



# **Grade 8 Informational Writing Guide**

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

### **SECTION 1: Recognizing Genre/Organization**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ARGUMENTATIVE, INFORMATIONAL, OR RESPONSE TO TEXT?

Read the paragraphs below and decide if they are examples of informational writing, argumentative writing, or response to text. Circle your choice.

1. How did we ever get along without our smartphones? For some of us, it's hard to imagine a world without these handy technological wonders. This essay will trace the evolution of these popular conveniences from the 1970s when the idea of a multipurpose handheld device was first proposed through the 1990s when dozens of new and improved models hit the market. It will also look at the what's in store for the future of smartphones.

Informational

Argumentative

Response to Text

2. Look around. Whether you're on a city bus or in a restaurant, you're sure to see many, many people tapping out text messages and checking their e-mail on smartphones. The question is, do we rely too much on these modern day miracles? While smartphones are definitely helpful to most of us, the overuse of such handheld devices can disrupt our sleep patterns, provide a poor substitute for healthy social interaction and may cause repetitive motion injuries to our hands.

Informational

Argumentative

Response to Text

3. Do you ever binge watch your favorite television shows? If so, you're among the 73% of people today who use subscription services like Hulu to watch a full season's worth of their favorite programs one episode after another. While these marathon viewing sessions can be fun, we all should enjoy them on a limited basis only. Binge watchers often miss important plot points, cheat themselves out of the fun of anticipating upcoming episodes and often stay up way too late.

Informational

Argumentative

Response to Text

4. As the text Throwback TV explains, way back when television was something new, families gathered in their living rooms, sometimes with dinner trays, to watch their favorite shows together. While the picture was rarely crystal clear, parents and kids alike were thrilled with this exciting form of electronic entertainment. The author reviews three of the most popular shows from the early days of television, including I Love Lucy, Bonanza and the brilliantly spooky Twilight Zone and compares them to the reality programming of today.

Informational

Argumentative

Response to Text



## OPINION OR ARGUMENT?

The distinctions between opinion writing and argumentative writing aren't always obvious. After all, the two genres are organized in much the same way, with introductions, main reasons and conclusions. Here are some hints to help you tell the two apart:

**In Opinion writing, main reasons are developed with details. For example:**

*I get really excited when I remember my trip the Caribbean. Not only was the island beautiful, but there was so much to do! I absolutely loved swimming and snorkeling in crystal clear tropical waters. Plus, I perfected my serve on the clay tennis court of the lovely resort where we stayed.*

**In Argumentative writing, main reasons are supported by evidence, such as statistics and expert quotes. For example:**

*The islands of the Caribbean attract an average of 2.5 million tourists each year. This relaxing tropical destination offers a full range of accommodations, from the posh to the economical. When surveyed, almost 75% of all visitors report that they enjoyed a multitude of water sports, including snorkeling and kayaking, during their stay. "With shimmering turquoise waters and fine, soft sand, the beaches of St. Thomas are the most beautiful I've ever seen," reports Terry Trillion, a editor at Vacation Magazine.*

Remember, like informational writing, both argumentative and opinion writing are built on a foundation of facts.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## SHARING OPINIONS OR MAKING ARGUMENTS?

Read the sentences below and decide if they would more likely be found in an opinion piece or an argumentative essay. Mark your choice, [O] for opinion and [A] for argument as shown in the example.

Whether working with integers or fractions, I absolutely hate math.	<u>  O  </u>
Over 65% of all middle school students report that their least favorite class is math.	<u>  A  </u>

- In North America, 74.9 million people attend at least one professional baseball game every season. \_\_\_\_\_
- I get really excited when baseball season comes around. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am definitely in favor of wildlife conservation. \_\_\_\_\_
- When surveyed, 5 out of 5 eighth graders agreed that wildlife conservation is an important issue. \_\_\_\_\_
- To me, rock-climbing is just too risky a sport. \_\_\_\_\_
- A study published in the Journal of Preventative Medicine found that rock-climbing injuries have increased by 63% since 2007. \_\_\_\_\_

**BONUS:** Look at the sentences you identified as argumentative. What could be the claim of the argumentative essay in which these sentences appear? Write the claim(s) here. (The claim states the author’s point of view)

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## SENTENCE STARTERS FOR OPINION WRITING



**Pro**

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



**Con**

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

### Opinion Statements

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

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

### Transition Words

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

## SENTENCE STARTERS FOR ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

Research confirms \_\_\_\_\_

Experts agree \_\_\_\_\_

Statistics indicate \_\_\_\_\_

An informal survey revealed \_\_\_\_\_

The fact is \_\_\_\_\_

According to \_\_\_\_\_

Numerous studies suggest \_\_\_\_\_

This is evidence that \_\_\_\_\_

This is proven by \_\_\_\_\_

A surprising percentage of \_\_\_\_\_

Research corroborates \_\_\_\_\_

It's difficult to ignore \_\_\_\_\_

Studies published in \_\_\_\_\_

It is a well-known fact that \_\_\_\_\_

Authorities claim that \_\_\_\_\_

It seems obvious that \_\_\_\_\_

When I polled my classmates, I discovered \_\_\_\_\_

I created a survey to illustrate \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## OPPOSITION TO THE MUNICIPAL POOL: A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Read the Letter to the Editor below. Is this an example of opinion writing or argumentative writing? Why?

### Dear Editor:

I am writing to let everybody in our community know that I strongly oppose the plan to build a municipal pool in the Elm Street Park.

As we all know, Elm Street Park is our town's only public park. If you've been there on a weekend lately, you surely noticed that the park gets very crowded. In my opinion, the addition of a municipal pool will bring an unmanageable number of people to this limited space. Not only would they trample the gardens and litter the lawns, but where would they park? Finding parking within walking distance of the park is already a challenge.

The way I see it, a pool just isn't necessary. Of course, many people swim for fun and exercise during the summer months, but we have several clean, clear lakes on the outskirts of our town for just that purpose. Furthermore, these lakes provide recreational opportunities not only for swimmers, but for kayakers and those who enjoy catch and release fishing.

Let's keep in mind, also, that Elm Street Park offers bicycle and walking trails as well as a running track, all of which provide opportunities for year-round fun and exercise.

Our town's budget is already stretched almost to the breaking point and many civic improvement projects are competing for very limited funds. For safety's sake, we need to rebuild several of our major roadways, a project that really can't be delayed any longer. Additionally, we must consider the cost of maintaining a pool and hiring lifeguards. Considering all of these factors, it's clear that building a municipal pool just isn't feasible at this time.

For apartment dwellers like myself, Elm Street Park is the closest thing to a backyard that we have. Let's keep it clean and green! Building a pool would not only cause overcrowding in our only city park, but we don't need it and it's not within our budget.

Sincerely,  
Marty Splasher



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## A CASE FOR THE MUNICIPAL POOL: AN EDITORIAL

Read the editorial below. Is this an example of opinion writing or argumentative writing? Why?

About 70% of towns the size of ours have municipal pools. The question is, why don't we? As a landlocked community, a municipal swimming pool would enrich the lives of the children, teens and adults of our town immeasurably.

For children, the municipal pool is a safe place to learn how to swim. This could not be more important when you consider that drowning is the 4th most common cause of death for children under 10 years of age. Of course, we have lakes outside town and they are a fine option for experienced swimmers. However, considering the depth of these lakes and the rocky cliffs surrounding them, they are clearly unsafe for children. An informal survey actually revealed that less than 4% of parents of 3-10 year olds allow their children to swim in these cold, dark waters. It's a safe bet that the same parents would surely appreciate having a clean, safe pool where their children could play and learn how to swim.

Who better to provide that swimming instruction than the teens of our town, who desperately need summer jobs? Several prominent community members have already volunteered to provide water safety instruction for high school students at the pool. Offered free of charge, this invaluable instruction leads to lifeguard certification

and a coveted summer job at the pool for those aged 16-19. Numerous studies have shown that the availability of community-based jobs for teens reduce the incidence of juvenile crime by as much as 16% during the summer months. Additionally, we could offset the cost of hiring lifeguards and swimming instructors by renting the pool by the hour for birthday parties. This obviously benefits both the teens and the children of our community.

Adults who want to live long lives and seniors intent upon staying active will certainly support the municipal pool. A 2009 study published in the *Journal of Public Health* found that swimming was the form of exercise most frequently associated with longevity and better quality of life in the later years. Additionally, swimming rarely causes injuries and it is an accessible way for people with disabilities to achieve fitness. Our municipal pool would hours devoted to lap swimming for adults as well as water aerobics classes, taught by volunteers, for people of all ages.

Our town is a wonderful place to live and Elm Street Park is great gathering spot all of us. For sure, we can make it even better by building a municipal pool for children, teenagers and adults alike to enjoy.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## South America

Where is the world's largest river, longest mountain range and driest desert? Along with beautiful beaches and bustling cities, all three of these dramatic geographical features can be found on the planet's fourth largest continent, South America. Let's check out some of the physical and human characteristics of the Amazon River, the Andes Mountain Range and the Atacama Desert.



Map of South America's key land formations.

### Life Abounds in the Long, Winding Amazon

The Amazon River is truly amazing. It runs a length of 4,000 miles and reaches depths of 330 feet. While the Nile is longer, the Amazon contains a larger volume of water than any other river on earth. This mighty river cuts through the world's largest rain forest

and supports an extraordinary level of **biodiversity**, or different forms of life. More than 2,500 different species of fish swim in the river, including the fearsome piranha, and scientists believe that many more species have yet to be discovered. Critically endangered marine mammals of the Amazon, such as the pink dolphin and the giant river otter, can be found nowhere else on earth. Perhaps most fascinating are the native or **indigenous** humans whose culture and subsistence depend on the river. About 50 tribes of indigenous Indian tribes live on the banks of the Amazon today and have no contact with the outside world. Sadly, there is a danger that illegal logging operations in the rainforest around the river are intruding upon their ancient way of life and making their future uncertain.

### Exploring the Sky High Andes

Towering along the western coast of South America is the dramatic Andes Mountain Range with its rugged, snow-capped peaks and **tropical glaciers**, rivers of ice at high enough elevations that they never melt. The Andes are home to many active volcanoes, including **Ojos del Salado**, the world's tallest. Its name means "Salty Eyes" and refers to the salt deposits that seem to peer out at the world from the glaciers near the peak of the volcano. Ojos del Salado and many other active Andean volcanoes are dotted with **fumaroles**, vents in the earth's surface from which steam and volcanic gases are released. The Inca are the best known

of the indigenous people of the Andes. Their rich history in these mountains dates back to the early 15th century A.D. and lasted until conquistadors captured the last of the great Inca cities in the year 1572. In his book, The Incas: New Perspectives author Gordon McEwan writes that the Spanish were impressed by the Inca cities of the high-altitude Andes, finding them “as large as those of Europe but more orderly and by all accounts, much cleaner and more pleasant places to live.” The traditions of the native people survive in remote mountain villages throughout the stunning mountain range today, where llamas are still used as pack animals and **Quechua**, the native language of the Inca, is spoken.

### The Driest Place on Earth

While the Sahara might be larger and the Mojave better known, no desert on the face of the earth is drier than South America’s **Atacama Desert**. Spanning 41 square miles, the Atacama is a plateau situated between the Andes and the Chilean Coast Range. Its most arid central region, where years pass without a drop of rain, cannot support any plant and animal life. The surrounding areas get an annual rainfall of just 0.004 inches and some cacti,

insects and lizards manage to lead their hardscrabble lives there. Now considered extinct, the **Atacamenos** are the only known native humans of the desert. They were a nomadic people who grew corn and raised llamas. How’d they get their water? It might be hard to imagine, but they harvested the morning dew and caught **camanchaca**, the Chilean word for “fog,” and funneled its condensation drop by drop into buckets. Today silver and copper is mined from the arid sands of the Atacama. Since no place on earth is more similar to Mars than this extraordinary South American desert, it is also a testing ground for instruments and robots being developed for missions to the red planet.

Wouldn’t you love to paddle a canoe down the Amazon, follow the Inca Trail up an Andean peak and explore the most Mars-like place on earth? All three of these amazing adventures, and more, are possible in South America. This richly diverse and fascinating place has some of the most captivating geographical features in the world.

#### ENGLISH WORDS DERIVED FROM QUECHUA

<b>Quinine</b>	a bitter crystalline compound found in the bark of a rain forest tree that was frequently used in the past as a cure for malaria.
<b>Quinoa</b>	a nutritious whole grain that is native to the Andean highlands.
<b>Gaicho</b>	a South American cowboy.
<b>Pampa</b>	a flat, grass-covered expanse of land.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## YOU BE THE EDITOR!

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

1. Read the entire piece. What is the **topic** – in other words, what is the text **all about**?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Based on the **topic**, create a **title** for this piece that will help the reader figure out what they'll be learning about. Write your title, in large print, in the space provided.
3. Number each paragraph.
4. Circle the **introduction**.
5. Bracket the **body** of the piece.
6. Box the **sidebar**.
7. Read the first paragraph in the body of the piece (*paragraph 2*). It is missing a **heading** that tells the reader what the entire paragraph is about. Identify the main idea in order to create a heading and write it in the blank at the beginning of the paragraph. Do the same thing for paragraphs 3 and 4.
8. Read the **sidebar**, identify the main idea of the text and write a title. Circle a **key vocabulary word found in the sidebar**.
9. Read the introduction again. The writer has forgotten to italicize or bold a key vocabulary word.
10. Fill in the summarizing framework, below.

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

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

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

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



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Title

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What comes to mind when you think about prehistoric life? If you're like most of us, you conjure up an image of a T-Rex racing across the wooded terrain with its mouth agape and tiny arms flailing or of a gentle Brontosaurus snacking on the leaves of a tall tree. Well, it's time to broaden our horizons! Fascinating new discoveries in paleontology, the study of prehistoric life, paint a far more diverse portrait of the past. Let's learn more about a species of dinosaur that swam, the largest flying bird the world has ever known, and an amazing mammal that looks like it just might be the long-lost cousin of a unicorn!

## Heading:

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Based on fossil finds in what is today known as the Sahara desert, paleontologist Nizar Ibrahim believes he has identified the first dinosaur who lived most of its life in the water. Named Spinosaurus, it was a carnivore with a thick skull and heavy bones that probably made it slow and clumsy on land. So this massive swimmer took to the water where its large, flat feet acted as highly effective paddles. Judging from the position of its nostrils, the formidable creature could almost certainly breathe while it was partially submerged too. It fed on marine creatures, the larger the better and one extraordinary fossil actually shows a

bone from the earliest species of sawfish stuck between Spinosaurus' teeth! Larger than T-Rex, with sharp, seven-foot-tall spines protruding from its back, this hulking hunter was a fearsome predator indeed. Like a crocodile, it had powerful claws and an elongated snout filled with cone-like teeth made for grabbing passing prey. For many years, scientists have speculated that large dinosaurs like Spinosaurus may have been more agile in water than on land because of their immense weight. Now, thanks to Ibrahim's research, that theory is backed up with solid evidence for the very first time.

## Heading:

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Imagine looking out the porthole of a boat and seeing a bird with a wingspan of more than 20 feet gliding in the air just above the waves. If you lived 28 million years ago, you might have been treated to just such an awe-inspiring sight. Found in the southern United States, fossil remains of the *Pelagornis sandersi* reveal an amazing creature with long, slender wings and tiny back legs. Despite its delicate, hollow bones, this long-extinct flyer weighed up to 88 pounds so it probably couldn't take off just by flapping its wings. Most likely, the extraordinary aviator had to run downhill and catch a gust of wind in order to launch itself into the air. Once airborne, it hitched a ride on ocean

currents and glided for vast distances. As if its size wasn't intimidating enough, *Pelagornis sandersi* had a mouth filled with menacing spikes of bone that allowed it to swoop down and catch a passing fish effortlessly. Although the Pterodactyl, a prehistoric flying reptile, was larger in wingspan, *Pelagornis sandersi*, is believed to be the largest flying bird of all time. Research suggests that these bizarre birds once lived on every continent, but the cause of its extinction is still a mystery.

## Heading:

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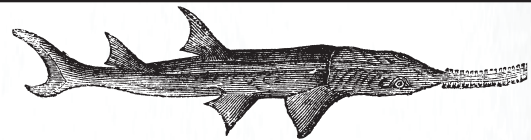
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You might wonder if unicorns really are just creatures of myth when you hear about the ancient Siberian Rhinoceros. A well-preserved skull of this shaggy herbivore with a single pointed horn in the center of its forehead has been discovered in Kazakhstan, a nation just south of Russia that was once part of the USSR.

However, this ancient creature was not quite as graceful and beautiful as the lovely unicorn of folklore. Instead, it was covered with coarse, shaggy hair. Heavy-boned and muscular, the primitive beast weighed in at about 9,000 pounds! Paleontologists believe the fossilized skull was that of an elderly male who lived in Siberia about 29,000 years ago. That presents a mystery. All of the early ancestors of the Siberian Rhinoceros went extinct thousands of years earlier. Why did this particular species survive for so

long? Researchers are working to find an answer to that question and to better understand the environmental factors that led to the extinction of the Siberian Rhinoceros and its predecessors.

So that's what's new in paleontology. The swimming Spinosaurus, the gliding *Pelagornis sandersi* and the long-lived Siberian Rhinoceros are three of the prehistoric creatures we are just beginning to truly understand. It seems safe to say that future discoveries will teach us more about the range and richness of ancient life on earth.



The prehistoric Sawfish, known as *Onchopristis*, was a favorite food of the Spinosaurus and a skillful predator in its own right. This relative of the sting ray and early ancestor of today's sawfish impaled prey on its long, flat snout, also known as a **rostrum**, which had sharp barbs like the teeth of a saw on each side. In Spinosaurus' time, these creatures of the deep were enormous but today the largest specimens are about 7 feet in length. Nearly blind, sawfish use their spiky snouts not only as weapons but as sensory organs to help them locate prey. Critically endangered, small populations of this amazing ancient species survive today in the shallow waters of Caribbean Sea and off the west coast of Africa.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Make it Snappy!

Are you an aspiring professional photographer or just an everyday cell-phone shutterbug like so many of us? Either way, you'd probably be overjoyed to have a chance to snap pictures at the Piazzale Michelangelo, Victoria Falls and the Taj Mahal. These three landmarks are among the most photographed places on earth.

### It's a Piazzale Party!

Capture panoramic views of the historic city of Florence, Italy from Piazzale Michelangelo! Designed in 1869, this city square offers one photographic treat after another. Start by snapping the terraced gardens or the bronze replica of Michelangelo's famous statue of David. From the piazzale, you can



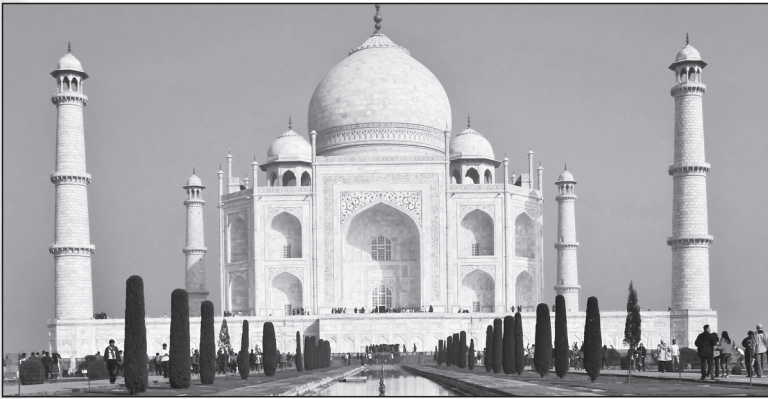
shoot the ruins of the medieval city of Torre San Niccolo from many different angles. Take a short stroll and discover the beautiful monastery of San Miniato, one of the finest examples of original Tuscan Romanesque architecture in Italy. It dates back to the year 1013! Additionally, you're going to want to photograph the San Salvatore Church, which is encircled by old walls that were designed by Michelangelo himself during the siege of Florence in 1529. Finally, there's no

better place than the Piazzale to see the gorgeous Tuscan sun setting over the city.

### An African Adventure

Who could resist the chance to photograph the largest waterfall in the world? More than a mile wide, Victoria Falls plummets an amazing 355 feet over a sheer rock face. Located on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, the rushing wall of water invites you to get creative. From the vantage point of Knife's Edge Bridge,





you can get a close-up of the churning waters. Or, you might decide to hike a few feet into the nearby rainforest to capture just a sliver of the falls' wild beauty framed by glossy, green jungle vines. Whether you're shooting from near or far, your photographs will likely have a soft, mysterious quality because of the thick mist that surrounds the natural wonder. If you're lucky, you'll have the opportunity to shoot a rainbow arching over the cascade and maybe even a moonbow! Created when the light of a full moon is reflected in the spray from the falls, moonbows occur more often at Victoria

Falls than at any place on earth.

## Married and Buried

For photographers and tourists alike, a trip to India isn't complete without a visit to the Taj Mahal. Known as a monument to love, the stately structure serves as the final resting place Mumtaz Mahal, the beloved third wife of emperor Shah Jahan. While impressive from any angle, the Taj Mahal is usually shot head-on surrounded by manicured green lawns and a mirror smooth reflecting pool. But from other angles, you can create compositions that

encompass the nearby mosque and other majestic mausoleums on the compound. You can even take dramatic photographs from the inside of the solid white marble building looking out or from the banks of the Yamuna River just behind the lavish mausoleum. Many photographers, in fact, say it's hard to take a bad picture at the architectural gem. Whether captured shimmering in the afternoon sun or by the light of the moon, the Taj Mahal certainly lives up to its name as the 7th wonder of the world!

In a wide world full of amazing sights, the Piazzale Michelangelo, Victoria Falls and the Taj Mahal are among the most intriguing. So develop your artistic eye and hone your camera skills. Maybe you'll get the opportunity to travel to these unforgettably photogenic destinations in the future.

# INFORMATIONAL PILLAR

## INTRODUCTION

Lead/Topic Sentence

Main Idea #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Idea #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Idea #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Detail

Detail

Detail

Detail

## CONCLUSION

### Informational Summarizing Framework

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

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

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

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

# ARGUMENTATIVE PILLAR

## INTRODUCTION

Lead/Claim Statement

Main Reason #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence	Evidence
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Evidence	Evidence
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Main Reason #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence	Evidence
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Evidence	Evidence
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Main Reason #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence	Evidence
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Evidence	Evidence
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## CONCLUSION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE GREAT AMERICAN GAME OF FOOTBALL

The temperature's dropping and leaves are falling from the trees. It's autumn! This is the time of tailgate parties and touchdowns for football fans around the world. Let's take a look at the history of this rough-and-tumble sport, meet some of its most celebrated players and discover what it takes to become a football hero.

Football evolved into the all-American sport it is today on college campuses in the 1820s. The earliest games were quite violent as dozens of players crowded onto the field and tackled one another randomly. But in 1839, a great football player for Yale University named Walter Camp developed the rules that are still used today. Known as the father of American football, Camp reduced the number of players on the field to eleven and established the line of scrimmage. This made the game much safer. Football was played primarily on college campuses until 1920 when the National Football League was established. Today there are 32 teams in the NFL and their annual championship, the Superbowl, attracts an average of 116 million viewers around the world.

As the exhilarating sport grew in popularity, superstars emerged and salaries skyrocketed. Nicknamed "The Golden Arm," quarterback Johnny Unitas became a household name back in the 1960s when he was playing for the Baltimore Colts. The NFL's most valuable player for two years in a row, Joe Montana garnered similar fame passing the pigskin for the San Francisco 49ers in the 1980s and 90s. University of Texas player Lam Jones was drafted by the New York Jets in 1980 and won the first NFL contract worth over a million dollars, a sum surpassed spectacularly in 2011, when Brett Favre commanded \$100 million to play for the Green Bay Packers. Today, several NFL players, including New England Patriot's quarterback Tom Brady, earn even more. Football heroes are also richly compensated by endorsement deals. Peyton Manning, for instance, earns 12 million dollars a year pitching brands like Nationwide, Gatorade, and Papa John's

International. Considering these colossal paychecks, it's hard to believe that some of the earliest NFL players were compensated with money raised by "passing around a hat" amongst spectators!

So what skills do you need to excel on the football field? Like all athletes, football players need speed, strength and stamina. Most rely on weight training and a consistent sleep routine to achieve optimum fitness. A high protein diet, heavy on beef, chicken, fish and eggs, also helps build lean muscle mass. Perhaps more importantly, champions need a competitive spirit and the right mental attitude. New Orleans Saint tight end Benjamin Watson believes goals are the key to achieving greatness. "Goals give you a mark to shoot for and keep you motivated when you face adversity," he explains. Teamwork is also crucial to greatness on the football field. The sport's best players always focus on doing right by the team rather than trying to steal the spotlight for themselves. After all, a champion team is built on a unified effort.

Fast-paced and unpredictable, football is an exciting game to watch and to play. Without a doubt, it's a sport with an interesting history and many intriguing personalities that requires superior athletic ability. No wonder so many football fans and players are passionate about the game!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE GREAT AMERICAN GAME OF FOOTBALL

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

Informational

Argumentative

Response to Text

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the *introduction*.

4. Box the *conclusion*.

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

6. Underline the *lead* in red.

7. Circle the *main ideas* highlighted in the introduction.

8. Underline each *main idea* in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

Read this detail: *In the 1960's, "Broadway Joe" Namath became a household name when he set a new record with 4,007 yards passing in the 1967 season.*

Where does this detail belong? Paragraph # \_\_\_\_\_

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

10. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan. Remember, informational text explores a **TOPIC** while argumentative writing focuses on an **ISSUE**.

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

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

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

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



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## FOOTBALL: A GREAT SPORT FOR TEENS

There's no doubt about it: football is one of the most popular and exciting sports around! Unfortunately some believe that this rough-and-tumble game is too dangerous and demanding for middle and high school students. However, the benefits of participating on a football team during the years of adolescence far outweigh the risks. This exhilarating game builds self-esteem and improves academic achievement. Further, football carries no higher risk of injury than many other sports and activities.

Football teaches the life skills that lead to self-confidence. Players learn to work together for the good of the team and build strong, lasting bonds of friendship. They must take responsibility for maintaining a superlative level of physical fitness and manage their time so they can meet team obligations. Perhaps most importantly, football teaches teens that the harder they work, the better they perform. This strong work ethic will serve them well throughout their lives. While football definitely requires strength and speed, it also demands a competitive spirit and positive mental attitude. Developing both is a highly effective confidence booster.

It is an outdated notion that student athletes fall short when it comes to academics. The truth, in fact, is just the opposite. As a general rule, football players perform as well in the classroom as they do on the field. A 2013 study about the relationship between football and academic achievement conducted at the University of Arkansas found that athletes have a lower dropout rate and higher test scores. Perhaps this is because they are required to maintain their grades in order to stay on the team or maybe it's because of the discipline they developed as a result of their commitment to the sport. Either way, football seems to enhance all aspects of the high school and middle school experience. Players are also able to compete for valuable college scholarships. In the year 2014, U.S. colleges awarded over \$3 billion in tuition assistance to deserving young athletes.

(continued)

Football is no more dangerous than many other sports and activities that teens enjoy. Of course, head injuries do occur on the football field, but research conducted by the American College of Pediatrics reports suggests that bicycling, skating and skateboarding are equally risky. Despite the use of helmets, skiing and snowboarding are even more perilous. Trampolines alone account for an estimated 65,000 emergency room visits each year! Clearly, it would be unrealistic and unwise to deny teens the opportunity to engage in all of these exciting activities just to reduce the possibility of injury! Let's remember also that football players suit up in layers of protective gear!

If you are interested in playing football, nothing should stop you from trying out for the team. No more risky than many other active pursuits, this all-American sport just might help you develop greater self-esteem and the discipline you need to do better in school. As the legendary football coach Knute Rockne said, "Football is a game played with arms, legs and shoulders but mostly from the neck up." Without a doubt, this irresistible sport is good for your mind and your body!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## FOOTBALL: A GREAT SPORT FOR TEENS

1. This is an example of what kind of writing? Circle one:  
Informational                      Argumentative
2. Number each paragraph.
3. Circle the *introduction*.
4. Box the *conclusion*.
5. Circle the *title* and note the *topic*.
6. Underline the *issue statement* in red.
7. Underline the author's *claim* in blue.
8. Underline each **MAIN IDEA** (for informational pieces) or **MAIN REASON** (for argumentative text). Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.
9. Underline the *second-hand evidence* (evidence taken from a research study) in the third paragraph.
10. Does this piece include first-hand evidence (evidence the author has gathered on her/his own?)    \_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_ No    If so, underline it.
11. Number the references to each main idea/reason restated in the conclusion. Use paragraph numbers.
12. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan. Remember, informational text explores a TOPIC while argumentative writing focuses on an ISSUE.

**TOPIC/ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WILDLANDS FIREFIGHTING

Can you see yourself charging into a burning forest, wearing an oxygen mask and fire-proof clothes? Would you like to be the hero who stops a raging fire before it ravages an entire wilderness and threatens the nearby village? If so, you might be suited for a career as a wildlands firefighter. Physical fitness, medical training, and wilderness survival skills are among the requirements for this challenging job.

Obviously, it is critically important that wildlands firefighters maintain a high level of fitness. Their job will, after all, require demanding physical labor, often at high altitudes where the heart and lungs must operate at maximum capacity. Sometimes, too, they will have to parachute into a burning wilderness while carrying all of their equipment. To qualify for the job, wildlands firefighters are usually required to pass various fitness tests, the least strenuous of which is a three-mile walk with a 45-pound backpack that must be completed in less than 45 minutes. To get and stay in shape, most wildlands firefighters recommend running on hilly terrain while clutching hand weights.

At the very least, wildlands firefighters need to have training in first aid and CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation). Most go a step further and become certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). This makes sense because they will be responsible for rescuing victims of forest fires and providing medical assistance on the spot. Of course, if the need arises, they need to be able to help their fellow wildlands firefighters, too. Setting broken bones, applying tourniquets to control bleeding and administering oxygen are the medical procedures most commonly performed by wildlands firefighters.

Since they will be working in remote, rugged areas, all wildlands firefighters must have topnotch outdoor survival skills. They must know how to pitch a tent or locate a safe, natural shelter, such as a cave. To navigate through miles of forest, these brave individuals must have the ability to read a topographic map and use a compass. Knowing how to operate a chain-saw and an off-road vehicle with a manual transmission in a variety of weather conditions is also essential.

Do you have outdoor survival skills, a commitment to physical fitness and the ability to complete medical training? If so, you've probably got what it takes to battle forest fires. While risky and demanding, wildlife firefighting is, without a doubt, an exciting career choice.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WILDLANDS FIREFIGHTING

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

Informational

Argumentative

2. Number each paragraph.
3. Circle the *introduction*.
4. Box the *conclusion*.
5. Circle the *title*.
6. Underline the *lead* in red.
7. Underline the *topic sentence* (for informational pieces) or the *claim* (for argumentative text) in blue.
8. Underline each **MAIN IDEA** (for informational pieces) or **MAIN REASON** (for argumentative text). Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.
9. Read this detail: *Knowing how to locate a water source in the wild would be another valuable skill.*
- Where does this detail belong? Paragraph # \_\_\_\_\_
10. Number the references to each main idea restated in the conclusion. Use paragraph numbers.
11. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan. Remember, informational text explores a TOPIC while argumentative writing focuses on an ISSUE.

**TOPIC/ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## BALEEN WHALES VS. TOOTHED WHALES

“There she blows!” It was so exciting to hear those words from the captain of the whale watching boat! I rushed to the front of the vessel and saw a v-shaped cloud of vapor rising from the water. While it looked like a spout of water, it was actually the exhalation of a humpback whale! Everybody in the world deserves a chance to go whale watching! There is no better way to learn about some of the most fascinating creatures on the face of the earth. I was particularly fascinated by the similarities and differences between baleen whales and toothed whales. While these two types of whales have a lot in common, they have some important distinctions too, including the way they feed, their size and their social behaviors.

Both toothed whales and baleen whales require massive amounts of nutrients, but they feed in very different ways. Toothed whales, like the snow white beluga, are aggressive hunters of fish as well as seals and other marine mammals. Their teeth are made not for chewing, but for grabbing their prey, which they swallow whole. Baleen whales, on the other hand, are what’s known as filter feeders. Instead of teeth, they have baleen plates hanging from their upper jaw. Just think of a baleen plate as a fine-toothed comb. Made of the same protein as our fingernails, these fringed structures allow the baleen whale to take in a huge mouthful of seawater and swallow the tiny krill from it while allowing the excess water to seep out.

Probably the most obvious difference between these two types of air-breathing mammals is their size. Both are impressively large, but baleen whales tend to be truly colossal. In fact, the most enormous animal on earth, the blue whale, has baleen plates in its mouth rather than teeth. With a heart the size of a compact car, this submarine-sized swimmer can grow to the amazing length of 100 feet. The second largest of these deep-sea giants, the fin whale, is also a baleen whale. The fastest marine mammal in the ocean, this graceful, streamlined animal can reach 85 feet in length and travel the ocean at a speed of 25 miles per hour. With its characteristic box-shaped head, the sperm whale is the largest of the toothed whales. These deep divers rarely grow beyond 50 feet long, but they have the largest brain mass of any other animal on earth.



Science has not yet proven it, but it seems clear that toothed and baleen whales enjoy the company of one another. Toothed whales live in close-knit groups called pods. Comprised of up to 40 individuals, pods have been observed hunting cooperatively and even working together to teach survival skills to their young. Baleen whales, on the other hand, tend to live alone or in small family groups. However, they have a sophisticated system of vocalizations through which they appear to communicate with each other very effectively. Further, when groups gather at feeding grounds, they have been seen joyfully engaged in what looks like play. Most marine biologists are convinced that both baleen and toothed whales experience a range of emotions. Both take very good care of their young and mourn their dead.

Isn't it fascinating to learn about the feeding behavior, enormous dimensions and complex emotional lives of toothed and baleen whales? My research about both types of whales has sparked my interest in studying other types of marine life, including the endangered whale shark and the jellyfish-eating ocean sunfish. For sure, our oceans support an awesome diversity of life.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## BALEEN WHALES VS. TOOTHED WHALES

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

Informational

Argumentative

Response to Text

2. Number each paragraph.

3. Circle the *introduction*.

4. Underline *the main idea or main reason sentences* in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4.

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

6. Box the *conclusion*.

7. Circle the word referent for whale in paragraph #3.

8. Where does this detail belong? *The smallest whale species is the toothed Pygmy Orca.*

Paragraph # \_\_\_\_\_

9. While baleen whales and toothed whales have much in common, the two are quite unique. How do they differ from on another?

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10. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan. Remember, informational text explores a TOPIC while argumentative writing focuses on an ISSUE.

**TOPIC/ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **THE GIVER BY LOIS LOWRY**

Can you imagine a world without pain or war, a community where everybody makes a valued contribution based on their own abilities? Such a place might sound ideal at first, but once you read The Giver you will probably change your mind. In her haunting novel, author Lois Lowry takes us into the future to a world that's orderly to the extreme, but individuality is not tolerated and deep emotion is recognized by the head but never experienced in the heart.

The Giver is set in a relentlessly safe community that plays by the rules – and there are many, many rules. When the main character Jonah is chosen to learn the memories of the past, he realizes that the orderly world he lives in comes at a shocking cost. In his community, people do not fall in love and choose their own partners. Instead, they apply to the community leaders for a spouse and are matched with somebody suitable. After all, it would be dangerous for people to make these important choices on their own. People are similarly matched with a profession. As a result, there is no divorce or unemployment and only a set number of children are born each year. Family units are formed when couples are matched with a child, born to a woman whose job is birth mother. As the plot unfolds, we learn that twin births complicate this efficient system.

Dressed in tunics and riding bicycles, everybody looks and acts alike in Jonah's community. As a result, there is no bigotry but nobody has the opportunity to develop special talents or pursue their own goals. From birth until death, each individual follows the same path, which makes for a decidedly colorless world. The young are not educated as much as brainwashed and childhood milestones are celebrated collectively with those of the same age. As they grow up and leave the family unit, parents move into the homes for Childless Adults. Conformity is unquestioned in the community and it is not until Jonah receives a memory of a birthday party from the past that he finally understands "the joy of being an individual, special and unique and proud."

(continued)

Can we feel joy or love if we've never felt sorrow? Jonah receives an answer to that question when the wise elder, known as the Giver, plants memories of the thrill of a sled ride and the horrors of war in the young man's head – and the answer is no. As he becomes more familiar with the rich, messy world of the past, he realizes that emotions are identified and talked about in his community, but never truly felt by the heart. "Do you love me?" is a question his parents can't answer. His mother explains that the word "love" is meaningless, and admits only that she "enjoys his company" while his father "takes pride in his accomplishments." Jonah comes to realize that real love, like the candles and fireplaces that have been banned within the community, can warm the heart or burn you in the blink of an eye. He wonders if experiencing such feelings might be worth the risk of heartbreak.

How is Jonah going to exist in the cold-blooded, regimented world of the community once he has learned about the past? What will become of him if he breaks the rules, asserts his own individuality and feels the full range of human emotions? As the Giver shares his memories with Jonah, it seems clear that the young man will ultimately have to choose between the safe and familiar community and the unpredictable world outside its borders. For sure, it's a dangerous decision.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **THE GIVER BY LOIS LOWRY**

1. Number each *paragraph*. Circle the *introduction* and box the *conclusion*.
2. Put a bracket around the three *body paragraphs* and underline the *main idea sentence* in each.
3. Write a blurb (a word or two) in the margin next to the paragraph explaining what the entire paragraph is about.
4. Highlight the quotes in paragraph 4.
5. Fill in the Summarizing Framework/author's prewriting plan:

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

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

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

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

6. How does the author feel about the character Jonah?

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7. Use the sentence starter below to summarize the piece.

8. *This piece introduces us to* \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE VIBRANT 1960's

If you could travel back in time, what decade would you be the most eager to visit? Would you enjoy dropping in on the 1890s and taking a ride in a horseless carriage? Or, maybe you'd prefer kicking up your heels as you dance the Charleston in the jazzy 1920s. For me, that question is a no-brainer. Hands down, I would choose to bounce back to the 1960s. It is easy to see the spirit of fun and freedom reflected in the art, music, and fashion of this passionate age.

How could you help but admire the daring new style of art that was all the rage in the 1960s? It was called "Pop Art" because it incorporated images from popular culture. The best known of all the pop artists was Andy Warhol, who made an unforgettable mark on the world with his silkscreened impressions of soup cans. While Warhol's brash innovations are more famous, I much prefer the work of Roy Lichtenstein, who turned comic book images into museum pieces. Robert Indiana is another pop artist from the 1960s who definitely deserves our admiration. Indiana used his pop art to make statements about the civil unrest of the times. One of his most celebrated works incorporates the words, "Just as in the anatomy of man, every nation must have its hind quarters," to brazenly express disgust about the attack on civil rights activists in Selma, Alabama in 1965. I couldn't agree with him more!

Everybody knows that music captured the essence of the times like never before in the 1960s. Bob Dylan memorably sang about how "the times they are a-changing" while Joan Baez's clear, gorgeous voice rang out in protest of the Vietnam War. Baez also gave the civil rights movement its hopeful theme song, "We Shall Overcome." Toward the end of the decade, John Lennon spoke for everybody as he asked the world's leaders to "Give Peace a Chance." These eloquent songs certainly touched many hearts and shaped many attitudes. Other tunes from the 1960s just made people want to get up and dance. Who could sit still while listening to the breezy tunes of the Beach Boys or, my personal favorite, the 1968 smash hit "Build Me Up Buttercup" by the Foundations?

I love how the fashions of the 1960s broke free from the conventions of the past. The decade that began with the conservative, classic styles of the 1950s had swung in the exact opposite direction by the mid-60s. Women and girls strutted around in boldly colorful, shockingly short "mini skirts" and knee-high boots made of shiny vinyl. Men kicked their ties to the curb and replaced them with soft, cotton turtlenecks, worn by the most rebellious with dinner jackets. For both men and women, the best look from the age of flower power was definitely a pair of well-worn jeans and a gauzy, loose-fitting tunic top, accessorized with colorful strings of beads and long, free-flowing hair. This hippie look is popular to this day and known as "boho chic" in more recent times.

Now do you understand why I'd love to travel back to the 1960s? This dynamic decade contributed a wealth of unforgettable art, music and fashion to our culture. The electrifying passion and daring spirit of those bygone days are definitely worth revisiting.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE VIBRANT 1960's

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

Informational      Argumentative

2. Number each *paragraph*.

3. Circle the *introduction* paragraph.

4. Box the *conclusion*.

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

6. Underline the *lead* in red.

7. Underline the *claim* in blue.

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

9. What does the phrase “broke free from the conventions of the past” in the 4th paragraph mean? Can you think of another way of saying the same thing?

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10. Circle the word referent for “The 1960's” in the fourth paragraph.

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

12. Fill in the summarizing framework/author's prewriting plan. Remember, informational text explores a TOPIC while argumentative writing focuses on an ISSUE.

TOPIC/ISSUE: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA/REASON #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA/REASON #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA/REASON #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## SUMMARIZING YOUR INDEPENDENT READING

What are you reading? If you're reading a story, tell us about it by completing the Narrative Writing Summarizing Framework below. If you're reading nonfiction, please let us know what you are learning from it in the Informational Writing Summarizing Framework.

### Narrative Writing Summarizing Framework

Name of book \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

This story is about \_\_\_\_\_  
*main character*

The problem, adventure or experience was that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*single significant main event*

The problem is solved, adventure/experience concluded when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*solution/conclusion*

### Informational Writing Summarizing Framework

Name of book \_\_\_\_\_

TOPIC \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Additional main ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING SIMPLE SUMMARIZING PARAGRAPHS

Look at the following summarizing framework and summarizing paragraph:

**TOPIC: Volcanoes**

**MAIN IDEA #1: What causes volcanoes**

**MAIN IDEA #2: Hazards of volcanoes**

**MAIN IDEA #3: How science can predict eruptions.**

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

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

**TOPIC: Battle of Gettysburg**

**MAIN IDEA #1: Beginnings**

**MAIN IDEA #2: Pickett's Charge**

**MAIN IDEA #3: Aftermath**

**TOPIC: Great Wall of China**

**MAIN IDEA #1: Purpose**

**MAIN IDEA #2: Construction**

**MAIN IDEA #3: Present Condition**

**TOPIC: Rainforest Botanicals**

**MAIN IDEA #1: Trees**

**MAIN IDEA #2: Vines**

**MAIN IDEA #3: Flowers**

**TOPIC: Teddy Roosevelt**

**MAIN IDEA #1: Early life**

**MAIN IDEA #2: Years as a Rough Rider**

**MAIN IDEA #3: Presidency**

### INFORMATIONAL VERBS

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## IRRELEVANT, EXTRANEIOUS DETAILS IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

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

1. The isolated Indonesian island of Flores is the site of one of the most exciting discoveries of the 21st century! Here, the remains of what is thought to be an extinct species of tiny human was found in 2003. Weighing about 75 pounds and standing less than four feet tall, these ancient people lived in dug-out shelters and used stone tools. Some believe they even fought off attacks from gigantic, venomous Komodo Dragons! The world's largest reptile, the endangered Komodo Dragon looks like a dinosaur and is found only on the islands of Indonesia. But what's really unique about the Hobbits of Flores is how recently they inhabited the earth. Some paleoanthropologists, scientists who study the origins of the human species, believe that they lived as recently as 12,000 years ago. If that is true, the Hobbits of Flores outlived the Neanderthals and may have crossed paths with modern humans. Of course, excavations are still underway and there's still much we have to learn about these early people.

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

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2. Even the worst arachnophobics among us will surely admire the Peacock Spider! It might be hard to believe but, if any insect could actually be considered cute, it's this flamboyant critt7er. The males of this recently discovered Australian species sparkle with iridescent color, vivid blues, reds, yellows and greens in a rainbow of light and dark hues. They have four wide blue eyes and amazing eyesight. That comes in handy since the tiny peacock spider doesn't spin a web, but rather stalks and hunts microscopic insects to feed on. The males do a goofy, but amazingly acrobatic dance in order to impress the drab brown females. Like all spiders, they are venomous but since their jaws are so small you probably wouldn't even feel their bite. The funnel web spider is another Australian native, but its bite would definitely hurt you. Since their discovery just last year, seven subspecies of peacock spiders have been identified. One is named "Sparklemuffin," an adorable name for what we can only assume is yet another cute spider?

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

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## IRRELEVANT, EXTRANEIOUS DETAILS IN ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT

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

- Here's the best reason yet to avoid cigarette smoking! As if gum disease and lung cancer weren't bad enough, the filthy habit has now been linked with mental illness. Recent research conducted at Columbia Medical College revealed that users of tobacco are more likely to suffer from depression severe enough to require hospitalization. Smokers are also at increased risk for suicide. Binge drinking is also associated with a variety of mental disorders. Alarming, too, is the finding that when pregnant women smoke, their children are 38% more likely to develop schizophrenia than the offspring of nonsmokers. In light of this authoritative research, it is disturbing to know that cigarettes have been used as rewards for good behavior among patients in mental facilities for many years and, in some cases, still are! It is vital that this thoughtless practice stop immediately!

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

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- What is a "robber baron?" This term refers to a few entrepreneurs who turned the late 1800s into a time of massive injustice and inequality in North America. While admired as "captains of industry" by some, these slick operators profited from the hard work of others, accumulating millions at a time when most citizens earned \$8-\$10 per week. The shady tycoons also squandered natural resources and pressured elected officials to serve their own selfish interests. They built their businesses during what's remembered as "The Gilded Age," named by writer and humorist Mark Twain who said the era was "glittering on the surface but corrupt underneath." The 1990s were a decade of economic growth and prosperity too. While some of the business leaders of the day, such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, showed compassion for the working people of the world, most did not. Steamship and railroad magnate, Daniel Drew, for example, manipulated the stock market and paid his workers slave wages. For sure, Drew and other sleazy robber barons like him made the Gilded Age a shameful period in history.

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

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE BICYCLE

Read and compare the following Argumentative pieces about the bicycle.

### 1. The Bicycle

I am going to convince you that the bicycle was the most important invention of the 1800s! Just think about how it brought people together to ride for fun and fitness. Riders joined bicycle clubs in great numbers during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The bicycle advanced the cause of women's rights as it gave women freedom like they'd never experienced before. Roads were paved first for bicycles and later for cars! This was an exciting era in history and the bicycle was the most important invention of the times?

### 2. The Bicycle

When you think of the most important invention of the 1800s, what comes to mind? Many people say the telephone, but I would argue that the bicycle was the most important invention of its time. It helped women win rights, brought people together and gave us an understanding of mechanics that we later used to make automobiles and airplanes.

Before the bicycle, women were confined to home too much of the time. It is wonderful that the bicycle gave them freedom. Once they started riding bicycles, they began wearing more practical and comfortable clothes, too.

People joined bicycle clubs in the 1880-90s. Never before had physical fitness been a fun and social activity.

Also, lots of the mechanics that went into making bicycles were adapted and used in the creation of the automobile and the airplane. The pneumatic tire is a great example of this.

It is clear that the bicycle set the stage for many changes in the world at the end of the 19th century. Bicycles promoted women's rights, the fun of physical fitness and helped pave the way for the invention of the automobile and airplane.



### 3. The Bicycle

While the invention of the telephone, typewriter and sewing machine definitely changed the world, I am convinced that the bicycle was the most important innovation of the 1800s. This two-wheeled miracle promoted women's rights, made physical fitness a fun, social activity, and paved the way for the automotive and aeronautics industries.

Who could argue with the famous women's rights activist Susan B. Anthony when she said that bicycling "did more to emancipate women than anything else in the world." After all, bicycles gave women the freedom to leave their homes and explore the world around them for the very first time. The bicycle was also responsible for the evolution of women's fashions from restrictive corsets, hoop skirts and petticoats to the more practical bloomers, which can best be described as baggy pants that were gathered into ruffles at the knees. As women asserted their right to dress safely and appropriately for bicycle riding, their interest in other women's issues, including winning the right to vote, was sparked.

Like no other invention before, bicycles showed us how physical fitness can be an enjoyable and social activity. Between 1880 and 1890, hundreds of bicycling clubs were formed in major cities around the world. In New York City, some were organized around ethnic lines such as the Harlem Bicycle Club for African Americans and the Unione Sportiva Italiana for Italian Americans. Many others welcomed all competitive amateur riders, and thus the bicycle became a vehicle for assimilation among recent immigrants. These clubs were instrumental in bringing recreational riders together for races and long-distance rides.

It is amazing how many of the innovations essential for building automobiles and airplanes were first created for bicycles. The pneumatic or inflatable tire was first invented in 1888 for bicycles and adapted for the automotive industry. The popularity of recreational bicycling also led to the creation of some of the first paved roads years before automobiles were in widespread usage. Bicycle manufacturers first developed metalworking techniques and specialized ball-bearings, sprockets and washers that were later used for airplanes and automobiles. It is unsurprising that Wilbur and Orville Wright were bicycle mechanics before they achieved their historic flight.

If you ever thought of a bike as a simple kid's toy, think again. From its earliest days, the bicycle brought independence to women as well as fitness and fun to all! Much more than mere transportation, these people-powered vehicles led the way to the development of the automobiles and airplanes we rely on today. For sure, the bicycle was the most important invention of the 1800s.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE ISLANDS OF INDONESIA

Do you consider yourself a luxury lover, an adventure seeker – or a little bit of both? Whichever your preference, you’ll probably find island hopping through Indonesia the experience of a lifetime! Relax at the posh resorts of Bali. Discover the extraordinary diversity of marine wildlife in the Coral Triangle. Explore the bustling city of Jakarta. Your Indonesian adventure has begun.

While the country of Indonesia is made up of a large chain of islands, known as an **archipelago**, the best known and most visited is certainly Bali. This island paradise is known for its traditionally thatched cottages, often built on docks right over the crystal clear sea. Some of these deluxe accommodations have plates of thick glass built into the floors so that lucky vacationers can view the sea life beneath their feet. While many visitors just relax and soak up the sun at Bali’s breathtaking beaches, others venture out to see the ancient temples and terraced rice paddies of the island. Nature lovers shouldn’t miss a trip to the Sacred Monkey Forest, a sanctuary for the Balinese monkey. With long-tails and expressive hairless faces, these loveable natives will take time out from swinging in trees to grab a treat from a visitor’s hand. Another adventure is a trek through lush, leafy green jungle and orchards of fragrant fruit to the top of Bali’s highest waterfall, Sekumpul. Those who’ve seen it say the view of the distant coffee plantations is absolutely spectacular.

Believe it or not, the underwater coral gardens of Indonesia are equally enchanting. These idyllic islands are located in an area of the western Pacific known as the “coral triangle.” Second in size only to the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, this immense coral garden is home to 600 coral species in every vivid color of the rainbow and more than 2,000 different kinds of reef fish, including the orange and white Clown Fish and the brilliant Blue Tang, both of “Finding Nemo” fame. Seven species of giant sea turtles, two of them critically endangered, paddle around in these serene waters. Gentle whale sharks, the largest fish in the sea, suck up plankton through

mouths that measure five feet in width. These calm, shallow waters are also breeding grounds for the Bluefin tuna, one of the most widely harvested fish in the sea and the lifeblood of many an Indonesian fisherman. Green tourism is seen as the key to the preservation of this delicate and complex ecosystem, so environmentally responsible snorklers, scuba divers and underwater photographers are always welcome!

A trip to Indonesia wouldn't be complete without a visit to the bustling city of Jakarta! On the island of Java, this capital city has a richly diverse population of more than ten million. Here, you'll meet representatives from the more than 300 ethnic groups of Indonesia and hear the melodic rhythms of their native languages. The city dates back to the 5th century when it was a stop along the shipping trade routes of Asia. Rapidly developing today, this urban powerhouse is experiencing its share of growing pains, as luxurious hotels, expensive boutiques and sleek high-rise apartments sprout up right beside makeshift shantytowns, densely populated with the destitute and lacking even basic sanitation. Along with income inequality, the city also struggles with air pollution and intense traffic. Hope is on the horizon, however, as programs that bring education to the poor are implemented and industry grows. Additionally, more than a trillion dollars has been earmarked for improving the infrastructure of Jakarta with the hope of attracting more businesses to the city.

From the tranquil beaches of Bali and the vibrantly colorful Coral Triangle to the crowded streets of Jakarta, Indonesia is a place I dream of exploring one day. Without a doubt, this island nation is a unique destination, equally suited for a luxury vacation or an action-packed adventure.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## BE A TEXT DETECTIVE!

Read the sentences below. Then find the evidence that supports each statement within the text The Islands of Indonesia. Write the evidence from the text on the lines provided.

- Traffic is not the only major problem in the city of Jakarta. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- While known for its beaches, the island of Bali has other interesting sites to visit too.  
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\_\_\_\_\_
- Bluefin tuna is bred in the Coral Triangle and harvested by Indonesian fishermen.  
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\_\_\_\_\_
- The Coral Triangle supports a great deal of marine life. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- The monkeys at Bali's Sacred Monkey Forest will eat right from your hand. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Two species of sea turtles are critically endangered. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- There are many different ethnic groups in the city of Jakarta. \_\_\_\_\_  
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**REMEMBER:** You don't need to read the text beginning to end. Use the main ideas to direct your attention and then skim and scan! Post your evidence beside each statement!