



Grade 4 Informational Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 3: Elaboration – Detail Generating Questions



DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS

WHAT DOES IT “LOOK” LIKE?

Sound like? Feel like?

Taste like? Smell like? Seem like?

You may need to research this!

WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

Why is that important to your main idea?

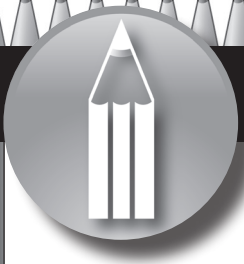
You may need to research this!

IS EACH DETAIL IN A SEPARATE SENTENCE?

Separate the Grocery List!

DID YOU GIVE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE?

Avoid general language such as
“stuff,” “things,” “nice,” etc.



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JUST OKAY...OR MUCH BETTER?

Read each pair of sentences. In one sentence the author simply states a fact. In the other, the author presents the same fact, in a much stronger way. Label each sentence, JUST OKAY if it's the bare-bones fact, or MUCH BETTER if the author fully elaborates.

1. _____ When it starts to get cold you need some good mittens.
_____ You need thick woolen mittens to keep your hands warm when the winter temperatures drop below freezing.

2. _____ With its long legs and neck, the spotted giraffe can easily blend in with its habitat while dining on the leaves of tall trees.
_____ Giraffes have spots and long necks and eat leaves.

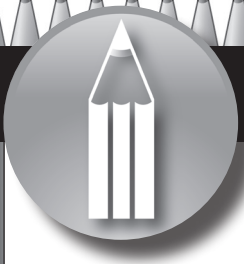
3. _____ The author shows why scientists believe that global warming is caused by people.
_____ In the article the author states, "Carbon dioxide surrounds our planet like a blanket, trapping energy, and keeping the earth warmer. And we're producing more carbon dioxide all the time."

4. _____ In the summer I really, really like to eat an ice cream cone.
_____ There's nothing like a triple scoop mint chocolate chip ice cream cone on a hot August afternoon.

5. _____ Fruit and vegetable scraps from your kitchen can be used for compost.
_____ Adding fruit and vegetable scraps to a bin of dirt, grass clippings, and dead leaves decomposes into compost, providing rich nutrients for your garden soil.

BONUS: Which example would best belong in an opinion piece? _____

Which example would best belong in a response to text piece? _____



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MATCHING WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? WITH WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

When you are using detail-generating questions, your sentences often have two parts. The first part describes what it looks like. The second part tells you why it is important. Match the first and second parts of the following sentences by drawing a line from the first part in column 1 to the second part in column 2.

Column 1

What does it look like?

Skunks' horribly scented spray, called musk, helps protect them

Their cozy nests are lined with leaves

The best time to spot a skunk with its distinctive black and white coat is at night

Whatever you do, don't get close to one of these creatures

Column 2

Why is it important?

to help keep them warm inside their burrows.

because their smelly fumes can hit targets twelve feet away!

when these nocturnal creatures are out hunting for food.

by frightening away predators.

BONUS: If these sentences appeared in an informational text, what would the TOPIC be? _____



Name: _____

WRITING SENTENCES WITH: WHAT DOES IT “LOOK” LIKE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? (1)

Read the detail sentence below. Revise the sentence using the detail-generating questions:
What does it look like? Why is it important?

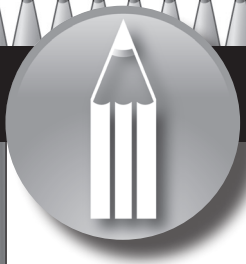
Ex. *Winter has cold temperatures and shorter days.*

Revision: *When you start to need a warm, woolen coat and scarf, and it begins to get dark before you’ve eaten your dinner you know winter, with its cold temperatures and shorter days, has arrived.*

Detail sentence:

Bring an umbrella with you on cloudy days.

Your revision:



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WRITING SENTENCES WITH: WHAT DOES IT “LOOK” LIKE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? (2)

Read the detail sentence below. Revise the sentence using the detail-generating questions:
What does it look like? Why is it important?

Ex. *Making popcorn is easy.*

Revision: *Popping a convenient packet of popcorn into the microwave is an easy way to make a delicious, convenient and healthy snack.*

Detail sentence:

When taking a hike be sure to bring along a snack.

Your revision:



Name: _____

WRITING SENTENCES WITH: WHAT DOES IT “LOOK” LIKE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? (3)

Read the detail sentence below. Revise the sentence using the detail-generating questions:
What does it look like? Why is it important?

Ex. *In fall we need to get rid of all the leaves on the lawn.*

Revision: *When November arrives each family member needs to grab a sturdy rake and numerous leaf bags and pitch in to clean up all the fallen leaves that will make a mess once the snow arrives.*

Detail sentence:

In spring we need to pull the weeds from the garden.

Your revision:

Detail sentence:

Your dog needs exercise.

Your revision:



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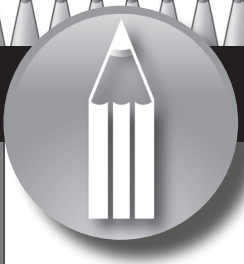
FIND THE OVERLY GENERAL WORDS AND PHRASES (1)

Read the paragraph about a pet store. Look at the words in boldface print. These words are way too general and do not add to the elaboration of the piece.

The pet store sells everything you need to have a pet. They have **all kinds of animals**. People go there to get **stuff like pet toys**. Of course, you can shop for all types of **things pets need**.

Now read the revised paragraph. The author has provided **specific examples** instead of overly general words or phrases. Decide which paragraph is more powerful.

The pet store sells everything you need to have a pet. They sell adorable puppies, fluffy kittens, and colorful birds. People go there to buy chew toys for their dogs. Catnip mice and hamster wheels are also for sale. Of course, you can shop for pet food and treats, collars and leashes, and even doggie coats for cold weather!



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FIND THE OVERLY GENERAL WORDS AND PHRASES (2)

Read the paragraph about theme parks. Look at the words in boldface print. These words are way too general and do not add to the elaboration of the piece.

Theme parks offer something for everyone. There are **fun things** to do there. You can go on **all kinds of rides**. Most theme parks have shops where you can buy **all sorts of stuff**. In between the rides and shopping you can get **something to eat** at one of their restaurants. People also enjoy all **types of entertainment**.

Now read the revised paragraph. The author has provided **specific examples** instead of overly general words or phrases. Decide which paragraph is more powerful.

Theme parks offer something for everyone. There are **many games, animal exhibits, and even a fun house** for your enjoyment. Of course, most people love the **wild roller coasters, exciting rides like the Whip, as well as kiddy rides such as the merry-go-round**. Theme park shops offer **tee-shirts, mugs, and small, inexpensive souvenirs**. In between the rides and the shopping, you can get **burgers, fries, hot dogs, and frozen yogurt** in the food court or restaurant. People also enjoy listening to **the bands** and watching **theme-related skits**.



Name: _____

CAN YOU GIVE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE? (1)

When reading, it is always more interesting when the author includes specific examples.

Ex. *At the seashore, you can see birds.*

This is very general. This revision has specific examples:

*At the seashore, you can see **loud, squawking gray and white gulls swooping over the water.***

Look at the detail sentence below. It includes a general detail. Replace the general detail with some vivid, specific detail.

After dinner, many people enjoy dessert.

Your revision:



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CAN YOU GIVE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE? (2)

When reading, it is always more interesting when the author includes specific examples.

Ex. *The corner store sells candy.*

This is very general. This revision has specific examples:

*The corner store sells **everything from chocolaty peanut butter cups to bright, multi-colored gummi bears!***

Look at the detail sentence below. It includes a general detail. Replace the general detail with some vivid, specific detail.

The fish tanks has lots of things in it.

Your revision:

Having refreshments at the movies is fun!

Your revision:



Name: _____

BREAK UP THAT GROCERY LIST! (1)

Details are always more powerful when they appear one at a time rather than grouped together in a list. Read each “grocery list” below. Then break up that grocery list by writing each detail in a separate sentence. Be sure to include what each detail “looks like” and why it is important. You can continue on the back of this page. You can use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help.

Ex. My favorite birthday menu includes pizza, cake, potato chips, and ice cream.

Revision: At my birthday party I'd start with crispy potato chips as an appetizer. The main course might be delicious, cheesy pizza. For dessert I'd serve chocolate cake with plenty of frosting. I'd top it off with vanilla ice cream.

When you shop for snack food, you can choose from cookies, chips, crackers and ice cream.

Your revision:

Sentence Starters

One must-have snack food is _____.

Most people stock up on _____.

And don't pass up the _____.

Don't forget the _____.

Don't you always buy _____?

Be sure to get _____.

BONUS: Informational or opinion? How do you know? _____



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Name: _____

BREAK UP THAT GROCERY LIST! (2)

Details are always more powerful when they appear one at a time rather than grouped together in a list. Read each “grocery list” below. Then break up that grocery list by writing each detail in a separate sentence. Be sure to include what each detail “looks like” and why it is important. You can continue on the back of this page. You can use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help.

Ex. At the food court you can buy hamburgers, Chinese food, pizza, or a salad.

Revision: For those with large appetites, the food court has thick, juicy quarter-pound burgers with all the toppings. If you’re in the mood for Chinese, you can order pork lo mein or chow mein. For a quick snack, try cheesy, thin-crust pizza with everything from broccoli to sausage. Of course, for the health-conscious, these mall eateries offer crisp, green salads with juicy tomatoes and fresh vegetables.

This pet store has puppies, hamsters, snakes, and birds.

Your revision:

Sentence Starters

This establishment also carries _____.

Come in for _____.

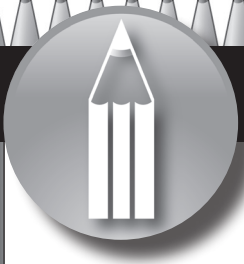
People come here to purchase _____.

You can buy _____?

Others shop here for _____.

This shop offers _____.

BONUS: Informational or opinion? How do you know? _____



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USING DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS (1)

Read this paragraph about gardens. The author has simply listed a number of facts. The author did not SHOW us what the garden looked, sounded, and smelled like. On another paper, revise this paragraph using the detail-generating questions below. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to correct the redundant sentence structure.

- What does it “look” like?
- Why is it important?
- Can you give a specific example?
- Is each detail in a separate sentence?

Many things grow in a garden. You can grow flowers like roses, sunflowers, and daffodils. You can grow vegetables like tomatoes, beans, corn, carrots, and much more.

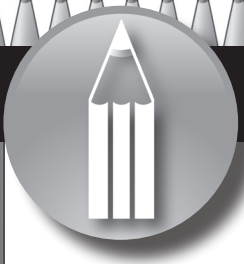
Many things grow in a garden. You can grow flowers like roses, sunflowers, and daffodils. *(Is each detail in a separate sentence? What does it look like? Why is it important?)* You can grow vegetables like tomatoes, beans, corn, carrots, and much more. *(Is each detail in a separate sentence? What does it look like? Why is it important?)*

Sentence Starters

You can catch the scent of _____. _____ are perfect for _____.

Some gardeners plant _____. Gardeners often plant _____.

Colorful _____ can be grown, too.



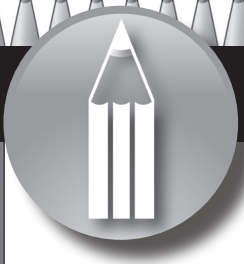
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USING DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS (2)

Read the paragraph below from a how-to piece on the topic: Preparing Vegetable Soup. The author has simply listed a number of facts. None of the facts have been elaborated on in an effective way. On another paper, revise this paragraph by applying the detail-generating questions. Also, be sure to include good sentence variety in your revision. Look for and correct redundant word choice.

Choosing the right ingredients is often the difference between vegetable soup that's just so-so, or soup that's scrumptious. Go to a good store. The grocery store has lots of vegetables on display. You'll need to pick out really nice carrots, potatoes, celery, onions, and tomatoes. Then get a large can of white beans. Then get two large cans of vegetable broth. You'll also need some olive oil. Buy these and you're ready to begin the next step - preparation.



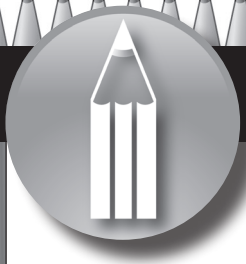
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USING DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS (3)

Read the paragraph below from a compare/contrast piece on the topic: The Ultimate Birthday Party - At Home or at the Bowling Alley? The author has simply listed a number of facts. None of the facts have been elaborated on in an effective way. On another paper, revise this paragraph by applying the detail-generating questions. Also, be sure to include good sentence variety in your revision. Look for and correct redundant word choice.

One important aspect of any party has to do with the party games and activities. At home you can play Twister, Musical Chairs, and some games you play outside on Field Day. If the weather's good you can have a pool party for swimming and water games. Of course, if the weather's rainy, you can't play outside. Rain or shine, at the bowling alley you mostly bowl, which you can't do at home. You don't bowl every day which makes it special. Whether it's at home or the bowling alley, you can open gifts and have birthday cake!



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FLIP THE SENTENCE SUBJECT! (1)

Read each sentence below from a paragraph on beach recreation. Notice the redundant sentence variety. The group of sentences reads like a “broken record”.

It is fun to play in the waves.

It is great to build a sandcastle.

It is interesting to collect shells.

One way to correct this problem is by “flipping” the sentence subject:

INSTEAD OF

It is fun to play in the waves.

It is great to build a sandcastle.

It is interesting to collect shells.

FLIP THE SENTENCE

Playing in the waves is fun.

Building a sandcastle is great.

Collecting shells is interesting.

Then, identify a critical element and “show” rather than “tell” - add some description!

INSTEAD OF

Playing in the waves is fun.

Building a sandcastle is great.

Collecting shells is interesting.

WHAT DOES IT “LOOK” LIKE?

Playing in the powerful, white-capped waves can be fun.

Building a pointy sandcastle surrounded by a moat is great.

Collecting smooth white clam shells and bumpy oyster shells is interesting.

REVISE these two sentences by flipping the subject and adding description.

1. It is challenging to look for hermit crabs on a mudflat.

2. It is refreshing to take a swim.



Name: _____

FLIP THE SENTENCE SUBJECT! (2)

Read each sentence below from a paragraph on friendship. Notice the redundant sentence variety. The group of sentences reads like a “broken record”.

One thing friends enjoy is playing outside.

Another thing friends do is talk on the phone.

Another thing friends look forward to is sharing a snack.

One way to correct this problem is by “flipping” the sentence subject:

INSTEAD OF

One thing friends enjoy is playing outside.

Another thing friends do is talk on the phone.

Another thing friends look forward to is sharing a snack.

FLIP THE SENTENCE

Playing outside is one thing friends enjoy.

Talking on the phone is another thing friends do.

Sharing a snack is another thing friends look forward to.

Then, identify a critical element, include a specific example - and tell “What it looks like!”

INSTEAD OF

Playing outside is one thing friends enjoy.

Talking on the phone is another thing friends do.

Sharing a snack is another thing friends look forward to.

WHAT DOES IT “LOOK” LIKE?

Playing baseball or tree climbing are two things friends enjoy.

Talking on the phone about weekend plans is another thing close friends do.

Sharing some ice cream or a bag of chips is something friends look forward to.

REVISE these two sentences by flipping the subject and adding description.

1. Another thing friends like is planning a party.

2. Another activity friends hope for is taking a vacation together.



ELABORATION TOOLS FOR RESPONSE TO TEXT TASKS

When writing in response to text, it's important to cite evidence from the source material without copying word for word. Here are some ways to cite evidence in interesting ways:

- **SUMMARIZE**

In a sentence or two, *summarize* the topic and main ideas of the source material.

Ex. In the texts Siamese Cats and The Sphynx Cat, we explore the history of both breeds, learn to recognize the appearance and temperament of each of these unique felines, and discover some of the special care required for the hairless Sphynx.

- **PARAPHRASE**

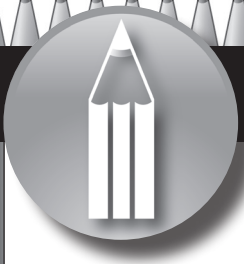
In your own words, rephrase specific details in the source material in order to support your summary.

Ex. The author explains that sometimes a genetic mutation happens and a hairless kitten can be born to a regular cat.

- **CITE THE SOURCE TEXT**

Cite specific words, phrases, examples from the source material, using quotation marks to indicate the source author's exact words.

Ex. In paragraph four the author states: "Unlike most cats, a Siamese is not an independent creature."



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Summarizing in Paragraph Form

Look at the following summarizing framework for an informational text:

TOPIC: Volcanoes

MAIN IDEA #1: What causes volcanoes

MAIN IDEA #2: Hazards of volcanoes

MAIN IDEA #3: How science can predict eruptions

Now read the way one student expressed this summary in a short paragraph using INFORMATIONAL VERBS:

This article provided information about volcanoes. The reader discovers the causes of volcanoes and learns about the hazards that occur when volcanoes erupt. The author also delves into the ways that science can help predict when these fiery eruptions are likely to occur.

Now it's your turn! Read each summarizing framework, below, and on another paper rewrite each as a short paragraph, using informational verbs. Select your informational verbs from the box, bottom of page.

TOPIC: Legos

MAIN IDEA #1: Invention of Legos

MAIN IDEA #2: Legos for learning

MAIN IDEA #3: Legos as art

TOPIC: Bluebirds

MAIN IDEA #1: Appearance

MAIN IDEA #2: Habitat

MAIN IDEA #3: Bluebird houses

TOPIC: Ice Cream

MAIN IDEA #1: Who invented ice cream

MAIN IDEA #2: How ice cream is made today

MAIN IDEA #3: Flavors and toppings

TOPIC: Space Travel

MAIN IDEA #1: History

MAIN IDEA #2: What's happening now

MAIN IDEA #3: What the future holds

- recognize • understand • learn about • discover • uncover • reveal • study
- examine • observe • analyze • investigate • find out • focus on • research
- know • delve • consider • determine • remember • explore
- become familiar with • be on the lookout • become aware of



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Reading and Summarizing Texts

1. Read the text Vernal Ponds.
2. Annotate it, marking in the following: TOPIC, INTRODUCTION, MAIN IDEA BLURBS, CONCLUSION. Then fill in the summarizing framework, below:

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

3. Finally, write a summarizing paragraph based on this framework on the lines below. Be sure to use informational verbs.

- recognize • understand • learn about • discover • uncover • reveal • study
- examine • observe • analyze • investigate • find out • focus on • research
- know • delve • consider • determine • remember • explore
- become familiar with • be on the lookout • become aware of

On the back of this paper, do the same thing for the partner text Salt Marshes. Be sure to read, annotate, create a summarizing framework, and then create a summary paragraph using informational verbs.



Name: _____

VERNAL PONDS

If you've ever taken a late afternoon springtime walk in the woods, you've probably heard the sound of spring peepers. Sometimes mistaken for the chirping of birds, this chorus of high-pitched peeping is actually the sound of small frogs searching for a mate in an interesting habitat called the **vernal pond**. Vernal ponds are an important part of the ecosystem, providing sanctuary to a number of forest creatures.

The best time to observe a vernal pond is in the early spring right after the winter snows have melted and run off into lower ground. This seasonal run-off of water pools up in woodland habitats, forming a seasonal pool. These shallow, small ponds last into the late summer when they usually dry up, leaving behind a layer of black decomposing leaves and gray silt-like soil. They may appear as a large puddle early or late in the season. This unique and ever-changing wetland habitat may not look like much, but is extremely important to the ongoing life of the forest.

Biologists and conservationists might refer to a vernal pond as a forest nursery. This is because these seasonal pools provide a safe place for frogs, toads, salamanders, newts and insects to breed and lay eggs. Because vernal ponds dry up in the summer they are not home to fish who might eat these eggs. So, when these pond dwellers mate and lay jelly-like clumps or strands of eggs in the water and on the surrounding plants, there is less chance of them being eaten by hungry fish. In addition, insects such as dragonflies, damselflies and mosquitoes also lay their eggs in vernal ponds. All of these creatures and their young provide an important food source for turtles, birds such as herons and hawks, raccoons and other small mammals. When the eggs hatch in spring the



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young will stay in the vernal pond for a few months until it dries up. Then they move out into the forest where they will live as adults. They return to the pond the next year and the life cycle begins again. A keen observer can be entertained by witnessing the life cycle of a variety of amphibians and learn to appreciate this unusual and important ecosystem.

It is important to preserve vernal ponds in order to maintain a healthy, balanced woodland habitat. People might be tempted to dig a deeper pool and add water to create a year-round pond for their own enjoyment, perhaps adding fish and lily pads. However attractive this may be, it would disturb the ecosystem and affect the food source and life cycles of many creatures. In recent years people have become more aware of how important these wetland habitats are and the Department of Environmental Protection and other agencies continue to work to educate people. Avoiding the use of fertilizers and pesticides near vernal ponds and in any area where water run-off occurs will also help protect these fragile habitats. Since vernal ponds need shade to maintain a cool, wet environment, keeping a canopy of deciduous trees around the pool is a must. In short, people would do best to simply leave vernal ponds and the woods surrounding them alone. Follow these simple rules and naturalists and anyone who appreciates wildlife and the outdoors will thank you! In fact, learning to respect and appreciate a vernal pond may encourage you to become a naturalist or environmentalist as well.

So, the next time you take a hike in the woods or hear the sound of a chorus of spring peepers, follow the sound to a vernal pond. Protecting these fascinating seasonal pools will ensure that the small creatures that began life there will continue to thrive.



Name: _____

SALT MARSHES

Wherever there are coastlines you can be sure there are salt marshes nearby. Take a walk along the seashore and eventually you'll come to a muddy area filled with tall grasses and reeds. If the tide is low, follow your nose – salt marshes can smell a bit like rotten eggs during low-tide. At one time people thought these marshy areas were worthless, and many marshes in the United States were filled in so that waterfront homes, apartments, and hotels could be built. We later discovered that this was a mistake. Salt marshes serve many purposes and are now protected and preserved.

Salt marshes are easily recognizable along the entire coastal United States. They are located next to oceans, bays, lagoons, and at the mouths of rivers where the fresh water pours into the sea. If you were to taste the water in a salt marsh you'd discover that it's *brackish* – a mix of fresh and salt water. Marshes are filled with tall sturdy grasses such as cord and salt grass as well as reeds and algae. If you were to watch a marsh for twenty four hours you'd see that the area fills with water twice a day as the tide comes in, then empties as the tide goes out. This habitat is alternately wet and dry and therefore the plants and creatures that thrive there must be able to readily adapt to these extremes in moisture and temperature.

Salt marshes are protected because they provide a safe, rich environment for mollusks, snails, crabs and other invertebrates, birds and mammals. Because



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the water is shallow it is not usually frequented by large fish that would readily eat these creatures. The tall grasses provide cover for baby fish and crabs as well as eggs of insects and invertebrates. Other marsh dwellers burrow into the mud between tides to avoid being scooped up by a bird or small mammal. When the marsh grasses in these natural sanctuaries begin to die back in the fall they decompose, creating a rich food called *detritus*. Detritus and algae form the foundation of the food web in the salt marsh.

In addition to its importance to wildlife, salt marshes provide many benefits for people. Whether they realize it or not, fisherman could not survive without the salt marshes that protect the baby fish that they later catch in open waters. The same can be said for those who catch crab and shrimp. Another lesson learned after many of these wetlands were filled in was that salt marshes provide a natural barrier and buffer to coastal zones. During hurricanes where flooding might occur, the spongy soil of the marshes absorbs water. The grasses hold the soil in place and help reduce erosion. In fact, studies have shown that salt marshes can reduce the height of large, damaging waves in storm surges by almost 20%. This could mean the difference between a coastal home staying put or being washed out to sea.

If possible, visit a salt marsh. Notice the tide and the plant life. Spot a fiddler crab and a salt marsh sparrow. Be careful not to disturb this critical habitat and consider the importance of preserving it.



Name: _____

RESEARCH SIMULATION TASK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - VERNAL PONDS & SALT MARSHES

You have read two Informational texts about wetland habitats, Vernal Ponds and Salt Marshes. Write an essay explaining the importance of wetland habitats to human beings and to nature. Be sure to cite evidence from both texts.

1. Fill in the summarizing frameworks, below, for each text:

VERNAL PONDS

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

SALT MARSHES

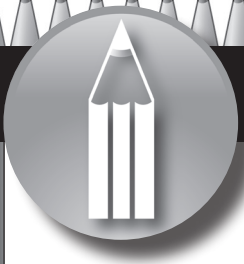
TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

2. What do you notice about the second main idea in each summarizing framework?



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3. What are the “givens” in the boxed assignment?

4. Go back to each text. Based on your main idea “blurbs” in the margins, circle the “appearance and attribute” paragraphs in yellow, the “importance to animals” paragraphs in pink, the “importance to humans” paragraphs in orange.

5. Create a summarizing framework for this essay:

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

6. Based on your summarizing framework and the assignment, write a topic sentence for your essay and both main idea sentences:

Topic Sentence: _____

Main Idea Sentence #1: _____

Main Idea Sentence #2: _____

7. Go back to both texts. Underline evidence of the importance to humans in green, and to animals in red. Then, use the Grid, p. 287, to organize and list your evidence to support each main idea.

BONUS: Go back to each source and circle the word referents the authors refer to their topics.



Name: _____

COMPARISON GRID

	VERNAL POND	SALT MARSH
Importance to people		
Importance to nature		



Name: _____

EXEMPLAR TEXT

HOW WETLANDS ARE IMPORTANT TO NATURE AND TO PEOPLE

In these texts the authors discuss the appearance and attributes of two different types of wetland habitats, the vernal pond and the salt marsh. We learn about the ways both of these wetlands provide a protected, safe environment where eggs are laid and baby water creatures can grow. In Vernal Ponds the author outlines ways to protect and maintain these important forest wetlands while the author of Salt Marshes describes the many ways that these shoreland habitats provide benefits to people living nearby.

Vernal ponds and salt marshes both provide benefits to nature. The author refers to the freshwater vernal pond as a “forest nursery” and as “a safe place for frogs, toads, salamanders, newts, and insects to breed and lay eggs.” Likewise, we learn that the brackish waters of the salt marsh provide a “safe, rich environment for mollusks, snails, crabs, and other invertebrates, birds and mammals.” The reader discovers that the shallow water of the marsh discourages large fish that might devour the smaller marsh-dwelling creatures. Also, baby fish and crabs can hide from predators in the grasses of the salt marsh. Despite this, both the vernal pond and the salt marsh do provide food for other, larger creatures including raccoons, herons, and small mammals. In addition, the reader discovers that as marsh grass dies in autumn it disintegrates into a nutritious food for salt marsh creatures that’s called “detritus.” Detritus, along with algae, make up a key part of the marshland food web.



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Both of these wetland environments can benefit people, however, the salt marsh seems to provide a multitude of benefits to people who live and work along the shore. Environmentalists and naturalists can enjoy observing evidence of wetland creatures' life cycles in both types of wetlands and can learn from and appreciate the ecosystems there. The author of Salt Marshes goes on to explain: "Fishermen could not survive without the salt marshes that protect baby fish that they later catch in open waters." Besides ensuring our future fish, shrimp and crab dinners, salt marshes can serve as a buffer or barrier along the coast. The absorbent marsh soil can soak up water that might otherwise flood. Additionally, marsh grass helps hold this spongy soil in place to cut down on coastal erosion. Surprisingly, we learn that salt marshes can even decrease the height of dangerous waves during storms by about 20%.

After reading about these two important wetland sanctuaries I have a new appreciation of and respect for the ways in which they nurture wildlife. I believe that both authors convince the reader to take a greater interest in salt marshes and vernal ponds. I now understand why it's critical to protect these fascinating habitats – disrupting them can affect the life cycles of many water dwellers, upset the balance of nature, and destroy shoreland communities. I will look for opportunities to observe and explore both habitats. But, I'll be sure to leave them exactly the way I found them.



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Paraphrase It!

When writing a response to text or when using researched material in a report or an essay it's important not to take another author's words and use them as your own. That is called **plagiarism**. Instead, you need to refer to the text or source material and then express what you learned in your own words. This is called **paraphrasing**.

Read each sentence below from the text Hula Hoops. On another paper, **paraphrase** each sentence in your own words. Use sentence starters and replace underlined words or phrases with word referents. Then, try "flipping the sentence."

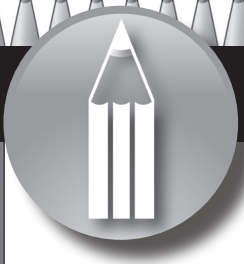
Ex. For thousands of years people of all ages have found ways to play with circles of wood or other materials.

In the article, we learn that throughout history (children and adults) alike have used (wheel-shaped toys) made of wood and other materials as a (fun form of entertainment).

Underline the sentence starter and circle each word referent used for the underlined key words. Notice how the writer "flipped the sentence," below:

Playing with (wheel-shaped toys) made out of wood and other materials has been a (centuries-old) (form of entertainment) and fun for children and adults of all ages, according to this article.

1. The modern plastic hula hoop was fashioned after bamboo hoops that were popular in Australia.
2. In the 1950's the Wham-O company in Los Angeles started a hula hoop fad.
3. Millions of hula hoops were sold after the Wham-O company offered demonstrations in playgrounds and parks across California.



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4. Wham-O sponsored national Hula Hoop competitions beginning in 1968.

SENTENCE STARTERS

- The author discusses _____ .
- In the article we learn that _____ .
- The text explains the way _____ .
- It was interesting to learn how _____ .
- Reading the piece, I discovered that _____ .
- The writer outlines _____ .
- The reader learns that _____ .
- This informational piece examines _____ .
- In this article we discover _____ .
- According to this article _____ .
- Based on this text _____ .

BONUS: Select several sentences from a textbook, magazine article, or nonfiction book and paraphrase them using these techniques.



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More Paraphrasing!

Read these sentences from an article titled Owls. Imagine that you are writing a report on owls and want to use this information. *Paraphrase* each sentence. Use word referents for the underlined words and the Citing Sentence Starters to help you. You might also flip the sentence subject!

1. Owls are birds of prey that hunt rodents, insects, and even smaller birds.

2. Owls are mostly active after dark.

3. These stealthy hunters have sharp talons and hooked beaks to help them rip apart their victims.

4. Their feathers match the natural colors of the woodlands and fields so that their prey can't see them.

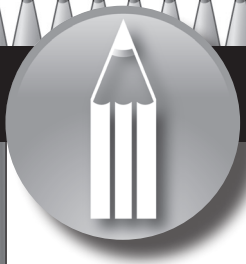
5. Owls fly very quietly, often surprising an unsuspecting mouse or rabbit.

CITING SENTENCE STARTERS

The author points out that _____. The text explains _____. In the article we learn that _____.

The reader discovers that _____. It is interesting to note that _____. The author shows how _____.

I learned in the text that _____. The author explains how _____. The text includes the fact that _____.



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GIVING THE AUTHOR CREDIT (1)

Oscar’s teacher asked the class to write a response to text essay about the article titled The Honey Badger. Oscar read the article and summarized the author’s important points – but he forgot one important step! He used the author’s exact words without citing them! Reread The Honey Badger and the following sentences from Oscar’s response. Skim and scan to locate the sentence in the text. Then REVISE each sentence, using quotation marks to enclose the author’s exact words and an informational verb to help explain where the quote can be found in the text.

Ex. These nasty weasels can unleash a stink bomb that smells worse than the spray of a skunk.

In paragraph two the author describes the honey badger’s spray: “These nasty weasels can unleash a stink bomb that smells worse than the spray of a skunk.”

1. A swarm of angry bees won’t stop the bold badger when he’s craving honey.

2. Incredibly, honey badgers can survive snake bites that would kill humans, and scientists aren’t exactly sure why.

3. Considered to be the most fearless animal in the world, the honey badger never backs down from a battle.

Citing Sentence Starters with Informational Verbs

- In paragraph _____ the author states: “_____.”
- In the introduction the author informs us that: “_____.”
- In the article the author explains: “_____.”

BONUS: Substitute a different Informational Verb for the one given:

- divulges • shares • asserts • maintains • says • tells us



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GIVING THE AUTHOR CREDIT (2)

Read each sentence from the text, Scarecrows, Yesterday and Today. Skim and scan to locate each sentence in the text, then REVISE as a citation, using quotation marks and a citing sentence starter to show where the citation can be found in the text.

1. In fact, in England and other places, people hired children to be bird shoosers.

2. When German immigrants came to the U.S. in the 1800's they made scarecrows they called bootzamon or the bogeyman.

3. Scarecrows are the inspiration for fall festivals all over the world.

Citing Sentence Starters with Informational Verbs

- In the section titled "The Need for Scarecrows", the author states: "_____."
- Later in the article the author maintains that: "_____."
- When describing the ways people have fun with scarecrows the author tells us: "_____."

BONUS: Substitute a different Informational Verb for the one given:

- divulges • shares • asserts • informs • says • explains