



Grade 4 Informational Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 2: Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas/Reasons



OVERLY GENERAL “BLURBS” TO AVOID

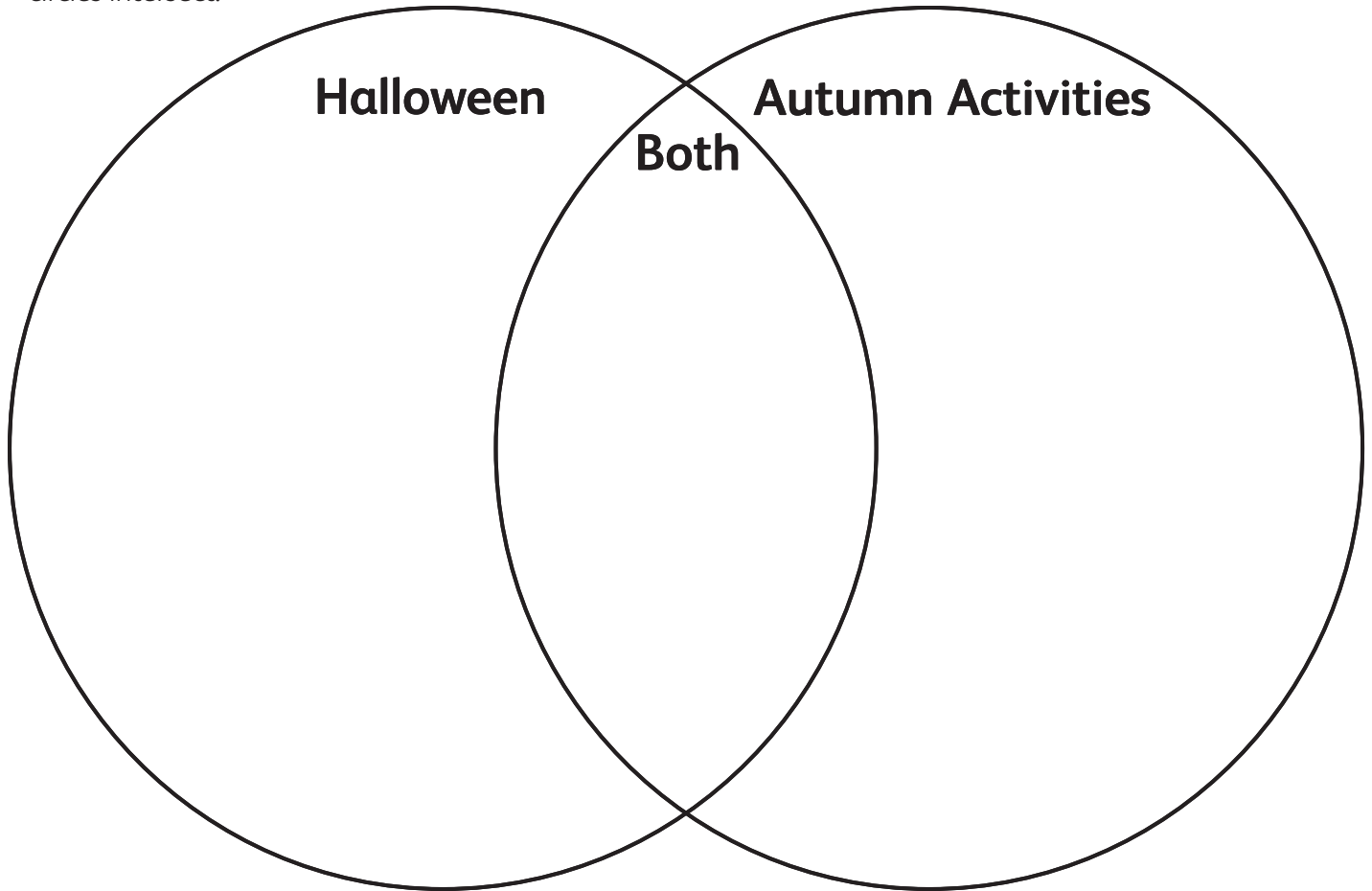
NICE
FUN GREAT
COOL AWESOME
INTERESTING
GOOD BAD
CUTE



Name: _____

SORT & CATEGORIZE (1)

Read the list of details below and decide which main ideas/reasons they apply to. Write the details in the circle. Any details that apply to both main ideas/reasons should be sorted into column where the circles intersect.



Details:

Making costumes

Raking leaves

Bonfires

Apple picking

Carving pumpkins

Hayrides

Football games

Haunted houses

Trick or Treating

Corn mazes

Ghost stories

BONUS: *Can you think of any other details that might fit into either or both of the main idea/reason categories? If so, write them in the appropriate circle.*

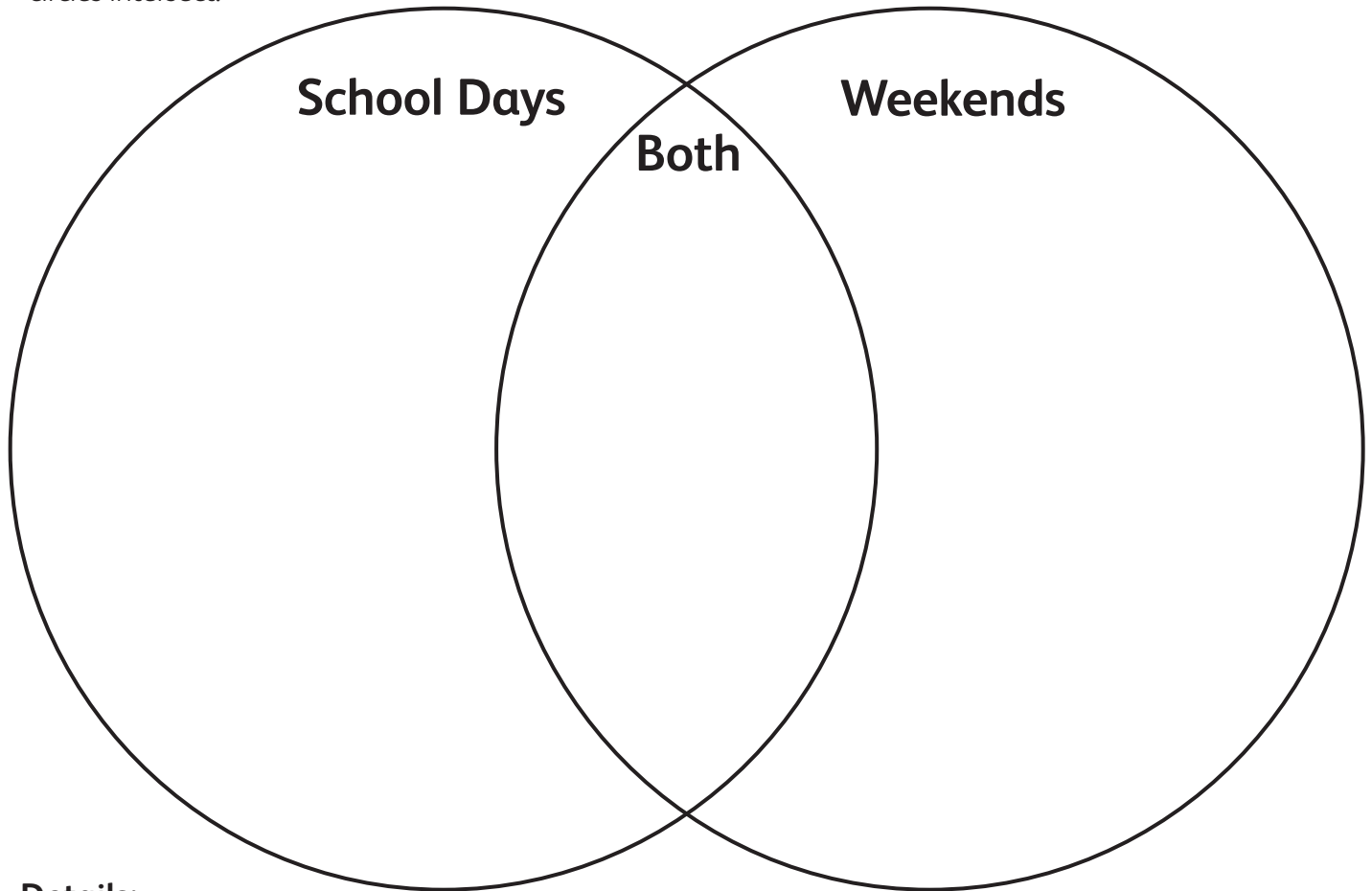


Student Page

Name: _____

SORT & CATEGORIZE (2)

Read the list of details below and decide which main ideas/reasons they apply to. Write the details in the circle. Any details that apply to both main ideas/reasons should be sorted into column where the circles intersect.



Details:

Family dinners

Gym Class

Saturday morning cartoons

Riding on the bus

Homework

Doing chores

Sunday brunch

Lunch in the cafeteria

Playing sports

Seeing friends

Sleepovers

Shopping

Math tests

Sleeping late

BONUS: Can you think of any other details that might fit into either or both of the main idea/reason categories? If so, write them in the appropriate circle.



Name: _____

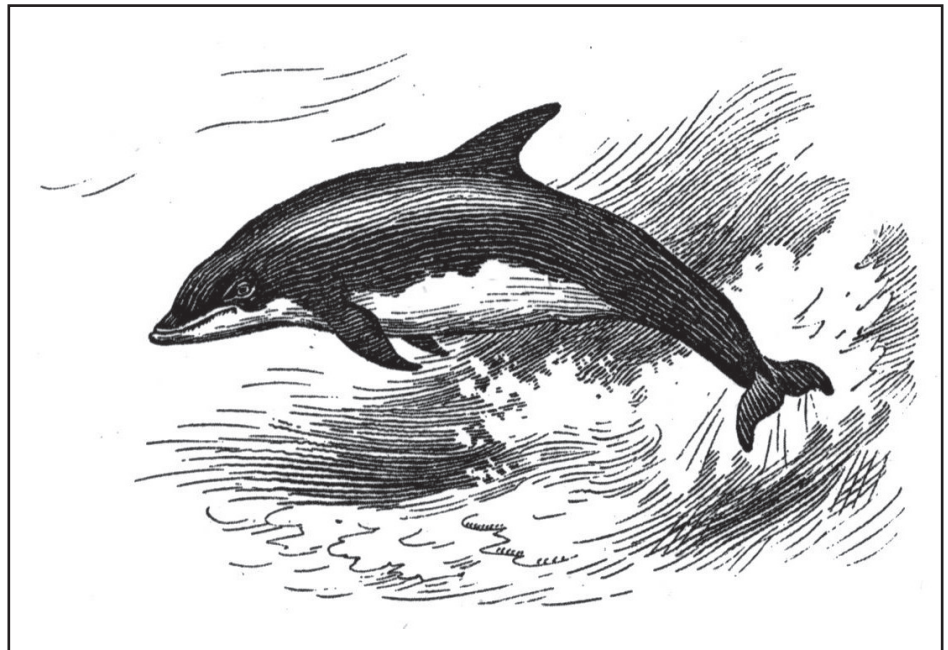
THE CHARMING DOLPHIN (1)

Do you dream of swimming with the dolphins one day? If you're like me, you certainly do! Most people would agree that splashing around with these wonderful animals would be really fun. After all, dolphins are cute, friendly and absolutely awesome.

If you've ever seen a dolphin, you know how cute they are. They always look like they are smiling. They also do cute things like jump out of the water and spin in mid-air. Baby dolphins are adorable as they swim alongside their mothers. Just as panda bears are the cutest animals that live on land, dolphins are

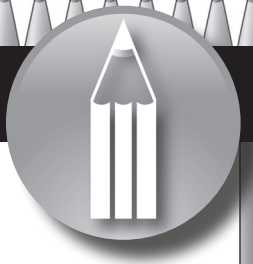
the cutest of all the creatures of the sea. Even though they look like cute fish, they are really mammals that breathe air.

When I was in Florida I got to swim with an adorable, gentle dolphin.



Dolphins are nice, friendly creatures. They are easily trained to do tricks and seem to enjoy performing for people. It's so cute to see them swim right up to a boat as if they want to say hi. It's awesome the way they'll swim

(continued)



behind whale watching ships or alongside fishing boats, surfing along on the wake of the waves. They look like they are having so much fun. Even though dolphins are perfectly capable of living on their own, they choose to live in large groups.

Awesome is the only word to describe dolphins. They not only are smart, but they seem to care about people and other dolphins. People have survived shipwrecks because dolphins rescued them. Dolphins also help each other and seem to feel human emotions like grief when a fellow dolphin dies. The military has done research to see if dolphins can help them with their underwater missions. People flock to see these sweet, awesome animals at aquariums and zoos around the world.

Learning about dolphins is interesting. There is a lot to love about these cute, friendly, awesome creatures! Let's hope we all get the chance to swim with dolphins someday.



Name: _____

THE CHARMING DOLPHIN (2)

One of the most unforgettable moments of my life came during a fishing trip. Just as I was about to drop my line, a dolphin popped its head out of the water and looked me right in the eye. Amazingly, it seemed happy to see me! I have been curious about these charming marine mammals ever since. Their playfulness, obvious intelligence and astonishing ability to express compassion make dolphins absolutely captivating.

Dolphins have often been observed at play. As youths and adults, they will somersault out of the water and make twisting turns in mid-air. Surfing along in the wake of a boat is another game they play. They make toys of pieces of driftwood or strands of seaweed. Large groups have been seen playing catch with such items, joyfully tossing them from one to the other. Of course, dolphins aren't the only animals that play. Kittens and puppies, for example, are notorious for their frisky antics, but their play has a purpose. It



helps them practice the hunting behaviors they needed to survive when they lived in the wild.

Dolphins, on the other hand, seem to play just for the fun of it, much like we do.

(continued)



Marine biologists are convinced that dolphins are at least as smart as humans. They clearly have the capacity to pay attention, learn and remember. In one intriguing study conducted by the Dolphin Institute of Honolulu, dolphins showed that they could associate a part of their anatomy with the human form, for example: a human stomped a foot and the dolphin slapped the water with its tail. This shows the ability to understand an *analogy*. If you've ever been confused by a test that asked you questions like "a mitten is to a hand as a boot is to a," you know that understanding analogies can be quite difficult.

There are dozens of documented cases of dolphins showing compassion for one another, for other marine mammals, and even for humans. They've been seen pushing a stranded baby seal from shallow waters into the safety of deeper seas and swimming in circles around an injured creature to protect it from sharks. Since ancient times, there have been stories of dolphins working together to drag a drowning human from the depths of the ocean to the surface. In most cases, they also stayed with the victim until help arrived. Such incidents make us quick to trust dolphins.

Do you have a soft spot for dolphins? If so, you are not alone. So many of us admire the high spirits, intelligence and kindness of these sleek, smiling marine animals. For sure, dolphins have charisma to spare.



Student Page

Name: _____

COOKING (1)



Would you rather depend on restaurants or learn to cook for yourself? In my opinion, cooking is a basic skill that everybody needs and you're never too young to start. Over a lifetime, knowing how to cook will save you money, allow you to eat healthier, and help you carry on precious family traditions.

Cooking at home saves money. For the price of a single meal in a restaurant, you can buy the ingredients to make several meals at home. Additionally, the portions served in restaurants are always astronomically large so you overeat or throw the leftovers away. When you cook at home, there is little waste. You can either make the exact number of portions you need or use the leftovers in creative new ways. Countless free recipes are available on the Internet so you'll never run out of ideas for tasty, economical meals.

You will eat healthier if you learn to cook. When you prepare your own meals, you know exactly what's in them. You can limit the salt and sugar in your recipes and use delicious fresh herbs instead. Cooking is also the easiest way to sneak more vegetables into your diet. Try adding chopped spinach

(continued)



or grated carrot into your spaghetti sauce. Another great option is to add blended sweet potato or squash to your macaroni and cheese. As everybody knows, take-out meals and frozen foods are notoriously high in unhealthy fats. When you cook at home, you can be sure your food only includes healthy fats like olive oil.

Cooking carries on family traditions. Every family has a few special dishes that they serve when everybody gets together. Passed down from generation to generation, these recipes are part of your family history. You must learn how to cook them all or you risk losing an invaluable piece of your past forever! In the years that come, these recipes will stir precious memories and you'll definitely want to share them with your own children. Whether you're serving Grandma's Irish Stew or Uncle Jorge's Tortilla Soup, you'll be proud to say "this recipe's been in our family for years."

Don't you agree everybody needs to know how to cook? Knowing your way around the kitchen will surely help you save money, enjoy the health benefits of good nutrition and celebrate your own unique family history. Let's get cooking!



Student Page

Name: _____

COOKING (2)

When my family made a New Year's Resolution to eat healthier, the first thing we decided was to cook all of our meals at home. We all pitched in to make meals that were good for us and it was fun. I believe learning to cook is important because it is healthy, fun, and good for you.



Cooking at home is healthy. When you cook your own food, you know what's in it. When you go to a restaurant, you're never certain if your meal includes too much sugar, salt or calories. You can't be sure that it was made with healthy fats. On the other hand, when you go to the grocery store and choose fresh ingredients, you're able to make a meal that you know is really good for you.

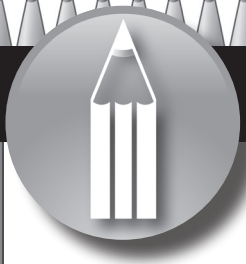
Cooking can be fun! Imagine whipping up a pot of spicy chili for your friends on a Friday night or taking a special dish to a holiday feast. As you experiment with different seasonings and recipes, you might discover that you really like to cook. It could become a lifelong hobby or even a career. Everybody knows that great chefs are always in demand!

(continued)



Your home cooking is good for you. Let's face it: when you rely on restaurants, you eat mostly pizza, hamburgers and take-out Chinese. You can get very tired of these same old meals and they're not very healthy. When you learn to cook, you'll be able to make an endless variety of foods that are really good for you and have fun doing it! As everybody knows, including a wide variety of foods is a healthy habit.

Don't you agree that learning to cook just makes sense? You will get healthy, enjoy meals that are actually good for you and you might even discover that you have a real gift for cooking. Without a doubt, we all should save restaurants for special occasions only and start learning our way around the kitchen today.



Student Page

Name: _____

PICK, LIST, CHOOSE, ASK, & FIND

1. **PICK** a topic _____

2. **LIST** what you already know about this topic (bullet points, not sentences):

3. **CHOOSE** main ideas (at least 2)

Main Idea #1 _____

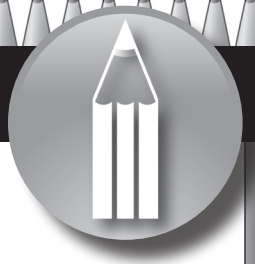
Main Idea #2 _____

Main Idea #3 _____

Main Idea #4 _____

4. **ASK:** What do you still need to know?

5. **FIND:** Where might you find answers to these questions?



Name: _____

SUMMARY

Look at your PICK, LIST, CHOOSE, ASK, & FIND worksheet to complete this summary of our upcoming unit.

Our class will be studying _____ .

We will read about _____

and discuss _____ .

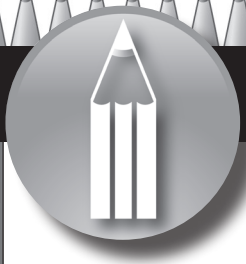
We'll also study _____

and examine _____ .

We will use books and computers to learn about _____

_____, including

_____ .



Student Page

Name: _____

REVISED SUMMARY

Please look over the summary you wrote when we were just beginning to study _____.

Now that we've completed the unit, re-write your summary to include what you've learned.

Our class just finished studying _____ .

We read about _____

and discussed _____ .

We found answers to our questions about _____ ,

_____ and

_____ .

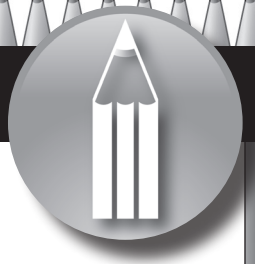
I was surprised to learn that _____ .

Now I understand why _____

_____ .

The only question I still have about this topic is _____

_____ .



Name: _____

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

Read the TOPIC and related main reason sentences below. Then, write a one word “Blurb” that sums up what the main reason sentence is about. Next, see if you can figure out which detail sentence belongs to which main reason. Some may seem like they fit into more than one main reason. 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 in.

TOPIC: THE MARCHING BAND

MAIN REASON SENTENCES:

MAIN REASON #1: As a member of the marching band you'll learn to play a musical instrument really well.

MAIN REASON #2: Band camp will be the highlight of your summer.

MAIN REASON #3: Take wonderful trips to perform parades and special sporting events.

BLURB:

DETAIL SENTENCES:

1. A typical camp day might start with a marching drill and end with an awesome square dance.
2. The flute, tuba, and saxophone are just a few of your choices.
3. Performing at Disney World is a definite possibility.
4. Maybe the bass drum or cymbals are more your style.

MAIN REASON(S):

Are the main reasons distinct enough? (Check one)

Yes. Choose yes if it was clear that each detail belonged with one of the main reasons.

No. Choose no if the details could fit in more than one main reason.



Student Page

Name: _____

MAIN IDEAS/ REASONS - 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 is about. 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 in. Write the number of the paragraph the detail sentence belongs in.

TOPIC: OUR SOLAR SYSTEM

MAIN IDEA SENTENCES:

MAIN IDEA #1: The sun is a blazing ball of gas held together by its own gravity.

MAIN IDEA #2: Our solar system is full of interesting **celestial bodies*.

MAIN IDEA #3: Earth is one of eight different planets.

BLURB:

**Celestial bodies - planets, moons, stars, comets, meteors, asteroids and galaxies*

DETAIL SENTENCES:

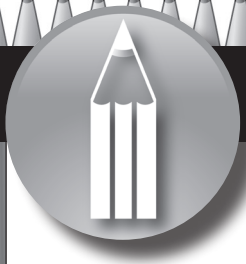
MAIN IDEA(S):

1. The sun is the center of the solar system and the source of all its energy.
2. The cold, dark planet Neptune is composed entirely of hydrogen and helium.
3. On Mercury temperatures range from burning hot to icy cold.
4. Bright rings surround the planet of Saturn.

Are the main ideas distinct enough? (Check one)

[] Yes. Choose (yes) if it was clear that each detail belonged with one of the main ideas.

[] No. Choose (no) if the details could fit in more than one main idea.



Student Page

Name: _____

MAIN IDEAS/ REASONS - BROAD ENOUGH OR TOO NARROW? (1)

Read this group of main reasons for an opinion piece about Moving. If any one of the three is too narrow to be properly elaborated or overlaps with another, cross it out and replace it with a broad yet distinct main reason. (Remember, they may be okay as is!) Then write a main reason sentence for each main reason. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help you.

TOPIC: MOVING

MAIN REASON #1: Making new friends
MAIN REASON #2: Changing schools
MAIN REASON #3: New teachers

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #1:

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #2:

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #3:

Sentence Starters

- You will surely miss _____.
- It might be hard to _____.
- You'll start to feel at home when _____.
- The best way to _____.
- Try not to be embarrassed if _____.



Name: _____

MAIN IDEAS/ REASONS - BROAD ENOUGH OR TOO NARROW? (2)

Read this group of main ideas for an informational piece about Collections. If any one of the three is too narrow to be properly elaborated or overlaps with another, cross it out and replace it with a broad yet distinct main idea. (Remember, they may be okay as is!) Then write a main idea sentence for each main idea. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help you.

TOPIC: COLLECTIONS

MAIN IDEA #1: Types of collections

MAIN IDEA #2: Displaying your collection

MAIN IDEA #3: Admiring your collection

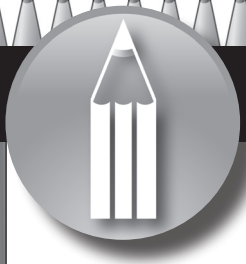
MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #1:

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #2:

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #3:

Sentence Starters

- You might find _____.
- Your collection might _____.
- Join other collectors at _____.
- Keep your collection _____.
- Discover how _____.



Student Page

Name: _____

MAIN IDEAS/ REASONS - BROAD ENOUGH OR TOO NARROW? (3)

Read this group of main reasons for an opinion piece about Pen Pals. If any one of the three is too narrow to be properly elaborated or overlaps with another, cross it out and replace it with a broad yet distinct main reason. (Remember, they may be okay as is!) Then write a main reason sentence for each main reason. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help you.

TOPIC: PEN PALS

MAIN REASON #1: Make friends around the world
MAIN REASON #2: Share photos
MAIN REASON #3: Having envelopes and stamps

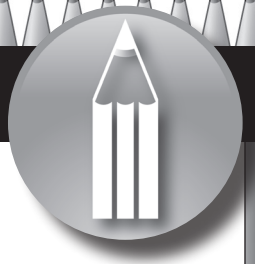
MAIN REASON SENTENCE #1:

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #2:

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #3:

Sentence Starters

- You might learn _____.
- Your pen pal will _____.
- You might get a chance to _____.
- Can you imagine how _____.
- You can share _____.



Name: _____

IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS/REASONS WITHIN A PROMPT (1)

Read this prompt/assignment. Circle the topic. Underline the three main ideas/reasons.

What's your idea of a perfect holiday celebration? Write about the foods, the decorations and the gifts you would give and get at a super-special celebration of your favorite holiday.

Fill in the blanks in the prewriting plan below.

YOUR TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA/REASON #1: _____

MAIN IDEA/REASON #2: _____

MAIN IDEA/REASON #3: _____

Do you think this assignment is informational or opinion? Why? _____

IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS/REASONS WITHIN A PROMPT (2)

Read this prompt/assignment. Circle the topic. Underline the three main ideas/reasons.

Wouldn't you love to plant a great big garden? Write an essay about what you'd include in your garden.

Fill in the blanks in the prewriting plan below.

YOUR TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA/REASON #1: _____

MAIN IDEA/REASON #2: _____

MAIN IDEA/REASON #3: _____

Do you think this assignment is informational or opinion? Why? _____



Name: _____

NAMING GIVENS AND VARIABLES

Before writing to an assignment or prompt, an author must determine not only the genre, but the given and variable parts of that assignment. Read each assignment below, and answer the questions about genre, givens, and variables.

1. You've read an article and viewed a video about fire safety. In response to these sources write an essay about two strategies to keep in mind if you ever find yourself in a burning building. Be sure to present evidence from each source.

- In what genre should the author respond? _____
- What is the GIVEN in this assignment? (What every writer needs to include.)

- What are the VARIABLES in this assignment? (What each individual writer must decide.) _____

2. The main characters in the stories Camp Out and Braving the Rapids both were excited about an outdoor experience. Write an essay about one of the unexpected challenges each character faced and what they learned from it. Be sure to include specific examples from the text.

- In what genre should the author respond? _____
- What is the GIVEN in this assignment? (What every writer needs to include.)

- What are the VARIABLES in this assignment? (What each individual writer must decide.) _____

3. In the piece Skating to Win we learn what it's like to be an Olympic figure skater. Write about what it takes to become a competitive skater and include examples from one of the skaters featured in the text.

- In what genre should the author respond? _____
- What is the GIVEN in this assignment? (What every writer needs to include.)

- What are the VARIABLES in this assignment? (What each individual writer must decide.) _____



Name: _____

GENERATING BROAD YET DISTINCT MAIN IDEAS/REASONS (1)

Think about the TOPIC listed in the larger box below. Ask yourself what you know about this topic. Then, write several distinct main idea “blurbs” about the topic on the lines below. Be sure that each main idea is distinct from the others. Use the example as a guide.

Example:

TOPIC: REPTILES
MAIN IDEA #1: Characteristics of Reptiles
MAIN IDEA #2: Different Types of Reptiles
MAIN IDEA #3: Reptile Habitats

TOPIC: SUMMER HAZARDS

MAIN IDEA #1:

MAIN IDEA #2:

MAIN IDEA #3:

Select one of your main idea “blurbs” and develop it into a main idea sentence. Use the sentence starters at the bottom of the page if needed.

Sentence Starters:

Be careful when _____.

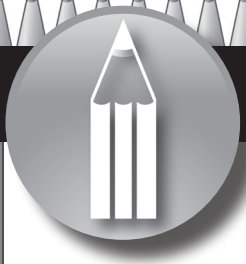
Make sure you avoid _____.

If you get _____.

During the summer _____.

Watch out for _____.

Always be aware of _____.



Student Page

Name: _____

GENERATING BROAD YET DISTINCT MAIN IDEAS/REASONS (2)

Your Best Friend is the topic of this opinion piece. Think about all the reasons your best friend is so special to you. Then, write 2 distinct main reason “blurbs” and main reason sentences about the topic on the lines below. Be sure that each main reason is distinct from the others. Use the sentence starters at the bottom of the page if needed.

<p>TOPIC: YOUR BEST FRIEND</p> <p>MAIN REASON #1: <u>Plays Fair</u> _____</p> <p>MAIN REASON #2: _____</p> <p>MAIN REASON #3: _____</p>

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #1:

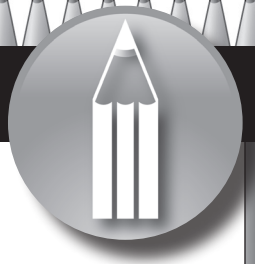
I love sharing sports and games with my best friend because she always plays fair.

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #2:

MAIN REASON SENTENCE #3:

Sentence Starters:

- In my opinion, my best friend is _____.
- As everybody knows, a best friend should ____.
- I admire my best friend’s _____.
- I appreciate the way _____.
- She/he can be counted on to _____.
- As far as I’m concerned _____.



Name: _____

GENERATING BROAD YET DISTINCT MAIN IDEAS/REASONS (3)

Think about the TOPIC listed in the box below. Ask yourself what you know about this topic. Then, write several distinct main idea “blurbs” about the topic on the lines below. Be sure that each main idea is distinct from the others. Use the sentence starters at the bottom of the page if needed.

<p>TOPIC: VISITING A MUSEUM</p> <p>MAIN IDEA #1: _____</p> <p>MAIN IDEA #2: _____</p> <p>MAIN IDEA #3: _____</p>
--

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #1:

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #2:

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #3:

Sentence Starters:

- Be sure to see _____.
- Take a close look at _____.
- Learn about _____.
- Be sure to visit _____.
- Spend some time _____.



Name: _____

BORING! REVISE! (1)

Read this author's prewriting plan and the main idea sentences. Notice the boring, redundant sentences and lack of variety. Each sentence begins the same way.

TOPIC: THE WINTER OLYMPICS

MAIN IDEA #1: Snowboarding

The Winter Olympics has snowboarding events.

MAIN IDEA #2: Figure Skating

The Winter Olympics has figure skating events.

MAIN IDEA #3: Ice Hockey

The Winter Olympics has ice hockey events.

This kind of writing does not spark the reader's attention or make them want to read on. Using the sentence starters below, see if you can rewrite these sentences to make them more interesting.

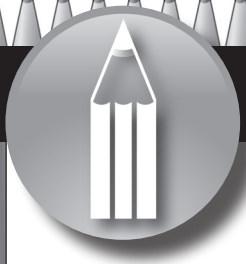
SNOWBOARDING

FIGURE SKATING

ICE HOCKEY

Sentence Starters:

- It is extraordinary to see _____.
- People all over the world watch _____.
- Cheer on your _____.
- Don't miss the _____.
- Fans adore _____.
- Another attraction at the Winter Olympics is _____.



Student Page

Name: _____

BORING! REVISE! (2)

Read this author’s prewriting plan and the main reason sentences. Notice the boring, redundant sentences and lack of variety. Each sentence begins the same way.

TOPIC: BEING A TWIN

MAIN REASON #1: A best friend Since I’m a twin, I feel I always have a friend nearby.

MAIN REASON #2: Sharing Since I’m a twin, I believe I learned how to share.

MAIN REASON #3: Playing pranks Since I’m a twin, I like playing pranks on people.

This kind of writing does not spark the reader’s attention or make them want to read on. Using the sentence starters below, see if you can rewrite these sentences to make them more interesting.

A BEST FRIEND

SHARING

PLAYING PRANKS

Sentence Starters:

- Twins benefit by _____.
- Being a twin is one way of _____.
- An advantage of being a twin _____.
- The best thing about _____.
- Having a twin means _____.



Student Page

Name: _____

MAIN IDEA BLURBS INTO SENTENCES (1)

Look at this writer's INFORMATIONAL PILLAR FRAMEWORK. The author has a good prewriting plan. Help the author by writing a complete MAIN IDEA SENTENCE for each main idea listed on the pillar.

TOPIC: Picnics
Introduction: Lead/Topic Sentence

**MAIN IDEA #1:
Food to Pack**

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

**MAIN IDEA #2:
Location**

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

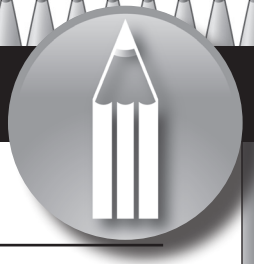
**MAIN IDEA #3:
Outdoor Activities**

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

CONCLUSION

Sentence Starter Suggestions:

- Picnic planning requires _____.
- One way to enjoy a picnic is _____.
- Don't forget _____.
- Wouldn't you agree that _____?
- Many people enjoy _____.
- Every picnic includes _____.
- The most successful picnics include _____.
- You'll need to decide _____.
- Most picnickers _____.
- It's helpful to plan _____.



Name: _____

MAIN REASON BLURBS INTO SENTENCES (2)

Look at this writer's OPINION PILLAR FRAMEWORK. The author has a good prewriting plan. Help the author by writing a complete MAIN REASON SENTENCE for each main reason listed on the pillar.

TOPIC/ISSUE: <u>Ice Cream - the best dessert</u> Introduction: Lead/Opinion Statement	
---	--

MAIN REASON #1: Variety of Flavors	
---	--

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

MAIN REASON #2: Variety of Toppings	
--	--

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

MAIN REASON #3: Ways to Serve It	
---	--

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

CONCLUSION

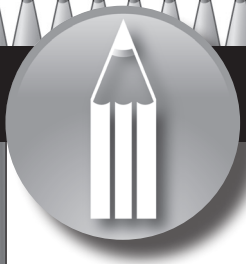
Sentence Starter Suggestions:

- Who doesn't enjoy _____?
- I absolutely adore _____.
- I can never resist _____.
- It's fun to choose _____.
- Ice cream lovers can select _____.
- In my opinion, _____.
- I love considering _____.
- Go to your local ice cream shop and _____.
- This dessert is enhanced by _____.
- There are many ways to _____.



BONUS: Do you agree or disagree with this author's arguments? Why or why not?

Write your response in complete sentences on the back of this sheet, or at the keyboard.



Student Page

Name: _____

MAIN REASON BLURBS INTO SENTENCES (3)

Look at this writer's OPINION PILLAR FRAMEWORK. The author has a good prewriting plan. Help the author by writing a complete MAIN REASON SENTENCE for each main reason listed on the pillar.

TOPIC/ISSUE:
Fast Food is Great
 Introduction: Lead/Opinion Statement

MAIN REASON #1:
Delicious

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

MAIN REASON #2:
Convenient

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

MAIN REASON #3:
Inexpensive

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

CONCLUSION

Sentence Starter Suggestions:

- Who doesn't enjoy _____?
- I absolutely adore _____.
- I can never resist _____.
- It's fun to choose _____.
- It's so easy to _____.
- In my opinion, _____.
- I love considering _____.
- What's easier than _____?
- Just hop in the car and _____.
- Fast food is _____.
- Another reason to love fast food is _____.
- Almost anyone can afford _____.
- What a bargain _____.



BONUS: Do you agree or disagree with this author's arguments? Why or why not? Write your response in complete sentences on the back of this sheet, or at the keyboard.



Student Page

Name: _____

TURNING QUESTIONS/PROMPTS INTO RESPONSES (1)

REMEMBER: When writing a response to text you will be given a question or prompt to consider. Within the question or prompt you'll find a *key phrase* that you'll need to address. One effective way of getting started is to use this key phrase in the first line of your response. This key phrase becomes your *TOPIC SENTENCE*.

DIRECTIONS: Read each question/prompt below and underline the key phrase. Then, on the lines beneath the question/prompt, use this key phrase in your **TOPIC SENTENCE**.

1. Write an essay explaining the reasons why dust storms are dangerous.

2. Explain the reasons that caused Greta to run away from home.

3. Based on the text, write about the many hardships and dangers early explorers experienced in their travels.

4. After reading the text, write about why feathers are important to birds.



Name: _____

TURNING QUESTIONS/PROMPTS INTO RESPONSES (2)

REMEMBER: When writing a response to text you will be given a question or prompt to consider. Within the question or prompt you'll find a *key phrase* that you'll need to address. One effective way of getting started is to use this key phrase in the first line of your response. This key phrase becomes your *TOPIC SENTENCE*.

DIRECTIONS: Read each question/prompt below and underline the key phrase. Then, on the lines beneath the question/prompt, use this key phrase in your **TOPIC SENTENCE**.

1. Write a paragraph explaining the challenges of life faced by refugees of war.

2. Explain the series of circumstances that led up to the accident on the ski slope.

3. Based on the text, describe three clever ways that Derek earned money to buy his bike.

4. After reading the text, write an essay outlining the threats to polar bears in the Arctic Circle.



Student Page

Name: _____

THE MISSING MAIN IDEA (1)

Read each paragraph. Think about the specific details in each sentence. Ask yourself what the paragraph is all about and write a BLURB in the margin. Then write a MAIN IDEA SENTENCE on the line above the paragraph that tells what the entire paragraph is about.

MAIN IDEA: _____

You can always spot a tiger by its splendid coat--golden fur with elegant black stripes. These 700 pound cats have powerful muscles that give them a sleek, slinky appearance and allow them to move with a quiet, threatening grace. Tigers have long tails which flick back and forth revealing their mood. They measure an impressive ten feet from their whiskered noses to the tips of their tails.

MAIN IDEA: _____

You can find tigers in their natural habitats across Asia and in the Himalayan Mountains. The Siberian tiger can be found as far north as the Arctic Circle. In India, you are likely to meet the Bengal tiger. Smaller, darker tigers are found on the islands of Sumatra, Bali, and Java.

MAIN IDEA: _____

For years they have been hunted for their beautiful coats. Their pelts have been made into rugs, coats, and jackets. This is now illegal. As jungles are cut down and cities are built, their habitats are lost. They have no place to live and little to eat. In an effort to save them, some tigers are taken into captivity where they are less likely to breed.

BONUS: What is the TOPIC of this piece? _____

Write a good title for this piece. _____



Name: _____

THE MISSING MAIN REASON (1)

Read each paragraph. Think about the specific details in each sentence. Ask yourself what the paragraph is all about and write a BLURB in the margin. Then write a MAIN REASON SENTENCE on the line above the paragraph that tells what the entire paragraph is about.

MAIN REASON: _____

When I don't have a friend nearby I can amuse myself for hours playing video games. It's so much more fun and interactive than sitting around watching TV. What makes video games so exciting is the challenge of trying to increase my score and to develop new strategies for getting ahead. I love the way I can save my results, so that the next time I play I can pick up where I left off. This is why I prefer video games to board games. Another advantage of video games is that they include sound, color, and movement to hold my attention. There's always a surprise so it never gets boring! What could be more entertaining than that?

MAIN REASON: _____

When I was younger I had some games that taught me to identify and track different kinds of wildlife. I loved learning about all of the Australian bush creatures, and I still remember all of that information. Another game took me all along the Oregon Trail and taught me what life was like for pioneers. Learning addition, subtraction and multiplication through video games is so much more interesting than old-fashioned flashcards. Another game helps me learn my weekly spelling words. Why shouldn't study be fun?

MAIN REASON: _____

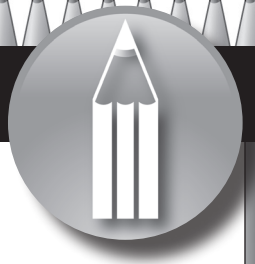
I really enjoy getting together with friends to play, at my house or theirs. We teach each other new strategies as we compete. A favorite family activity is group bowling, where we each get to create our own character and then hit the video bowling alley. It's hysterical to watch my mom when she gets a gutter ball. When I visit my great grandma in her senior apartment complex we go to the rec room and play a number of different video games. We laugh together, store our scores, and plan our next visit.

BONUS: What is the TOPIC of this piece? _____

Write a good title for this piece. _____

What is the author's position? _____

Do you agree or disagree with this position? Why or why not? Write your reasons on the back of this sheet.



Name: _____

Sentence Variety and Word Choice (1)

Read each dull main idea sentence below. Revise each sentence by varying the sentence structure, and replacing overly general adjectives with more specific, vivid adjectives to create main idea sentences that your audience will read with enthusiasm. Also, try using word referents to replace the double underlined topic word in each sentence.

Ex. Hurricanes are scary.

Revision: You'd better believe that these powerful storms are terrifying!

1. The Grand Canyon is awesome.

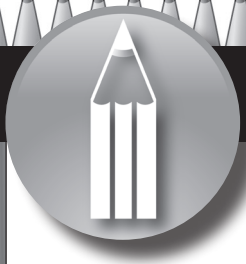
Revision: _____

2. Snowboarding is fun.

Revision: _____

3. Raccoons are cute.

Revision: _____



Student Page

Name: _____

Sentence Variety and Word Choice (2)

Read each dull main idea sentence below. Revise each sentence by combining a sentence starter (for good sentence variety) with a vivid adjective (for good word choice) to create main idea sentences that your audience will read with enthusiasm. Replace each underlined word with a better word.

Ex. Bonzo the clown is funny.

Revision: Let me tell you about this entertaining comedian, the most amusing, comical clown in the world!

1. Queen Olivia is very pretty.

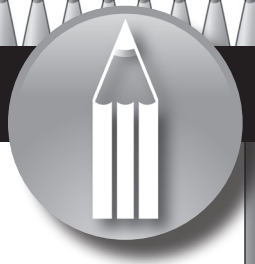
Revision: _____

2. The desert is really hot.

Revision: _____

3. Piloting a plane is exciting.

Revision: _____



Name: _____

PREPARING TO WRITE A RESPONSE TO TEXT

You've read the text titled Bears, p. 37-38. In response to this text, write an essay discussing two interesting bear behaviors. 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 the **paragraph** in the text.
5. What text conventions can help guide your response?
6. After you've selected two interesting bear behaviors, **highlight** your examples in the text. Highlight the first interesting behavior in yellow, and the second interesting behavior in pink.
7. Write a **topic sentence** using the given elements that you underlined as your "topic."
8. Write a **main idea sentence** for each of bear behaviors that you selected.
9. Use citing **sentence starters** to reference evidence in the text:

In the text titled Bears we learn that _____ .

On page 38, column 2, the author states that _____ .

The author describes the way that _____ .

Another example the author notes is _____ .

In the information provided about foraging we learn that _____ .

The author also discusses _____ .

Additionally, the text includes the fact that _____ .

This informational text also explains _____ .



EXEMPLAR RESPONSE

Ex. SUMMARIZING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: Two Interesting Bear Behaviors

Main Idea #1: foraging

Main Idea #2: marking

BEARS

Bears exhibit many interesting behaviors. Two of the behaviors we learn about in the text titled Bears are foraging and marking.

On page 38, columns 2 and 3, the author describes how these large hungry mammals forage for food. We learn that bears are known for raiding campsites and cottages looking for whatever they can find to eat. The author also discusses the way that these carnivores have a sweet tooth when it comes to honey. In the text the author explains how a bear will bat down a bee's nest and swab out the honey with its claws. Additionally, the text includes the fact that a bear's thick fur helps protect these furry foragers from bee stings.

Bears are also known for behavior known as marking. On page 37, column 3 we learn that these members of the Ursidae family will claw, gnaw, or chew at tree trunks. The author explains that this is a signal to other bears to "stay clear of their territory."

Certainly, if I ever visit a National Park or head out into the wilderness I'll keep an eye out for bear markings and will keep my gear locked up from these large foraging, territorial creatures.



Name: _____

THE PERFECT COSTUME

“This is perfect!” Jenna whispered. She gazed into the mirror and fluffed the midnight blue flowing skirt that swirled around her ankles, adjusted the sparkling tiara on her head, and admired the long white silk gloves that graced her hands and forearms.

“You’ll be the most gorgeous princess this Halloween,” her mother said, snapping her daughter’s photo with her phone.

“But I still need a bracelet,” Jenna said. “Can we go to the costume store? Please?”

Her mother checked her watch. “We’ll have to hurry,” she said. At 4:30 your brother needs the car to drive to work. Slip out of your costume and let’s get going!”

Jenna carefully folded her costume and placed it in a large bag. She was determined to match the bracelet perfectly to her gown. She dashed out the front door toward the car, past the smiling jack-o-lantern and the slumpy scarecrow they’d made that was seated on the steps.

In no time they were at the mall, making their way to the pop-up costume store walking between parades of tiny trick or treaters. Jenna made a beeline to the jewelry, strands of sparkling multi-colored jewels, pearls, and glittering gold and silver bands. She spotted it immediately – a thick elastic bracelet covered in deep blue faceted stones. Jenna peeked into her bag, and sure enough, the colors matched perfectly. “Okay,” her Mom said, checking the price tag. “Let’s buy this and hurry home. You need to be ready for trick or treating by 6:00!” They paid for the bracelet and were off.

As they pulled into the driveway Jeff was standing beside the scarecrow on the steps jingling his car keys. “About time!” he said, sprinting toward the car. “I’m going to be late for work.” He took his mother’s place behind the wheel. Jenna hopped out, gripping the bag with her new bracelet inside. Jeff took off and Jenna and her mother headed inside.



Student Page

After a quick dinner it was time to get dressed. Jenna went to her room, and admired her new bracelet. She laid it on the dresser and, preparing to transform herself once more from a fifth grader into a princess. She noticed the hanger hooked onto her closet door. “Oh no!” she cried. “I left my gown in the bag! I hope it isn’t wrinkled.” Looking around the room she gasped. “Mom!” she yelled, her heart pounding. “I think I left the bag with my costume in the car! Quick – call Jeff!”

Her mother called Jeff, but there was no answer. Jenna felt her eyes well with tears. “Now I don’t have a costume,” she cried. “What am I going to do?”

Just then the doorbell rang. Jenna watched her mother open the door, a bowl of candy in her hand. Two little kids in masks shouted, “Trick or Treat!!” Before the door closed Jenna caught a glimpse of the scarecrow on the steps. That’s when she got an idea. She ran outside, yanked the straw hat off the scarecrow and gathered handfuls of hay sprouting out of its plaid flannel shirt. These she placed inside the door and dragged the rest of the scarecrow into the hallway. “Sorry buddy,” she said as she tore apart the scarecrow’s denim overalls, red bandana, and Jeff’s old work boots that were dangling from the bottom of the comical character’s baggy legs.

“Let me help you!” her mother called, and in no time Jenna was transformed into a scarecrow. Her mother drew a red triangle on Jenna’s nose with an old lipstick and helped her stuff hay into her collar and under the brim of the straw hat. The bandana was tied jauntily around her neck and she stepped into Jeff’s tattered old work boots.

“Tahdah!” her mother called, spinning Jenna toward the mirror. Before looking at her reflection, Jenna gazed longingly at the elegant blue bracelet on her dresser. “I’m not a princess any more, that’s for sure,” she said.

“But you’re the best looking scarecrow I’ve ever seen,” her mom replied.

Jenna had to agree. She grabbed her trick or treat bag and shrugged. “Maybe next year I’ll be a princess,” she said, and bounded out the door.



Name: _____

PREPARING TO WRITE A RESPONSE TO TEXT

You've read two very different texts about scarecrows, Scarecrows, Yesterday and Today and The Perfect Costume. Write an essay comparing these two texts. Be sure to address the differences in genre, organization, and author's purpose. Also, describe at least one key characteristic in each text that is unique to the genre.

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 Scarecrows, Yesterday and Today, pp. 39-41 , and write a **summarizing framework** for this piece.

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

What is the genre of this piece? _____

What is the author's purpose? _____

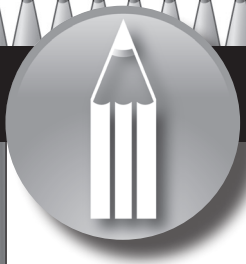
How do you know? _____

What pre-writing tool did the author use to shape this text? _____

4. Fill in the summarizing framework below for The Perfect Costume.

This story is about _____

The problem was that _____



Student Page

The problem was solved when _____

What is the genre of this piece? _____

What is the author's purpose? _____

How do you know? _____

What pre-writing tool did the author use to shape this text? _____

5. Name one characteristic you'll describe in the narrative story. Highlight this in yellow. _____
6. Name one characteristic you'll describe in the informational text. Highlight this in pink.

7. Write a **topic sentence** based on what the prompt is asking. _____

8. Write **two main idea sentences**, one for your description of the key characteristics in the informational text, and another for the narrative text.

9. Use citing **SENTENCE STARTERS** to reference evidence in the text:
 - *In the first text the author used* _____.
 - *Another major difference is that* _____.
 - *You can recognize a narrative piece by* _____.
 - *In the second text it's clear that* _____.
 - *The organizational strategy* _____.
 - *The author's purpose was* _____.



EXEMPLAR RESPONSE

Ex. SUMMARIZING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: Difference between Two Texts

MAIN IDEA #1: Scarecrows, Yesterday and Today

MAIN IDEA #2: The Perfect Costume

An Essay Comparing Scarecrows, Yesterday and Today & The Perfect Costume

The two texts we read are different in terms of genre, organization, and author's purpose. Scarecrows, Yesterday and Today is an informational text while The Perfect Costume is a narrative story.

There are many key characteristics that the author includes in Scarecrows, Yesterday and Today that tell us that the genre is informational. The text focuses on the topic of "scarecrows" and is organized into main ideas followed by details. Each main idea appears as a boldfaced heading. Another characteristic of informational texts are the many italicized key words that help the reader understand the information. These details explain and support the main idea. For example, under the main idea heading "The Need for Scarecrows" we read details about how farmers throughout history had to invent things like "bird shooers" "clappers" and mannequins" to chase away hungry birds and animals. The photographs, captions, and chart in the text also are characteristics of informational texts.

The Perfect Costume is a very different type of text. This narrative story focuses on a character named Jenna. It takes place on Halloween as she's getting ready for trick or treating. Like all narrative stories, it includes action, description, dialogue, and the main character's (sometimes called the point of view character) feelings. It is organized very differently than the informational text, following a beginning, middle, and ending format. The story begins with an entertaining beginning in which the point of view character (Jenna) whispers about her Halloween costume. The story moves into the main event (the middle and largest part of the story) where Jenna is faced with a problem - she leaves her princess costume in the car and her brother drives away with it. She solves this problem by taking apart the scarecrow on her front porch and using it as a replacement costume. Instead of being written to provide information, this story is written to entertain the reader.

Although both texts include scarecrows, it is clear that they differ in genre, organization, and purpose.