



# **Grade 7 Informational Writing Guide**

## **Student Pages for Print or Projection**

### **SECTION 5: Introductions and Conclusions**

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## WHAT YOUR INFORMATIONAL INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH NEEDS

When writing an original essay or report include:

1. **A LEAD**

Catch your reader's attention with:

- a question
- an amazing or unusual fact
- a descriptive segment
- a quote
- a statistic
- an anecdote

2. **A TOPIC SENTENCE**

Briefly, clearly, tell the reader what the piece will be about.

Read each introduction paragraph that follows. Pay attention to the different kinds of leads. The lead appears in italics. The topic sentence is underlined. Notice that the topic sentence in each example is the same.

*Each year an astounding 35,000 travelers from around the world set sail for a cold and windy place where there are no resorts, no restaurants and no stores. These hearty adventurers are eager to explore and photograph Antarctica's dramatic Elephant Island.* Let's take a closer look at the history, geographic features, and wildlife of this remote, rugged island.

Type of Lead: **A STATISTIC**

*Imagine cruising through a crystal clear sea where glassy sheets of ice and majestic glaciers float with the currents. Straight ahead, a mountainous island soars into the sky and your heart races with excitement as you approach. Without a doubt, it would be the adventure of a lifetime to explore Elephant Island.* Let's take a close look at the history, geographic features, and wildlife of this remote, rugged island.

Type of Lead: **A DESCRIPTIVE SEGMENT**

It might be hard to believe, but there is a species of seal that can weigh up to 8,000 pounds! This immense, blubbery mammal is called an Elephant Seal and it has a whole island named after it! Let's take a close look at the history, geographic features, and wildlife of this remote, rugged island.

Type of Lead: **AMAZING FACT**

(continued)

The first time I saw a photograph of Antarctica's Elephant Island, I thought that it had been taken on another planet. That was when I vowed to someday visit this otherworldly empire of ice. *Let's take a close look at the history, geographic features, and wildlife of this remote, rugged island.*

Type of Lead: **AN ANECDOTE**

Would you dare visit Elephant Island? Found just off the coast of Antarctica, this frigid, windswept place has a bleak, one-of-a-kind beauty, but it's hardly welcoming to humans. *Let's take a close look at the history, geographic features, and wildlife of this remote, rugged island.*

Type of Lead: **A QUESTION**

"Standing on the stirring ice, one can imagine it is disturbed by the breathing and tossing of a mighty giant below." That's how polar explorer Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton describes his first impression of Elephant Island in Antarctica, where he and his crew were stranded for 21 months between 1914-16. *Let's take a close look at the history, geographic features, and wildlife of this remote, rugged island.*

Type of Lead: **A QUOTE**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## LEADS AND TOPIC SENTENCES (1)

Read each introduction paragraph. Fill in the author’s prewriting plan in order to highlight each main idea. Underline the lead in red and the topic sentence in blue. Then, on the line below each paragraph, tell which kind of lead the author used:

**Descriptive Segment • Amazing Fact • Question**  
**• Quote • Statistic • Anecdote**

1. “Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game.” That’s the advice of the Babe Ruth, one of baseball’s most beloved and enduring heroes. Nicknamed the Bambino, this bold, brash champion ruled major league baseball between the years of 1914-1935. Let’s trace the progression of his spectacular career from his early days as a pitcher, through his peak years of homerun hitting for the New York Yankees, and on to his induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. We’ll also explore the legacy this baseball hero left behind.

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE OF LEAD:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Imagine the rip-roaring, gravity-defying fun of maneuvering a snowboard from the summit of a snowy slope. As you carve your way down the mountain with the wind in your face, you just might decide that winter is your favorite season of all. To enjoy this super exciting sport, you’re going to need specialized equipment, including warm, water-proof clothing, well-fitting boots, the right type of board and, of course, a sturdy safety helmet.

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE OF LEAD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BONUS:** On another piece of paper or at the keyboard, rewrite the lead for both of these paragraphs using a different type of lead. Then, rewrite the given topic sentence, which specifically references all of the main ideas, with a more general topic sentence that hints at what the rest of the piece will be about, but doesn’t say so outright.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## LEADS AND TOPIC SENTENCES (2)

Read the introduction paragraph below. Underline the general topic sentence. Then, create a prewriting framework with 3-5 main ideas that could be associated with this topic sentence. This may require research. Finally, underline the lead in red and identify the kind of lead used:

**Descriptive Segment • Amazing Fact • Question**  
**• Quote • Statistic • Anecdote**

Imagine an ancient civilization where glittering palaces made of marble and gold perch atop a grand mountain that soars into the clouds. In this high-altitude paradise, gods and goddesses enjoy perfect weather and feast on sumptuous nectars. You have arrived in the world of Greek mythology! Meet some of its most powerful residents.

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #4:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #5:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BONUS:** On another piece of paper or at the keyboard, rewrite the lead for this paragraph using all five of the other techniques listed above.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING AN ATTENTION-GRABBING LEAD (1)

Read the topic sentence below:

Without a doubt, the platypus is a very unique mammal.

The topic sentence tells us that the piece will be about the uniqueness of the platypus. Think about the various types of leads you can write to grab the reader's attention:

- Descriptive Segment • Amazing Fact • Question
- Quote • Statistic • Anecdote

Use the spaces below to write an example of each kind of **lead**. Make sure your lead catches the reader's attention and draws the reader on to the topic sentence which is given.

**Quote** (What might a wildlife biologist or other such authority say about the platypus? Research this via the internet.)

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**Statistic** (Use a percentage or other number to spark your reader's interest in the platypus. Research this via the internet.)

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**BONUS:** See if you can write a lead that uses two of the techniques. For example, a question that includes a statistic or an anecdote that incorporates an amazing fact.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING AN ATTENTION-GRABBING LEAD (2)

Read the topic sentence below:

Without a doubt, the platypus is a very unique mammal.

The topic sentence tells us that the piece will be about the uniqueness of the platypus. Think about the various types of leads you can write to grab the reader's attention:

**Descriptive Segment • Amazing Fact • Question**  
**• Quote • Statistic • Anecdote**

Use the spaces below to write an example of each kind of **lead**. Make sure your lead catches the reader's attention and draws the reader on to the topic sentence which is given.

**Anecdote** (Write a short story telling your reader what you like or dislike about the platypus.)

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**Amazing Fact** (Write an amazing or little known fact about platypus. Research this via the internet.)

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**BONUS:** See if you can write a lead that uses two of the techniques. For example, an amazing fact that includes a statistic or an anecdote that incorporates a quote.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING AN ATTENTION-GRABBING LEAD (3)

Read the topic sentence below:

**Without a doubt, the platypus is a very unique mammal.**

The topic sentence tells us that the piece will be about the uniqueness of the platypus. Think about the various types of leads you can write to grab the reader’s attention:

- Descriptive Segment • Amazing Fact • Question**
- Quote • Statistic • Anecdote**

Use the spaces below to write an example of each kind of **lead**. Make sure your lead catches the reader’s attention and draws the reader on to the topic sentence which is given.

**Question** (Write a question, or series of questions, that people might have about the platypus.)

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**Descriptive Segment** (Write several phrases that describe the platypus.)

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**BONUS:** See if you can write a lead that uses two of the techniques. For example, a descriptive segment that includes a statistic or an anecdote that incorporates a quote.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## REVISE THESE BORING LEADS

Even though an informational piece is intended to give you information, it shouldn't be dull. Read each lead sentence below. Each one is boring!

**Remember:** The introduction should have a "lead" sentence that makes the reader eager to read on! In each example, the boring lead sentence is in italics. The topic sentence is underlined.

Revise each lead sentence using one of the following techniques:

**Descriptive Segment • Amazing Fact • Question**  
**• Quote • Statistic • Anecdote**

1. *Indonesia is nation comprised of thousands of islands.* Visitors to Indonesia have their choice of many exciting adventures.

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2. *Ice hockey is the most popular sport in Canada while football is the favorite in the United States.* Competitive sports are part of North American culture.

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**BONUS:** Revise one of your leads using an alternate technique.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## EFFECTIVE TOPIC SENTENCES

Read the prewriting plan and the menu of possible TOPIC SENTENCES the author is considering.

- Underline the topic sentence that refers to the main ideas in a *general* way.
- Cross out the topic sentence that does not encompass all of the main ideas.
- Write a topic sentence that specifically references each of the main ideas.

**TOPIC: Thailand**

**MAIN IDEA #1:** History

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Geography

**MAIN IDEA #3:** People

Topic Sentences:

1. There are great beaches in Thailand.
2. Let's learn about Thailand.
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC: Vehicles**

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Jeeps

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Muscle cars

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Trucks

Topic Sentences:

1. There are lots of different vehicles on the road today.
2. Classic muscle cars are highly collectible.
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THINK ABOUT IT:** What is the benefit of stating each main idea within the topic sentence? How does it help the author? How does it help the reader?

**BONUS:** On another sheet of paper or at the keyboard, compose an effective lead that could be used with your choice of the two effective topic sentences.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING TOPIC SENTENCES

Read each prewriting plan. The author has listed both the TOPIC and the MAIN IDEAS. Use this information to craft an effective TOPIC SENTENCE. Be sure your topic sentence references all of the main ideas and remember, it doesn't have to be a single sentence. Try using two or even three.

### Example:

**TOPIC: Working with Animals**  
**MAIN IDEA #1:** Guide dog trainer  
**MAIN IDEA #2:** Veterinarian  
**MAIN IDEA #3:** Pet Groomer  
**MAIN IDEA #4:** Wildlife rehabilitator  
**MAIN IDEA #5:** Veterinary dentist

### TOPIC SENTENCE:

If you love animals, why not explore a career as a guide dog trainer, veterinarian or veterinary dentist? Consider becoming a pet groomer or wildlife rehabilitator too!

### Now it's your turn.

**TOPIC: Extreme Weather**  
**MAIN IDEA #1:** Tornados  
**MAIN IDEA #2:** Hurricanes  
**MAIN IDEA #3:** Blizzards  
**MAIN IDEA #4:** Tropical cyclones  
**MAIN IDEA #5:** Heat waves

TOPIC SENTENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**BONUS:** Try creating a topic sentence that suggests or implies main ideas in a general way rather than stating each main idea specifically.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING THE INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH (1)

Read the writing prompt and the author’s prewriting plan below. Use this information to write two effective introduction paragraphs:

- One with your choice of a lead and a topic sentence that specifically refers to each main idea.
- A second using an alternate lead and a general topic sentence that does not name any of the main ideas specifically but hints at them.

Remember, your lead can be a blend of two of the techniques and your topic sentence doesn’t have to be one single sentence. Take notes from your research below and compose your paragraph at the keyboard.

*Scientists are learning more about our galaxy every single day! Write an informational piece that describes the equipment needed for space exploration and the different branches of space science, including the study of planets and their moons as well as solar astronomy. Your piece should also explore research currently being gathered by the International Space Station and the future of space science.*

**TOPIC: Space Science**

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Equipment for space exploration

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Planets and their Moons

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Solar astronomy

**MAIN IDEA #4:** International Space Station

**MAIN IDEA #5:** Future of space science

Research Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING THE INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH (2)

Read the writing prompt and the author’s prewriting plan below. Use this information to write two effective introduction paragraphs:

- One with your choice of a lead and a topic sentence that specifically refers to each main idea.
- A second using an alternate lead and a general topic sentence that does not name any of the main ideas specifically but hints at them.

Remember, your lead can be a blend of two of the techniques and your topic sentence doesn’t have to be one single sentence. Take notes from your research below and compose your paragraph at the keyboard.

*The order of primates includes humans, apes, monkeys, and prosimians like the ring-tailed lemur, and your assignment is to write an informational essay about non-human primates. Your essay should examine the many different types of primates, their ability to learn and their behavior. Please include information about the habitats in which primates can be found and captive breeding programs involving primates.*

**TOPIC: Non Human Primates**  
**MAIN IDEA #1:** Different types  
**MAIN IDEA #2:** Ability to learn  
**MAIN IDEA #3:** Behavior  
**MAIN IDEA #4:** Habitat  
**MAIN IDEA #5:** Captive breeding

Research Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STRATEGIES FOR CRAFTING A RESPONSE TO TEXT INTRODUCTION

1. Read the assignment or prompt and analyze it for GIVENS and VARIABLES.
2. Fill in a SUMMARIZING FRAMEWORK for each source text and use this to write a paragraph using INFORMATIONAL VERBS.
3. Read the assignment and TURN QUESTIONS INTO RESPONSES.

**You've read two articles about Lost Civilizations, one describing three such civilizations and another detailing the reasons for their downfall. Write an essay citing the key differences between two of the civilizations. Make sure your essay includes paragraphs discussing the accomplishments of the civilization, what is known about its belief system and why it disappeared.**

1. Analyze the assignment for GIVENS and VARIABLES:  
Givens: three main ideas (accomplishments, belief systems, downfall)  
Variables: which two civilizations to write about
2. Use summarizing framework to craft a paragraph with informational verbs:  
**TOPIC:** Incan Empire vs. Minoan Civilization (or Indus Valley Civilization)  
**MAIN IDEA #1:** Accomplishments  
**MAIN IDEA #2:** Belief system  
**MAIN IDEA #3:** Downfall

*Both of these texts focus on lost civilizations from the ancient world. The first article, Lost Civilizations, describes three such lost civilizations while the second, Why Civilizations Disappear, recounts the reasons why they disappeared. Both articles emphasize the fact that there is much we still have to learn about these lost civilizations.*

3. Turn the question into a response: *Both the Incan Empire and the Minoan Civilization flourished during ancient times, but they differed in many ways.*
4. By combining these techniques students can compose a solid introduction paragraph:

*As detailed in both of these articles, the Incan Empire and the Minoan Civilization were both very successful ancient kingdoms. The first text describes some of the achievements of each civilization while the second focuses on the probable reasons for the downfall of such settlements. Based on what we learned from both texts, we are able to identify some of the key differences between the accomplishments, belief systems and downfall of the Incan Empire and the Minoan Civilization.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING RESPONSE TO TEXT INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPHS

Imagine that you've read two source texts and created the following summarizing frameworks for these texts.

**TOPIC:**

Key Characteristics of Science Fiction

**MAIN IDEA #1:**

Otherworldly Settings

**MAIN IDEA #2:**

The Martian Chronicles

**MAIN IDEA #3:**

Alien characters

**TOPIC:**

Examples of Great Science Fiction

**MAIN IDEA #1:**

The "Back to the Future" movies

**MAIN IDEA #2:**

Makes predictions about the future

**MAIN IDEA #3:**

The Hunger Games

Now, imagine that you must respond to this assignment:

**You have read two texts about the genre of science fiction. The first article focuses on the key characteristics of this genre and the second describes three famous works of science fiction. Based on what you learned from both articles, write an essay describing two key characteristics of the genre as evidenced in one of the movies. Be sure to cite specific evidence from both texts.**

1. What are the GIVENS in this assignment?

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the VARIABLES?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Based on the summarizing frameworks, write a paragraph using INFORMATIONAL VERBS:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Finally, turn the "why" question into a RESPONSE and make it the last sentence in your paragraph above.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Why Ancient Civilizations Disappeared

It may be hard to believe that a civilization can thrive one decade and vanish the next, but it's happened throughout history. The question is why. While it's impossible to say for sure, it's likely that war and invasions, climate change and natural disasters are to blame for the fall of many great ancient kingdoms.

In South America, war and invasions put an end to some of the most successful civilizations in the ancient world, including that of the tall, fair-skinned Chachapoya of Peru. These resourceful people lived high in the Andes Mountains where they cultivated terraced gardens and raised llamas for five hundred years. Known as "the warriors of the clouds," they fought the neighboring Inca constantly and were eventually defeated by the far larger tribe. The Chan Chan people, who built a community of 60,000 on the Pacific coast of northern Peru, also fell to the Inca. While the Inca brought about the downfall of the Chachapoya and the Chan Chan, their own flourishing empire was lost to the Spanish conquistadors in the 14th century, who murdered Inca leaders, took others into slavery and plundered Inca treasures.

Climate change is believed to be the cause of the downfall of several lost civilizations, including the colossal Indus Valley settlement. Research into the geology of the area suggests that the civilization arose at a time when monsoons occurred regularly. These seasonal monsoons brought torrents of water to the area, but not quite enough to cause flooding. When the waters receded, they left behind rich, fertile soil which people farmed successfully for 2,000 years. But over time the monsoons came less frequently and the soil was eventually depleted of necessary nutrients. Agriculture failed and people migrated from the area. Similar issues with climate are thought to be responsible for the loss of the ancient civilization of Ubar on the Arabian Peninsula and a contributing factor to the fall of the Mayan Empire in Mexico and Central America.

Additionally, natural disasters ravaged the ancient world. In Italy, the city of Pompei was famously lost to the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The Minoan Civilization on the island of Crete was rebuilt after powerful earthquakes several times over the course of its nearly 1,000 year history. Finally, it is likely that the combination of a mighty earthquake, the eruption of a huge volcano on a neighboring island and an immense tsunami destroyed the island empire once and for all. Similar seismic activity was probably responsible for the downfall of the Olmec civilization in the tropical lowlands of Mexico too. Furthermore, there are several lost civilizations in southeast Asia and Africa, about which very little is known, that were most likely destroyed by flooding and other natural disasters.

From earliest days of human history, great civilizations have come and gone. We believe that some were lost to natural disasters and climate change and others to war and invasions. But the only thing that we know for sure is that we still a lot to learn about the lost kingdoms of the world.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Lost Civilizations

Imagine trekking through a thicket of wilderness and suddenly coming upon the ruins of an elaborate, old palace. Throughout history, lucky explorers have actually had such an experience. Lost civilizations, dating back to ancient times, have been discovered around the globe. The Indus Valley Civilization, the Minoan Kingdom and the Inca Empire are three mysterious examples.

Thousands of years ago, the Indus Valley Civilization sprawled across parts of India and into several middle-eastern nations. Experts believe that at least 10% of the world's population at the time lived in this sophisticated, well-organized agricultural settlement. They resided in spacious homes constructed of baked bricks and many had their own private water supplies. Their cities had bustling marketplaces where crops such as dates and wheat were sold or traded. The ruins of the Indus Valley Civilization were first discovered in 1826, but excavation didn't begin until the 1920s. The artifacts recovered include knives and tools made of bronze as well as copper. Fragments of pottery with intricate geometric designs have also been found. Despite years of study, the Indus Valley civilization is still shrouded in mystery. We haven't cracked the code of its language yet nor do we understand its belief system or how the community was governed. Especially intriguing is that fact that palaces or temples have never been uncovered in the ruins of the Indus Valley. Such structures were prominent in other ancient civilizations of the time.

For more than 600 years, the earliest Greek settlement thrived on the island of Crete in the Aegean Sea. Known as the Minoan Civilization, this kingdom rose around 6000 BC and became renowned for its lavish palaces with their colorful and richly detailed wall murals that depicted scenes of daily life. These royal residences also had large theatre arenas for public spectacles and rows of stately columns. As a seafaring people, the Minoans established trade routes along the Mediterranean and sold ceramics, bronze armor and jewelry in the Middle East, Spain and Italy. Not much is known about how the island was governed, but many believe that this unique society was a **matriarchy**, governed by women. It is also likely that their belief system centered around the worship of female priestesses. Since no protective walls or fortresses have been found on the island, it is assumed that life on the island was peaceful. However, it was subject to several violent earthquakes throughout its prosperous history.

In South America, the Inca people adapted to life in the highest peaks of the Andes Mountains and built their empire aggressively. For 100 years, Inca warriors conquered neighboring tribes until they controlled nearly the entire length of western South America, an area measuring more than 2,500 miles in length and 500 in width. Aside from their skills on the battlefield, the Inca were innovative farmers who created aqueducts to irrigate their crops and figured out how to preserve food for times of drought. The well-preserved ruins Machu Picchu, an Incan city, was discovered about 100 years ago and archaeologists excavated many fascinating relics of life in the ancient empire. Perhaps the most exciting find was the **Intihuatana**, which means “the place where the sun gets tied.” A major tourist site today, the Intihuatana was a pyramid-shaped structure made of rock with a flat top where the Inca went to speak to their gods and pray to the sun for a bountiful harvest.

Today, leading archaeologists are using sophisticated technology to learn more about life in the Indus Valley, on the island of Crete during Minoan times and in the Incan Empire. Additionally, they are convinced that other lost civilizations are buried deep beneath the earth and awaiting discovery. In your lifetime, perhaps, their mysteries will be revealed. Without a doubt, lost civilizations are intriguing!

## INFORMATIONAL VERBS

- Recognize
- Disclose
- Discover
- Reveal
- Examine
- Analyze
- Find out
- Research
- Delve
- Determine
- Explore
- Be on the lookout
- Emphasize
- Outline
- Discuss
- Chronicle
- Understand
- Learn about
- Uncover
- Study
- Observe
- Investigate
- Focus on
- Know
- Consider
- Remember
- Become familiar with
- Become aware of
- Illustrate
- Explain
- Recount
- Clarify

## REVISING DULL CONCLUSION PARAGRAPHS

Read the prewriting plan and conclusion paragraph below.

**TOPIC: Percussion Instruments**

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Snare drum

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Cymbals

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Xylophone

**MAIN IDEA #4:** Tambourine

*If you want to learn how to play a percussion instrument, try out the tambourine, snare drum, cymbals or xylophone. The End*

The conclusion paragraph restates the main ideas in a boring way.

Watch the way the author REVISED this paragraph using the following techniques:

- Restating each main idea as a question.
- Using word referents.
- General topic sentence.

*Can you imagine pounding out a rhythm on a snare drum? Don't you love the resounding crash of the cymbals? Doesn't the penetrating, precise tinkle of the xylophone make a great accent to a musical composition? Who doesn't appreciate the playful jingle of the tambourine? These rhythmic sound sensations surely enhance marching bands and orchestras.*

Here's another example of a "before and after" conclusion paragraph:

**TOPIC: How to make candles**

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Selecting the right wax

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Adding color and fragrance

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Placing the wick

**MAIN IDEA #4:** Molding the candle

*Now you know how to make your own candles. Just select the right type of wax, add color and fragrance, place the wick, and mold the candle. The End*

*Do you understand why it's so important to choose the right type of wax for candle making? Aren't you excited about how many different colors and fragrances you can add to your candles? Doesn't it sound easy to place the wick properly? What molds will you use to shape your tiny torches? Most people find the process of making these pretty pillars quite satisfying.*

**BONUS:** Can you think of any other word referents for percussion instruments or candles?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING CONCLUSION PARAGRAPHS

The concluding paragraph should “sum up” the main ideas of an informational piece. However, this should not be a totally redundant restating of the main ideas. Read this conclusion paragraph. It restates the main ideas in a boring way. Underline the main ideas and fill out the prewriting summary.

*Visiting battlefields such as The Waterloo Battlefield, The Gettysburg National Military Park and Juno Beach is very educational.*

Based on that conclusion paragraph, fill in the author’s prewriting plan:

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Now read the revised conclusion below. Once again, underline the main ideas.

*Would you like to visit the place where Napoleon finally met with defeat? How about exploring the site of one of bloodiest battles ever fought on North American soil? Wouldn't you like to see the beach where Canadian troops landed on D-Day? These heart-wrenching landmarks bring military history to life.*

**Analyze it:**

1. Compare the “Before and After” concluding paragraphs.
2. Circle the word referent the author used in place of the words “battlefields.”
3. In the revised version, what technique does the author use to restate each main idea?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Underline the general restatement of the topic sentence.

**BONUS:** Research this topic to come up with a fourth main idea for this informational piece. On another piece of paper or at the keyboard, rewrite the conclusion paragraph to include this additional main idea.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## REVISE THIS CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH

Read this conclusion paragraph. Fill in the author's prewriting plan below. On another sheet of paper or at the keyboard, revise the conclusion paragraph. Begin by restating each main idea as a question. Then, write a general restatement of the topic sentence using one of the word referents you created below.

*By comparing and contrasting two world-class cities, we see that New York and Paris are both tourist magnets and fashion capitals with renowned landmarks and very similar geographic features but entirely different personalities. THE END*

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Revise this conclusion paragraph by restating each main idea as a question. You may use the following sentence starters to help you:

### SENTENCE STARTERS:

- Wouldn't you love to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Wouldn't it be exciting to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Isn't it amazing how similar \_\_\_\_\_?
- Who wouldn't recognize \_\_\_\_\_?
- Doesn't it make sense that \_\_\_\_\_?

**BONUS:** Now, see if you can create a few word referents for the main ideas of this piece.

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**DEFINITIVE WORDS/PHRASES lend an air of authority and finality to the piece.**

certainly	surely	positively	clearly
decidedly	undoubtedly	for sure	absolutely
definitely	of course	indeed	truly
without a doubt			

**INFORMATIONAL VERBS replace passive or helping verbs with informational verbs in order to easily restate each main idea.**

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## DEFINITIVE WORDS AND PHRASES

One way authors end their pieces effectively is to use definitive words and phrases to add an air of authority and clarity to the conclusion paragraph. Here is a list of some of these words and phrases:

certainly	surely	positively	clearly	decidedly	truly
for sure	absolutely	definitely	of course	indeed	undoubtedly
without a doubt					

**Read each conclusion paragraph below. Use carets to insert one or more definitive words or phrases to make the conclusion paragraph more effective.**

- Why not turn off the television this evening and challenge your parents to a game of Monopoly or Pictionary? Wouldn't your younger siblings be thrilled to share a round of Candyland with you? How about inviting a few friends over to play Clue on Friday night? These classic board games are an active, engaging alternative to electronic entertainment.
- Launching a career in animation is challenging. To compete in this high-pressure industry, you need strong drawing skills as well as technical know-how. Bringing cartoon characters to life also demands careful attention to detail and the ability to distinguish between many shades of color. It's not easy, but if you've got the right combination of talents, why not follow in the footsteps of Walt Disney and become the next great cartoon artist.
- Once hunted for sport, the black rhino is one of the most critically endangered animals on the planet. Saving the remaining few animals requires drastic measures such as sawing off their horns which are so valuable to poachers. Captive breeding programs have the potential to help restore wild populations, too. Another conservation strategy is keeping all of the scant survivors in sanctuaries where they can be guarded around the clock. Nobody can predict if these conservation efforts will be successful.

**BONUS:** Find the word referent for TELEVISION in the first paragraph and for BLACK RHINO in the third.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## INFORMATIONAL VERBS (1)

One way authors effectively restate main ideas is to use informational verbs along with word referents. Here is a list of informational verbs:

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

Read this “before” version of a conclusion paragraph. Underline the main ideas.

***If you're determined to become a modern-day gold miner, you now know where you're most likely to find the precious metal, the equipment you'll need, and the risks you'll face.***

Read the following “after” version that restates each main idea using informational verbs and word referents. Again, underline the main ideas.

***Clearly, modern-day prospectors have much in common with their predecessors during the rough and tumble days of the gold rush. These hopeful miners recognize just the right place to stake their claim. They know how to use the equipment that maximizes their chances of success. Perhaps most importantly, these daring dreamers understand the risks they are taking in their quest to strike it rich. Just as it did back in 1849, gold mining today certainly requires determination and a bold nature.***

### ANALYZE IT:

- Compare the “before and after” concluding paragraphs.
- Locate each word referent for GOLD MINER in the after version and circle.
- Place a check beside the general restatement of the TOPIC SENTENCE and BOX the general adjectives.
- Highlight the definitive words and phrases in the after version. In a different color, highlight the informational verbs.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## INFORMATIONAL VERBS (2)

One way authors effectively restate main ideas is to use informational verbs along with word referents. Here is a list of informational verbs:

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

Read this “before” version of a conclusion paragraph. Underline the main ideas.

***So if you're eager to make new friends, try volunteering in your community, getting involved in student government, joining the soccer or softball team, or starting a study group.***

Now, rewrite the above conclusion paragraph restating each main idea using informational verbs and word referents. Make sure your revision includes a general restatement of the topic sentence and definitive words or phrases.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE HYPOTHETICAL ANECDOTE

One way to hold your reader’s attention in your conclusion paragraph is to use a “hypothetical anecdote.” In other words, place your reader in a situation where they might encounter your topic.

*Example:*

<u>If your topic was:</u>	<u>Your reader might encounter your topic:</u>
<b>Tidal pools</b>	At the beach At an aquarium While watching a nature show on TV
<b>Your hypothetical anecdote might read:</b>	If you ever get a chance to explore a tidal pool while you’re at the beach or visiting an aquarium, you will surely marvel at many types of life that can be found there.

**BONUS:** Underline the definitive word that can be found in the above example.

*Now you try it:*

<u>If your topic was:</u>	<u>Your reader might encounter your topic:</u>
<b>Family Vacations</b>	_____
	_____
	_____

<u>If your topic was:</u>	<u>Your reader might encounter your topic:</u>
<b>Museums</b>	_____
	_____
	_____

On another sheet of paper or at the keyboard, turn your ideas into effective hypothetical anecdotes. Use the following sentence starters if needed:

<u>SENTENCE STARTERS:</u>	
• When you go _____.	• If you’re lucky, you’ll _____.
• The next time you _____.	• Have you ever _____.
• Someday you might have the chance to ____.	• If you ever decide to _____.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING MORE COMPLEX CONCLUSIONS

The concluding paragraph should “sum up” the main ideas of an informational piece. However, this should never be a totally redundant restating of the main ideas. Read this conclusion paragraph. It restates ideas in a boring way. Underline main idea #1 in red, main idea #2 in blue, main idea #3 in green.

*Costa Rica is a great place for a vacation because it has beautiful beaches, an amazing array of wildlife and one of the world’s most active volcanoes. THE END*

Based on that conclusion paragraph, fill in the authors prewriting plan below.

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Now read the revised conclusion below. Once again, underline main idea #1 in red, main idea #2 in blue and main idea #3 in green.

*If you ever get a chance to plan a dream vacation, you should definitely consider making Costa Rica your destination. In this Central American wonderland you will discover beautiful, uncrowded beaches and see an amazing array of wildlife. You’ll also have the chance to visit one of the world’s most active volcanoes and marvel at the awesome power of nature as you watch glowing rocks and red-hot lava fly from this towering crater. As thousands of travelers have already learned, a visit to this tropical paradise is certainly unforgettable.*

### ANALYZE IT:

- Compare the “before and after” versions of the concluding paragraph. (Compare color to color for main ideas.)
- Box the hypothetical anecdote that puts your reader in contact with your topic.
- Circle the word referents the author used in place of the word “Costa Rica.”
- Underline the definitive words.
- Double underline the informational verbs.
- Place a check beside the general restatement of the topic sentence.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## CRAFTING POWERFUL CONCLUSION PARAGRAPHS

Use the techniques below to REVISE the following dull conclusion paragraph. Remember, you can:

- \* Restate main ideas as questions
- \* Use word referents
- \* Use informational verbs
- \* Use hypothetical anecdotes
- \* Use definitive words/phrases
- \* Use a general restatement of the topic sentence

*The Jazz Age was time of prosperity and freedom when people enjoyed great music, exciting new dances and the first “talkies” on the silver screen.*  
**THE END**

Take notes from your research below and write your revision on another sheet of paper or at the keyboard.

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### CHECK YOURSELF

- Compare the “before and after” versions of this concluding paragraph. Underline main idea #1 in red, main idea #2 in blue and main idea #3 in green.
- Box the hypothetical anecdote that puts your reader in contact with your topic and/or the restatements of main ideas as questions.
- CIRCLE the word referents you used in place of the topic words and main ideas.
- Underline the definitive words/phrases.
- Double underline the informational verbs.
- Place a check beside the general restatement of the topic sentence.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## BROADENING YOUR TOPIC

Read the conclusion paragraph below for a compare and contrast piece about alligators vs. crocodiles. Brainstorm the associated topics that may spark your interest as you research that topic. (Two ideas have been provided for you.)

Is it the alligator or the crocodile that sports a pointy snout? Which of these two remarkable reptiles is more aggressive? Where could we find alligators but not crocodiles – and vice versa? By comparing and contrasting these carnivorous cousins, it becomes obvious that they have distinct similarities and differences.

Associated Topics:

llama vs. alpaca \_\_\_\_\_

lizards vs. snakes \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now, compose a concluding sentence that suggests opportunities for further research about an associated topic. Use the sentence starters below if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SENTENCE STARTERS:**

- Doesn't it make you wonder \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- Is it possible that \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- My research about\_\_\_ has sparked my interest in\_ .
- It might be valuable to \_\_\_\_\_ .

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING RESPONSE TO TEXT CONCLUSION PARAGRAPHS

You've read two source texts and created the following frameworks for these texts:

**TOPIC:** Pioneers of the Red Planet

**TOPIC:** History of Mars' Exploration

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Geography

**MAIN IDEA #1:** The Mariner Missions

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Atmosphere

**MAIN IDEA #2:** Viking Orbiter/Lander

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Climate

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Mars Science Laboratory

Now, imagine that you completed the assignment below, but you still need to write the conclusion paragraph.

Based on your reading, write an essay discussing the possibility of human inhabitation of Mars. Cite specific examples from the source texts to describe the challenges humans face as they prepare to travel to the planet.

Use the following to help craft your conclusion paragraph on the lines below:

**REITERATE** your **TOPIC** and **MAIN IDEAS**.

**SYNTHESIZE** information from both texts and draw a conclusion.

**EVALUATE** how this information inspires, challenges or changes you.

Challenge: Include word referents and informational verbs!

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Pioneers of the Red Planet

Would you accept a one-way ticket to Mars? Surprisingly, more than 100,000 people have answered yes to that very question by volunteering to travel to the red planet in 2027 and start the first human settlement on Mars. Is colonizing Mars really possible or is it just an outlandish dream? Let's take a look at characteristics of the Mars' geography, atmosphere and climate and decide for ourselves.

Mars has several amazing geographical features, including the largest volcano in the whole solar system. Known as Olympus Mons, this supersized volcano soars 16 miles into the sky and it's not the only impressively large volcano on Mars. Others, while not quite as big, are scattered around the planet and scientists have found ample evidence that they have erupted in the past. Just imagine the destruction if Olympus Mons explodes again! It's a safe bet that the possibility alone is enough to keep many of us from joining the Martian colony. Of course, Mars does have geographical features that would remind pioneering earthlings of home, including flat lowlands and rocky highlands. Further, those who enjoyed exploring the earth's magnificent 277-mile long Grand Canyon, will be overjoyed to discover Valles Marineris, a staggering 2,500 miles of deep, rugged canyon that spans 1/5 of Mars' circumference.

Composed almost entirely of carbon dioxide with only a trace of oxygen, the sparse atmosphere on Mars cannot support life as we know it. However, millions of years ago, the planet had an atmosphere dense enough to sustain very simple, single-celled forms of life, such as protozoa. NASA's ongoing MAVEN (Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution) mission is studying why the air changed so drastically. Currently, the theory is that when Mars lost its magnetic field, most of its atmosphere was swept into outer space by solar wind. Can the magnetic field be restored? If so, will the atmosphere return? These are the questions the MAVEN mission hopes to answer. At present, any extraterrestrial adventurers from earth would definitely need some sort of breathing apparatus in order to survive on Mars.

Since Mars is further from the sun than Earth, it is much colder. Temperatures average about -80 degrees, but there are seasonal highs of 20 degrees and lows of 175 below zero. So the colonists from Earth will definitely needs a reliable means of staying warm. They do not need to worry about rain but snow has been observed falling from clouds high above the planet. The precipitation, however, vaporized before it reached the ground. The earthlings should be prepared for intense dust storms, which come on without warning and often last for weeks. These whirling clouds of fine, rust-colored dust can completely block out the sun and change the landscape, creating craters and rolling hills. They also generate a massive amount of static electricity and create corrosive chemicals that accumulate in the soil. That's why some scientists believe that these violent dust storms alone make life on Mars impossible.

Considering its geography, atmosphere and climate, the Red Planet is clearly not ready for human habitation at this point in time, but who knows what is possible in the future. Without a doubt, life for earthlings on the dusty, rusty orb would be a challenge, but also the adventure of a lifetime.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## A Brief History of Mars' Exploration

Back in the 1700s, people around the world were convinced that the planet Mars was not only inhabited, but that its residents led lives similar to our own. Since then, we've learned quite a bit more about our interstellar neighbor. This article will trace the history of Mars' exploration from the flyby missions of the 1960 and 70s, to the landing of the spacecraft Viking and the ongoing research being conducted today by the Mars Science Laboratory.

Beginning in 1965 and lasting through 1971, the Mariner Missions gave us our first close look at the terrain of Mars. Nine in all, these "flyby" missions detected clouds hovering high above the planet, heavy with icy particles, for the very first time. Dense enough to dim out the sun, these ice clouds keep the planet freezing cold and dark for most of the year. The last and most successful of the missions, Mariner 9, gave us our initial glimpse at a Martian dust storm. Mariner 9 also returned to earth with images of the dramatic landscape of Mars, including massive volcanoes and craters that were carved into the land by moving glaciers. Pictures of ancient river beds and polar ice caps further confirmed that there was water on Mars long ago, which was a clear sign that the planet could at one time sustain life. Could it again? That question remained.

The Mariner missions paved the way for the journey of the American spacecraft Viking, consisting of an orbiter and a lander, which touched down on the planet on July 20, 1976. While the orbiter circled high above the planet capturing images from every angle, the lander conducted experiments on the ground. Soil samples from the surface of the terrain were gathered and tested for the presence of living microorganisms, which were detected but have yet to be identified. The soil was discovered to be highly radioactive and rich in magnetic particles, making it toxic to plant, animal and microbial life as we know it on earth. Additionally, seismic activity on Mars was measured for the first time and found to be minimal which suggests that the many volcanoes on the planet may well be dormant. From this mission, we also discovered just how long and violent Martian dust storms can be when images of a three-month long whirlwind were beamed back to earth.

Today, research into the Red Planet continues with the Mars Science Laboratory. This robotic space mission launched in 2011 and landed the car-sized land rover "Curiosity" on Martian soil. With an overall goal of determining the planet's habitability, this long-term

(continued)

mission has the benefit of extraordinary technology at its fingertips. The rover is able to generate its own electricity so that it can continue gathering data through all the cycles of Martian seasons. Since it can roll over rough terrain and climb hills, it has captured never-before-seen views of Mars from high altitudes and from the floor of a deep crater, where geologic clues about the planet's past are buried. So far, the Curiosity has confirmed that Mars has distinct seasons that bring about atmospheric changes, including a sudden, unexplainable spike in methane gas in autumn of the lunar year. Additionally, the Mars Science Laboratory is setting the stage for actual human exploration of Mars and has identified many potential hazards, including high radiation levels, to the health of any future visitors to the planet.

Our understanding of Mars has come a long way since the days when we thought Martians tended gardens and raised families just like we do here on Earth. But we still have much to learn before we fully understand its mysteries. Was there life on Mars long ago? Will humans ever find a way to fully explore, and maybe even inhabit, this unwelcoming planet? Certainly, we all look forward to finding answers to these intriguing questions.