



Grade 5 Informational Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 1: Recognizing Genre/Organization



Student Page

Name: _____

NARRATIVE, INFORMATIONAL, OR OPINION?

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

1. Geologists classify rocks three ways. *Igneous rocks* come from deep within the earth and are formed from cooled magma. *Sedimentary rocks* are created when layers of sediment, plant and animal matter and rock fragments are pressed together. Finally, *metamorphic rocks* are produced when igneous or sedimentary rocks are exposed to intense heat or pressure.

Narrative

Informational

Opinion

2. It was Monday morning and I was late for school. As I ran to catch the bus, I saw the glimmer of two sparkling green eyes peering out at me from within the overgrown bushes that circled our lawn. All day long, I kept remembering that set of playful, friendly eyes and I guessed that they belonged to a cat. I certainly hoped so; I'd been wanting a cat for a long time and I hoped that one had found me.

Narrative

Informational

Opinion

3. Don't you agree that fall is the best of the four seasons? The season starts with the excitement of a new school year in September. In October, everybody loves dressing up like a witch or ghouel and celebrating a spooky Halloween. Veteran's or Remembrance Day falls in November and is usually celebrated with parades and moving tributes to war veterans. Of course, there are great holidays in the winter, spring and summer also, but the festivities of autumn will always be my favorites.

Narrative

Informational

Opinion



Name: _____

INFORMATIONAL, OPINION, OR RESPONSE TO TEXT?

Read the following paragraphs. Determine whether each paragraph is Informational, Opinion, or Response to Text. Circle your response. Be ready to explain how you determined the genre of each.

1. Becoming a pianist involves many skills. You must learn to read music and develop an ear so that you can recognize the way the notes should sound. Just as an athlete needs muscle strength and dexterity, a pianist must strengthen her or his fingers and learn to move them independently across the keys. This is accomplished by practicing exercises and scales every day. It's also important to listen to music in a variety of styles – blues, jazz, classical, and rock so that you'll become skillful in addressing these styles in your own playing.

Informational

Opinion

Response to Text

2. In the text titled The Civil Rights Movement we learn about the struggles in the United States during the 1950's and 60's that attempted to end racial discrimination. The author describes the many forms of prejudice, inequality, and segregation that existed and, in some ways, continue to exist even today. In paragraph two we learn about the role of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his efforts to bring about change through peaceful protest, community organizing, and non-violent agitation. The author goes on to describe the violent responses to these efforts that included bombings, lynchings, and police brutality. We learn that the Civil Rights Act was signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964. It was designed to make discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, or national origin illegal. The article ends by outlining the many strides we've made as a nation, as well as the many challenges we continue to face in defending the civil rights of all our citizens.

Informational

Opinion

Response to Text

3. In our town there is talk of changing the school schedule from a ten to twelve month calendar. Proponents believe that year-round school would provide more consistency and less "learning drop off" during the summer break. But, I disagree. Based on my experience, I know that by the time May and June roll around what I need most is some down time to relax, enjoy the out-of-doors, and to have some fun. There are many ways to learn, and not all of them are in the classroom! I think that kids need an extended break from all of the structured pressure we experience all year. I know year round schooling offers a greater number of shorter breaks, but from my perspective, there's nothing like two months of extended freedom to get my creative juices flowing!

Informational

Opinion

Response to Text



IS THAT A FACT OR AN OPINION?

At first, it might be challenging to tell informational writing and opinion writing apart. After all, the two types of writing are organized in much the same way with introductions and conclusions as well as main ideas (informational) or main reasons (opinion).

Here are some hints to help you tell the two apart.

Informational writing focuses on facts that inform you. Facts can be checked in books or online. For example:

1. There are five Great Lakes in North America.
2. The Komodo Dragon is the largest reptile in the world.

These two sentences would likely be found in informational texts.

While opinion writing may include facts, its purpose is to communicate an author's personal opinion on a topic. You could agree or disagree with it. For example:

1. Of the five Great Lakes in North America, Lake Superior is the most beautiful.
2. I think the Komodo Dragon is the most fearsome creature in all of Indonesia.

These two sentences present statements that you could agree or disagree with. They would likely be found in opinion writing.

So, as a general rule, when you're trying to decide if text is informational or opinion, just ask yourself:

- Does this sentence say something that I could check in a book or online? If so, it's probably a fact.
- Does this sentence say something I could agree or disagree with? If so, it's probably an opinion.

Here's another hint: Sentences that use phrases like "the best," "the worst," "the most," and "the least" are likely to be stating opinions. Words like "everybody," "nobody," "never," and "always" should alert you to that you are probably reading somebody's opinion.

1. The **best** way to celebrate your birthday is with a pool party.
2. The **most beautiful** flower in the world is the red rose.
3. Baseball is the **least** exciting sport in the world.
4. The **worst** vegetable of all is Brussels sprouts.

Remember: Opinion writing will include facts but informational writing **should not** include opinions.



Student Reference Page

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR OPINION WRITING

Pro

One thing I enjoy is _____.
My favorite _____ is _____.
I absolutely love _____.
It's easy to see why I like _____.
I really appreciate _____.
I heartily approve of _____.
I get really excited when _____.
I feel positive about _____.
There's nothing I'd rather do than _____.
I look forward to _____.
I am in favor of _____.
I adore _____.
I'm very impressed by _____.
I strongly support _____.
I'm fond of _____.

Opinion Statement

In my opinion, _____.
To me, _____.
According to my point of view _____.
My belief is that _____.
As I see it, _____.
My attitude is that _____.

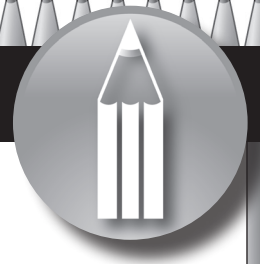
Transition Words

- because
- for the reason that
- given that
- as cited by
- as demonstrated by the fact that
- since
- as evidenced by
- in view of the fact that
- as illustrated by
- as
- seeing that
- in light of the fact that
- supported by the fact that

Con

One thing I dislike is _____.
My least favorite _____ is _____.
I absolutely hate _____.
It's easy to see why I dislike _____.
I just can't appreciate _____.
I completely disapprove of _____.
I get very disappointed when _____.
I feel negative about _____.
There's nothing I'd like to avoid more than _____.
I dread _____.
I am against _____.
I abhor _____.
I'm unimpressed by _____.
I strongly oppose _____.
I don't care for _____.

My stance is that _____.
From my point of view, _____.
I think that _____.
It seems to me that _____.
My position is that _____.



Name: _____

STATING FACTS OR SHARING OPINIONS?

Look at the sets of sentences below. In each pair, one states a fact, one shares an opinion. Write an **E** next to the sentence that states a fact. This is the kind of sentence that is meant to inform, which is the focus of **informational** text. Write an **O** next to the sentence that shares an opinion. This is the kind of sentence expressing a personal point of view in an **opinion** piece. Keep in mind that opinions are **subjective**, meaning that different people may view the same thing very differently. Facts are **objective**, meaning that they can be proven to be true.

1. That is a really ugly and over-priced dress.

 O

Clarkson High School band uniforms are made of gold and maroon fabric.

 E

2. The latest blueprints for the new school gym are the smartest ones yet.

The architect included plans for an indoor running track and pool.

3. On average, our school raises about \$5,000 from its annual gift wrap fundraiser.

Selling gift wrap to raise money for our school benefits everyone.

4. A great way to celebrate your birthday is to host a bowling and pizza party.

Callaway Skating Rink hosts over 100 birthday parties every year.

5. According to the Nielsen Agency, Americans, on average, watch more than 5 hours of television per day.

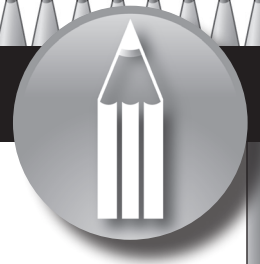
Cable television is superior to satellite dish or live streaming of TV programming.

6. The scientific name for the domestic dog is
- Canis lupus familiaris*
- .

Dogs make really loving, loyal family pets that contribute a lot to the household.

BONUS: On a topic of your choice, write a pair of sentences, one factual and one opinion.

Then, exchange with a neighbor and see if she/he can identify these correctly. Discuss how both of you made your determination.



Name: _____

READING #1

Title

There are several thousand varieties of snakes that live in just about every part of the world. Of these, only 375 are known to be venomous. In the United States alone, almost 50,000 people are bitten by snakes every year. Of these, 18 % deliver dangerous venom. It's important to know what to do when you come in contact with a snake, how to avoid getting bitten, and what to do if you receive a snake bite.

The good news is, unless snakes are provoked or frightened, they will not bite. If you see one of these slithering creatures while hiking or camping, the best thing to do is to back off. Snakes strike quickly and can lunge forward up to half of their body length to inflict a bite. So, if you accidentally disturb a snake, step back at least two large strides, putting at least six feet between you and the defensive reptile. In order to avoid surprising a snake, pay attention where you step. Stay on the hiking trail. Avoid walking through tall, dense grass. Exercise caution when climbing across or turning over rocks. If you come upon a dead log on the forest floor, don't step over it – a snake could be curled up on the opposite side. Instead, step onto the log, look down, then proceed. If, despite your best efforts, you accidentally disturb a snake, wearing long pants and sturdy boots can prevent a bite. Most importantly, never reach for or touch a snake in the wild, even if you think it is dead. Having a healthy respect for these serpents is the best way to avoid a bite.



Student Page

If you do get bit, it's critical to call 911 immediately. Even if you think the snake isn't poisonous, it can be difficult to tell. Most importantly, stay calm. Do not try to capture or kill the offending creature. Instead, if you can, take a photo of the snake so that experts can identify it and determine whether it is venomous. If you're bitten on the leg or arm, remove any tight, constricting clothing or jewelry in case swelling occurs. Don't try to squeeze or suck out the venom, or to further cut the fang marks in an attempt to "bleed" out the poison. These tactics can cause infection.

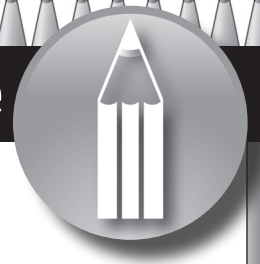
If, in spite of your preparation and attention you do get bit, be sure to follow the guidelines, above. Most snake bites, even those of venomous snakes, with prompt medical care, are not fatal. On your next hike, dress appropriately, proceed with caution and respect, and know what to do if a bite occurs. Preparation and knowledge is the key to appreciating these fascinating creatures.

Fill in the Summarizing Framework, below:

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____



Name: _____

READING #2

Title

I stepped out of our cabin door and gazed into the woods and glistening blue lake beyond. “This is awesome!” I whispered, as I did every time I ventured outside. As a city kid, I’d always dreamed of exploring the countryside. To experience nature. I could hardly believe I was spending three weeks at White Birch Camp. But here I was.

Jack, our counselor, blew his whistle and the kids emerged from their cabins in small groups. “Okay, campers,” Jack called, “Do you have your gear?” We fumbled with canteens and water bottles. Jack handed out trail bars that we stuffed in our pockets. “Sun screen?” he barked. “Bug spray?” We nodded. “Okay, let’s hit the trail!”

We set out in small groups, single file, each group led by a counselor. Our goal was to observe wildlife – birds, small forest creatures like squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, and if we were lucky, maybe a fox, coyote or deer. We had just learned about reptiles and amphibians, and I was hoping to turn over a stone and find a sleek red salamander snoozing there. I had my phone in my pocket and was dying to take a picture to text home to my best friend, Marco. “Remember,” Jack called over his shoulder, “We need to be quiet – no talking, and step lightly. If we go trampling through the underbrush we’ll frighten off the forest dwellers.” We tiptoed behind him, heading toward the woodland. He stopped us just where the trees began. “One more thing,” he said, giving us all a stern look. “Stick together. Stay on the trail! No wandering off!”

Soon we were surrounded by shade. Leaves of all sizes and shapes whispered in the breeze. Every imaginable bird chirp, caw, and peep came together in a kind of forest symphony. There were rustling sounds in the underbrush, and I tried to imagine what could be making those sounds. I felt really alive in this place, this beautiful world I’d never experienced before. “There,” Jake whispered, pointing between the trees. “A vernal pond...” We’d learned about these seasonal watering holes – places where frogs, toads, newts, and salamanders laid their eggs. The eggs hatched and the shallow pond became a safe place for these young amphibians. I paused for a better look, wondering what was living in the shallow puddle and the area around it.



Student Page

Just then a fallen log surrounded by a pile of rocks caught my eye. The perfect place for a salamander to hide, I thought. It would only take a second...I stepped out of line onto the soggy ground, grabbed my phone, knelt in front of the log and reached to flip over a moist stone. Suddenly what looked like a pile of leaves moved. Thinking of the salamander, I reached to push the leaves aside. But what I saw was a snake, coiled and ready to strike, its yellow eyes and forked tongue flashing. I let out a scream and jumped away, falling on my behind. Jack was there in an instant, yanking my muddled self back onto the trail. "What is it?" he demanded. My cabin mates gaped at me as I brushed off my clothes. I'd dropped my phone into the pond, but didn't say a word about that.

"I was looking for a salamander...I went to turn over a rock - and there was a snake!"

Jack knelt in front of me. "Candice, did it bite you?" he asked, his eyes scanning my arms and legs.

"No..." I mumbled, fighting back tears, imagining what could have happened. Jack took this all in, stood, and gave my shoulders a squeeze.

"A close call," he said. "Which is why it's so important to stay on the trail with the group."

I was shook up, my knees trembling and my heart pounding. I bit my lower lip and took a deep breath. Jake and my trail mates could see I was upset. And embarrassed.

"It's okay," Jack said. "Candice just taught us all an important lesson. Now, let's move on!"

Off we went, deeper into the forest. I was more cautious than ever, watching where I stepped, and careful to stick with the group. I'd been scared, but luckily not hurt. And I had seen some wildlife. I smiled. I couldn't wait to tell Marco!

Fill in the Summarizing Framework, below:

This is a story about_____.

The problem or adventure was that_____.

The problem was solved or adventure concluded when_____.

_____.



Name: _____

Giant's Causeway

Close your eyes and imagine a mounded pathway of black hexagonal columns forming steps leading from misty stone cliffs that disappear into the sea. If you think you're envisioning the set of a movie about a prehistoric land or a strange planet in another solar system you'd be wrong. This place actually exists on the coast of Northern Ireland and it's called **The Giant's Causeway**.

Let's explore this legendary landform, investigate how it was formed, and discover the legend that draws almost a million tourists every year.

Peculiar Landscape

The **terrain** or landscape of Giant's Causeway is unique - there are few places in the world that resemble it. This

area along the Antrim Plateau is made up of thousands of stone pillars. The pillars are shaped like **polygons** (many-sided figures), with four, five, seven or eight sides. Some pillars are over 35 feet tall. These columns are packed



tightly next to one another as though a giant had driven thousands of stone spikes into the ground, side by side, forming a honeycomb pattern. The nearly flat tops of these pillars are just the right size to form steps. They cover over 170 acres. To get an idea how big that is, consider this - we can park 150 cars in a one-acre parking lot! The Giant's

Causeway curves around the shoreline and rises up into a small mountain-like mound overlooking the North Channel of the Atlantic Ocean between Northern Ireland and Scotland. Then it drops off into the sea, like a staircase leading to the ocean depths. This knobby

pathway of stones is surrounded by towering cliffs made of the same kind of columns. Some people say they look like gigantic organ pipes. Northern Ireland's misty weather and the sounds of the sea help to give the Giant's Causeway a mysterious, otherworldly

atmosphere.

How it Was Formed

This unique landscape was created over 50 million years ago through **volcanic activity**. Over and over again hot liquid rock called **lava** streamed from volcanoes into the area. As the lava met



Layers of basalt form pillars

the sea it cooled, and as it cooled it contracted and hardened into volcanic rock called **basalt**. Layer upon layer of basalt make up the pillars. The pressure in between the basalt columns eventually shaped them into the honeycomb pattern of many polygons that make this landform so unusual. All of this took place during the **Paleogene Period**, a time in which the continents were moving and the planet was evolving into what we now recognize as our earth.

Legend of Finn MacCool

The people of Northern Ireland invented a story or **legend** to explain how this interesting terrain came to be. Early

people knew little about the science of **geology** that would explain how the Causeway was formed. So, someone with a great imagination made up a story about a giant warrior named **Fionn MacCumhaill** (pronounced Finn MacCool) whose worst enemy was a Giant named The Red Man who lived across the sea in Scotland. Finn built the Causeway clear across the sea by hand so that he and the Red Man could meet for



a fight. As the fierce, gigantic Red Man crossed the Causeway, Finn MacCool caught sight of

him and realized he might not be able to overpower him. So Finn had his wife wrap him up in a blanket and he jumped into a big cradle, pretending to be Finn's baby. When The Red Man saw how big Finn's "baby" was, he could only imagine the size of Finn himself! With that, The Red Man took off across the Causeway, back to Scotland, ripping up most of the rocky path behind him as he went. This is why, according to legend, the Causeway rocks seem to vanish into the sea.

If you have an interest in geology or Irish legends, or if you like traveling to and photographing unusual places, you might consider a trip to Northern Ireland to visit the Giant's Causeway. The panoramic views, fascinating volcanic rock formations, and the entertaining legend that gave this scenic locale its name make it an amazing destination.



Name: _____

Ice Cubes - Before the Age of Freezers

These days we think nothing of reaching into the freezer, popping a handful of ice cubes into our glass and pouring ourselves a refreshing frosty beverage. Some of us even enjoy the convenience of an ice-maker built right into the refrigerator door – just press the lever and a seemingly endless supply of perfectly formed ice cubes cascade into the glass. But it wasn't always that way. You might be surprised to learn that ice was actually used long before the days when electricity and refrigeration was available. In fact, people have been using ice to keep their foods fresh and their drinks cold for thousands of years. Let's explore how ice was used in

ancient times, and find out when and how it became an industry in the United States.



Ice in the Olden Days

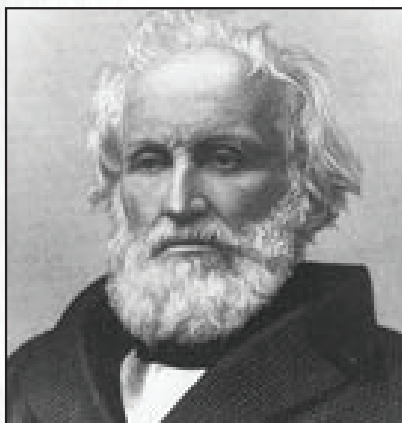
It's hard to imagine making, storing, and using ice before we had electric refrigerators and freezers. But historians tell us that ice has been used for thousands of years. Of course, this required people to be extremely creative and **industrious**. The ancient Egyptians, despite extremely hot daytime temperatures,

apparently took advantage of cold evenings (when the temperature dropped below freezing) to make ice. Shallow clay trays were filled with water and left outside on beds of straw or placed on the rooftops. In colder climates ice was cut from frozen lakes and stored. There are records that the Chinese did this before the year 1,000. Others such as the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans collected as much snow as they could and piled it in deep pits. They'd cover it to keep it cool and when they wanted a cold drink they'd add a scoop of snow. The problem with any of these techniques was that as soon as the temperature rose snow and ice would melt.



The Business of Selling Ice

In the early 1800's a Massachusetts man named Frederic Tudor began the business of selling ice. He saw the thick ice that formed on the ponds and rivers in New England and decided to find a way to not only sell it, but to transport it to far-away places where ice was scarce. At that time large chunks of ice were cut with special saws and hauled out of the frigid waters. These would be sold to local businesses and to wealthy people who had **ice houses**. Ice houses were heavily insulated



Frederic Tudor, the Boston Ice King

with hay and wood chips and filled with big blocks of ice used to keep food fresh and for use in cold drinks. Frederic Tudor (later nick-named "The Boston Ice King") figured out a way to **insulate** ships with sawdust, wood shavings, and straw to protect ice from extreme heat. He'd stack the large ice blocks like a brick wall and surrounded them with insulation. In this way he was able to ship ice to many southern U.S. cities and as far away as Cuba, Martinique, South America, India, and England. Later, special horse-drawn plows were invented to make the process called **ice harvesting** easier. In 1834 another Massachusetts man named Jacob Perkins invented a way to produce artificial ice. Other innovations followed that made ice available year-round.

MASSACHUSETTS LOCATIONS WHERE TUDOR ICE WAS HARVESTED



- Walden Pond, Concord
- Spy Pond, Arlington
- Horn Pond, Woburn
- Sandy Pond, Ayer
- Fresh Pond, Cambridge
- Suntaug Lake, Lynnfield
- Wenham Lake, Wenham
- Haggett's Pond, Andover
- Doleful Pond, Stoneham

So, the next time you head to the freezer for a glassful of clinking ice cubes think about all of the work your ancestors went through to cool their drinks and keep their food fresh. Since the olden days of gathering snow and ice, to the beginnings of the ice harvesting business, to the convenience of ice cubes in our own kitchens, none of us want to live without the many benefits ice offers.



Student Page

Name: _____

YOU BE THE EDITOR!

Imagine you're the editor of a science magazine for kids. Your assistant sent you this article, but forgot some of the most important parts that will help the reader learn from the text. Your job is to provide the missing parts.

1. Read the entire piece. What is the **topic** – in other words, what is the text **all about**?

Is this an informational or opinion piece? How do you know?

2. Based on the **topic**, create a **title** for this piece that will help the reader figure out what they'll be learning about. Write your title, in large print, across the top of the article.
3. Number each paragraph.
4. Circle the **introduction**.
5. Bracket the **body** of the piece.
6. Box the **conclusion**.
7. Read the first paragraph in the body of the piece (*paragraph 2*). It is missing a **heading** that tells the reader what the entire paragraph is about. Identify the main idea in order to create a heading and write it in the blank at the beginning of the paragraph. Do the same thing for paragraphs 3 and 4.
8. Read paragraph 1 again. The writer has forgotten to italicize or bold the **key vocabulary words**. Use the diagram in the middle of the page to help you identify these key vocabulary words. Underline these words to help the reader.
9. Insert **captions** beneath the diagram and the photo to explain what the reader is looking at.
10. Scan the remaining paragraphs and underline any key vocabulary words that should have appeared in bold or italicized print.
11. Fill in the summarizing framework, below.

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____



Name: _____

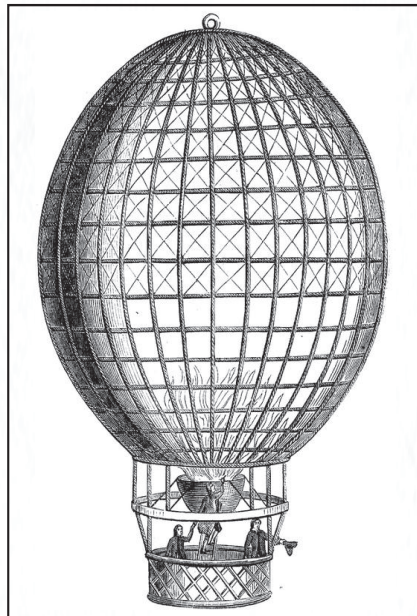
Title

Can you name the very first successful flying machine? If you guessed the Wright brothers' airplane, you'd be wrong! In fact, the hot air balloon was invented long before the Wright brothers' first flight. It's fascinating to learn the history of hot air balloons, find out how modern balloons are constructed, and to explore the sport of hot air ballooning today.

Heading:

The first successful hot air balloon launching and flight took place in the year 1783 in Paris, France. But centuries before this people had experimented with unmanned balloon launches. Between the years 220 and 280 AD the Chinese launched balloons, not to carry passengers, but to signal soldiers in battle about

military maneuvers. These early balloons, called kongming or sky lanterns were really large paper lanterns with a large candle or other



fire source suspended underneath it. Picture a paper bag suspended upside down with an apparatus to hold a flame beneath it. The flame heats the air inside the lantern causing it to rise. Two brothers, Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Etienne Montgolfier used this concept to create the first hot-air balloon. They

began with unmanned flights. Animals were next. Finally, in October of 1783, in France, the Montgolfier brothers sent up a tethered flight – the balloon attached to a long line secured on the ground - with Etienne aboard. A few weeks later two Frenchmen, named Pilatre de Rozier and Marquis Francois d'Arlandes,

became the first passengers in a free flight without tethers. Later, in 1794, the French used balloons for the first time for surveillance purposes during a military battle.

Heading:

Hot air balloons work on a simple principle – hot air is lighter than cold air and when the air inside the balloon is heated it will rise. Therefore, hot air balloons require a heat source to continually heat



Masters of Disguise

The wild and wonderful world of nature is a dangerous place. Every minute of every day wild creatures act as hunter or the hunted. Every animal, bird, and insect uses many tactics to stay alive and do their best not to become another beast's dinner. One way creatures protect themselves is through **camouflage**. Camouflage helps wildlife blend in with the environment. Let's discover how a tiger's stripes help it survive, explore how other creatures are experts at hiding, and others who pretend to be something they're not.

One of a Kind!

Do you ever wonder why a tiger has stripes? Each tiger has a unique set of stripes in shades of brown, orange, gold, white, or



Tiger Taking Down an Antelope.

tan. In fact, no two tigers are exactly the same. Besides being beautiful, the tiger's stripes help it blend in with tall grasses and other vegetation in the grasslands and jungles

where they live. Their furry coats as well as their skin beneath are marked with this **camouflage**. The stripes are examples of what scientists call **disruptive coloration**. Stripes or spots tend

to blur the outline of the creature, making them hard to see. This allows them to be stealthy hunters and to disappear into the underbrush when danger arises. Tiger stripes are so effective

that companies have manufactured fabric to resemble tiger skins. This tiger striped fabric is used to make pants and shirts for hunters who hope to become as successful in the hunt as the mighty tiger.



Going Undercover

Other creatures can protect themselves through what is called concealing coloration. When a toad nestles into a pile of dried leaves the bumpy texture and earthy color of its skin allow it to perfectly blend into the background. The white fur of a snowshoe hare or pale feathers of a snowy owl against a field of snow makes it difficult for predators to distinguish them. Polar bears are another example of this. It makes sense that in wooded or desert habitats many creatures

will be brown or gray in color. Tree frogs and exotic insects that dwell in the rain forests are often – you guessed it! Green! Even fish use this trick – the flat flounder fish with its brownish speckled skin seems to disappear against the sandy ocean floor.

Great Pretenders

Another way that creatures camouflage themselves is through the use of disguise. This means that they fool their predators by appearing like something else that wouldn't be appetizing.

For example, the leaf katydid looks surprisingly like a leaf. When perched on a tree or bush it's nearly impossible to distinguish it from the vegetation.

The leaf-tailed gecko is another example of a creature that positions itself on a branch and creates the illusion of being just another brown, curled leaf. The many varieties of the insect called walking sticks (which can be as small as an inch long, or as long as a foot or more) with their thin, branch-like body and numerous angled twig-like legs appear to be just another part of the tree. Easy to see how a hungry predator could pass them by.

If you are a wildlife enthusiast or a nature lover you'll need to train yourself to recognize these Masters of Disguise. Whether they use disruptive coloration, concealing coloration, or disguise you can train yourself to pick them out of their habitat. Without a doubt, camouflage is a little miracle of the natural world.





Student Reference Page

INFORMATIONAL PILLAR

INTRODUCTION

Lead/Topic Sentence

Main Idea #1 _____

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Idea #2 _____

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Idea #3 _____

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Conclusion

Informational Summarizing Framework

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____



OPINION PILLAR

INTRODUCTION

Lead/Opinion Statement

Main Reason #1 _____

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Reason #2 _____

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Reason #3 _____

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Conclusion

Creative Restatements of Main Reasons

Opinion Summarizing Framework

TOPIC: _____

MAIN REASON #1: _____

MAIN REASON #2: _____

MAIN REASON #3: _____



Name: _____

SAFETY FIRST: THE NECESSITY OF SNOW DAYS

While most students revel in a snow day, few know how difficult the decision to close schools because of bad weather can be. Schools face criticism if they close too readily due to bad weather or if they choose to remain open during a storm. When making this tricky decision, most schools consider the amount of snow, the timing of the storm, and any accompanying weather conditions.

Obviously, the amount of snowfall is an important consideration. After all, the heavier the snowfall, the longer it takes to clear the roads. As a general rule, most schools consider closing when there is more than three inches of snow on the ground. They are more likely to close school when the snow is heavy and wet because of the increased chance of power outages. Just imagine how parents would worry if their children were stranded at school without heat or lights!

The timing of the storm always needs to be taken into account. School officials must consider when the snow fell or when it is predicted to begin and end. If snow falls early in the morning, it is likely that schools will be closed because the roads will not be cleared in time for buses. If a substantial snowstorm is predicted to begin in the afternoon, a snow day may be called because travel conditions are likely to be treacherous by the close of school. However, the School Superintendents Association advises that snow days never be called just on the basis of a single weather forecast. Instead, it suggests that superintendents “rely on multiple sources of information including subscription weather alert systems, local radio and television meteorologists and their own judgment.”



Finally, school closings are more likely when icy conditions, extreme cold or strong winds accompany the snowstorm. Strong winds may cause dangerous snow drifts as well as fallen tree branches in the roadways. Icy conditions cause cars to skid and people to sustain falls. On very cold mornings, school buses need time to warm up, so they are likely to run behind schedule. Children could get frost-bite while waiting for the school bus and, sadly some children just don't have the winter clothing they need to stay warm when the temperature drops dramatically.

While parents sometimes have to miss work when schools call a snow day, it is wise to stay home when winter weather becomes treacherous and unpredictable. A snow day is not just a happy surprise for students, but a genuine necessity, especially when a significant amount of snow falls, when the storm hits at an inconvenient time and when it is accompanied by other dangerous conditions.



Student Page

Name: _____

SAFETY FIRST: THE NECESSITY OF SNOW DAYS

1. This is an example of what kind of writing? Circle one:

Informational

Opinion

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the **introduction**.

4. Box the **conclusion**.

5. Circle the **title** and identify the **topic**.

6. Underline the **lead** in red.

7. Underline the **topic sentence** in blue.

8. Underline each **MAIN IDEA** or **MAIN REASON** and label accordingly. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

9. Read this detail: *Depending on the timing of the storm, schools may opt for a delayed opening or early dismissal rather than a full snow day.*

Where does this detail belong? Paragraph # _____

10. Number the references to each main idea restated in the conclusion. Use paragraph numbers.

11. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan. If the piece is informational, circle 'Main Idea', if it's an opinion piece, circle 'Main Reason':

TOPIC: _____

Main Idea/Main Reason #1 _____

Main Idea/Main Reason #2 _____

Main Idea/Main Reason #3 _____



Name: _____

SAVE ME FROM SNOW DAYS!

Imagine a gray winter day. Your fingers and toes tingle with the cold, your knees and elbows are sore and possibly bleeding (you can't tell for sure since you are wearing two sweaters and ski pants) because you slipped on ice-covered pavement. The hours roll by slowly since you are bored beyond belief. You can't enjoy your favorite winter sports, you could have a power outage at any minute and snow days can cut into your summer vacation.

On snow days travel is difficult making it challenging to get to your favorite winter sport. After all, how many of us live within walking distance of a skating pond, sledding hill or ski mountain? You can be sure nobody is going to give you a ride to any of these places because driving in the slushy mess of the road is dangerous. In my opinion, this is extremely frustrating because the freshly fallen snow usually makes conditions for skiing, snowboarding and sledding absolutely perfect.

Another problem with snow days is that you have to worry about power outages. This is a serious concern because you are stuck at home with nothing to do except watch dull daytime television and play computer games until your wrist aches. You won't even be able to rely on these simple diversions if the raging storm knocks out the electricity at your house. Picture yourself stuck in a cold, dark house with absolutely nothing to do. What could be worse?



Student Page

In the darkest hours of this never-ending day, you remember that sometimes snow days have to be deducted from your summer vacation. So, you've traded in a sunny summer day that you could have spent fishing, swimming, bike riding and canoing for this boring snow day. Instead of cutting days off summer vacation, some schools cancel their February vacations, shorten spring break or hold classes on Saturdays to make up for snow days. From my point of view, this makes snow days something to avoid at all cost.

Who needs snow days? I believe they should be outlawed. After all, studded snow tires and four-wheel drive vehicles are available and they make travel possible through the worst of winter weather. On these boring days, we can't enjoy winter sports and we run the risk of a power outage. The final insult is that these long, dreary days just may cost us some of the fair-weather fun we look forward to all year long.



Name: _____

SAVE ME FROM SNOW DAYS!

1. This is an example of what kind of writing? Circle one:

Informational

Opinion

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the **introduction**.

4. Box the **conclusion**.

5. Circle the **title** and identify the **topic**.

6. Underline the **lead** in red.

7. Underline the **topic sentence** in blue.

8. Underline each **MAIN IDEA** or **MAIN REASON** and label accordingly. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

9. Read this detail: *If you have brothers and sisters, they're likely to be just as bored as you are during a power outage and you'll probably annoy each another.*

Where does this detail belong? Paragraph # _____

10. Number the references to each main idea restated in the conclusion. Use paragraph numbers.

11. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan. If the piece is informational, circle 'Main Idea', if it's an opinion piece, circle 'Main Reason':

TOPIC: _____

Main Idea/Main Reason #1 _____

Main Idea/Main Reason #2 _____

Main Idea/Main Reason #3 _____



Student Page

Name: _____

A BOWLING PARTY

I've had lots of fun at pool parties in the summer and sledding parties in the winter. Parties with scavenger hunts are great any time of the year. So are birthday celebrations with smiling clowns and big bouncy houses. But, as far as I'm concerned, the best kind of party for boys and girls of all ages is a bowling party.

If you've ever bowled, you will surely agree that it is fun, whether you're good at it or not. I'm always excited to hear the sharp crack that lets everybody know I've knocked down all or most of those white pins. Still, I just laugh along with my friends if my ball tumbles into the gutter with a thud. The colorful, blinking lights of the bowling alley and the cheers of the high scorers seem to put everybody in a really good mood. It's fun to rent a pair of comical gray and red bowling shoes. Everybody is wearing them and they do keep you on firm footing as you launch your ball down the slick alley.

The way I see it, planning a bowling party is a breeze. You just book a few lanes and invite your friends. You can buy favorite party treats like cheesy pizza and crispy onion rings right at the bowling alley, so all you'll need to bring is a cake and paper plates. Chances are, everybody is going to be having so much fun they won't want to stop to eat anyway. I'd select cute bowling-themed party favors and invitations that are widely available and inexpensive. You can even get a piñata in the shape of a bowling pin to break open at your party.

Finished bowling? Well, the fun is just getting started because now it's time to hit the arcade! My personal favorite game is air hockey. If you've ever played, you'll surely agree that this game, in which you send a puck sailing along a slick surface at breakneck speed, is an absolute blast. Foosball is another arcade game that everybody enjoys - and who doesn't love a rowdy game of pinball?

I absolutely love a bowling party. Bowling is fun, regardless of your skill level, the party is easy to plan, and gives you a chance to share the excitement of arcade games with all of your friends. My birthday is in March and I am definitely going to celebrate with a bowling party. Look for your invitation in the mail! You're not going to want to miss it.



Student Page

Name: _____

A BOWLING PARTY

1. This is an example of what kind of writing? Circle one:

Informational Opinion Narrative

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the **introduction**.

4. Box the **conclusion**.

5. Circle the **title** and note the **topic**.

6. Underline the **lead** in red.

7. Underline the **topic sentence** in blue.

8. Underline each **MAIN REASON**. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

9. Read this detail: *Make sure you have plenty of quarters on hand for the race car driving games too.*

Where does this detail belong? Paragraph # _____

10. Circle the opinion language throughout the piece.

11. Number the references to each main idea restated in the conclusion. Use paragraph numbers.

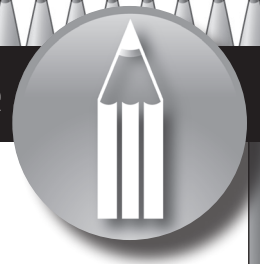
12. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan:

TOPIC: _____

Main Reason #1 _____

Main Reason #2 _____

Main Reason #3 _____



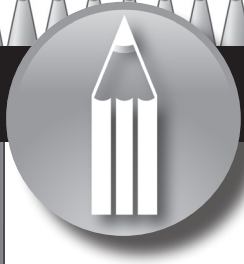
Name: _____

HATCHET BY GARY PAULSEN

Have you ever wondered if you could survive without a kitchen full of groceries and a safe, warm bed to sleep in at night? I've often daydreamed about being stranded on a desert island. Could I manage to build myself a little shelter? Could I survive by diving for shellfish and climbing for coconuts? I thought it would be great to find out, until I read the novel Hatchet by Gary Paulsen! This unforgettable novel showed me that wilderness survival is difficult and dangerous as main character Brian Robeson is forced to fend for himself in a remote forest after a plane crash. I found Brian to be a realistic character with determination and a respect for the awesome power of nature.

While another author may have depicted Brian as a hero, Gary Paulsen portrays him more realistically. An ordinary 13-year-old boy, he is troubled by his parents' divorce, but helpless to do anything about it, and we know just how he feels. When he points the plane toward a safe landing spot, he's not being heroic. He's panicked, but does what he must to keep himself alive. We all have a survival instinct so we'd probably react the same way. We can imagine his hope as he realizes that his parents "would tear the world apart to find him." We can feel his hunger when he dreams about eating a cheeseburger. All of this makes it easy for us to empathize with Brian.

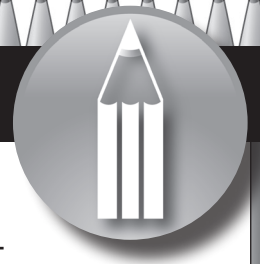
Brian's determination is also admirable. He faces overwhelming hardships, but he never gives up on trying to carve out a spot for himself in this hostile wilderness. He makes mistakes and pays dearly for them but also learns from them. One of his worst mistakes was trying to preserve his food by burying it only to find a skunk digging it up. As he tries to protect his food, Brian is sprayed directly in the face at a close distance. Two weeks later, his eyes still stung and the smell clung to his clothing for more than a month. Brian's reaction to the incident was to accept the loss of his food gracefully and gather more.



Student Page

As a city boy, Brian came to the wilderness with little understanding of nature, but he quickly grows to respect its amazing power. He feels no anger toward the skunk that stole his food or the moose who attacked him. In Brian's mind, he and the animals were all just living things trying to stay alive. The camaraderie he comes to feel toward nature is evident when he finds a gun: "It was a strange feeling, holding the rifle. It somehow removed him from everything around him. Without the rifle, he had to fit in, to be part of it all, to understand it and use it – the woods, all of it." Clearly Brian has come to understand the value of his experience in the wilderness armed with only his hatchet.

From his miserable first night in the wilderness to his rescue fifty four days later, Brian Robeson had me rooting for him on every step of his journey. As an ordinary boy who reacted to extraordinary hardships with determination and learned to respect nature, he is certainly the most courageous and memorable character I have ever met in literature.



Name: _____

HATCHET BY GARY PAULSEN

1. Number each paragraph. Circle the introduction paragraph and box the conclusion.
 What type of text is the author writing about? _____
 Is this response an informational or opinion text? _____
 How do you know? _____
2. Put a bracket around the three BODY PARAGRAPHS and underline the MAIN IDEA SENTENCE in each.
3. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to each paragraph to tell what each paragraph is about.
4. Highlight the quotes in the 2nd and 4th paragraphs.
5. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan:
 TOPIC: _____
 MAIN IDEA #1: _____
 MAIN IDEA #2: _____
 MAIN IDEA #3: _____
6. How does the author feel about the character of Brian Robeson? Support your answer with evidence from the text. _____

7. On the back of this sheet, use the following sentence starters to summarize the text:
 This piece describes _____ .
 The author felt that _____ and provided examples such as _____ .
 It seems to me that the book Hatchet is _____ because _____ .
8. Do you think this was an effective book report? Why or why not? _____



Student Page

Name: _____

THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

Don't you wonder why some people doubt the existence of the Loch Ness monster? In my opinion, it is obvious that the Scottish highlands are home to not one, but a colony of prehistoric aquatic animals. When you consider the characteristics of Loch Ness itself, the persistent sightings of the strange creature and the results of sonar testing, you will surely agree that the Loch Ness monster is anything but a myth!

The characteristics of the loch (loch is the Scottish way of saying lake) make it entirely possible that an unknown species is able to survive there, undetected. The loch is located in a rugged, sparsely populated area. It has a surface area of 21.8 square miles and reaches a depth of 755 feet. Just imagine how easily a small population of large creatures could find food and shelter in a body of water so large and so deep! Furthermore, huge underwater caverns that would provide perfect shelters for animals are known to exist at the bottom of the loch. Due to its high peat content, the loch is murky which makes it hard to spot underwater life. Amazingly, Loch Ness never freezes and maintains a constant temperature of 42-44 degrees. All of these features combine to make the loch a very hospitable environment for many elusive and adaptable kinds of life. The way I see it, Loch Ness is one of the few places on earth today where prehistoric aquatic creatures really could survive.

Since 1933, there have been over 3,000 reported sightings of the Loch Ness monster. While some have clearly been hoaxes, many are credible. One of the most authoritative belongs to scientist and inventor Robert Harvey Rines. Nobody could ever mistake the distinguished Rines for a quack. He was a war veteran, a lawyer, a lecturer at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and one of the inventors of ultra-sound technology. While on vacation in Scotland in 1972, Rines spied "a large, darkish hump covered with rough mottled skin" in the loch. He estimated that the creature was about

(continued)



45 feet long with a long tail, flippers and a long neck like a giraffe. The descriptions of other eyewitnesses are strikingly consistent with Rines'. If you compare those descriptions to fossil records, you've got an animal that bears an uncanny resemblance to the plesiosaur, a marine reptile said to have gone extinct 65 million years ago. Do you agree with the theory that the Loch Ness monster is a plesiosaur? I concur with Rines, who said, "If I didn't trust the people I've talked to and our own scientific evidence, I'd say I was crazy. I may not be able to prove it, but I know there was a plesiosaur in Loch Ness because I saw it."

Who can argue with the results of sonar testing? This sophisticated technology uses sound waves to locate underwater life and sense its size. It is very accurate and used extensively by the U.S. military. The overwhelming majority of sonar tests conducted in Loch Ness have detected "large, unidentified living creatures at a depth of 75 feet or more." The leader of one research expedition describes his excitement at seeing the images: "There is nothing that big in the Loch. I was in shock, as it looked like a big serpent. It's amazing. You can't fake a sonar image." Cynics say that the images are just a colossal bloom of algae, but what are the chances of algae thriving at 75 feet below the surface? At that depth, in waters as murky as those of Loch Ness, it is highly unlikely that any type of algae would get the sunlight it needs to grow.

Are you convinced that cold, deep Loch Ness provides a perfect habitat for large aquatic animals? Do you find more than 3,000 reported sightings hard to dismiss? Are you, like the U.S. military, willing to trust the results of sonar testing? If so, you will surely have to agree that Scotland's most controversial critter is definitely real!



Student Page

Name: _____

THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

1. This is an example of what kind of writing? Circle one:

Informational Opinion Narrative

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the **introduction**.

4. Box the **conclusion**.

5. Circle the **title**.

6. Underline the **lead** in red.

7. Underline the **topic sentence** in blue.

8. Underline each MAIN REASON. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

9. Circle the opinion language throughout the piece.

10. Highlight the quote in the third paragraph.

11. Number the references to each main idea restated in the conclusion. Use paragraph numbers.

12. Circle the word referent that appears in the conclusion.

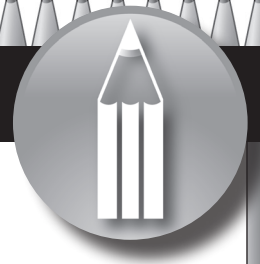
13. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan:

TOPIC: _____

Main Reason #1 _____

Main Reason #2 _____

Main Reason #3 _____



Name: _____

Writing Simple Summarizing Paragraphs

Look at the following summarizing framework and summarizing paragraph:

TOPIC: Volcanoes

MAIN IDEA #1: What causes volcanoes

MAIN IDEA #2: Hazards of volcanoes

MAIN IDEA #3: How science can predict eruptions

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.

Select one of the following summarizing frameworks and use informational verbs to help extend it into a summarizing paragraph as the author did, above.

TOPIC: Space Travel

MAIN IDEA #1: History

MAIN IDEA #2: Astronauts

MAIN IDEA #3: Spacecraft

TOPIC: Desert

MAIN IDEA #1: Landscape

MAIN IDEA #2: Wildlife

MAIN IDEA #3: Climate

TOPIC: Migration

MAIN IDEA #1: Birds

MAIN IDEA #2: Fish

MAIN IDEA #3: Seals

TOPIC: George Washington

MAIN IDEA #1: Early Life

MAIN IDEA #2: Year as soldier

MAIN IDEA #3: First President

INFORMATIONAL VERBS

discusses	explores	uncovers	notes that	delves into
explains	predicts	illustrates	learns about	demonstrates
notes	highlights	emphasizes	discovers	observes
introduces	describes	investigates	outlines	scrutinizes
compare	contrast	shares	analyzes	identifies
reveals	presents	recognize	argues	determines
examines				



Name: _____

BIRDS OF PREY

If you look up in the sky and see a bird that doesn't even need to flap its wings to fly, you are probably looking at a bird of prey. Birds of prey, soar silently through the air. Also known as raptors, these large and interesting birds hunt and feed on other animals. Osprey, owls, hawks, and eagles are all birds of prey that share many characteristics, but differ in important ways too.

Owls are a well-known example of a bird of prey. These large-eyed night stalkers have very sensitive ears, excellent night vision and sharp talons that are perfect for snaring prey. They are known for their ability to turn their heads almost completely around to spot prey in their territory. Their configuration of wing feathers helps them to fly silently and surprise their prey. Some owls, such as the Barn Owl have a concave arrangement of feathers on their faces that channels sound into their ears. Owls come in a variety of sizes from the tiny Saw Whet Owl to the Great Grey Owl, which has a wingspan of over five feet. Though owls are known for their hooting they make a variety of clicking and hissing sounds. All owls hunt at night and therefore are seldom seen.

Hawks have much in common with owls. Both use their powerful eyesight and strong talons to hunt small rodents like mice. Easily recognized by its rusty-red tail feathers, the red-tailed hawk is a common sight in the Canadian skies, throughout the United States and into northern Mexico. The Sparrowhawk is less frequently sighted. This small hawk gets its name because 98 % of its diet consists of other birds, usually sparrows. It is preyed upon by larger birds of prey. Hawks are daytime or diurnal hunters who spot, swoop, and devour their prey. They can perceive more colors than humans, which helps them locate prey. Their beaks are more hooked than the curved beak of an owl.

While owls and hawks live in forested areas, the osprey lives near lakes, rivers and other waterways. This large, white headed predator with yellow eyes, is a diurnal hunter that feeds almost entirely on fish and often builds its nests of sticks on top of telephone poles. Pesticides have hurt Osprey populations but the species has rebounded in recent years. Osprey can be seen diving into the waterways, capturing fish. Some people confuse osprey with eagles, but can be distinguished by their white bellies and a distinctive black stripe that extends from their eyes along the side of their heads. Like Osprey, eagles are usually sighted around water. Two types of eagles live in North America. The Bald Eagle, a symbol of American courage and freedom, is not bald at all. It has a pure white head and a dark brown body. With glints of shimmering golden brown around its neck, the Golden Eagle is another easily recognized bird of prey. This fearless bird has been known to attack coyotes with its sharp talons and powerful beak in order to defend its young.

North America is home to many birds of prey, from owls and hawks to osprey and eagles. These interesting raptors are among nature's most successful predators. Look up in the sky and see if you can spot one today.



Student Page

Name: _____

BIRDS OF PREY

1. This is an example of what kind of writing? Circle one:

Informational Opinion Narrative

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the **introduction**.

4. Box the **conclusion**.

5. Circle the **title** and note the **topic**.

6. Underline the **lead** in red.

7. Underline the **topic sentence** in blue.

8. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

9. In paragraph 2 what phrase (or word referent) does the author use in place of bird of prey? _____

10. If you wanted to find out about birds of prey who live near water, which paragraphs would you read? Paragraph # _____ and _____

11. In paragraph 2, list the word referent the author uses in place of the word owl.

12. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan:

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1 _____

MAIN IDEA #2 _____

MAIN IDEA #3 _____

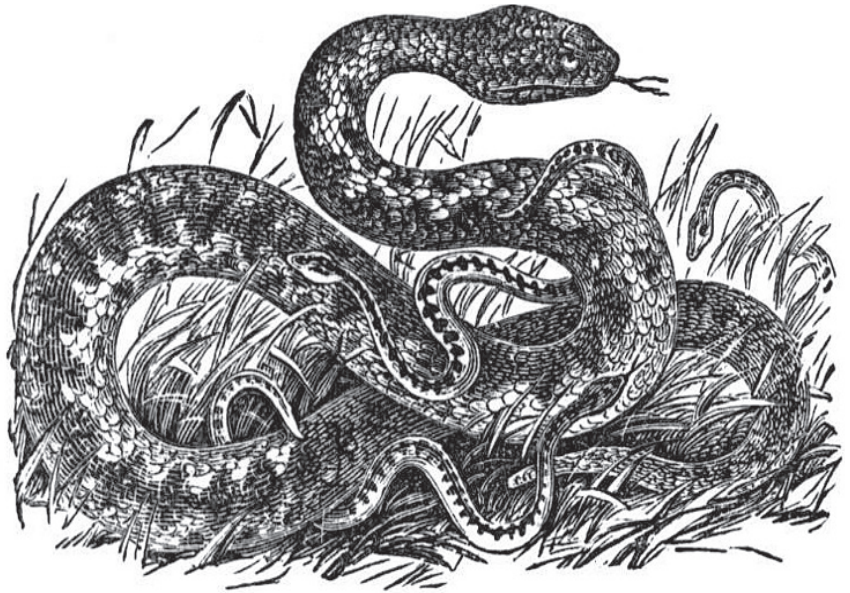


Student Page

Name: _____

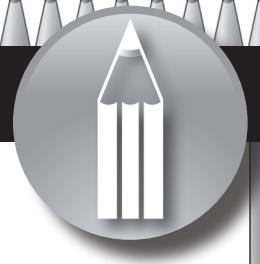
VENOMOUS SNAKES VS. CONSTRICTORS

Do you hate snakes? If so, you are not alone. Many of us are terrified of these slithering reptiles and their deadly bites. But the fact is that only one-third of all snake species on earth are venomous. The rest are constrictors who pose very little danger to humans.



These two types of snakes share some traits, but each has distinct characteristics too. Let's learn more about the appearance, diet and feeding behaviors and habitats of these constrictors and venomous snakes.

At first glance, venomous snakes and constrictors look much the same with long, legless bodies and forked tongues that flicker from their mouths. Upon closer inspection, you will notice several obvious differences in their appearance. The next time you see a venomous snake in a glass enclosure at a zoo or nature center, look into its eyes. You will see slit-like, vertical pupils while constrictors have round pupils like we do. The head of a constrictor is slightly rounded, just a bit wider than the rest of its body. Conversely, a poisonous snake needs a much larger head to house its venom glands. Both types of snake can be quite colorful.



The diet and feeding behavior of both venomous snakes and constrictors is identical. Both hunt and eat other animals; both swallow their food whole. However, they attack their prey quite differently. A venomous snake will strike hard and fast, sinking its fangs deep into their victim and injecting them with a fatal dose of toxins. In contrast, constrictors kill by wrapping their muscular bodies around their target and strangling it to death. Another similarity is that both strike quickly and prey mostly on rodents.

Another trait they share is that both constrictors and venomous snakes can live in a variety of habitats. Hot, dry deserts are the home of venomous rattlesnakes as well as the handsome black and white Kingsnake, which is a constrictor. Boa Constrictors and Anacondas, which can grow to more than 20 feet long and weigh as much as 300 pounds, prefer the steamy Amazon rainforest. They share this habitat with the Bushmaster, an aggressive snake that can deliver multiple highly toxic bites in a matter of seconds. There are also species of venomous snakes and constrictors living in the African jungles, the Australian bush, and in marine environments around the world.

From a timid garter snake to a swaying, spitting cobra, snakes are well-adapted for survival on earth. Without a doubt, it is interesting to compare the appearance, diet and feeding behaviors and habitats of constrictors and venomous snakes.



Student Page

Name: _____

VENOMOUS SNAKES VS. CONSTRICTORS

1. This is an example of what kind of writing? Circle one:

Informational

Opinion

Narrative

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the **introduction** paragraph.

4. Underline the **main idea sentence** in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4.

5. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

6. Box the **conclusion**.

7. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan:

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____



Name: _____

FLIGHTLESS BIRDS

When we think of birds we mostly imagine sleek feathered creatures soaring across the sky. However, while all birds have feathers, not all birds fly. In fact, there are many types of flightless birds in the world. Let's examine the ostrich, the kiwi, and the penguin – three very different flightless birds.

The ostrich is the largest of the flightless birds. These feathered giants stand between seven and nine feet tall on their incredibly powerful, long, jointed legs and weigh up to 350 pounds. Ostriches have long skinny necks that allow them to see far across the African plains. They also have incredibly large eyes and sharp vision to help them spot predators from long distances. Ostriches travel in herds and are formidable adversaries in a fight. Their legs deliver a lethal kick and they can outrun most predators at speeds of up to 43 miles per hour. In defending themselves and their young they have been known to defeat even lions in a battle. Contrary to folklore, ostriches do not stick their heads in the sand when trouble arises. They simply hunker down and try to blend in with their environment. These omnivores eat mostly plants, but will also eat a variety of insects and other small creatures when the opportunity arises. Female ostriches lay 7-10 eggs at a time, each large egg weighing 3-5 pounds, 6 inches around and 5 inches in height.

In contrast to the ostrich is the national symbol of New Zealand, the kiwi. The *kiwi* is the smallest flightless bird – about the size of a chicken. It stands about 20 inches tall and weighs just over two pounds. The kiwi has unusually distinctive gray feathers that look more like porcupine quills. It also is distinct because it doesn't have a tail. These nocturnal birds have whiskers beside their beaks that help these poorly-sighted birds as they snuffle about for food. Kiwis have an excellent sense of smell that helps them locate insects, fruit, frogs, eels, and crayfish. These omnivorous birds are easily agitated and extremely territorial. Their three-toed feet boast razor sharp claws with which they protect themselves. These bad-tempered, solitary birds nest in underground burrows, and excavate a new burrow every night. They lay very large eggs for such a small bird. Their oblong eggs are almost seven inches long and 3 inches around.



Student Page

The penguin is perhaps the most well-known of the flightless birds. There are 17-20 different penguin species living exclusively in the southern hemisphere. These migratory birds come in many sizes, from the diminutive 16 inch tall Little Blue Penguin, to the four foot tall Emperor Penguin. Penguins are exceedingly good swimmers and divers, perfectly adapted to the frigid waters where they spend most of their time. Their speedy swimming is the characteristic that helps them the most in moving quickly away from predators such as killer whales or leopard seals. In fact the *Gentoo* penguin can swim up to 22 miles per hour! Their black and white tuxedo-style coloration helps camouflage them in the water. Penguin “wings” function as flippers to assist them in swimming. These non-flyers have more feathers than most other birds, and this helps maintain their body heat in the cold climates where they live. All species of penguins eat mostly fish, krill, and crustaceans. Most penguin species live in large colonies, some up to 200,000 birds. Depending on the species, penguin eggs range from about 2 to 5 inches in length. Interestingly, the female Emperor Penguin lays but a single egg and leaves it in the care of her male partner. The male cradles it on top of his webbed feet and covers it with a fold of skin that keeps the egg warm.

These are just three earth-bound bird species that have managed well without the ability to fly. Should you ever visit the African plains, the forests of New Zealand, or the icy coastlines of the far Southern hemisphere, perhaps you’ll be lucky enough to catch sight of one of these unusual flightless birds.



Student Page

Name: _____

Discussion Questions – Birds of Prey and Flightless Birds

You have read two informational texts about very different types of birds, Birds of Prey and Flightless Birds. Select a predatory bird and a flightless bird and write an essay describing what these birds have in common, and how they differ. Be sure to discuss the appearance and characteristics of both birds, citing examples from the text.

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

BIRD OF PREY

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

MAIN IDEA #4: _____

FLIGHTLESS BIRDS

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

2. What do you notice about these summarizing frameworks? _____

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

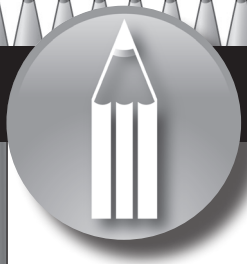
4. Go back to each text. Based on your main idea “blurbs” in the margins, circle the paragraph describing your chosen predatory bird in yellow and your flightless bird in pink.

5. Read your selected paragraphs. What common information might you use to compare/contrast? _____

6. If you were going to expand the text Birds of Prey what is another main idea you might include: _____

7. If you were going to expand the text Flightless Birds, what is another main idea you might include: _____

BONUS: Go back to each source and circle all of the ways the authors refer to the birds described in these texts. (*word referents*)

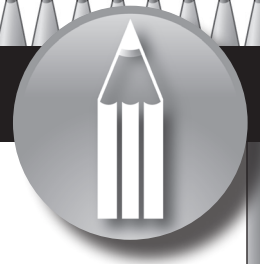


Student Page

Name: _____

Comparison Grid

	PREDATORY BIRD - OWL	FLIGHTLESS BIRD - OSTRICH
Size/ Appearance		
Habitat		
Predators/ Prey/food		



Name: _____

EXEMPLAR TEXT

Birds are all around us. But there are also some unusual birds that most of us don't see everyday. Two of these would be owls and ostrich. In the texts Birds of Prey and Flightless Birds we learn about a variety of out of the ordinary birds. The owl and ostrich are two of these interesting feathered creatures that share some traits and differ in other ways.

The author points out that while owls are a "well-known example of a bird of prey" they are difficult to spot, since they're nocturnal hunters. In the text we learn that there are many varieties of owls that come in all sizes, "from the tiny Saw Whet Owl to the Great Grey Owl which has a wingspan of over five feet." The author points out that owls have extremely large eyes to assist them in their nightly hunting of small rodents. These forest dweller's feathers help them while hunting. We read about how their arrangement of wing feathers help them to fly silently in order to surprise their prey. In the text, the author describes the Barn Owl's configuration of facial feathers that create a concave bowl that helps owls "channel sound into their ears." While the author doesn't mention any predators, I imagine owls could defend themselves with their sharp talons and beaks.

From the other text I learned ostriches offer a clear contrast to owls. Standing between 7 and 9 feet tall, with long, strong legs and long necks, these flightless birds can run up to 43 miles per hour. These African plain dwellers are omnivorous and spend much of their time scavenging for plants, insects, and sometimes small creatures. I was surprised to read that ostriches are "formidable adversaries in a fight." It was also amazing to read that their "lethal kick" can help them defeat even a lion in battle!

So, while owls and ostriches are both types of birds, owls are nocturnal hunters and ostriches are diurnal scavengers. Owls are stealthy flyers, while the flightless ostrich depends on its strong legs to run and to fight. Both are fascinating creatures.



Student Reference Page

SUMMARIZING YOUR INDEPENDENT READING

What are you reading? After reading a story, highlight the important parts by completing the Narrative Writing Summarizing Framework below. If you're reading nonfiction, summarize what you learned from it using the Informational Writing Summarizing Framework.

Narrative Writing Summarizing Framework

Title _____

Author _____

This story is about _____
Main Character

The problem, adventure or experience was that _____

Single significant main event

The problem is solved, adventure/experience concluded when _____

Solution/conclusion

Informational Writing Summarizing Framework

Title _____

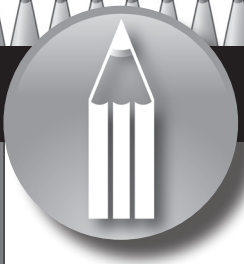
Topic _____

Main Idea #1 _____

Main Idea #2 _____

Main Idea #3 _____

etc.: _____



Student Page

Name: _____

IRRELEVANT, EXTRANEOUS DETAILS IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Read the informational paragraphs below and identify the **MAIN IDEA** of each. Then, find the detail sentence that does NOT support the **MAIN IDEA** and cross it out.

1. St. Bernards are very large dogs that were originally bred to rescue victims of avalanches in the Italian and Swiss Alps. At dog shows today, these muscle-bound canines display amazing strength in weight-pulling competitions. Beagles and Basset Hounds also participate in dog shows. While huge and powerful, St. Bernards usually have a calm nature. For families with large homes and yards, this gentle giant is often a great choice for a pet.

What is the **MAIN IDEA** of this paragraph?

2. Strap on a pair of snowshoes and you can hike your favorite trail even when during the winter. Snowshoeing is easy to learn and great exercise for people of all ages. Cross country skiing is another popular winter sport. Since snowshoes cost only about \$100 a pair and last for a very long time, it is a less expensive sport than many other snow season sports like skiing or snowboarding. Renting snowshoes on a daily, weekly or seasonal basis is another money-saving option.

What is the **MAIN IDEA** of this paragraph?

BONUS: List word referents for “St. Bernards” and for “Winter.”



Name: _____

IRRELEVANT, EXTRANEOUS DETAILS IN OPINION WRITING

Read the opinion paragraphs below and identify the **MAIN REASON** of each. Then, find the detail sentence that does NOT support the **MAIN REASON** and cross it out.

1. I wish my family could move to the city. The way I see it, cities are exciting places bustling with activity. It's easy to get place-to-place on subways and buses, and fun to hail a taxi cab. I'd love to be able to be close to the sports arenas, museums, shops, and parks that cities like New York offer. We live in the suburbs and there's just not as many interesting things to do there as there is in a city. I also wish my family would take a vacation to Disney World next summer.

What is the **MAIN REASON** of this paragraph?

2. Everybody enjoys a delicious turkey dinner, but I firmly believe that the best part of Thanksgiving Day is watching the Thanksgiving Day Parade on television. In my opinion, there really is nothing quite as exciting as this yearly extravaganza in New York City. Year after year, I love to watch the giant balloons of popular cartoon characters and colorful floats that take my breath away. A fun fact is that the people who march the balloons along the parade route are all volunteers; none are paid for doing this tricky job. I can't think of anything better than eating pumpkin pie after Thanksgiving dinner. Another parade highlight for me is listening to the marching bands from schools across the country and unforgettable musical performances from Broadway stars. Don't you wonder why anybody'd miss it?

What is the **MAIN REASON** of this paragraph?

BONUS: Circle the words and phrases that tell you these are passages from opinion pieces.

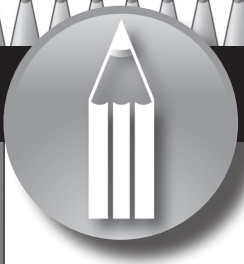


EATING BUGS

READ AND COMPARE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS. WHICH IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE, AND WHY?

Eating Bugs

Some people in the world eat bugs. There are lots of bugs that can be eaten when there's not a lot of other food around. Bugs have protein which is good for you. They're easier to raise than cows and cheaper. Bugs could end hunger. And you don't feel as bad killing a bug to eat as you do a cow or a chicken.



EATING BUGS

READ AND COMPARE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS. WHICH IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE, AND WHY?

Eating Bugs

If people could get used to eating bugs it could solve a lot of problems. I'm going to tell you where insects are eaten, why they're economical, and how they can taste good!

In North America most people think eating bugs is gross, but not in other parts of the world. In Cambodia you can buy fried tarantulas from food carts on the streets. In Thailand you can buy deep fried crickets. In the Outback of Australia you can try big fat roasted witchetty grubs. In the USA you can even try grasshopper tacos or toasted mealworms over ice cream. If people got over feeling yucky about bugs they might find that eating them isn't so bad.

Bugs can be a plentiful, cheap source of food. It doesn't cost as much to raise and feed bugs as it does to feed cows and pigs and chickens. Raising bugs doesn't ruin the land like some crops do. There are over a thousand kinds of bugs that can be made into food.

Bugs can taste good! Some bugs have a lemony, sour taste. Some bugs like witchetty grubs have a crispy outside and a creamy, eggy inside. Some people mix bugs with lots of spices before they're cooked. Bugs can be toasted and served on salad or dessert.

So, now you know some of the places where bugs are on the menu. You know how they are a plentiful, cheap source of food and you know that they can taste good. So, will you try to eat a bug?



EATING BUGS

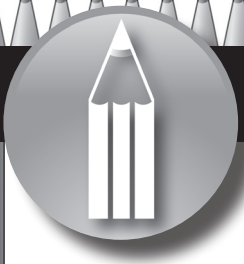
READ AND COMPARE TO THE PREVIOUS INFORMATIONAL TEXTS. WHICH IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE, AND WHY?

Insects on the Menu?

What would you do if you found a bug on your burger? Or an insect in your eggs? You'd probably send the food back and demand a refund! But, this bug-aversion may be on the brink of becoming a thing of the past. Scientists and chefs alike are beginning to see the benefits of cooking and eating many of the over 1,000 types of edible insects in the world. Not only can they be creatively prepared, but they can provide a much-needed healthy source of protein in our diets. Perhaps most importantly, insects can be farmed inexpensively as a way to end world hunger.

Many groups of native people have long enjoyed insects as a part of their diets, and now some big city restaurants are learning from them! Indigenous people such as the Aborigines in Australia dig large 2 inch long white grubs from the roots of the witchetty bush and slow roast them on hot coals. Crusty on the outside and creamy on the inside, these tasty nuggets are said to be like a combination of fried chicken and soft boiled eggs. Another Aboriginal delicacy is the honey ant. People harvest them from their nests with long sticks, then bite off the ants' honey-filled bellies for an all-natural sweet treat. In Cambodia deep-fried crunchy tarantulas are sold from snack carts on city streets where children and adults alike break off each of the eight crispy legs and happily munch before devouring the soft body. Now, restaurants the world over are beginning to offer dishes such as fresh smooth guacamole topped with crispy fried grasshoppers, or savory silkworm soup. One popular California restaurant offers "Singapore style Scorpions." When prepared creatively, insects can be just as flavorful as traditional food.

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The fact is, edible insects are a healthy source of protein and other nutrients. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, just a three and a half ounce serving of grasshoppers can deliver up to 28 grams of protein! Compare this to an egg, which provides just 6 grams. Grasshoppers also offer healthy unsaturated fat and small amounts of iron. Ants, beetles, and caterpillars boast similar benefits. Compare this to many commercially prepared foods and you'll see that, from a health standpoint, bugs have a lot to offer!

Most importantly, in a world where tens of thousands of people die each day from starvation and related illnesses, insects could be the answer. Insects can be farmed in ways that do not deplete the environment the way over planting and the use of fertilizers and pesticides can. Bugs reproduce quickly and have short life cycles, and they don't require the investment in feed, pastureland, and care that cattle, sheep, hogs, and chickens do. Insects can survive drought and other adverse conditions better than their tasty four legged and feathered livestock can. And, for those who would find it difficult to actually kill a cow in order to eat it, killing an insect is a little easier. And they don't need to be fenced, caged, or confined. So, we can feed the world's hungry in a humane and economical way.

Without a doubt, creatively preparing insects can become not only a dining adventure, but a healthy alternative to some of the fat-filled, artificially flavored foods we eat. Learning from the eating habits of indigenous people might be the key to solving world hunger by getting used to the idea of using insects as food.



TAKING THE BUS

READ AND COMPARE THE FOLLOWING OPINION TEXTS. WHICH IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE, AND WHY?

Taking the Bus

Some kids walk to school. Some get rides from their mom or dad. Some kids walk to school or ride bikes. But the best way to get to school is to take the bus. The bus is fun cause you get to ride around and see stuff. It's fun to sit with your friends and talk before school starts. Plus you see kids from other grades. It's even fun to hang around at the bus stop with your friends. It's like a great big carpool that saves gas. That's why I like riding the bus to school.

(continued)



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TAKING THE BUS

READ AND COMPARE THE FOLLOWING OPINION TEXTS. WHICH IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE, AND WHY?

Taking the Bus

There are many ways to get to school but taking the bus is the best way. It's fun to ride around town and to spend time with your friends. It's also a way to save gas.

The reason I know all the back roads in my town is because I ride the school bus. From the time I was in kindergarten I'd enjoy sitting by the window and looking out. I'd love seeing where kids lived and where the traffic was heavy. It was fun going through the center of town and see all the stores there. When we have a substitute bus driver I get a kick out of pointing out the route. If I had my license I think I'd know how to pick up every kid on the bus!

Another reason I like taking the bus is because I get to see my friends before school. It's a blast hanging out at the bus stop, trading baseball cards. On the bus I like seeing kids in all different grades and getting to know them. We laugh when we see something funny out the window and tell jokes and funny stories as we ride. I know more kids than the kids who walk or get a ride and that is the best part.

The last reason I like taking the bus is because it is good for the environment and it saves time. I feel good thinking that if the 30 kids on the bus got rides in cars, that would mean 30 more cars on the road. What a waste of gas! What a lot of fumes! Not to mention that all those parents would be wasting time and wearing out their cars.

So, what do you think? Isn't riding the school bus the best way to get to school? You get to know your town, spend time with friends, and produce less pollution.



TAKING THE BUS

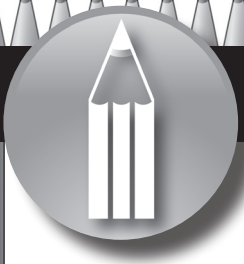
READ AND COMPARE TO THE PREVIOUS OPINION TEXTS. WHICH IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE, AND WHY?

Taking the Bus

A crowd of kids from Mulberry School gather on the corner of my street at 7:45 each morning and I'm one of them! I know some kids like to have their parents drive them to school, or they walk, but, from my point of view, there's nothing like gathering at the bus stop, spotting the big yellow vehicle in the distance, and when it rumbles to a stop, climbing up the steps with all your friends. Riding the bus everyday has taught me to know my way around town, allows me to spend time before school with my friends, and it also is a plus for the environment!

Since I've been riding the bus, I know the streets of Mulberry like the back of my hand! Even as a five-year-old kindergartener who could barely see out the bus window, I enjoyed peering out as we drove from stop to stop. I loved to quiz myself at each corner: Would we turn left or right? It was fun to memorize the names of all the streets and learn how to get from one end of town to the other. When I'm driving around in the car with my mom I relish the idea of showing her short-cuts and naming streets she doesn't know. "Bobby," she says, "I think if you could get your driver's license as a fifth grader you could become the best bus driver in town!" That makes me feel proud!

Waiting for and riding the bus is a great time to socialize. I rush to the bus stop every morning and look forward to the minutes my fellow riders and I spend joking and laughing. It's the best way to work off some energy before

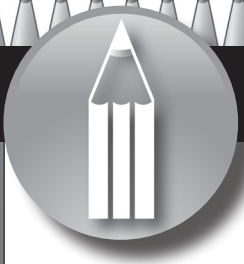


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the school day even begins so we don't get in trouble! The best part is when Carlos, Jack, and I trade baseball cards and argue about which team is the best. I also appreciate getting to know the younger kids and reassuring them when they're scared or nervous. It's so much more fun than sitting in the back of your mom's car having her ask you about your homework!

Besides all the fun, I think riding the bus is probably the best way I can protect the environment. If all thirty kids on who ride the bus decided to come to school by car, think of all the extra traffic and exhaust that would produce. I value the idea that I'm taking public transportation - it's even better than carpooling! Not only that, but it seems to me it eliminates extra cars on the road that cause traffic back-ups. As cars sit in traffic they produce even more pollution. I'm grateful to be able to do my part in reducing emissions. It makes me feel very responsible!

So, when the alarm clock goes off, I hop out of bed, get myself ready, and head out the door with a smile. Becoming an expert navigator, spending time with friends old and new, and helping the environment make taking the bus a favorite part of my day! I think every kid should try it!



BE A TEXT DETECTIVE!

FIND THE EVIDENCE

Creatures of the Amazon

- Electric eels have a unique way of protecting themselves.
- An electric eel's eyesight does little to help it.
- The vampire fish's fangs are impressive.
- The vampire fish is a nimble creature.
- The pink dolphin is as friendly as the vampire fish is aggressive.
- It's not easy to spot a pink dolphin.
- Your hair dryer runs on 200 volts, and the electric eel is more shocking than that!

REMEMBER: YOU DON'T NEED TO READ THE SOURCE TEXT BEGINNING TO END! USE MAIN IDEAS TO DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION AND THEN SKIM AND SCAN. POST YOUR EVIDENCE BESIDE EACH STATEMENT.



BE A TEXT DETECTIVE!

FIND THE EVIDENCE

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

- Galapagos is a bird watcher's paradise!
- It wouldn't be difficult to beat a Giant Galapagos Tortoise in a race.
- If you got a Giant Galapagos Tortoise as a child, it would likely outlive you.
- If you enjoy swimming and wildlife, Galapagos is the place for you.
- Galapagos is a place that can feel like a fairytale or fantasy land.

REMEMBER: YOU DON'T NEED TO READ THE SOURCE TEXT BEGINNING TO END! USE MAIN IDEAS TO DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION AND THEN SKIM AND SCAN. POST YOUR EVIDENCE BESIDE EACH STATEMENT.