and the cycles of the moon, they created an accurate calendar that is still used in some Mayan communities today. The Maya had their own complex language and kept their own historical records. They harvested rubber from the rainforest tree and used it to make glue, water-resistant cloth and book bindings. If you’re a chocolate lover, you’ll surely appreciate the Maya’s discovery and cultivation of the cocoa bean, with which they made a thick bitter version of the hot chocolate we enjoy today. It is interesting to note that the Maya people created one of the most complex looms for weaving cloth of its day, but they built their cities of stone without even using as basic a tool as the wheel.

5.) From its primitive beginnings to its unpredictable decline, the Mayan Empire made an indelible mark on world history and left us with a legacy of innovation. Without a doubt, it is fascinating to study the rich history and culture of the extraordinary Mayan people.

## LESSON 10

### Objective:

Students learn to identify literary elements in a text and when responding orally and in writing to repeat key elements of the question in the beginning of their response.

**\*\*Important:** *Before beginning, select a story they've read, annotated, and analyzed from earlier in this Guide that will serve as the source text for this lesson. Be sure students have their copies handy for reference.*

### Procedure:

1. Explain to students that one way to demonstrate what they've comprehended from reading a text is to answer questions about it, both verbally and in writing. The important thing is to respond in complete sentences. Tell them that an easy technique for this task is to repeat the important parts of the question as they begin their response. Project Narrative Writing Diamond - Literary Elements, RP 13 and discuss how the diamond and the literary elements are connected.
2. Distribute copies of Literary Elements, RP 12.

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class and Independent Activity

- Select a story previously read and annotated.
- Review literary elements.
- Distribute Turning Questions into Responses.
- MODEL
- Students apply skill

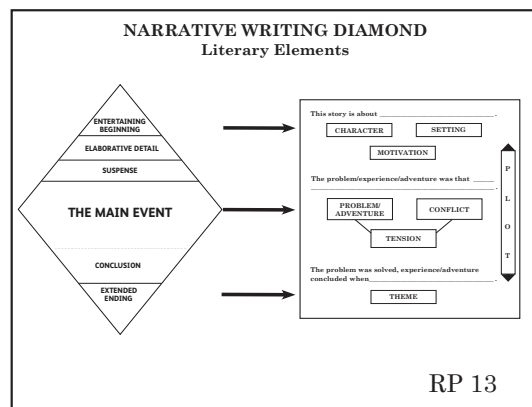
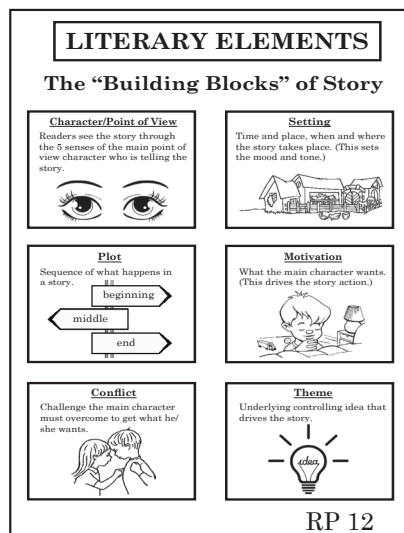


Chart the following literary elements and discuss:

- Character
- Setting
- Problem/adventure (the main event of the story)
- Motivation (what the main character wants)
- Conflict (what stands in the main character's way)

Explain that these are called **literary elements** and that these are the basic building blocks of stories. Ask them to silently reread the story you selected and to see if they can pick out the literary elements listed. Discuss their findings.



# Introduction to Literary Analysis

3. Distribute copies of Turning Questions into Responses, SP 38. Model how to use the key parts of the question to begin their response. Move through each response to text question in the same way, having students frame their responses. MODEL how using the sentence starters can provide a series of more interesting responses. Have the students continue on their own. Use Literary Analysis Questions, RP 14 to color-code the evidence from the text as they locate it.

**Student Page**  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**TURNING QUESTIONS INTO RESPONSES**

An easy way to answer response to text questions is to turn the important parts of the question into the beginning of your response. Look at the questions below, followed by the beginning of a response. Using this technique ensures that your answers will be written in complete sentences. Your teacher will select a story for you to reread. Then, answer each of these questions about the story, by turning the question into the beginning of your response. The first two have been started for you.

1. Who was the main point of view character?  
*The main point of view character was \_\_\_\_\_.*
2. What was the setting?  
*The setting was \_\_\_\_\_.*
3. What was the problem or adventure?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. What was the main character's motivation?  
(What did the main character want?)  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. What caused the conflict in the story?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**KICK IT UP A NOTCH!**

To improve the writing, try varying the way each of above sentences begin. On another sheet of paper, or at the keyboard, REVERSE the complete sentences you created by using the sentence starters below.

In this story \_\_\_\_\_.

In the story (title here), \_\_\_\_\_.

The author introduces us to \_\_\_\_\_, our main character. We immediately meet (main character's name), \_\_\_\_\_, the hero of the story.

The story took place \_\_\_\_\_.

The story was set \_\_\_\_\_.

The protagonist, (main character's name) wanted \_\_\_\_\_.

(Main character's name) was trying to \_\_\_\_\_.

The author created tension when \_\_\_\_\_ (conflict) \_\_\_\_\_.

The problem began when \_\_\_\_\_.

**SP 38**

**LITERARY ANALYSIS QUESTIONS**

Locate evidence from the text to identify character, setting, motivation, plot, conflict and theme. Color code the evidence when you find it. Remember that in some stories there will be more than one piece of textual evidence.

**Main point of view character:** Who was the main character(s)? (red)

**Setting:** Where and when did the story take place? (blue)

**Plot:** What was the problem or adventure? (yellow)

**Motivation:** What did the main character(s) want? (green)

**Conflict:** What kept the main character(s) from getting what he/she/they wanted? (purple)

**Theme:** What was the big idea of the story? (orange)

Use this summary every time you read a story:

**Summarizing Framework:**

This story is about \_\_\_\_\_.

The problem/adventure/experience was \_\_\_\_\_.

The problem was solved, experience or adventure concluded when \_\_\_\_\_.

The theme of the story was \_\_\_\_\_.

**Sentence Starters for Providing Evidence:**

- The author shares \_\_\_\_\_.
- We see this as the main character \_\_\_\_\_.
- The text states, "\_\_\_\_\_".
- The reader realizes this when \_\_\_\_\_.
- The theme is clearly shown when \_\_\_\_\_.
- In paragraph \_\_\_\_\_, the author writes \_\_\_\_\_.
- "\_\_\_\_\_" writes the author to show \_\_\_\_\_.

**RP 14**

**OPTION:** Have students write these revised sentences, one following the other in paragraph form. This is a good way to structure a simple response to text essay. You may provide them with the following beginning sentence:

*I recently read the story \_\_\_\_\_.* Follow this with the sentences they wrote.

**Here are some additional sentence starters that are useful for this purpose:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| The reader discovers that _____.         | We recognize _____.                         |
| The author reveals _____.                | (Character's name) was motivated by _____.  |
| _____ contributed to the story conflict. | I believe that _____ because _____.         |
| In this story _____.                     | The reader realizes _____.                  |
| At the beginning it's clear that _____.  | As the story unfolds we learn that _____.   |
| The plot centers around _____.           | In the story, evidence suggests that _____. |
| It isn't long before we discover _____.  | Through the text we learn that _____.       |
| Clearly, the theme was _____.            | From my point of view, _____.               |
| The author definitely shows _____.       | We see this when _____.                     |

**NOTE:** Use this technique every time students read as a simple way to practice responding to text.

**Turn and Talk:** Discuss with a partner why complete sentences in a response are important? Why would you use a sentence starter? Together, choose one literary element and answer the question using a book you've read independently. Remember to add sentence variety.

# Introduction to Inferential and Evaluative Thinking

## LESSON 12

### Objective:

Students begin to consider questions that will lead them to think inferentially and evaluatively about the stories they read, citing examples from the text and drawing parallels from their own personal experience. They will respond verbally and in writing.

**\*\*Important:** Before beginning, select a story they've read, annotated, and analyzed from earlier in this Guide that will serve as the source text for this lesson. Be sure students have their copies handy for reference.

### Procedure:

1. Discuss with students the fact that in the stories they read authors don't usually communicate everything they want to say in a straightforward way. Authors leave some of the work up to the reader! They *infer* or *imply* aspects of the story by showing rather than telling. It's a little bit like giving the reader hints that must be figured out and connected.
2. Begin a conversation about the way that people (and characters) express the way they are feeling. Ask them the following: Can you tell the way a person may be feeling or reacting if they didn't say a word? How might you know? Discuss, demonstrate, and have students pantomime a variety of feelings using both facial expressions and body language.

**\*NOTE:** See Teacher Background notes, p. 94, for more about What Feelings Look Like.

3. Tell students that strong readers notice the body language and facial expressions of the characters they read about and these clues provide valuable information about these characters. Authors include these kinds of powerful details to bring the story to life!
4. Distribute copies of Digging Deeper – Be a Text Detective, SP 39, along with Thinking About Reading, RP 15. **Read through the questions together. Identify which questions are inferential and which are evaluative.** This will set a purpose for close, inferential reading. It will also inspire students to draw comparisons to their own personal experiences. (evaluative reasoning)

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class Small Group Activity

- Select story previously read and annotated.
- Discuss and define Inferential Thinking and the Evaluative Thinking.
- Read and then model using sentence starters.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**DIGGING DEEPER – BE A TEXT DETECTIVE!**

To get the most out of a story, it's important to not just think about the action, but to consider why things happened in the story. What might the character's feelings have to do with it? What caused the character to feel as she or he felt? How did you feel about the events in the story? What about the things an author implies but doesn't actually explain? This routine helps you look for evidence in the text. Look at the questions below. Your teacher will select a story for you to read. Then, on another sheet of paper or at the keyboard, answer each of the questions below about the story using the sentence starters provided. You may also turn each question into a response by repeating the key parts.

1. In the story, how did (character) feel about his/her situation?
2. How do you know how (character) felt?
3. Did you ever have a similar experience? When?
4. How did you feel during your experience?
5. What did (character) learn from his/her experience?
6. What did you learn from your experience?
7. Why did you empathize with (character)?

**Sentence Starters:**

1. It was clear \_\_\_\_\_ was feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. This was evidenced by \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I understand the way \_\_\_\_\_ felt because \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I'll never forget the time \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A similar experience I had was \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I could really empathize with her/him because \_\_\_\_\_.
7. It's easy to understand why \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Although I never had an experience like this, I can imagine \_\_\_\_\_.
9. This scene kept my interest because \_\_\_\_\_.

SP 39


**THINKING ABOUT LITERATURE**

**Inferential Thinking**

This is the kind of reasoning you must use when the author hints at or *infers* something in a story, but doesn't state it outright.

**Ex. When Marc told his joke Claire rolled her eyes and shook her head.**

The reader *infers* that the joke wasn't very funny.



**Evaluative Thinking**

When we think in this way we compare what happened in the story to something in our own lives. This helps us empathize with and understand the story situation better.

**Ex. It was just like the time when I got separated from my family at the amusement park. I know what it's like to feel scared.**

RP 15

## LESSON 5

### Objective

Students understand the difference between distinct main ideas and those that overlap, and thus, fail to distinguish themselves sufficiently from other main ideas. Students develop the thinking skills they need to generate broad yet distinct main ideas to replace those that overlap. Additionally, students will learn to recognize and avoid redundancy in their writing and select sound main ideas to fully develop.

### Procedure

1. Review the concept of overlapping and distinct main ideas with the class.
2. Copy and distribute Seahorses, SP 50 and Main Ideas - Don't Overlap Them! (1), SP 51.

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class Activity

- Read text to gain necessary background information.
- Examine examples of main ideas and accompanying detail sentences.
- Identify details that could support more than one of the main ideas and replace with more distinct main ideas.
- Research to develop additional main ideas.

Student Page  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

### SEAHORSES


What creature would you be most excited about seeing in the wild? My answer is that question is the seahorse. These sea creatures have many unique characteristics. They are odd-looking but appealing. Their tails are really unusual and they live on coral reefs.

Seahorses are cute, but weird looking. They have long, slender bodies that allow them to poke into the nooks and crannies of a coral reef and find food. They use fish and they breathe through gills, but they have no scales. Instead, they are covered with bony plates. Some have sharp spines. The biggest seahorse species can grow to more than a foot in length but the smallest is barely a half an inch long. Another thing that is weird about seahorses is that the males hatch the eggs. Baby seahorses are called "foi" and they are tiny.

A seahorse has a long, strong tail that extends from its body and ends with a curl. This tail allows them to grip onto sea grasses. This is similar to the way some monkeys grasp onto the branches of trees with their tails to maintain their balance. Without this strong tail, the seahorse might get swept into the open ocean by strong currents and big waves. They're born knowing to hitch rides on floating seaweed with this tail, too. No other fish has a tail like this.

Seahorses are usually found in warm shallow waters. They are hard to spot because they blend in so well with their surroundings. Some can even change colors to camouflage themselves and evade predators. They live on coral reefs around the world. Other animals that live on coral reefs are sea stars, sea urchins, and many more.

With its long tail and strange snout, a seahorse is one of a kind. There is no other creature of the coral reef quite like it. Without a doubt, seahorses are unique.



The seahorse

SP 50

Student Page  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

### MAIN IDEAS - DON'T OVERLAP THEM! (1)

Read and improve two blurbs and related main idea sentences below. Then, write a one word "blurb" that sums up what the main idea sentence says. Next, see if you can figure out which detail sentence belongs to which main idea. Some may seem like they fit into more than one main idea. That means they overlap; they are not distinct enough. Remember, the main ideas should be different from each other. If your main ideas are distinct enough, it will be clear which paragraph the detail belongs to. Write the number of the paragraph the detail sentence belongs to.

TOPIC: Seahorses

MAIN IDEA SENTENCES:	BLURB:
MAIN IDEA #1: Seahorses are cute, but weird looking.	_____
MAIN IDEA #2: A seahorse has a long, strong tail that extends from its body and ends with a curl.	_____
MAIN IDEA #3: Seahorses are usually found in warm shallow waters.	_____

DETAIL SENTENCES:

1. Seahorses are the only fish that swim in an upright position.
2. In the shallow waters that both prefer, crabs are a major threat to seahorses.
3. Male seahorses have a pouch like a kangaroo.
4. Seahorses have big, bulging eyes.

Are the main ideas distinct enough? (Check one)  
 Yes. Choose one if it was clear that each detail belonged with one of the main ideas.  
 No. Choose one if the details could fit in more than one main idea.

Bonus: If you do not believe these main ideas are distinct enough, try to come up with some alternatives. On a separate sheet of paper, write three improved main idea sentences and accompanying blurbs. Do research on the internet or in the library if you need more information.

SP 51

3. Project the text and read aloud. Then, project the accompanying activity sheet and read through the main idea sentences with the class. Work together to create "blurbs" that sum up the main idea of each paragraph.
4. Complete the activity sheet by working with students to assign the additional detail sentences to one of the main ideas. Give students this hint: **if it is difficult to determine which main idea/reason the details belong with, then the main idea/reason is *not* distinct enough.** If your main ideas are distinct, you will probably not feel confused when you are working to pair detail sentences with main ideas.

# Main Ideas - Don't Overlap Them!

5. Help students generate several alternate main ideas for the topic. Following this with the PICK, LIST, and CHOOSE process outlined on pp. 97-98, is an effective way to generate alternate main ideas and is highly recommended. Have students brainstorm all they know about the topic; their responses will be the details. Chart and then categorize them in order to identify alternate main ideas. Also, you can use the suggestions on the next page. (Keep in mind that if the original given main ideas ARE distinct from one another, it is often more challenging to generate additional main ideas. Some suggestions are included on the key that appears on the following page.
6. When you feel your students are ready for an additional challenge, have them complete Main Ideas - Don't Overlap Them (2), SP 52. This activity sheet asks students to research the topic, Mexico, via the internet or library in order to generate main ideas for an informational piece.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEAS - DON'T OVERLAP THEM! (2)**

Read the TOPIC and related main idea sentences below. Then, write a one word "Blurb" that sums up what the main idea sentence says. Next, use the internet or the library to find details that support each of those main ideas.

**TOPIC: Mexico**

**MAIN IDEA SENTENCES:** **BLURB:**

MAIN IDEA #1: Explores ancient Mayan ruins on the Yucatan Peninsula. \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: Discover some of the world's most beautiful beaches on Mexico's Pacific coast. \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: Take a tour through time in historic Mexico City. \_\_\_\_\_

Detail Sentence for Main Idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Detail Sentence for Main Idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Detail Sentence for Main Idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CHALLENGE: Continue to research Mexico via the internet or the library and see if you can come up with some additional main ideas for an informational piece about Mexico as well as details to support them. On another sheet of paper, write main idea and detail sentences based on your research.

**SP 52**

See next page for Answer Key.

# Main Ideas - Don't Overlap Them!

## KEY:

### Main Ideas - Don't Overlap Them!

#### 1. Seahorses

No, the main ideas are not broad yet distinct. The main idea blurbs are **cute but weird**, **tails**, and **habitat**. Main reason #1 is too general, Main reason #2 is too specific and overlaps with main reason #1, Main reason #3 includes details about how the seahorse defends itself rather than just focusing on the habitat. An alternative would be:

**TOPIC:** Seahorses

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Appearance

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Reproduction

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Habitat

None of the given detail sentences fit neatly with the main ideas, but probably #1, 3 & 4 pair most appropriately with the first overly general main idea (and that's because it is, in fact, overly general). #2 probably goes best with the third main idea, **habitat** but would be more appropriate with a main idea of Predators/Prey or Threats to Seahorses.

#### 2. Mexico

Main idea blurbs are: **Ancient ruins**, **Beaches**, **Mexico City**. Students are asked to conduct research in order to compose detail sentences that fit with these main ideas. Just a few examples of what they might come up with are:

- The ancient Mayan city of Tulum, located in the midst of a lush jungle, is worth a visit.
- The wide, clean beaches and clear waters of Puerto Vallarta are perfect for swimming and snorkeling.
- A great way to get familiar with the sprawling city is by taking a 45-minute street car tour.

**NOTE:** This activity includes a challenge in which students are asked to conduct additional research in order to come up with alternative main ideas for this topic. Alternate main ideas that might be sparked by research include:

- Music of Mexico
- Mexican food
- The Sierra Madre Mountains

## LESSON 16

### Objective

Students apply the concepts of varied sentence structure, interesting word choice, and word referents in order to produce interesting main idea sentences.

### Procedure

1. Remind students about the importance of good sentence variety. Discuss how the use of overly general adjectives (good, fun, nice, pretty, awesome, cool, interesting, etc.) add very little to the overall effectiveness of the piece.
2. Introduce the use of word referents - synonymous words or phrases that can be used in place of the topic word - typically some combination of an adjective and a noun.

#### Ex. TOPIC WORD: Bird

##### Adjectives

Feathered

Winged

Lightweight

Flying

Nesting

Worm

##### Nouns

Friend

Singers

Egg-layers

Foragers

Organisms

Hunters

These word referents can be used in place of the topic word, which, in the context of the entire piece of writing, would likely be repeated numerous times.

**Ex.** An endless variety of birds live in woodland and desert habitats around the world.

An endless variety of these flying foragers live in woodland and desert habitats around the world.

3. **MODEL** the questioning necessary to generate effective word referents. The teacher needs to present a series of leading questions in order to help students generate ideas. The skillful practitioner will constantly refine the questions in order to draw more specific information from students. An example is outlined on the following page.

#### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

##### Whole Class and Independent Activity

- Generate word referents.
- Rewrite main idea sentences using varied sentence structure, rich vocabulary and a variety of word referents.

## Sentence Variety and Word Choice - Sample Scripted Lesson

**Teacher:** Let's brainstorm some word referents that we can use in place of the word "shark."

Remember, we're looking for synonymous words or phrases - words or phrases that are related to or similar to our keyword - "shark." And, we'll need nouns and adjectives. Here, let's make a chart:

*(Teacher writes the following on the whiteboard.)*

### Shark

#### Adjectives

#### Nouns

**Teacher:** So we all know that a shark swims in the ocean. It's not a mammal, it's a ...

**Student:** It's an animal. A fish.

**Student:** You could also say it's a beast.

**Teacher:** Great. I'm going to add all those nouns to our list *(writes these in the nouns column)*. Now, let me ask you, how do sharks get their food?

**Student:** They hunt down smaller fish.

**Teacher:** So we could say they are hunters *(adds this word to the list)*. What's the scientific word for an animal that hunts?

**Student:** Predator!

**Student:** Or carnivore.

**Teacher:** Terrific. *(Adds these two words to the list of nouns)*. Now let's move onto the adjectives. How would you describe a shark?

**Student:** They've got lots of really sharp teeth.

**Student:** They're really big and scary.

**Teacher:** So how about sharp-toothed? Fearsome? Huge? *(adds these words to the list)*. Where do sharks live? How do they move?

**Student:** They swim in salt water.

**Teacher:** Do they make any sounds?

**Student:** I don't think so, but sometimes they leap out of the water.

**Teacher:** Good. *(adds words such as swimming, ocean dwelling, silent, leaping)*

# Sentence Variety and Word Referents

The final chart might look like this:

SHARK	
<u>Adjectives</u>	<u>Nouns</u>
ocean dwelling	beasts
sharp-toothed	fish
fearsome	predators
huge	carnivores
silent	stalkers
salt water	swimmers

You can see how helpful this skill can be to empower more creative and vivid word choice as well as to inspire better sentence variety. The use of word referents enhances all genres - informational, opinion, argumentative and narrative, even poetry. It is also a powerful exercise in creatively incorporating information in a less didactic way.

**Ex. Sharks swim in every ocean on earth and feed on smaller fish.**

***These fearsome predators swim in every ocean on earth and feed on smaller fish.***

4. Copy and distribute Sentence Variety and Word Choice (1), SP 69, and talk through the example. Then, have students work independently to complete the first example on the activity sheet. You may want to provide some sentence starters for them to use or have them type their revised sentences at the computer.
5. Share their revisions and discuss. Then, have them proceed independently to complete the activity. Another approach would be to divide the class into small cooperative learning groups and have each group revise a particular example for either of the two activity sheets and then compare the variety of responses. Otherwise, assign the second activity sheet, SP 70, as homework.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**SENTENCE VARIETY AND WORD CHOICE (1)**

Read the dull main idea sentences below. Revise each by varying the sentence structure and replacing overly general adjectives with specific, vivid descriptive words to create more exciting main idea sentences for your readers. Also, try to create word referents to replace the underlined topic word in each sentence.

Ex: Clubs are loud and crowded.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

A major metropolitan handles with activity and adobe with the blaring clatter of smp and go traffic.

1. Farmers raise many different types of crops.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Looking at a glacier is fun.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Summer jobs can be hard to find.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

SP 69

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**SENTENCE VARIETY AND WORD CHOICE (2)**

Read the dull main idea sentences below. Revise each by varying the sentence structure and replacing overly general adjectives with specific, vivid descriptive words to create more exciting main idea sentences for your readers. Also, try to create word referents to replace the underlined topic word in each sentence.

Ex: The beaches of Italy are lovely.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

With rugged rocky cliffs and calm, clear waters, the beaches of Italy are irresistible.

1. Hiking is a great way to enjoy the outdoors.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Extreme sports can be risky.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Malls are convenient.

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_

SP 70



# Preparing to Write a Response to Text

## LESSON AT A GLANCE:

### Whole Class Activity

- Discuss responding to text in writing.
- Use *Strategic Reading Guidelines*.
- Work through and MODEL *Preparing to Write a Response to Text*.
- SUMMARIZE

## LESSON 17

### Objective

Students review the purpose of and process for responding to text in writing. They identify the topic and main ideas in a prompt or assignment and recognize the salient features of an effective response in order to inform their own writing.

### Procedure

1. Explain to students that they'll be learning a process for responding to a variety of texts in writing. Remind them that the purpose of this kind of writing is to demonstrate deep comprehension. Also explain that you'll be walking them through the steps they'll need to take and modeling the writing with them – something like a guided tour of the process! Use the Steps For an Extended Response, RP 37, as a step by step reference for this lesson.
2. Distribute copies of The Mayan Empire, SP 9-10, that they read in the last unit. You'll also want to project this for the class. In addition, photocopy and distribute Preparing to Write a Response to Text, SP 73.

#### Steps for an Extended Response

- Step 1: ANALYZE and ANNOTATE the text.
- Step 2: Fill in the SUMMARIZING FRAMEWORK.
- Step 3: Analyze the prompt for givens and variables.
- Step 4: Highlight the paragraph(s) where you will find the information needed.
- Step 5: Underline the EVIDENCE from the text to support your thinking.
- Step 6: Create a PRE-WRITING PLAN for answering the question - summarizing framework.
- Step 7: Write an INTRODUCTION paragraph - summarize then turn the task into the response and write a topic sentence that includes your main ideas.
- Step 8: Compose the body paragraphs - write a main idea sentence and add the evidence (paraphrase, sentence starters, cite evidence, word referents, flip the sentence subject, transitional words and phrases.)
- Step 9: Write a CONCLUSION paragraph - restate topic and main ideas, synthesize information to draw a conclusion, evaluative statement.

RP 37

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### The Mayan Empire


Imagine a city of stone in a tropical jungle, ruled by kings and bustling with builders, star-gazing astronomers and fierce warriors. That could be what a Mayan settlement looked like the earliest days of Mesoamerica, the southern region of North America from the year 2000 BC until the early 1500s. As the native people of this region, the Maya created one of the best known civilizations of ancient times in what is now Mexico and Central America. Let's take a look at how the Mayan empire rose and fell, and the legacy left behind by this fascinating civilization.

#### Early Mayan Settlements

The Maya civilization probably began as small settlements of hunter-gatherers. They began trading with one another. These settlements grew together and formed regional chiefdoms, an organized system of rule usually based on kinship. They became skilled farmers, clearing acres of rain forest to grow crops such as corn, squash, beans and avocados, a starchy vegetable that tastes like a sweet potato and grows in the tropical regions of the Americas. As their farms thrived and their

population grew, they set down roots. They began constructing vast cities of stone with tall pyramids that had steep stairs leading up the sides to the top where powerful rulers were laid to rest. Some of these pyramids still stand today. They also built palaces for their ritual s'ajaw or holy lords that were often situated on elevated stone platforms.

Some cities were once considered to be more advanced than others, but the majority of them were not only to provide prestige of victory who became the bloody battles, it for nearly 2,000 years.



At its peak, the Mayan Empire covered southern Mexico and Central America.

SP 9

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### The Mysterious Fall of the Mayan Empire

In the 800s A.D., the Mayan empire had great leaders and mighty armies. Trade seemed to flourish, but the population began a slow decline. One hundred years later, many of the great Mayan cities had been abandoned and swallowed up by the jungle. What happened? There are many theories surrounding the mysterious decline of the Mayan civilization. One of the most recent and widely accepted is that drought and the process of clearing, but not replanting trees in a rainforest, known as deforestation, brought it to an end. In a recent study, researchers at Arizona State University concluded that the great Mayan city of Chichen Itza was abandoned at a time when "severe reductions in rainfall were coupled with a rapid rate of deforestation." This makes sense when we consider that the Mayans used massive amounts of wood to fuel their fire. The rapid deforestation, combined with drought, depleted the soil of nutrients so that crops could no longer grow in the region. The people left the Mayan cities and dispersed into small villages. Centuries later, many were taken as slaves by Spanish conquistadors. In spite of the struggles of the past, an estimated 7 million Maya keep their colorful culture alive today in southern Mexico and Central America.

### The Legacy of the Maya

The Mayan people were among the most advanced and innovative of their time. Amazing mathematicians, they developed the concept of zero. This feat of brilliance allowed them to work with once unimaginable sums and learn how to measure time. Six

the cycles create cities. Mayan and their own history rather find it to make look, but you'll need dry and ca which, the of the had, interesting created on weaving of their cities have a tree

From an predictable made on it ry and left link. Will to study the the cities

SP 10

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### PREPARING TO WRITE A RESPONSE TO TEXT

You've read the text titled The Mayan Empire, SP 9-10. In response to this text, write an essay explaining the probable cause of the downfall of this ancient civilization and describing two contributions of the Mayan people. Be sure to use evidence from the text to support your response.

1. Underline the given elements in this writing assignment.
2. What are the variable elements in this writing assignment - in other words, what decision do you need to make as the author?
3. Skim and scan the text and write a summarizing framework for this piece.  
TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_  
MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_
4. In your summarizing framework, circle the Main Idea that will be most helpful in crafting your response. Locate and circle those paragraphs in the text.
5. What annotation markings can help guide your response?
6. Select two of the Mayan people's contributions and highlight the descriptive text that you will refer to when composing your essay.
7. Write a topic sentence using the given elements that you underlined as your "topic."
8. Write a main idea sentence for each of your paragraphs.
9. Use citing sentence starters to reference evidence in the text:
  - In the text titled The Mayan Empire, we learn that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - In paragraph \_\_\_\_\_, the author states that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The author describes the way that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Another fact the author notes is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - In the information provided about \_\_\_\_\_, we learn that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The author also discusses \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Additionally, the text includes the fact that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - This informational text also explains \_\_\_\_\_.

SP 73

## Preparing to Write a Response to Text

3. Walk the students through the piece, annotating and analyzing the text, marking in the following:
  - Paragraph Numbers
  - Title/Topic
  - Main Idea Sentences (underline them) and Blurbs for each main idea (in the left margin)
4. Direct students' attention to Preparing to Write a Response to Text, SP 73, and explain that you'll be working through this as a class. Begin by reading and discussing the boxed assignment, top of the page. The previous lessons have laid a groundwork for the first two questions about identifying givens and variables. Remind students of that and engage them in a conversation to identify the given and variable elements. (Refer back to p. 120 of this manual to guide your discussion.)
5. Address question 3 by writing a blank summarizing framework on the board and, based on the text, have the class direct you in filling it in.

**Ex.**

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

6. Proceed in a similar fashion through the remaining items of SP 73. Pay special attention to highlighting the examples in the text. This is perhaps the most critical skill for students to master. MODEL this using the text projected on the board. Elicit ideas from students and MODEL writing a TOPIC SENTENCE and MAIN IDEA SENTENCES. Chart these for students to see and read aloud.
7. Read through the **citing sentence starters** and point out how these can help make the writing smooth and fluent. (You may differentiate your instruction by having students who are ready use these to transfer their cited details into sentences, or engage the whole class.)



## LESSON 1

### Objective

Students practice elaborating through the use of the two basic detail-generating questions: What Does it Look Like? Why is it Important?

### Preparation/Materials

Compile a grab bag full of school supply items (pencil, pen, eraser, ruler, markers, notebook, journal, etc.). Copy and distribute Detail-Generating Questions, RP 22. Alternately, you could compile a grab bag full of baseball equipment (glove, bat, ball, catcher's mask, cleats, cap, etc) hair care items (brush, comb, shampoo, conditioner, barrettes, scissors or clippers, pomade, etc.) or use your own ideas.

### Procedure

1. Review the student reference page Detail-Generating Questions with students and explain that this lesson will focus on the first two questions: What does it look like? Why is it important? Emphasize how the use of these questions can help them “show” rather than “tell” in their writing by completing the activity we refer to as “Just the Facts.”

2. On your white board, create three columns with the following headings:

**JUST THE FACTS      WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?      WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

3. Choose an item from your grab bag and model the activity with the students. Initially, this should be done verbally, as oral language precedes the written. Later, this type of activity can be done by writing responses rather than speaking them.

- For example, if you chose the notebook, stand before the heading **JUST THE FACTS** and say:

*“Here’s my notebook.”*

- Then, move on to the **WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE** column and say:

*“Here is my spiral-bound notebook with a glossy green cover and three subject dividers.”*

Compare to the “Just the Facts” sentence.

- Finally, step before the **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT** column and say:

*“Here is my spiral-bound notebook with a glossy green cover and three color-coded subject dividers. I use it to take notes in social studies, science and language arts classes.”*

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class Activity

- Students draw an object from grab bag.
- Respond verbally, stating the simple fact, then apply What Does it Look Like? Why is it Important?

# What Does it Look Like? Why is it Important? Grab Bag

- Chart this activity so it looks something like this:

<b>JUST THE FACTS</b>	<b>WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?</b>	<b>WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?</b>
<i>Here is my notebook.</i>	<i>Here is my spiral-bound notebook with a glossy green cover and three color-coded subject dividers.</i>	<i>I use it to take notes in my social studies, science and language arts classes.</i>

4. Proceed to take each subsequent item from the grab bag and discuss how each is related. Ask students to name the **main idea** of the collection (School Supplies). Then, assign an item to individual students (or allow them to work with partners or in small groups) and ask them to compose the three sentences. Read strong examples to the class or invite students to present their finished work. Allow struggling students as well as English language learners to complete this task verbally at first. Once they've gained confidence in their ability to use the detail-generating questions successfully, ask them to compose their sentences on paper.
5. Review this lesson on an ongoing basis by displaying a random item each day (a fork, a pair of socks, an umbrella) and have students describe the item by composing three sentences. The first, simply stating facts. The second and third, using the detail-generating questions "What does it look like?" Why is it important?" This will help students become comfortable with the thinking process necessary to use detail-generating questions effectively. You might want to choose a different student each day to come up with the sentences (with your help and the help of the class, if necessary). Repeat until each student has had a turn. If needed, allow students to use the following sentence starters. (Of course, you'll need to modify these or create others based on your topic.)

## SENTENCE STARTERS:

- I have a \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Notice this \_\_\_\_\_ .
- This \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ .
- I use this \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a necessity because \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Having a \_\_\_\_\_ is useful when \_\_\_\_\_ .
- It's important because \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Without it, I'd never be able to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- It's a necessity when \_\_\_\_\_ .
- This essential tool helps me \_\_\_\_\_ .

# Locating Golden Bricks for Research

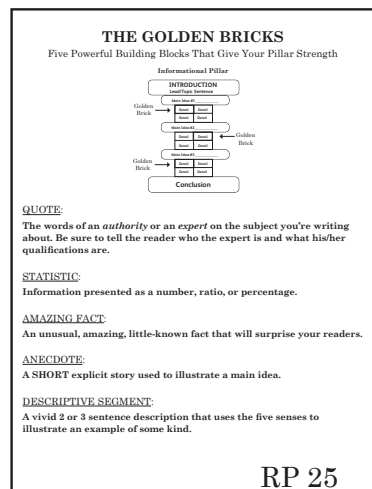
## LESSON 9

### Objective

Students create search phrases to locate “Golden Bricks” (quotes, statistics, amazing facts) about topics of interest.

### Procedure

1. Review the “Golden Bricks” with students, RP 25, and remind them that quotes, statistics, and amazing facts are research-based and that they enhance informational and argument writing by adding a more powerful level of detail – showing, rather than telling.



### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class, and Independent Activity

- Review the “Golden Bricks”
- Discuss creating search phrases around “Golden Bricks.”
- Incorporate research into fluent sentences.

2. Demonstrate how to develop simple search phrases to generate specific types of these more powerfully illustrative details: Write the following on the board using a topic of your choice.

**Ex. 1: TOPIC: Barack Obama**

**Possible Search Phrases:**

- Quotes **from** Barack Obama.
- Statistics **about** Barack Obama’s election to office.
- Amazing facts **about** Barack Obama’s presidency.

**Ex. 2: TOPIC: Gun Violence in the U.S.**

**Possible Search Phrases:**

- Quotes **about** gun violence in the U.S.
- Statistics **on** gun violence in the U.S.
- Amazing facts **about** gun violence in the U.S.

3. Establish a topic of interest, project your computer screen, and type in your search phrase, emphasizing a particular “Golden Brick.” (Be sure to check results for appropriateness prior to class.) Peruse and discuss results.

# Locating Golden Bricks for Research

4. MODEL taking the relevant information you found and presenting it in sentence form, pointing out the ways the citing sentence starters (below) help credit the source and avoid plagiarism. (See Citing Sources, RP 31)

**CITING SOURCES**

It is a serious breach of academic integrity to take words and ideas that are not your own and incorporate them into your writing as if they were. This is called *plagiarism* and it is easily avoided. All you need to do is give the person or agency that generated the information credit for doing so with a properly formatted footnote, endnote, or in-text citation.

**HERE ARE THE FORMATS YOU NEED TO FOLLOW WHEN CITING SOURCES**

**From Books**  
Author's Last Name, First Name. Title of the Book. City: Publishing Company, Date of Publication.

**From Magazine Articles**  
Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Magazine Name. Publication Date, Volume, Page Number.

**From Websites**  
Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Publication Date: Page Number, Site Owner, Date of visit, Web Address.  
*All of this information is not available for some websites. In that case, include whatever you can.*

If you are using **footnotes**, the information cited is numbered in superscript (like this<sup>1</sup>) and the numbered footnote appears at the bottom of the page in the format shown above. **Endnotes** use the same format but appear not on each page, but collectively at the end of the paper.

**In-text citations** give credit right within the text, such as "According to the Center for Disease Control..." Or "Research completed at Stanford University suggests that ..."

**Remember: unless the information is widely known or available from a multitude of sources, it must be cited.**

**RP 31**

5. Close the lesson by reminding students that these types of details (Golden Bricks) can enhance informational and argument writing in powerful ways. (Showing vs. Telling)

## **CITING SENTENCE STARTERS:**

- According to \_\_\_\_.
- Amazingly, \_\_\_\_, according to \_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_, as reported by \_\_\_\_.
- More are surprised to learn that \_\_\_\_.
- Statistics indicate that \_\_\_\_, as evidenced by \_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_ has been quoted as saying, "\_\_\_\_".
- "\_\_\_\_", as stated by \_\_\_\_.
- "\_\_\_\_," explains \_\_\_\_.
- It may be hard to believe, but \_\_\_\_.

# Revise this Conclusion Paragraph

## LESSON 8

### Objective

When presented with ineffective, boring conclusion paragraphs, students are able to revise them using the technique of restating main ideas as questions. They will also try their hand at creating word referents in place of the topic or main idea words or blurbs and composing a general restatement of the topic sentence.

### Procedure

1. Refer to the teacher background information on Conclusion Techniques, pp. 280-282, as you lead a discussion about the purpose of the conclusion paragraph and review the following techniques:
  - restating each main idea as a question
  - word referents
  - restatement of general topic sentence
2. Copy, distribute and project one of the activity sheets Revise this Conclusion Paragraph (1) and (2), SP 151-152. Read the weak “before” version of the conclusion paragraph and ask the students to help you fill in the prewriting plan that states the topic and each main idea.

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class and Independent Activity

- Fill in prewriting plan.
- Restate main ideas as questions.
- Create word referents and restated topic sentences.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**REVISE THIS CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH (1)**

Read this conclusion paragraph. Fill in the author's prewriting plan below. On another sheet of paper or at the keyboard, revise the conclusion paragraph. Begin by restating each main idea as a question. Then, write a general restatement of the topic sentence using one of the word referents you created below.

*As sharpshooters, cattle rustlers, ranchers and rodeo queens, the women of the wild west were bold and daring. THE END*

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Revise this conclusion paragraph by restating each main idea as a question. You may use the following sentence starters to help you.

**SENTENCE STARTERS:**

Wouldn't you love to meet \_\_\_\_\_?

Can you imagine how exciting \_\_\_\_\_?

Isn't it amazing to think \_\_\_\_\_?

Would you like to know more about \_\_\_\_\_?

Can you picture \_\_\_\_\_?

Now, see if you can create a few word referents for the topic of this piece.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SP 151

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**REVISE THIS CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH (2)**

Read this conclusion paragraph. Fill in the author's prewriting plan below. On another sheet of paper or at the keyboard, revise the conclusion paragraph. Begin by restating each main idea as a question. Then, write a general restatement of the topic sentence using one of the word referents you created below.

*Troll dolls, superballs, pet rocks and mood rings are just a few of the goofy fads that swept the globe in the 1960s and 70s. THE END*

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Revise this conclusion paragraph by restating each main idea as a question. You may use the following sentence starters to help you.

**SENTENCE STARTERS:**

Have you ever seen \_\_\_\_\_?

Would you have yearned for a \_\_\_\_\_?

Isn't it amazing that \_\_\_\_\_?

Who would fall for \_\_\_\_\_?

Isn't it funny to think \_\_\_\_\_?

Now, see if you can create a few word referents for the topic of this piece.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SP 152

3. Then, solicit suggestions from students as you MODEL the process of restating these main ideas as questions using the given sentence starters. (See the examples on the following page.)



# Revise this Conclusion Paragraph

4. Move onto the BONUS activity and continue to model the revision process as you help students generate word referents (ask the questions: What is another way to refer to the main idea? How about an adjective to describe it?) and a general restatement of the topic sentence. You might find it helpful to refer to student reference page [Thesaurus of General Adjectives](#), RP 21.

THESAURUS OF GENERAL ADJECTIVES			
<b>interesting</b> appealing fascinating enthraling intriguing curious	<b>big</b> enormous gigantic huge immense colossal giant massive	<b>dangerous</b> harmful hazardous perilous risky challenging	<b>hot</b> blazing burning flaming scalding scorching
<b>nice</b> charming delightful enchanting captivating pleasant	<b>fun</b> enjoyable entertaining amusing delightful	<b>smart</b> clever skilful bright intelligent shrewd brilliant	<b>cold</b> arctic chilly cool freezing frigid
<b>pretty</b> (as in a person) beautiful attractive handsome elegant lovely adorable gorgeous regal	<b>satisfying</b> satisfying <b>strange</b> bewildering bizarre curious extraordinary mysterious odd peculiar unusual weird	<b>beautiful</b> (as in a place) charming captivating lovely lush majestic splendid breathtaking	<b>difficult</b> hard challenging complex demanding perplexing troublesome
<b>great</b> terrific incredible fantastic awesome grand magnificent splendid marvelous excellent	<b>exciting</b> exciting thrilling sensational electrifying rousing stimulating death-defying daring	<b>scary</b> frightening terrifying alarming shocking horrifying spooky eerie	<b>easy</b> effortless simple uncomplicated manageable comfortable a cinch
		<b>small</b> tiny petite little miniature microscopic puny	<b>special</b> unique exceptional distinctive extraordinary meaningful

(**animal** - although a noun, students often benefit by having word referents to use: creature, beast, monster, critter, feathered/furry/four-legged friend, varmint, carnivore, herbivore, predator, hunter.)

RP 21

5. Have students work independently to complete [Revise this Conclusion Paragraph \(2\)](#), SP 152.

## MODELED SAMPLES

### Revise this Conclusion Paragraph (1)

Wouldn't you love to meet a female sharpshooter like Annie Oakley? Don't you think it would be exciting to lead a cattle drive? Can you picture yourself dressed in the fringe and glitter of a rodeo queen? Isn't it amazing to think that some western women actually dared to rustle cattle? Without a doubt, the wild west had its share of fearless frontierswomen who lived by their own set of rules.

**Possible word referents:** fearless frontierswomen, brave pioneers, pistol packing mamas, bold nonconformists.

### Revise this Conclusion Paragraph (2)

Isn't it funny that an ugly doll with a swatch of neon bright hair could charm so many people? Would you have yearned for an incredibly bouncy superball if you lived in 1965? Who could actually love a pet rock? Wouldn't it be awesome if mood rings really worked? It might be hard to believe, but these silly sensations were all the rage in their time.

**Possible word referents:** silly sensations, kooky trends, toy craze, whimsical wonders, unlikely success stories

## LESSON 3

### Objective

Students read a select piece of literature (or an excerpt), apply and consider the framing questions, and engage in discussion around their verbal responses. Then they turn each question into a response and use sentence starters to express their responses in writing.

### Procedure

1. Explain to the class that the strongest readers are those who read “with purpose.” Compare this to a detective trying to solve a mystery. The first thing the detective might do is write down a number of questions he/she needs to answer in order to put all of the pieces of the puzzle together. Without these framing questions it would be much harder to know what the detective’s looking for. Some important clues might be missed.
2. Photocopy and distribute copies of student reference page: Framing Questions for Reading and Responding to Literature, RP 16. Introduce each example as an important “Text Forensics” question. Explain that the best readers will:
  - Read the entire selection first for sheer enjoyment.
  - Read the Framing Questions and consider them in relation to the text.
  - Reread the selection with these Framing Questions in mind.
  - Annotate the answers to these questions as you come across them in the text.
  - Answer the questions.
3. Discuss each question, with students offering and defending their responses based on evidence in the text.
4. Distribute copies of Read Like an Author, SP 172-175, and remind students how to turn the key words in the question into a simple written response. MODEL an example or two for them. Then, have them continue answering the questions in this way, in writing (GUIDED PRACTICE).

### LESSON AT A GLANCE:

#### Whole Class and Independent Activity

- Discuss reading with “purpose.”
- Introduce the Framing Questions.
- MODEL applying questions.
- GUIDED PRACTICE

**FRAMING QUESTIONS FOR READING AND RESPONDING TO LITERATURE**

1. Who is the main point of view character in the story?
2. Where is the story set?
3. What is the mood of the story? (How does the word choice make you feel?)
4. What is the main character's problem, challenge or adventure?
5. What is the main character's motivation? (What does the main character want?)
6. What is the main character's conflict? (Who or what stands in the way of the main character's motivation?)
7. Where does the author use suspense and/or foreshadowing?
8. How does the main character feel about the situation?
9. How does the main character show his/her feelings?
10. How does the main character grow and change in response to story events?
11. What is the theme of the story and how is it demonstrated?
12. Have you ever experienced something similar? Describe.
13. How did you feel about the experience you had?

\*Remember, some of these questions can be inferential or evaluative in nature.

**Sentence Starters for Responding to Literature**

The reader discovers that _____	We recognize _____
The author reveals _____	(Character's name) was motivated by _____
_____ contributed to the story conflict.	This is evidenced by _____
In this story _____	The reader realizes _____
At the beginning it's clear that _____	As the story unfolds, _____
The plot centers around _____	In the story, the evidence suggests _____
It isn't long before we discover _____	Through the text we learn that _____
Clearly, the theme was _____	The main character's point of view is _____
The author definitely shows _____	We see this when _____
For example, _____	Furthermore, _____
Additionally, _____	From the start, _____
However, _____	As a result, _____
An illustration of this _____	Similarly, _____
I believe _____ because _____	From my point of view _____

**RP 16**

**Student Page**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**READ LIKE AN AUTHOR**

In this excerpt from The Worst Class Trip Ever by Dave Barry, Wyatt Palmer and his classmates from Culver Middle School in Miami, Florida are heading to Washington D.C. for their 8th grade field trip. For Wyatt and his friend Matt, the three-day long adventure trip gets off to a mysterious start when they become convinced that two men on the plane—the big sword guy and the little sword guy—have a bomb in their backpacks. As their plane touches down in the nation's capital, the self-proclaimed nerds have just created a major scene trying to wrangle the backpack from the bad guys, getting their fellow passengers in a panic, attracting the attention of a Federal Air Marshal and, worst of all, making fools of themselves in front of a girl named Susanna.

The marshal held the backpack down on a seat, reached inside, and pulled out \_\_\_\_\_

A dragon's head!

It was made out of some lightweight material and painted a million colors. It had big buggy eyes and an open mouth filled with long, sharp fangs-looking teeth.

The marshal held it up and looked at it. "Nice," he said.

"Thank you," said the little guy. "I made it. I am artist. I make traditional folk art from my country."

"And what country is that?"

"Cuckistan. Is nice."

"I know where it is," the marshal put the dragon head back into the backpack and handed it to the little guy. He looked at Matt and me. It wasn't a friendly look.

"Listen," said Matt. "I still think..."

I grabbed his arm. "Shut up, I said."

"But there's..."

"Just for once shut up, okay?"

**SP 172**

**Student Page**

The plane was at the gate now, and the front door was opening. People were standing and getting their stuff down from the overhead storage. I reached down to get my backpack, hoping that somehow all this would just go away. But...

"Hold it," said the marshal, putting his hand on my shoulder. "You boys are staying right here."

Matt and I sat in our seats while everybody else got off the plane, except Mr. Barto, who stood with his arms folded, staring at us. The worst was when other kids went past us. Some of them were laughing. Susanna looked at me and just shook her head.

The two weird guys took their time getting ready to leave, so they were almost the last ones off. The big guy got his long black bag down from the overhead, and the two of them headed for the front of the plane. When they got there, the little one turned and looked back. He made sure the marshal wasn't looking his way. Then, he looked straight at me and Matt, held up his backpack, and smiled at us.

A really creepy smile.

**SP 173**

# Read Like an Author

**NOTE:** You may want to address the first 6 questions one day, and the second 6 questions on a subsequent day, or, if students need more time, discussion, and direction, tackle 3 questions a day for 4 days.

Student Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**READ LIKE AN AUTHOR**

You've read an excerpt from a narrative story. Now read each framing question, below. On the lines beneath each question, turn the key words into a simple response, using evidence from the story.

**Key:** Who is the main character (point of view character or protagonist) in the story?  
*The main character in this story, also known as the point of view character or protagonist, is Wyatt Palmer.*  
*In this story Wyatt Palmer is the main character, also known as the point of view character or the protagonist.*

1. Where is the story set? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the tone or mood of the story? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the main character's problem, challenge, or adventure? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the main character's motivation (what does the main character want)? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who or what stands in the way of the main character's motivation? \_\_\_\_\_

SP 174

Student Page

6. Where does the author use suspense and/or foreshadowing? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How does the main character feel about the situation? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How does the main character show his/her feelings? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How did the main character might grow and change as the story continues? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Based on the excerpt, can you make a prediction about how this story might end? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Judging from the excerpt, can you guess what the theme of the story might be? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What would you do if faced with a similar challenge or adventure? \_\_\_\_\_

SP 175

5. Finally, show students how these “answers” can be combined into a paragraph in response to the text. Have them compile these into a paragraph on another sheet of paper or on the keyboard. Have students adjust sentence structure where needed for fluency, sentence variety, and flow and share with the class. **Apply this same question and answer process to any piece of literature your class is reading.**

## Sample:

*As this comic novel begins, we meet Wyatt Palmer. The 8th grader from Miami, Florida is the main character, also known as the point of view character or the protagonist. The tone of the story is quite light hearted and the two boys are portrayed as awkward and goofy, rather than serious troublemakers. We learn that Wyatt and his friend Matt are off on a class trip to Washington D.C., but the two boys are in trouble before their plane even touches down in the nation's capital. They have become convinced that two men they call “the big weird guy” and “the little weird guy” on the plane are up to no good. After making fools of themselves attempting to wrestle a backpack away from the two adults, Wyatt is motivated by a desperate need to prove himself right and impress a girl named Suzana. The author effectively foreshadows what's to come and builds suspense at the end of the passage when the two boys are in trouble with the Federal Air Marshal and one of the two “weird” guys turns and gives them “a really creepy smile” as he leaves the plane. This makes the reader wonder if Wyatt and Matt were right all along! Wyatt shows his embarrassment at the situation by telling Matt, who is still trying to defend both them, to “Just for once shut up, okay?” As the story goes on, I believe the character will gain more confidence in himself and take action to put an end to the nefarious scheme of the big and little weird guys. I predict Wyatt and Matt are going to be heroes in the end and Wyatt will earn the respect of Suzana. As their adventures continue, it seems likely that a theme about friendship will emerge. How would I react if I were in a situation like Wyatt and Matt? Well, if I were on a plane with someone who looked suspicious to me, I would quietly alert the authorities, but I would never make a scene like Wyatt and Matt did. In a story, it's definitely funny, but in real life, that kind of behavior gets people into major trouble.*

**EXTENSION: Narrative Extension Tasks** – One form of critical thinking that is often asked of students is to extend or revise a narrative story based on some specific criteria. Discuss and have students attempt any of the following tasks using Field Days and/or Frenemies as the source material. Be sure to review the story critical elements of narrative stories. (See our Narrative Writing Guide for more information on all aspects of narrative writing.)

- Think about the events that took place in the narrative story Field Days. In this story Harry was the protagonist or point of view character (main character). The reader sees the story world through his eyes. Reimagine the events of this story through Brian’s eyes. How would it differ? How might it be the same? Rewrite this story from Brian’s viewpoint. Compare it to the original. Which point of view do you think is more compelling?
- As the scene Frenemies ends, Olivia is leaving the campfire feeling betrayed by her friends Tori and Katie. Extend this story to show what happens between the three girls the next day.