



Grade 6 Informational Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 4: Research

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KEY VOCABULARY: FINDING INFORMATION WITHIN TEXT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Found at the front of the book, the table of contents lists the parts or chapters of a book.

GLOSSARY

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

INDEX

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

CHAPTER TITLE

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

HEADINGS

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

KEYWORDS

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

DIAGRAMS

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

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

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

COPYRIGHT PAGE

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

SIDE BAR

A block of supplemental text usually located in a column alongside the primary text that enriches the reader's understanding of the primary text.

Name _____

THE BOOK DETECTIVE

1. What is the **title** of your book?

2. Turn to the **Table of Contents**. What are the titles of the first two chapters?

3. Look in the first chapter or section. Can you find any **keywords** that are defined within the text? If so, what are they? (Hint: look for words in **bold-face** or *italic* type!)

4. Are there **headings** that tell you the **main ideas** of the first chapter or section? If so, what are they?

5. Can you find an **illustration** or **photograph** in your book? If so, what is this illustration or photograph helping to explain?

BONUS: Turn to the back of the book. Look at the **index** and fill in the following blanks:

The index tells me that if I turned to page _____, I would learn about

_____.



Name _____

RESEARCH! USING SEARCH ENGINES

Have you ever looked for information on the Web? Interested in finding the perfect puppy, looking for information on the best vacations for kids? That is where search engines come in. The problem with doing research on the web is that you find way too much information.

Some of the more popular search engines are Google, bing and yahoo. Understanding how to use search engines will help you narrow your search, so you can find exactly what you're looking for. These are just a few techniques to help you get started.



1. Be Specific

The more specific you are, the more information you'll find. Use key words that tell the search engine exactly what you're looking for. For example, if you want to learn about bats, enter bats, but if you know that you want information on the various types of bats enter types of bats instead. If you want to learn about a specific type of bat enter that name, for example, mega-bats. Each time you revise the entry and focus your key word, you narrow your search.

2. The + Symbol

To ensure the search finds pages with all the words you're looking for, put the + symbol in front of each word. For example, if you want information on two types of bats such as golden fruit bats and spectacled flying foxes, put the "plus" sign in front of their names. +golden fruit bats+spectacled flying foxes. Only documents that have both their names will be found in the search.

3. Using Quotation Marks

When you put your search terms in quotation marks, it's called a "phrase search." The search engine will give you pages that have the terms in the exact order of the words in quotations. For example, if you're looking specifically for information on "vampire bats biting people" enter it just like that and you will only get the documents that have those words in that order.

4. Notice the Results!

Finally, notice that when you narrow the search, the number of results or "hits" changes. This information is usually found at the top of the page and indicates how many documents were found containing the key words you searched. For example, when *bats* was entered, 73,100,000 documents were found, but when "vampire bats biting people" was entered, 616,000 documents were found.

Name _____

DETAILS FROM IMAGES

You found images of _____ at **images.google.com**.

List some of the details you see in the images.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Now think of some questions you have about the images. What are you wondering?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

The answers to these questions can provide the “**Why is that important?**” part of your elaboration!



Name _____

DETAILS FROM VIDEOS

You found a video about _____ at _____.

your topic *website*

List some of the facts you learned from the video.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Now think of some questions sparked by the video. What are you wondering?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

The answers to these questions can provide the “Why is that important?” part of your elaboration!

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST (1)

Your Family Vacation

Imagine that your family has saved enough money for a vacation! Research the places you would like to visit and what you'd do there.

1. List your research questions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. What search terms might you use to begin your research?

3. What search terms yielded the best results? _____

4. Based on the sites you discovered, decide where you want to go and enter the name that destination as a search term. Add the word "images" and see what this reveals.

5. Cite your best sources here: _____

6. How would you stay busy at your chosen destination? List the activities your family would enjoy. _____

7. How did this research help you plan your family vacation? _____

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST (2)**North Sentinel Island**

Read the following passage. Does it spark any additional questions you'd like to learn about?

North Sentinel Island

If you're like most of us, you envision a tropical island as a welcoming place with swaying palm trees and crystal clear waters. That is definitely not the case with North Sentinel Island! This remote island in the Bay of Bengal is home to the most isolated band of indigenous humans on earth and they will defend it without hesitation against outsiders. As a result, little is known for sure about the Sentinelese people, their island and their history.

With today's population estimated at somewhere between 50 and 400, the Sentinelese people have probably lived in absolute isolation for centuries. These tall, dark-skinned people have resisted all efforts of **anthropologists** to learn more about their culture and integrate them into the wider world, using stone-tipped spears and arrows send a clear message: Stay away. Far away. Even those who strayed too close to the small island by accident have been murdered with these primitive, but effective, weapons. Thus, we can only guess how these aggressive islanders have managed to survive for so long. They appear to have no knowledge of agriculture or mining, but they probably make tools from metal scavenged from shipwrecks. These anti-social natives are believed to be **hunter-gatherers**, subsisting primarily on a diet of fish, turtles and small birds, who migrated from east Africa 60,000 years ago.

The island itself, located between mainland India and Sumatra, is part of the Andaman Island archipelago. Densely forested, it has just a narrow slice of beach and lacks a natural harbor. At about 44 square miles, the small, square-shaped island was in the epicenter of the 2004 tsunami, which devastated the entire region. However, the extent of the damage is unknown. When an Indian coast

guard helicopter flew over the island two days after the tsunami, it driven away by aggressive, armed natives. It is assumed that the lagoons on the east side of the island where the Sentinelese fished were destroyed and that a coral reef was driven to the surface by **tectonic uplift** which raised the island as much as five meters above sea level and reduced the depth of the remaining lagoons. Chances are, we'll never know for certain how the tsunami changed the geography of the island and how the people managed to adapt.

North Sentinel Island first appears in recorded history in the late 13th century when Marco Polo reported that the people of the island were “very cruel and kill and eat every foreigner whom they can lay their hands upon.” When the British arrived in 1789, they established a prison colony on the nearby islands of the archipelago but overlooked North Sentinel. Among the other four major groups of native people of the Andamons, most are extinct today. In all likelihood, they had no **immunities** to germs carried by the Europeans and died of diseases like influenza and cholera. In light of this, the hostile attitude toward outsiders of the Sentinelese certainly makes sense.

Isn't it amazing that the Sentinelese people have been able to survive as hunter-gatherers for so long? Wouldn't you like to see how the geography of the island was altered by the tsunami? Can you understand why the Sentinelese people are so determined to isolate themselves from the rest of the world? Without a doubt, North Sentinel Island is a place of mystery.

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST (2)

A sixth grade student read the text titled North Sentinel Island and wanted to learn more about the key words in the article. List the key words below and your related research questions.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now conduct your research. Circle the phrase that yielded the best results.

Remember, if you place the + symbol in front of each key word, only documents or sites that include all of those words will come up. Another option is to put your question or search phrase in quotation marks. Doing so will yield only sites that include the words in quotes in that precise order.

Write a short paragraph that answers your research questions. Be sure to use good sentence variety and check your spelling and punctuation.

CITING SENTENCE STARTERS

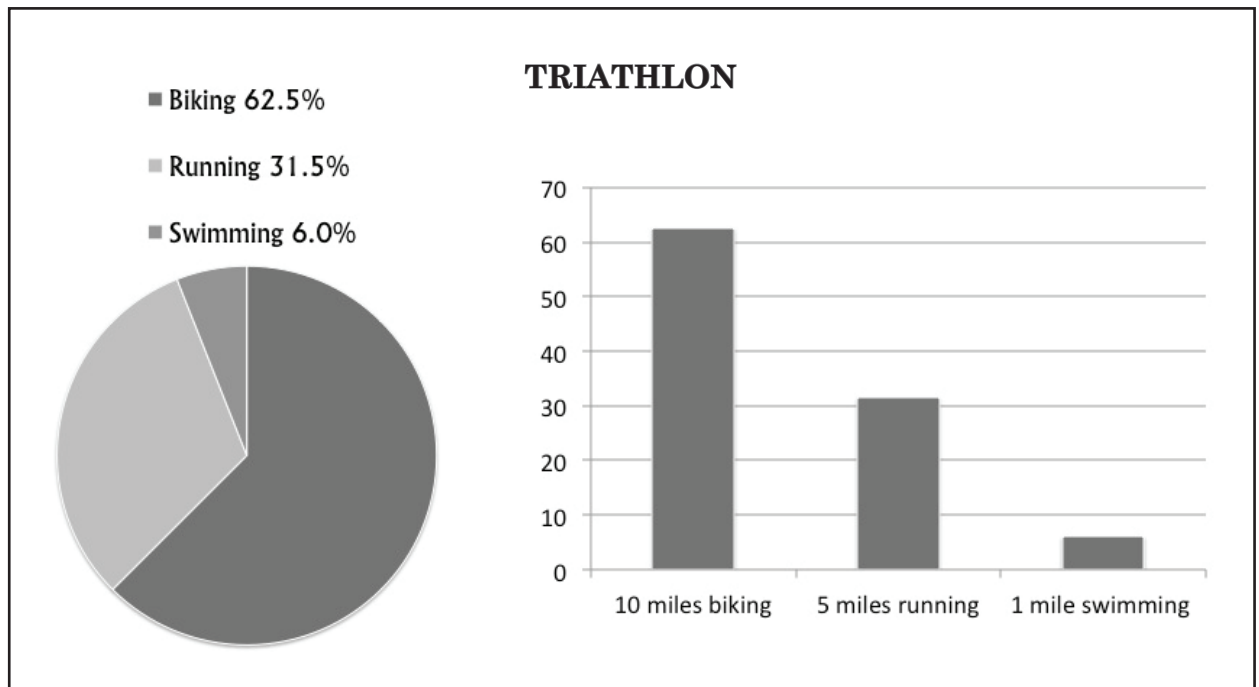
- In this article the reader discovers _____ .
- The text explains how _____ .
- This informational piece outlines _____ .
- The author discusses _____ .
- In paragraph ____, we learn that _____ .
- An interesting point the author makes is _____ .
- According to this article _____ .
- Based on this text _____ .

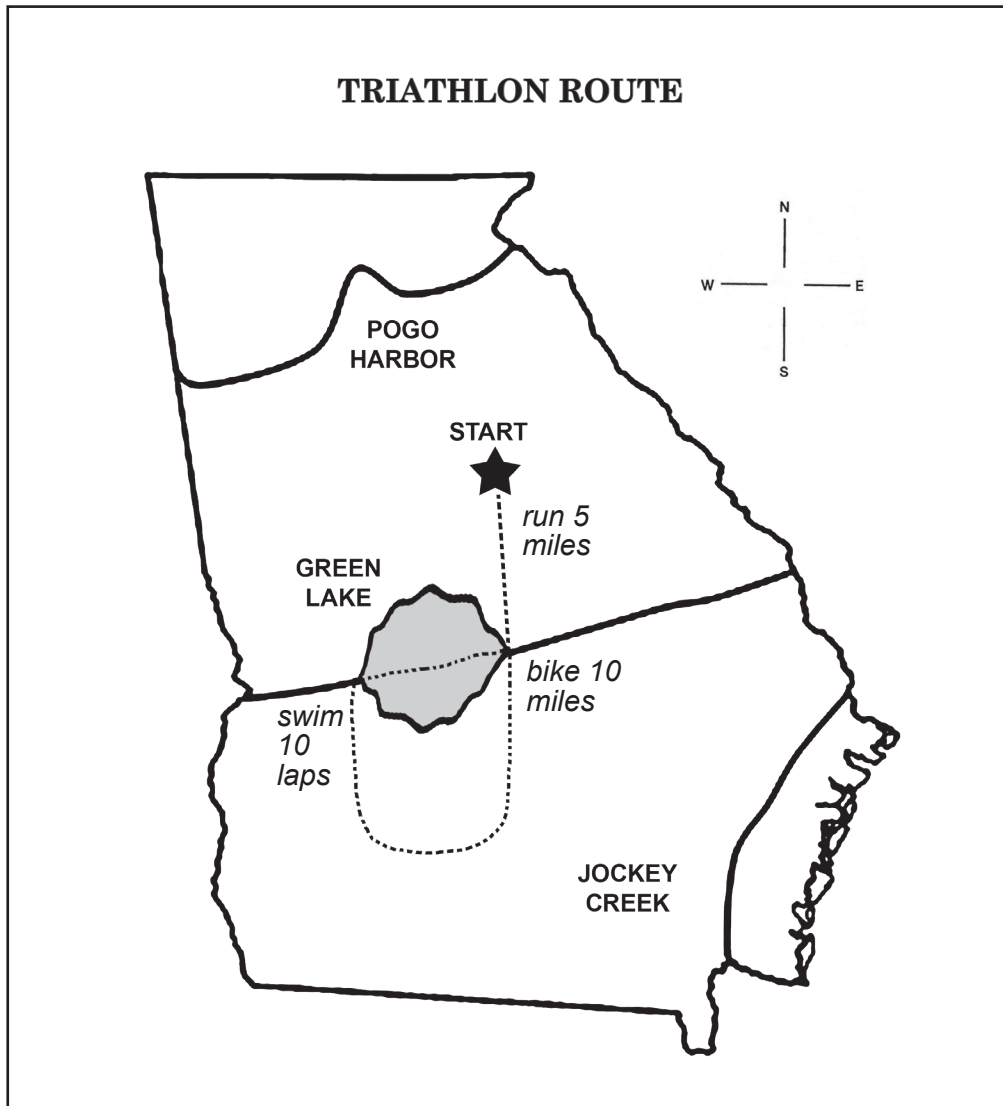
Name _____

GLEANNING INFORMATION FROM DIAGRAMS, CHARTS, GRAPHS, MAPS

While researching, authors often come across valuable information communicated through diagrams, charts, graphs, timelines, and maps. Information presented graphically can be incorporated into an essay, report, or research paper. Examine and discuss each example below. Then, on another sheet of paper, write three or more detail sentences about information provided in the diagram, the pie chart, the bar graph, and the map. Be sure to use good sentence variety and word choice.

ANNUAL POGO HARBOR TRIATHLON

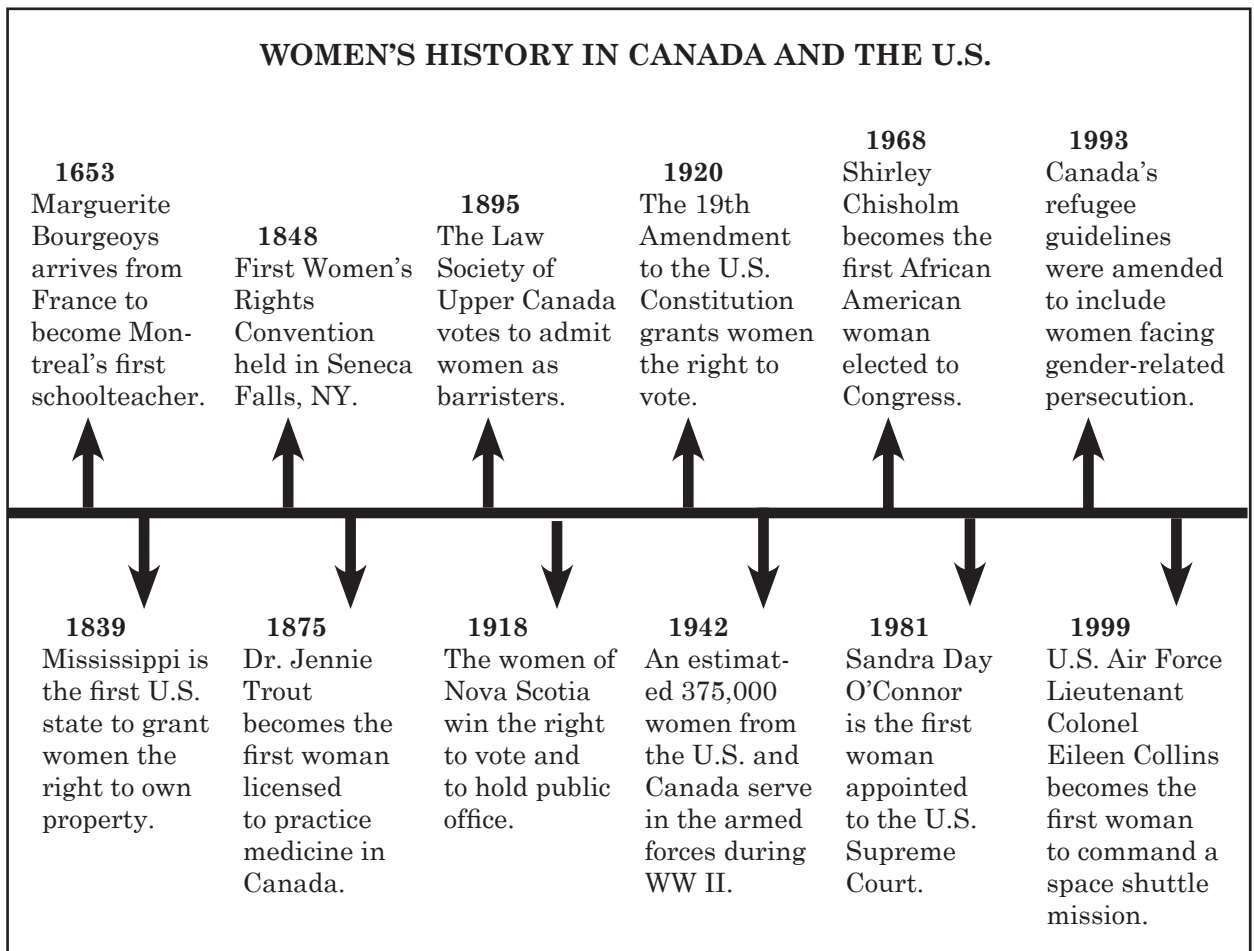




Name _____

GLEANNING INFORMATION FROM TIMELINES

While researching, authors often come across valuable information communicated through diagrams, charts, graphs, and maps. Certain kinds of information about events and when they happened can also be presented graphically in a *timeline*. Examine and discuss the timeline below. Then, on a separate piece of paper, write an informational paragraph tracing the progress of women’s rights using facts from the timeline and additional research if necessary.



Challenge: Research an event in women’s history and write a paragraph incorporating the information you uncover.

SENTENCE STARTERS:

On a historic day in _____ .

Several years later, _____ .

Women’s rights advocates were _____ .

Brave women worked for _____ .



Name _____

TAKE SOME NOTES

Read the complete sentences below and translate them into brief notes. Write just enough to trigger your memory of what the sentence taught you so that you can recall it at a later time. Focus on keywords. Keep it short by using dashes (-) and slashes (/) whenever you can.

1. Cells are made of protein and organelles, which are tiny structures within a living cell.

Your notes: _____

2. Created in the bone marrow, red blood cells transport oxygen around the body.

Your notes: _____

3. Mitochondria are organelles that provide a cell with energy.

Your notes: _____

4. Another organelle, known as the cytoplasm, consumes that energy.

Your notes: _____

5. A third organelle is the nucleus of the cell where the genetic code is stored.

Your notes: _____

6. Mitosis is the process of cell division that creates two identical cells.

Your notes: _____

7. Animal cells are irregular in size and shape while plant cells are more uniform.

Your notes: _____

8. Plant cells contain chloroplasts which absorb the sunlight necessary for the process of photosynthesis to begin.

Your notes: _____

VOCABULARY LIST

Protein: Large biological molecules consisting of the amino acids necessary to build healthy living tissues such as muscle, hair, enzymes and antibodies.

Organelle: Specialized structures with specific functions found within a living animal cell.

Cell: the smallest unit of a living organism.

Chloroplast: a part of a plant cell that includes the chlorophyll necessary for photosynthesis.

Photosynthesis: the process through which green plants and some other organisms use sunlight to transform carbon dioxide and water into nutrients.

CITING SOURCES

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

HERE ARE THE FORMATS YOU NEED TO FOLLOW WHEN CITING SOURCES

From Books

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

From Magazine Articles

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

From Websites

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Publication Date: Page Number, Site Owner, Date of visit, Web Address.

All of this information is not available for some websites. In that case, include whatever you can.

If you are using *footnotes*, the information cited is numbered in superscript (like this:¹) and the numbered footnote appears at the bottom of the page in the format shown above.

Endnotes use the same format but appear not on each page, but collectively at the end of the paper.

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

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

Name _____

RESEARCH/TAKE NOTES/WRITE/CITE (1)

Read the excerpt below and take notes highlighting crucial facts using the space below and a separate sheet of paper if necessary. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph about the 8th grader’s plans based on your notes. Remember to use varied sentence structure and rich vocabulary, and to state facts in your own words, but to cite your source (the excerpt) when using specific facts from the text.

Excerpt: *Chea, Terence. “Teen uses Legos to build braille printer,” www.tweentribute.com, January 30, 2015.*

In California's Silicon Valley, it's never too early to start a business. Just ask 13-year-old Shubham Banerjee.

The eighth-grader has launched a company to develop low-cost machines to print braille. That is the writing system for the visually impaired. With braille, the readers read by touch. They feel raised spots on the paper. Tech giant Intel Corp. recently invested in his startup. It's called Braigo Labs.

Shubham built a braille printer with a Lego robotics kit as a school science fair project last year. He did it after he asked his parents a simple question. How do blind people read?

"Google it," they told him.

Shubham then did some online research. He was shocked to learn that braille printers, also called embossers, cost at least \$2,000. That is too expensive for many blind readers.

"I just thought that price should not be there. I know that there is a simpler way to do this," said Shubham, who demonstrated how his printer works at the kitchen table. That's where he spent many late nights building it with a Lego Mindstorms EV3 kit.

Shubham wants to develop a desktop braille printer that costs around \$350 and weighs just a few pounds. Current models can weigh more than 20 pounds. The machine could be used to print braille reading materials on paper. It uses raised dots instead of ink, and can print from a personal computer or other electronic device.

Notes: _____

Name _____

RESEARCH/TAKE NOTES/WRITE/CITE (2)

Read the excerpt below and view the video “Lost History: Rediscovering the Taino People” at www.youtube.com. Take notes from both, below and on a separate sheet of paper if necessary. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph about the Taino Indians based on your notes. Remember to use varied sentence structure, rich vocabulary and to state facts in your own words but cite your source when using specific facts from the text or the video.

Excerpt: p. 134, Native People of the Caribbean by Jeanne Ngyugen, Cambridge House Publishing, 2004.

The Taino Indians are indigenous people of the Caribbean. In pre-Columbian times, they built thriving island communities governed by chiefs. Hard-working Taino farmers grew crops such as sweet potato and peanuts while fishermen harvested the bounty of the sea in their dug-out canoes. Every community had a healer who tended to the sick and injured with herbal remedies and spiritual rituals.

While the Taino’s were never known to invade neighboring islands, they were often called upon to defend themselves against aggressive Island-Caribs, descendants of South American tribes who raided their villages and took prisoners as slaves. The American Indian Heritage Foundation estimates that when the Spanish settlers arrived in the Caribbean in 1508, there were 20,000-50,000 Tainos living on the islands. As the peaceful natives were ravished by disease and abused by the settlers, that number was reduced to about 60 in less than forty years.

Notes: _____

Name _____

RESEARCH/NOTES/COMPOSITION/CITING SOURCES

Excerpt: p. 14, *Frontier Teachers: Stories of Heroic Women of the Old West* by Chris Enss, Globe Pequot Press © 2008.

Between 1847 and 1858, more than 600 female teachers traveled across the untamed frontier to provide youngsters with an education. There were few opportunities for respectable work for women in the early 1800s. For those women who did not want the socially acceptable career as a seamstress or nurse, there was teaching. It was the most popular profession for women in the 1840s.

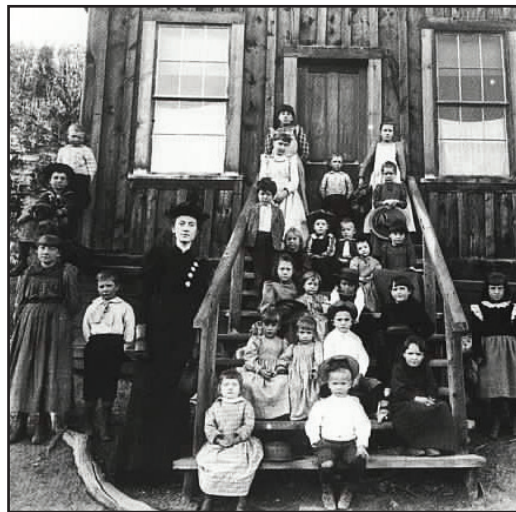
For Luella Fergus, a fourteen-year-old girl living in Illinois, it was the only thing she wanted to do. The prospective educator's father was living in the Montana territory in 1862 when she wrote him a letter about the requirements needed to enter the field.

“Teaching school is all the talk among young ladies,” Luella wrote. “If they can do sums and fractions, they can teach.”

Women like Sister Blandina Segale taught in the New Mexico territory in the 1880s for virtually no pay. Any funds that were donated to her for her work she turned back into the school to be used to purchase writing utensils, books and upgrades to the schoolhouse. Sarah Royce initially agreed to teach children the three Rs in her home in Grass Valley, California in 1857 in exchange for homemade preserves and chicken eggs. The motivation for these women to endure such want and hardship was to improve the minds of boys and girls in the new land.

FACTS ABOUT TEACHERS ON THE WESTERN FRONTIER

- Between 1847-1858, 600 female teachers went west
- Teaching most popular profession in 1840s
- Other respectable professions – nurse and seamstress
- Sister Blandina Segale, New Mexico territory
- Sarah Royce, 1857, Grass Valley, California
- Little or no pay

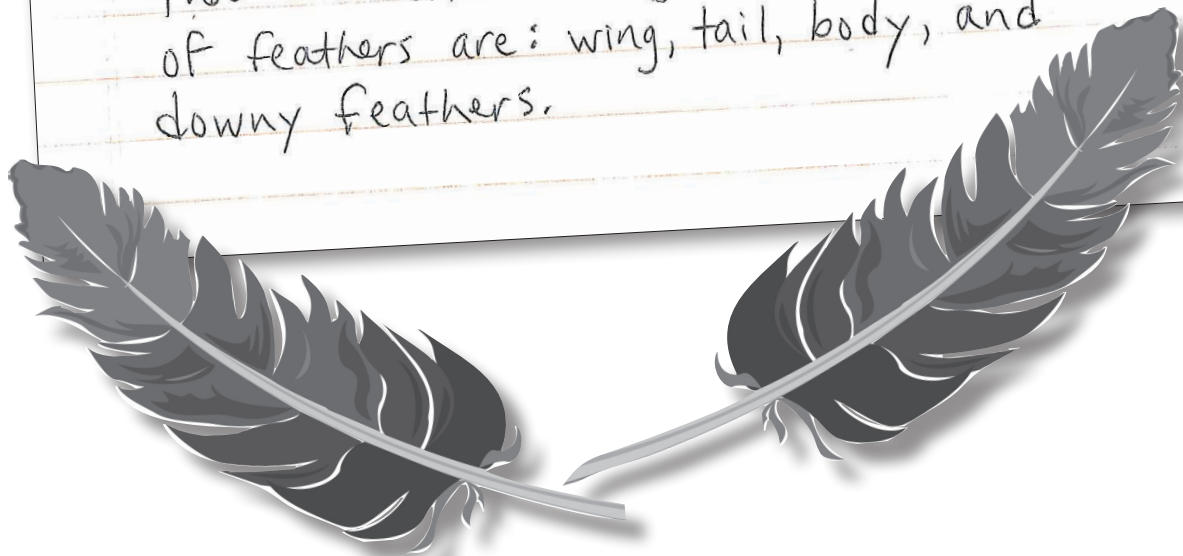


RESTATING INFORMATION FROM RESEARCH

Feathers

- feathers • unique to birds • 4 kinds - wing, tail, body, down - each does something different • small birds - 1,000 feathers, big birds - 20,000 • made of Keratin - kind of protein • Keratin makes feathers strong and flexible

Birds are the only animals that have feathers. Small birds have as few as 1,000 feathers. Large birds have as many as 20,000. Feathers are made of Keratin. Keratin is a special protein that makes feathers strong and flexible. Birds have different kinds of feathers that do different jobs. The four kinds of feathers are: wing, tail, body, and downy feathers.



MENU OF TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

Transitional Words/Phrases to express similar ideas

Also, _____ Not only that, but _____

In addition to this, _____ It's also true that _____

Another example of this is _____ Plus, _____

Furthermore, _____ Besides that, _____

Likewise, _____ Incidentally, _____

Similarly, _____ In the same way, _____

Transitional Words/Phrases to show an example

For example, _____ An example of this is _____

Here's what I mean by that - _____ For instance _____

An illustration of this is _____ I remember the time when _____

Transitional Words/Phrases to express alternate ideas

However, _____ On the other hand, _____

But, _____ Still, _____

Despite this _____ Nevertheless, _____

Nonetheless, _____ Regardless, _____

In spite of this _____ Yet _____

Transitional Words/Phrases to express cause and effect

For this reason _____ As a result _____

Due to this, _____ Consequently, _____

Then, _____ In view of this _____

On account of this _____ Therefore, _____

Name _____

TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

Read each sentence and underline the transitional phrase. Then, use the numbers to indicate which kind of transitional phrase it is.

DOES IT

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Link similar ideas? | 3. Express alternate/contrasting idea? |
| 2. Present an example? | 4. Illustrate cause and effect? |

- # _____ An illustration of this is when a multicolored rainbow forms in the sky.
- # _____ Plus, summer is the busiest time of the year for people in some professions.
- # _____ Besides that, we need to consider the environmental impact of oversized vehicles.
- # _____ Regardless, we enjoyed our vacation and hope to have another such adventure next spring.
- # _____ For example, dogs can be trained to sniff out illegal substances at the airport.
- # _____ Consequently, school closed early that day.
- # _____ On the other hand, most of us get our news from online sources.
- # _____ Not only that, but we'll still need to be prepared for increasingly extreme weather.
- # _____ For instance, the Chinese New Year is celebrated in February.
- # _____ On account of this, the beaches were closed for the season.
- # _____ Despite this, we managed to make our way home in time for dinner.
- # _____ Furthermore, band practice was canceled.
- # _____ In view of this, we decided to take a hike instead.
- # _____ Still, you might regret missing out on the opportunity to perform on stage.
- # _____ As a result, we all flunked the test.

Notice that if you eliminate the transitional phrase from each sentence, the sentence still makes sense. The reason the author begins with the transitional phrase is to achieve sentence variety and to clue the reader by linking details in terms of their relationship to one another.

Name _____

RECOGNIZING AND ANALYZING TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

Read the paragraphs below. Each contains at least one transitional phrase. Find and circle the transitional phrase or phrases. Then, identify the type of transitional phrase used.

1. Does climate change mean we can look forward to less snowy winters? The answer to that question may surprise you. As Paul O’Gorman, associate professor of atmospheric science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology explains, “In some regions, fairly cold regions, climate change could bring a decrease in the average snowfall in a year, but actually an intensification of the snowfall extremes.” In view of this, we can expect fewer but more intense snowstorms in the future. The same is true for rainfall: fewer days of drizzle but more torrential downpours. Not only that, but climate change will also impact our summer weather, bringing more frequent and severe heat waves, which can be just as treacherous as blinding blizzards. In large cities, children and the elderly are particularly susceptible to respiratory problems such as asthma when the temperature rises.

What type(s) of transitional phrase(s) are used in this paragraph?

2. According to the National Wildlife Federation, an alarming 42% of all threatened or endangered animals and plants are at risk primarily due to non-native species. Also known as an invasive species, these animals or plants arrive in a particular habitat as a result of human actions and adapt to survive and reproduce in there. For example, the Burmese python is an invasive species in the southeastern United States, particularly the Florida everglades. It is preying upon the wide variety of native birds, reptiles and mammals. Since the introduction of the Burmese python, populations of such natives as bobcat and cottontail rabbit have plummeted by more than 80%. Furthermore, the massive constrictor has no natural predators in the area to hold its numbers in check.

What type(s) of transitional phrase(s) are used in this paragraph?

Name _____

USING TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

Transitional phrases are used to link similar ideas, to present an example, express contrasting ideas, or to illustrate cause and effect. Think of a topic you know a lot about. Write at least 4 sentences about this topic, using transitional phrases correctly. Try to include each kind of transitional phrase and circle each one that you selected. Be ready to explain the function of each transitional word or phrase you used. Notice the transitional phrases in the detail sentences, and the way they relate to the sentence that precedes it, below:

Ex. TOPIC: Timber Sports

You won't see athletes who excel at timber sports in the Olympics and chances are, your school doesn't have a lumberjacking team. **But**, if you ever get a chance to see a timber sports championship, prepare to be amazed! The muscle-bound athletes compete in a series of unique and strenuous events that are just thrilling to watch. **For instance**, the Pole Climb is an exciting race against gravity as two lumberjacks climb a sixty foot tree in the blink of an eye. **Another** exciting event is the axe throw, which requires that the lumberjack hurl their axe into a 5-inch target from a distance of 20 feet away. **Of course**, there's also the logrolling competitions. Who could resist the sight of a burly timber athlete balanced on a log and using his own brand of fancy footwork to roll it down a waterway? It looks like fun, and it is, but it's also intensely challenging, requiring the grace and skill of a ballerina. **On the other hand**, some of the other events are played just for laughs. **For example**, the canoe joust has two pairs of lumberjacks in canoes battling to tip the other's boat. Some say the timber sports are obsolete in modern times and each year, there are fewer such competitions. **On account of this**, you owe it to yourself to attend a lumberjacking event if you ever get the chance. **After all**, the timber sports may be old-fashioned, but they're definitely entertaining.

Your Topic: _____

Your Main Idea Sentence: _____

Sentences using Transitional Phrases:

HOW TO WRITE A FULLY ELABORATED, WELL-SUPPORTED PARAGRAPH

AUTHORS INCLUDE:

- A broad yet distinct main idea sentence
- A number of details related to the main idea
- Sentences that answer the detail generating questions:
 - » What does it look like? Why is it important?
- Rich vocabulary and effective word choice
- Sentence variety
- At least one powerful “GOLDEN BRICK” detail in each paragraph:
 - *Quote *Statistic *Descriptive Segment *Anecdote *Amazing Fact
- Research

AUTHORS AVOID:

- Overly vague words and phrases, such as:
 - » nice, fun, good, pretty, cool, awesome, great, big, interesting, stuff, things and much more.
- The “Grocery List” - Do not list your details in a single sentence. Put each detail in a separate sentence.
 - » **Grocery List Sentence:** Frogs eat beetles, mosquitoes, small fish and smaller frogs.
 - » **Revision:** Frogs eat crawling insects such as beetles. These skillful hunters can also hop out of the water to snag a tasty mosquito in mid air. Small fish are another favorite meal. A hungry frog is also capable of feasting on a smaller frog.
- The “Broken Record” - Don’t begin each sentence with the same words:
 - » Example: There are....There are....There are....
- Too much “Telling” - Instead of telling that something is terrific, **SHOW** your reader what terrific looks like through the use of an example or two.

Name _____

REVISE THIS PARAGRAPH (1)

In the boxed paragraph below, the author included too many general, vague details. It is clear that the author did not apply the detail-generating questions:

“What does it look like?” “Why is it important?”

“Did you give a specific example?” “Is each detail in a separate sentence?”

Additionally, the author did not use any transitional phrases or “Golden Bricks” (Quotes, Amazing Facts, Anecdotes, Descriptive Segments) and did not pay attention to good sentence variety.

Read the paragraph below and REVISE it on another sheet of paper or at the keyboard. Be sure to use all the techniques you’ve learned about elaborating informational writing. Use the sentence starters at the bottom of the page if needed.

The Underground Railroad was not underground. The Underground Railroad wasn’t a railroad either. The Underground Railroad was just a route from the south to the north with safe places along the way where runaway slaves could rest. The Underground Railroad ran for many years and helped many people escape slavery and find new lives.

SENTENCE STARTERS:

The brave people _____ .

Travel via the Underground Railroad was _____ .

The journey _____ .

One of the most heroic _____ .

Of course, _____ .

Name _____

REVISE THIS PARAGRAPH (2)

In the boxed paragraph below, the author included too many general, vague details. It is clear that the author did not apply the detail-generating questions:

“What does it look like?” “Why is it important?”

“Did you give a specific example?” “Is each detail in a separate sentence?”

Additionally, the author did not use any transitional phrases or “Golden Bricks” (Quotes, Amazing Facts, Anecdotes, Descriptive Segments) and did not pay attention to good sentence variety.

Read the paragraph below and REVISE it on another sheet of paper or at the keyboard. Be sure to use all the techniques you’ve learned about elaborating informational writing. Use the sentence starters at the bottom of the page if needed.

Niagara Falls is a great place to visit. These world-famous falls attract all sorts of visitors. Niagara Falls is a favorite destination for families. It is also popular choice for a romantic honeymoon. It is also a place where the daring try to survive a plunge down the fall in a barrel. Niagara Falls is famous for attracting those fearless few who are willing to risk their lives to pull off such a stunt.

SENTENCE STARTERS:

The power of rushing water _____ .

The Falls are famous for _____ .

Visitors enjoy _____ .

Surviving a _____ .

Of course, _____ .

Name _____

WRITING A PARAGRAPH USING SUPPORTING DETAILS (1)

Look at this author's prewriting plan for a paragraph within an informational piece.

MAIN IDEA

Many large mammals have adapted to life in the desert.

DETAILS

Mountain Lion

Javelina

Coyote

Bighorn Sheep

On a separate sheet of paper, or at the keyboard, write a paragraph that includes all of these details. Remember to use good sentence variety and include vivid, interesting words. Use at least one "Golden Brick" in your paragraph. Begin with research and take notes on what you learn below.

Notes: _____



Name _____

WRITING A PARAGRAPH USING SUPPORTING DETAILS (2)

Look at this author's prewriting plan for a paragraph within an informational piece.

MAIN IDEA	It is exciting to celebrate special days throughout the year.	
	Veterans/Remembrance Day	Valentine's Day
DETAILS	Arbor Day	Mother's/Father's Day

On a separate sheet of paper, or at the keyboard, write a paragraph that includes all of these details. Remember to use good sentence variety and include vivid, interesting words. Use at least one "Golden Brick" in your paragraph. Begin with research and take notes on what you learn below.

Notes: _____



THE COMPARE/CONTRAST PIECE

Compare and contrast essays require that writers compare the similarities and contrast the differences between two or more topics (objects, people or ideas, for example). As a sub-genre of informational writing, it follows the same organizational framework as a straight information piece with main ideas that are supported by a multitude of appropriate details.

Organizational strategies to avoid include:

The Two Paragraph Approach

Let's imagine we're writing a compare and contrast piece about the Arctic vs. the Antarctic using this strategy. One paragraph that focuses on the Arctic would be followed by paragraph about the Antarctic. The end result would be two disorganized paragraphs, each providing random facts about the topic. This would be difficult for a reader to follow or extract any specific details from.

The Ping-Pong Strategy

This back and forth approach compares and contrasts the two topics sentence by sentence, such as:

The Arctic is an ocean surrounded by continents. The Antarctic is a continent surrounded by ocean. Penguins live in the Antarctic. Snowy owls live in the Arctic. There are no terrestrial mammals in the Antarctic. Terrestrial mammals such as musk ox and reindeer live in the Arctic.

The result is usually one rambling paragraph in which any specific fact that the reader might be looking for is difficult to locate.

Similarities and Differences

Using this approach, the author writes one paragraph that includes a collection of similarities for example: *Both the Arctic and the Antarctic are cold, remote and sparsely populated.* This is followed by a paragraph highlighting the differences between the two, such as: *Several penguin species are found in the Antarctic while many birds of prey live in the Arctic.* The problem with this approach is that the similarities or the differences between the two topics are rarely equal. Instead, one usually outweighs the other. In most cases, the body of the finished piece consists of only two paragraphs, one long and one very short. As with the other two ineffective strategies, the reader will struggle to locate any specific information they may be looking for.

Remember, an effective Compare/Contrast piece is organized around main ideas that are common to both topics. Within each main idea paragraph, the author cites the similarities and differences between the two topics. This creates a finished piece that is easy to skim and scan for key facts.

Example: **TOPIC:** The Arctic vs. The Antarctic

Main Idea #1: Mammals

Main Idea #2: Birds

Main Idea #3: Indigenous People

Main Idea #4: Natural resources

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR USE IN A “HOW-TO” PIECE

The next step involves _____ . Be sure to _____ .

Pay close attention to _____ . Continue by _____ .

Once this is accomplished, go on to _____ . After that _____ .

It is important to remember to _____ . Next, _____ .

Now you can start to _____ . Always keep in mind that _____ .

It is critical that you _____ . As you continue, be sure _____ .

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR USE IN A “RESPONSE TO LITERATURE”

This is clear when _____ . In the story, we see how _____ .

Specifically, _____ . This is evidenced by _____ .

This is demonstrated when _____ . We see an example of this when _____ .

The reader sees (or feels) _____ . The proof is _____ .

The author shows us that _____ when _____ . For example, _____ .

The main character demonstrates his/her _____ . An illustration of this is _____ .

We understand this clearly when _____ . The author proves this when _____ .

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR USE IN A “COMPARE/CONTRAST” PIECE

Similarly, _____ . On the other hand _____ .

In the same way _____ . They differ in that _____ .

One trait they share is _____ . Conversely, _____ .

Another similarity is _____ . An additional difference is _____ .

Likewise, _____ . A like characteristic is _____ .

They deviate in that _____ . Both share _____ .

In the same way, _____ . In contrast, _____ .

Name _____

USING INFORMATION FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES TO CREATE A FULLY-ELABORATED PARAGRAPH (1)

On a separate sheet of paper, or at the keyboard, write a paragraph beginning with the following main idea sentence:

The Great Bear Rainforest supports an outstanding array of plant and animal species.

Begin your research by viewing the video *Animals Return To Canada’s Pacific Coast* at <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/short-film-showcase/animals-return-to-canadas-pacific-coast>

Take notes below both from the video and from your own online research gathered when you conduct a search with the keywords “Great Bear Rainforest.”



Name _____

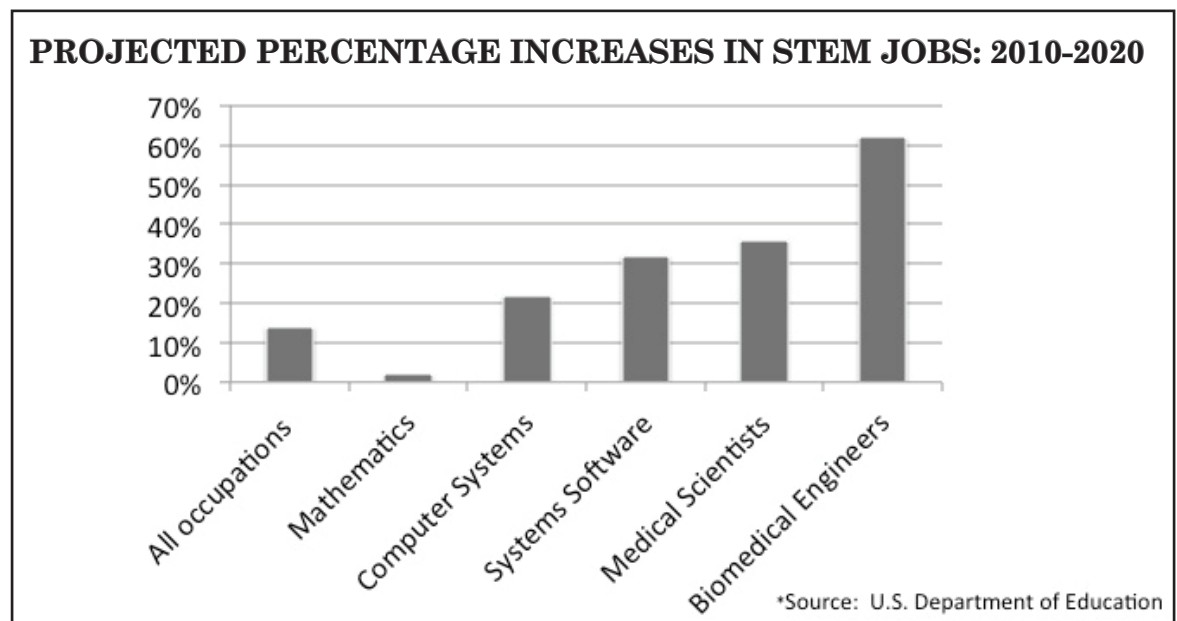
USING INFORMATION FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES TO CREATE A FULLY-ELABORATED PARAGRAPH (2)

On a separate sheet of paper, or at the keyboard, write a paragraph beginning with the following main idea sentence:

The STEM initiative encourages students to consider careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Begin your research by doing a keyword search of STEM initiative. Take notes from your research below.

Next, look at the accompanying graph and poll your classmates using questions below. Incorporate facts from the graph and from your poll in your paragraph.



Poll: Are you planning to pursue any of the careers noted on the graph?

Yes No Undecided

Would you like to learn more about how to pursue any of these professions?

Yes No If yes, which one? _____

Tally the results of your poll on another sheet of paper and use this first hand evidence in your paragraph.



Name _____

USING INFORMATION FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES TO CREATE A FULLY-ELABORATED PARAGRAPH (3)

On a separate sheet of paper, or at the keyboard, write a paragraph beginning with the following main idea sentence:

A tsunami can be catastrophic to coastal communities.

View the video: *Tsunamis 101* at <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/101-videos/tsunami-101>. Take notes below.

Next, review timeline below. Incorporate information from the timeline and the video in your paragraph.

HISTORY OF THE TSUNAMI

1490 B.C.
Greece: Tsunami devastates the Minoan civilization.

1929
Canada: Caused by an earthquake in the Atlantic, tsunami kills 27.

1992
Nicaragua: Caused by an earthquake in the Pacific, Tsunami kills 200 in Central America.

2011
Okuma, Japan: Tsunami destroys a nuclear power station, takes 15,000 lives and leaves at least 300,000 homeless.

1883
Indonesia: Tsunami caused by the eruption of the volcano Krakatoa kills 40,000.

1958
Alaska: Tsunami caused by a landslide brings waves of 1,720 feet in height.

2004
Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Southeast India: Most destructive tsunami ever recorded starts in the southern Indian ocean and takes the lives of 150,000.

