



Grade 6 Informational Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 6: Authentic Writing Tasks

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Name _____

ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENs AND VARIABLES (1)

You're going on safari! Write an informational essay describing the lions, elephants and hippopotamuses you'll see on your adventure.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENs and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
- Use the detail-generating questions to generate vivid, specific details.
- Include anecdotes, quotes, statistics, amazing facts and/or descriptive segments.
- Creatively restate your main ideas in your conclusion.

Name _____

ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (2)

The Inca created one of the most successful civilizations in the ancient world. Write an informational piece about the artifacts these accomplished people left behind, including their architecture, pottery and textiles.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
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ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (3)

Mutualism is a relationship between two living things that is beneficial to both. Write an informational essay explaining how the following organisms are important to the survival of each other: ants and fungus, the shark and the remora, and bees and flowers.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
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ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (4)

The past few decades have been a time of innovation in the world. Write an informational essay explaining the value of smart phones, global positioning systems (GPS), and hybrid cars in today's world.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
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ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (5)

Extreme weather can be dangerous. Research and write a report describing the causes and characteristics of hurricanes, tornados, and blizzards.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
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ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (6)

In 2007, seven new “wonders of the world” were identified. Write an informational essay describing the Taj Mahal in India and three more of these super-special landmarks.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

MAIN IDEA #4: _____ *etc., as needed*

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
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- Creatively restate your main ideas in your conclusion.

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ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (7)

Board games, card games, video games - what's your favorite?
Write an informational piece about a game you play. Make sure one paragraph explains the skills you need to excel at this game.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

MAIN IDEA #4: _____ *etc., as needed*

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
- Use the detail-generating questions to generate vivid, specific details.
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- Creatively restate your main ideas in your conclusion.

Name _____

ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (8)

Show off your culinary talents! Write a how-to piece describing how to make your favorite dish.

PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: _____

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

MAIN IDEA #4: _____ *etc., as needed*

REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
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Student Template

Name _____

STORY: FIELD DAY

**Harry's excitement
about field day**
Textual Evidence

**How he feels about
Brian**
Textual Evidence

**Harry's Dilemma
(To pair with Brian or
not?)**
Textual Evidence

How he feels about it
Textual Evidence

Harry's Choice (Brian or Heidi?) - *Textual Evidence*

SCENE: FRENEMIES

**Who is the ringleader
in this scene?**

**Is Katie a real friend to
Olivia?**

**How it's different from
the story**

**How it's similar to the
story**

Conclusion: Olivia resists peer pressure (*Evidence*)

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR A LITERARY ANALYSIS TASK - IDENTIFY THE THEME

- I believe the theme of both texts is ____
- Both texts explore ____
- This is evidenced by ____
- The author/playwright illustrates how ____
- The text/dialogue highlights ____
- We learn in paragraph ____ that ____
- The reader understands how ____
- In paragraph ____, the author shows how ____
- Through dialogue, the author ____
- It is interesting to note that ____
- The difference between the texts is ____
- The author/playwright points out that ____
- Furthermore, ____
- The details suggest that ____
- The reader can conclude that ____
- In paragraph # we learn that ____
- For example, ____
- Another example of this is ____
- The dialogue shows us ____
- When Brian says ____, we see that ____
- On the other hand, the playwright uses ____
- The theme in the story is expressed in ____
- When you hear the scene acted out, you notice ____
- I could relate to this theme because ____
- In my life I experienced ____
- In both the story and the scene ____
- In addition, ____
- Both the author and the playwright ____
- If I were in Olivia's situation, I would ____ because ____
- I'd agree that ____

Name _____

Identify a theme in the short story Field Day and in the scene from the play Frenemies. Write an essay that explains how the theme of the story is demonstrated through the dialogue and description and how the theme is shown in the scene through the examples provided. Be sure to include specific details from the story and from the scene to support your essay. Also, describe a time in your life when a friend either betrayed you or stood by you in a difficult situation.

Field Day

I had a definite spring in my step as I walked to the bus stop. Not only was it Friday, but summer vacation was just around the corner and today was Field Day at Royce Middle School. All in all, I was anticipating a great day.

“Hey, Harry,” Brian greeted me.

Brian and I had been waiting for the bus at this very curb since first grade and he was definitely the best friend I’d ever had.

“Hey, Brian,” I said. “Did you forget what today is?”

The reason I asked was that Brian was not dressed for a day of running races and playing games in the great outdoors. Instead, he wore his usual black pants, a button-down shirt and loafers. He carried his bulky saxophone case in one hand. I, on the other hand, was wearing my bright red high-tops, a t-shirt and a baggy pair of basketball shorts.

It dawned on him and he smacked his forehead. “Field day. Ugh.”

Ugh? Unfortunately, it didn’t surprise me that Brian was not a fan of field days. He was smart and musically talented, but he was no athlete and competition just stressed him out. Brian was my oldest friend in the world, but ever since we started middle school it seemed like we were growing apart. Our interests, at this point, were like polar opposites. Girls were still as invisible to Brian as they were when we were in 4th grade, which was definitely not the case with me. While Brian had progressed to lead saxophonist, I’d quit band to make time for soccer practice. I was just scraping by in my classes and Brian made the honor roll every semester.

He’d always been good at school. I would never forget how patient he was with me back in first grade when I was having so much trouble learning how to read. Somehow Brian

(continued)

knew exactly how to help me without making me feel stupid. He never lost patience even when I needed to be told the same thing over and over again. I often wondered if I ever would have learned to read without him.

For that, and that alone, I would be forever grateful to Brian. I hated to admit it, but that didn't stop me from wondering sometimes if we were really still best friends. Today, I realized, he would expect me to be his partner for the Field Day games that required us to pair up - like the three legged and the wheelbarrow races - and I wasn't happy about it.

"Don't even think about winning," I told myself, bitterly. "Not with Brian as a partner."

By ten that morning, we were soaked to the skin from a water balloon toss and watching the hula hoop contest. I cheered when my friend Heidi won.

"Great job with the hula hoop," I told her.

"Thanks, Harry," she said. "I've been practicing."

"I can tell."

"The three-legged race is next," she said. "Be my partner?"

I really liked Heidi. She was fast and agile, and I knew we'd win if we paired up. I wanted to say yes, but how could I? Brian was counting on me.

"Sorry," I said. "I've already got a partner."

"Harry," Brian said, with a smile. "Race with Heidi. You know you want to."

"Well, then, who will you..."

"Forget about it," he interrupted. "You ought to know by now that three-legged races aren't exactly my thing."

So Heidi and I went on to taste victory at the three legged race, plus the wheelbarrow competition, and my best buddy Brian rooted for us every step of the way.

Name _____

Frenemies

Act 1, Scene 1

SETTING - A group of twelve-year-old girls and boys gather around campfire in the dark of night. Spotlight illuminates each young face as they speak in turn.

Katie: I've got an extra special treat to share tonight.

Theo: We can always count on you, Katie, for the extra special treats.

Ian: Is it edible?

Katie: *(pulling out an E-cigarette)* Better.

Olivia: Are you sure about this?

Tori: I want to give it a try.

Katie: You're going to get a chance. We all are.

Ian: Me first.

Olivia: I don't want to.

Katie: Don't be a baby. It's not even a real cigarette.

Theo: Gimme a puff.

Katie: How about Olivia goes first?

Olivia: No way.

Tori: Come on, Livie. Live a little.

Olivia: No. Those things are dangerous.

Ian: I'll show her how it's done. *(he puffs the e-cig)*

Theo: My turn. *(he puffs the e-cig)*

Katie: *(offering e-cig to Olivia)* Your turn.

Olivia: No. Back me up, Tori. You know it's wrong.

Tori: Come on, Livie. Give it a try.

Olivia: No.

Katie: Well, then maybe you should leave.

Olivia: *(standing)* Okay. Come on, Tori.

LONG PAUSE

Tori: *(pointing to e-cig)* Give me that thing.

(Katie hands it to Tori who takes a puff. Olivia exits the stage alone.)

Name _____

READ LIKE AN AUTHOR

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

The marshal set the backpack down on a seat, reached inside, and pulled out...

A dragon’s head?

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

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

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

“And what country is that?”

“Gadakistan. Is near...”

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

“Listen,” said Matt. “I still think...”

I grabbed his arm. “Shut up,” I said.

“But there’s....”

“Just for once shut up, okay?”

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

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

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

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

A really creepy smile.

Taken from The Worst Class Trip Ever by Dave Barry

Hyperion, The Disney Book Group

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Name _____

READ LIKE AN AUTHOR

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

Ex. Who is the main character (point of view character or protagonist) in the story?

The main character in this story, also known as the point of view character or protagonist, is Wyatt Palmer.

Or:

In this story Wyatt Palmer is the main character, also known as the point of view character or the protagonist.

1. Where is the story set? _____

2. What is the tone or mood of the story? _____

3. What is the main character's problem, challenge, or adventure? _____

4. What is the main character's motivation (what does the main character want)? _____

5. Who or what stands in the way of the main character's motivation? _____

6. Where does the author use suspense and/or foreshadowing? _____

7. How does the main character feel about the situation? _____

8. How does the main character show his/her feelings? _____

9. How did the main character might grow and change as the story continues?

10. Based on the excerpt, can you make a prediction about how this story might end?

11. Judging from the excerpt, can you guess what the *theme* of the story might be?

12. What would you do if faced with a similar challenge or adventure? _____

Name _____

Jake Junior

As we turned up the bumpy, dirt road that led to Camp Full Moon, memories flooded my mind. To my right, I saw the basketball court where I'd perfected my jump shot two seasons ago. Straight ahead was the calm, clear lake where I'd learned to swim when I was young. Kayaks, in a rainbow of neon-bright colors, were lined up by the shore just waiting for an eager paddler; I'd flipped the bright green one last summer. To my left, of course, were the cabins, rickety and rustic, with their wobbly bunk beds and doors that never closed completely. Connected by winding, well-worn paths and shaded by tall oak trees, there were ten cabins in all, every one named after a Native American tribe. The first one we passed was Lakota, the oldest boys cabin where I'd had so many good times last summer.

But this summer would be different and I felt a pang of worry as I waved goodbye to my Dad. Gone were my days as a camper. Today I was the Junior Counselor at Hopi Cabin, residence of Camp Full Moon's 8-year-old boys. I'd been wanting this since I was a kid, but right now I had to wonder: Was I up to the job? I'd been a great camper, but that didn't mean I'd be a great Junior Counselor.

"It's a big responsibility," the camp director had warned me. "You're going to have to look after the boys, make sure they clean up the cabin every morning, help them find their way around the camp, take them to the nurse if they're not feeling well. At first, a few will be homesick and it'll be your job to cheer them up.

Of course, I wouldn't be doing it all on my own. Ben, the lead counselor, was really in charge and I was just his assistant. I'd been so proud and happy when I was offered the position.

"Count me in," I said, not giving it a second thought. It seemed perfect, a way to make a little money while enjoying another summer at Camp Full Moon. What I hadn't considered was that I'd be hanging out with 8-year-old boys rather than my usual group of camp buddies. I'd been surprised, not to mention disappointed beyond belief, when I found out that not a single one of them would be joining me as a Junior Counselor.

Oh, well. I was on my own and the boys would be arriving at any minute. I rolled out my sleeping bag onto one of the threadbare mattresses on a bottom bunk and stashed my clothes in a locker. On schedule, the first of the boys burst through the door.

"Hey," he yelled. "You're the counselor? Awesome. I want a top bunk, okay? When can we go swimming? Where's the skateboard park? How about the..."

"Slow down," I said. "I'm Jake, the junior counselor. And you are?" I guessed that this confident, enthusiastic young camper would not be among the homesick few I'd have to cheer up in the coming days and nights.

"Hi, Jake Junior," he said. "I'm Gideon."

"Nice to meet you Gideon. Let's put your stuff into a locker and..."

“Where’s everybody else?”

“They’ll be here any minute,” I told him, and they were. For the next hour, Ben and I helped a parade of boys unpack their stuff and make up their beds. Gideon tried to help, but he was mostly annoying as he asked one question after another without waiting for an answer and introduced me to the other boys as “Jake Junior.”

I let out a silent groan. What had I gotten myself into? I had no little brothers and I’d never done any babysitting. I wasn’t sure I liked this kid Gideon at all and what’s more, the dumb nickname he’d given me, Jake Junior, was catching on. Great. As I looked around, Camp Full Moon didn’t quite look like the friendly place I remembered. I looked up at the squeaky ceiling fan overhead and wondered how it could keep us cool on hot summer nights. How could the tattered screens covering the windows possibly shield us from the swarms of mosquitoes outside?

After the parents had left and the sun had settled into the western horizon, we hunkered down for the night. I was just about asleep when I heard a quiet snuffle from the bunk above me. Was Gideon crying?

A louder snuffle convinced me that yes, indeed, Gideon was crying. Ben was fast asleep and snoring to beat the band, so he’d be no help. I didn’t know what to do, but I had to do something.

“Gideon,” I said, in a loud whisper. “You okay, buddy?”

“No,” he sobbed. “It’s scary here: the dark and twisty pathways, that big, deep lake. I want to go home.”

I sure wasn’t going to tell him, but I was feeling the same way. But then I remembered being eight at Camp Full Moon.

“No, you don’t.” I assured him. “Go home now and you’ll regret it.” Then I told him about the many times I’d run up those dark and twisty pathways to lob water balloons at the girl’s cabins and about how good it felt to dive into that big, deep lake on a hot August afternoon.

The sniffing stopped as Gideon listened to my stories about being a kid at Camp Full Moon.

“And that’s why you’ve got to stick around,” I said, finishing up. “Because Camp Full Moon is awesome once you get used to it.”

“I guess you’re right,” Gideon said.

“Think you can go to sleep now?” I asked.

“Yeah,” he said. “Good night, Jake Junior.”

“Just Jake, okay Gideon,” I said.

“Sure, Jake,” said Gideon. And, you know what, I think you’re going to be the best junior counselor there’s ever been at Camp Full Moon.”

Thus, my summer as Jake, junior counselor, began and when it ended, Gideon loved every inch of Camp Full Moon, from its rocky hiking trails to the grassy knoll where we sang around a bonfire every Thursday night, just as much as I did.

Name _____

Time to Shine

Stage fright? Who me? No way. No way would I be afraid to step into the spotlight, take on a starring role in an elaborate production, belt out a tune, and tap dance my way to a standing ovation.

That was certainly true, but only in my dreams. In reality, I was the girl who stayed backstage and kept the props neatly organized for the actors.

Scratch that. My days as the prop girl were behind me. This year, I was finally going to come out from the shadows and try to land the role of Lucy in the middle school production of “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.” That is, unless I chickened out.

Knowing that auditions were after school, I couldn’t eat any lunch or concentrate on my classes all day long, but my nerves reached a crescendo when I stepped into the auditorium and got a look at my competition.

They all looked so confident. There was cute little Dinah, with her bouncy strawberry-colored curls, perched on the edge of the stage with her legs dangling into the orchestra pit. Since she was a shoo-in to play the main character’s true love, I could not imagine that her stomach was fluttering the way mine was. Right next to Dinah, sat Theo. As a soccer champ and class clown, he oozed self-assurance. No doubt about it, Theo would have a blast playing a beagle who imagined himself a World War I flying ace. There was Alex, who I always helped with math, wearing a backwards baseball cap and a catcher’s mitt. He was joking around with Juan who was snuggling his face in a tattered blanket and looking every bit like an adorably insecure child. Of course, Tessa was there too.

“Brace yourself for major disappointment,” I told myself. “Of course Tessa’s going to get it.” After all, she’d gotten the starring role in our 6th and 7th grade productions. Why wouldn’t she win the role of her choice this year too? What had I been thinking even showing up? Maybe I should’ve stuck with being the prop girl. I didn’t belong in this confident, outgoing group.

I was becoming more panicked by the minute as 7th and 8th graders filed into the auditorium. At ten of three, our drama teacher, Miss Braverman, got the audition underway, calling us up to the stage one-by-one and asking us to perform a scene from the play.

I had prepared carefully for this: delivering lines of dialogue in front of the bathroom mirror while paying close attention to my intonation, facial expressions and timing. As I watched my classmates perform, it became clear to me that they’d done the same. This was going to be a great production and I wanted to be a part of it more than ever.

(continued)

Finally, it was my turn. My legs felt shaky as I walked to the center of the stage and stood in the spotlight in front of a red velvet curtain, a heavy fabric that I easily imagined lining the inside of a coffin. The glaring beam of the spotlight hurt my eyes at first but I gradually became accustomed to it and looked out at the view from center stage. I'd been in this auditorium dozens of times before, but never noticed exactly how large it was. Today it seemed positively cavernous and entirely capable of swallowing me whole. The rows of worn seats seemed never-ending and the faces of my classmates peering up at me looked oddly unfamiliar and unfriendly.

"Ready when you are, Jenna," called Miss Braverman. Her voice seemed to echo in the huge space.

"Okay," I told myself, taking a few deep breaths. "Time to shine."

I delivered my first line, heard a soft murmur of laughter from the audience and my stage fright magically vanished. The spotlight lost its harsh glare until it felt like a gentle beam of sunshine on my face. As I continued, I saw the bright, happy faces of classmates looking up at me and their laughter encouraged me. My voice became stronger and bolder, and the laughter grew louder. By the time I finished, my audience was rolling in the aisles.

"Way to go, Jenna," Miss Braverman called, standing and applauding. My classmates joined her and, flushed with pride, I took my first bow.

The next day, Tessa stopped me in the hall. "You were great at auditions yesterday."

"So were you," I said.

"I was so nervous," she said. "I love being on stage, but I think you'll make a better Lucy than me."

I couldn't believe my ears. "Me?"

"Yes! You were hilarious."

"I was so nervous."

"You covered it up well," she laughed.

"That's good to know," I said, wondering if maybe I was a better actress than I gave myself credit for.

In the end, I won the role of Lucy and Tessa took on the character of sweet Sally Brown - and for both of us, opening night was a time to shine.

Student Template

Name _____

JAKE'S SITUATION:

Where is he and why? How did he feel about his situation?

EVIDENCE OF HIS FEELINGS:

**DESCRIPTION OF SETTING
THAT ILLUSTRATES POV*:**

JENNA'S SITUATION:

Where is she and why? How did she feel about her situation?

EVIDENCE OF HER FEELINGS:

**DESCRIPTION OF SETTING
THAT ILLUSTRATES POV:**

**POV = point of view*

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR A LITERARY ANALYSIS TASK - EXPLORING POINT OF VIEW AND SETTING

- The narrator's point of view was that ____
- Both texts illustrate how ____
- This is evidenced by ____
- The narrator makes a connection between ____
- The narrator's feelings are illustrated through ____
- In paragraph # ____
- When Jake meets Gideon, he ____
- In paragraph # the narrator describes ____
- It is interesting to note that ____
- Jake's POV is reflected by ____
- Furthermore, ____
- In contrast, ____
- The details suggest that ____
- Jenna's POV changes when ____
- The reader can conclude that ____
- The author uses action to show us ____
- For example, ____
- Another example of this is ____
- The dialogue shows us ____
- Jake's view of the camp was ____
- Jenna's impression of her classmates ____
- The author uses the following phrase ____ to show ____
- It's clear that ____
- This is clear when ____
- We know how Jenna feels when ____
- The narrator points out that ____
- The author effectively describes ____
- The words, ____, show that ____
- Jake's attitude changes when ____
- In conclusion, ____

Name _____

Giving Up Too Soon?

The bell rang and we were off to our first period classes. Teddy had missed homeroom again. I hoped he was just running late, that by lunchtime I'd see him swaggering down the hallways in his high-tops with his backpack slung across one shoulder, but in my heart, I knew that I probably wouldn't see Teddy today. Tomorrow, if he showed up, he'd be full of excuses.

"I was so sick," he'd explain, looking quite healthy.

Or, "I missed the bus and couldn't find a ride" or "I had to babysit until really late and was so tired."

I was really starting to miss him. Teddy and I hadn't been friends for long, but I liked him. He was witty and nice to everybody, but he had a hard time in school and I think he had some problems at home. Of course, lots of us struggle with our schoolwork and nobody's family life is perfect but I suspected these issues were really starting to get Teddy down.

"What can we do to help him?" I asked Rosie, my best friend. She liked Teddy too and she agreed that he might be headed in the wrong direction. Not only had he been absent too often, but he'd been in trouble for skipping classes and smarting off to teachers.

"Tell his parents?" she suggested.

"No," I said. "That might get him in trouble."

"You're right," said Rosie. "How about we just offer to meet him at the library and help him with his homework."

"We could," I agreed. "But that's not going to matter if he doesn't come to school in the first place or if he keeps getting into trouble."

Rosie shrugged. "I don't know what else we can do."

She was right. And I didn't have any ideas either.

Teddy was absent for the rest of the week, but we finally met up with him at the mall on Saturday.

“Where’ve you been?” I asked him.

“I’ve been around,” he said.

“You haven’t been at school,” I said. “If you need help, I’ll help you.” As I remembered, Teddy had been baffled by pre-Algebra. It was definitely confusing, but I was finally getting it. I knew enough to help Teddy.

“No, thanks,” he said.

“You’re going to flunk, Teddy,” I said.

“Nobody flunks 7th grade,” he said, with smile.

“I’m getting worried about you.”

“Don’t worry about me, Melissa,” he said. “It’s just 7th grade. I’ll get serious about my classes when we get to high school.”

I wanted to believe him but I had the sneaking suspicion that by the time we got to high school, it might be too late.

“Promise?” Rosie asked.

“Sure, I promise,” he said. But to me, it just didn’t ring true. I think Teddy knew it too. He looked away. “Hey, look, I’m meeting somebody so I’ll see you two later, okay?”

Rosie and I exchanged a glance as we watched him dash through the mall on his long legs. In the blink of an eye, he’d disappeared into the crowd, leaving us to wonder whether or not we’d all be graduating high school together someday.