



# **Grade 8 Informational Writing Guide**

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

### **SECTION 2: Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas/Reasons**

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# OVERLY GENERAL “BLURBS” TO AVOID

**NICE**

**FUN**

**GREAT**

**COOL**

**AWESOME**

**INTERESTING**

**GOOD**

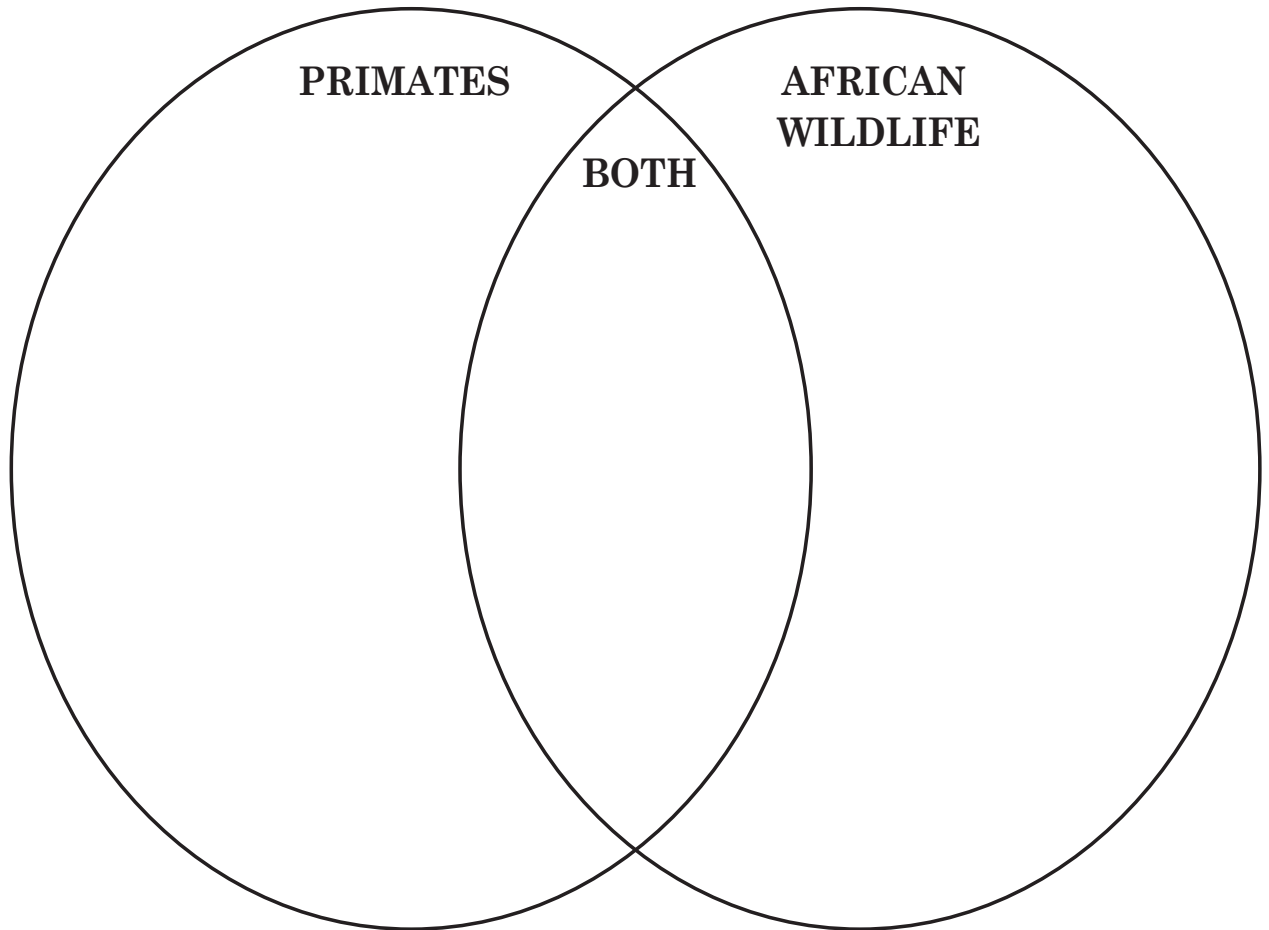
**BAD**

**CUTE**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **SORT & CATEGORIZE**

Read the list of details below and decide which main ideas they apply to. Write the details in the circle. Any details that apply to both main ideas should be sorted into the area where the circles intersect.



### **Details:**

Baboon

Golden Lion Tamarin

Spider Monkey

Warthog

Thomson's Gazelle

Mongoose

Howler Monkey

Chimpanzee

Gorilla

Hyena

Marmoset

**BONUS:** *Can you think of any other details that might fit into either or both of the main idea/reason categories? If so, write them into the appropriate circle.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WILDERNESS SURVIVAL (1)

What would you do if you found yourself stranded in the wilderness? If you enjoy hiking or camping, it is a good idea to become familiar with the basics of wilderness survival. Even if you never have to fend for yourself far from civilization, you'll feel self-sufficient if you know how to build a shelter, find a water source, and start as well as maintain a fire.

**Making a safe shelter is a top priority.** If you're lost in the woods and night is falling, the first thing you're going to want to do is figure out how to stay safe during the night. If you have a length of rope and a tarp with you, it will be easy to tie the rope between two trees, drape the tarp over the rope and weigh down the edges with rocks. There you have it: a simple tent where you can rest through the night. If you do not have any of these supplies on hand, finding a cave or another such natural shelter is probably your best bet. If that's not an option, try constructing a simple hut or teepee out of tree limbs and twigs. If you are lost in the snow, you'll have to dig yourself a snow dome. To preserve your body heat, keep it small and snug.

**A source of pure water is critical.** Clear, flowing water from a mountain stream or spring is the most reliably pure. Water from lakes and ponds is less ideal because bacteria tends to build up quickly in their still waters. If you are lost during the winter, never eat snow or ice without melting it first. Frozen precipitation will lower your body temperature dangerously. Another option would be to check in rock crevices for collected rainwater. Listen for the buzz of bees, too. If they're in the vicinity, water is almost certainly nearby. Of course, you should always carry water purification tablets in your backpack whenever you go out into the wilderness and use them before you drink any of the water you've found.

**Fire comes in handy in many important ways.** Not only will fire be a source of warmth, comfort and light during your night in the wilderness, but it will warn predators away from your camp. The smoke from your fire will discourage biting insects from swarming down to make a meal of you, too. You might also use fire to signal for help. Choose a site that is protected from the wind and find a large, flat rock on which to build your fire. This will reduce the possibility of igniting nearby vegetation. Use dry grasses, bark, small twigs and leaves as tinder to get your fire established. Then, build your fire by adding larger pieces of dry wood. Of course, you could try to spark your fire by banging two rocks together and rubbing the blade of a knife on a stone, but these primitive methods are very difficult and time consuming. Instead, just carry matches or a flint fire-starter in your backpack. Both are light and easily portable.

If you are interested in learning about wilderness survival, knowing how to build a fire, find water, and make a shelter is just the beginning. You'll certainly want to find out how to make a simple but effective snare to catch small animals or fish. It would also be useful to know how to identify edible, wild plants. As you master these skills, you will be ready to venture into the wilderness with confidence!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WILDERNESS SURVIVAL (2)

When my family went camping last summer, we had so many supplies with us. We slept on air mattresses in warm, cozy sleeping bags. In the morning, we prepared blueberry pancakes on our propane grill! It was definitely fun, but it made me wonder if I could take care of myself if I were truly stranded in the wilderness with just a few tools. I would love to test myself and see if I could build a shelter, find a water source and make a fire in order to survive in the wilderness.

**Being in the wilderness alone is challenging.** It gets cold at night and you will feel lonely. It would help if you could make yourself a shelter to sleep in. The shelter could also protect you from stinging insects and wild animals. You could also construct a teepee by making a tripod of large sticks and weaving bendable twigs and vines between them. If it is cold out, you'll need to dig yourself a snow shelter. This is hard work, but these dome-shaped hideaways can keep you surprisingly warm. You'll also work up an appetite and finding food is another obstacle to overcome.

**You'll need a shelter to protect you from wild animals.** Animals hunt at night and you don't want them to mistake you for prey. That's another reason why you'll need to build yourself a strong shelter. If you can, try to find a cave or another such natural shelter to occupy for the night. Just make sure another animal isn't already using it. Fire also helps keep the animals away.

**Finding food and water will be another challenge.** It's not pleasant, but you can survive without food for a few days. That is not true of water. You need water and lots of it when you are lost in the wilderness. Look for a clear mountain stream. Beware of stagnant, or still water because it probably has bacteria in it. If you can, boil the water before you drink it. It would be smart to study up on how to purify water if you can't make a fire. You will certainly get hungry out there, but water should always be your priority.

Whether you prefer a luxurious camping experience like the one I described above or a more rugged backcountry adventure, you should know the basics of wilderness survival. Become more self-sufficient today by knowing the challenges and how to respond to them.

# PLANNING AN INFORMATIONAL PIECE

1. **PICK** your *TOPIC*.
2. **LIST** what you know about your topic.
3. **CHOOSE** at least 3 *BROAD* yet *DISTINCT* ideas from your list. Be sure you can come up with at least 4 details to support the *MAIN IDEAS* you've chosen.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## PICK, LIST, CHOOSE, ASK, & FIND

1. **PICK** a topic \_\_\_\_\_

2. **LIST** what you already know about this topic (bullet points, not sentences):

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3. **CHOOSE** main ideas (between 2 and 4):

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

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

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

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

4. **ASK:** What do you still need to know?

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5. **FIND:** Where might you find answers to these questions?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## SUMMARY

Look at your PICK, LIST, CHOOSE, ASK, FIND worksheet to complete this summary of our upcoming unit.

Our class will be studying \_\_\_\_\_ .

We will read about \_\_\_\_\_

and discuss \_\_\_\_\_ .

We'll also study \_\_\_\_\_

and examine \_\_\_\_\_ .

We will use books and computers to learn about \_\_\_\_\_ .

\_\_\_\_\_, including

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## REVISED SUMMARY

Look over the summary you wrote when we were just beginning to study \_\_\_\_\_ . Now that we've completed the unit, re-write your summary to include what you have learned.

Our class just finished studying \_\_\_\_\_ .

We read about \_\_\_\_\_

and discussed \_\_\_\_\_ .

We found answers to our questions about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .

I was surprised to learn that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

Now I understand why \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

The only question I still have about this topic is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

# INFORMATIONAL VERBS

<b>Recognize</b>	<b>Understand</b>
<b>Learn about</b>	<b>Become aware of</b>
<b>Discover</b>	<b>Report upon</b>
<b>Uncover</b>	<b>Reveal</b>
<b>Study</b>	<b>Examine</b>
<b>Observe</b>	<b>Analyze</b>
<b>Investigate</b>	<b>Find out</b>
<b>Focus on</b>	<b>Emphasize</b>
<b>Research</b>	<b>Know</b>
<b>Delve into</b>	<b>Consider</b>
<b>Determine</b>	<b>Remember</b>
<b>Explore</b>	<b>Become familiar with</b>
<b>Chronicle</b>	<b>Become acquainted with</b>
<b>Discussed</b>	<b>Be on the lookout for</b>
<b>Debated</b>	<b>Heard about</b>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The History of Australia

Like its kangaroos, koalas and saltwater crocodiles, Australia is nothing but unique! This remote island continent has its own rough-and-tumble personality and a diverse population to match. Over the years, the land down under has been home to some of the most colorful characters on earth, including amazing aborigines, English convicts and gold-seeking diggers.

**The indigenous people of Australia created what is believed to be the oldest continuous culture in the world.** Known as aborigines, these native people have lived a simple, nomadic existence in the arid outback of Australia for at least 30,000 years. At the heart of aboriginal culture is “Dreamtime,” folklore passed down from one generation to the next that tells the story of how the universe was created and reflects an enduring reverence for the natural world. To this day, aborigines accept “Dreamtime” as the absolute truth and battle to keep their traditional beliefs alive. They have their own complex social structures that organize people into tribes according to kinship and geography as well as totems. A totem is an animal, plant or landmark such as a large boulder or river. The belief is that every person is ancestrally related to a totem. Sold



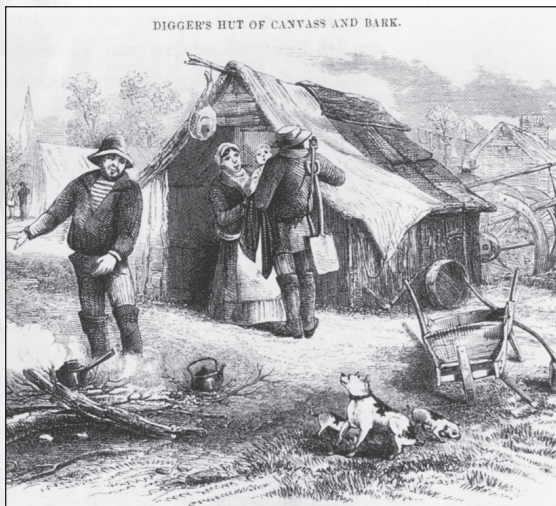
*An Aboriginal*

around the world, aboriginal art often showcases dramatic images of these sacred totems. Today about 3% of the population of Australia is aborigine.

**“You are hereby sentenced to Australia.”** Those words might sound outlandish, but they struck terror in the hearts of English criminals between the years of 1788 and 1868 when 160,000 convicts were sent to the penal colony of New South Wales in Australia. Being banished to the land down under was a harsh punishment meted out almost exclusively to the poor. It began with a terrifying six-month ocean journey on a dangerously overcrowded vessel with very little food or water. As many as

one-third of the convicts died aboard the ship. Those that survived the brutal journey endured years of slave labor and inhumane living conditions. Some, however, served out their sentences and built quite pleasant, independent lives for themselves afterwards. Today, Australians are proud to claim that their family history includes a convict or two from the early colonial days and about 20% of the population actually are.

**Strike it rich! The gold rush is on and the land down under will never be the same.** Known as the '49ers in North America, they were called the "diggers" in Australia. They were, of course, the dreamers who set sail for Australia from every corner of the world after gold was discovered there in 1851. First found at a waterhole in the inland settlement of Bathurst, gold brought prosperity to the remote island continent as new businesses flourished and the



*Australian Gold Rush*



*Map of Australia*

government collected license fees from the prospectors. The first railroad as well as the first telegraph operation came to Australia as a result of the gold rush. So did an estimated 40,000 Chinese diggers. Known as tireless workers, many of the Chinese diggers stayed in Australia long after the goldfields were depleted to mine tin and copper. Some made a fortune, but most did not, and all faced bigotry as they were blamed for introducing the practice of opium smoking to Australia. Today an estimated 8% of the Australian population is of Chinese ancestry.

Wouldn't you love to experience life as an aborigine on the arid Australian outback? Can you imagine being a convict during colonial times or a Chinese miner hoping to strike it rich during the gold rush? From ancient times through the present day, this far-away land has certainly progressed into a diverse and thriving place.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## MAIN IDEAS – DON'T OVERLAP THEM! (1)

Read the informational text The History of Australia and related main idea sentences below. Then, write a one word “Blurb” that sums up what the main idea sentence says. Next, see if you can figure out which detail sentence belongs to which main idea. Some may seem like they fit into more than one main idea. That means they overlap; they are not distinct enough. Remember, the main ideas should be different from each other. If your main ideas are distinct enough, it will be clear which paragraph the detail belongs in.

### TOPIC: The History of Australia

#### MAIN IDEA SENTENCES:

##### MAIN IDEA #1:

The indigenous people of Australia created what is believed to be the oldest continuous culture in the world.

##### MAIN IDEA #2:

“You are hereby sentenced to Australia.”

##### MAIN IDEA #3:

Strike it rich! The gold rush is on and the land down under will never be the same.

#### DETAIL SENTENCES:

1. Aboriginal people believe that some animals and plants are reincarnations of humans.
2. One notorious prisoner escaped from Australia on three different occasions but was recaptured each time!
3. An astonishing 2.4 million pounds of gold were mined between 1851-52.
4. Food was scarce and prisoners got 50 lashes for wasting a single morsel.

#### BLURB:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### MAIN IDEA(S):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are the main ideas distinct enough? (Check one)

Yes. Choose yes if it was clear that each detail belonged with one of the main ideas.

No. Choose no if the details could fit in more than one main ideas.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# ROLLER COASTERS

What's your favorite ride at the amusement park? If you answered the roller coaster without a single moment's hesitation, I'm with you! Whether you prefer the retro charm of the wooden models or the revolutionary new virtual reality designs, you'll surely agree that roller coasters are fast and scary enough to provide endless thrills.

What would be the point of a slow roller coaster? They've got to be fast! One of the speediest in the world is at an amusement park in Spain and it goes from zero to 84 miles per hour in only 3.5 seconds. It's intense! The fastest coaster in Canada, and one of the tallest in the world, is the Leviathan, found at Canada's Wonderland in Ontario. The Leviathan stands over 300 feet tall. It's said to be an amazingly smooth ride.

Roller coasters will have you screaming your lungs out. They're that scary! Some flip you entirely upside down and you are held in place only by centrifical force. Others take you through spooky dark tunnels. Feeling the fear is part of the fun, but there have been some really bad roller coaster accidents over the years. Mostly these deadly incidents were caused when the roller coaster hopped off

its track. Another danger is slipping out of your safety harness while the coaster is in motion.

Prior to 1959, all roller coasters, both the cars and the tracks, were made of wood. They weren't quite as fast as today's speedsters, but they were charming. The fastest wooden roller coaster operating today is at Dollywood, an amusement park in the Great Smoky Mountains. Dating back to 1902, Leap the Dips at Lakemont Park in Pennsylvania is the oldest wooden roller coaster around. Ride it for a retro thrill, but don't expect any real excitement from this great-granddaddy – its speed tops out at 10 miles per hour and its drop is a mere 9 feet.

Virtual reality is the newest thing in roller coasters. Strap on a pair of 3-d goggles and you are transported into an unforgettable adventure. It feels like you are in the driver's seat as the coaster twists and turns, climbs and plunges. It is a totally electrifying experience as the movements of the high-tech ride synchronize with the fast-paced action in the 360 degree reality world. You will love it!

Fast and scary, old and new, roller coasters appeal to the daredevil in all of us as they roar around their track taking unbelievably sharp turns, zooming up and plunging down. For sure, these amusement park rides are exhilarating!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## MAIN IDEAS – DON'T OVERLAP THEM! (2)

Read the informational text Roller Coasters and related main idea sentences below. Then, write a one word “Blurb” that sums up what the main idea sentence says. Next, see if you can figure out which detail sentence belongs to which main idea. Some may seem like they fit into more than one main idea. That means they overlap; they are not distinct enough. Remember, the main ideas should be different from each other. If your main ideas are distinct enough, it will be clear which paragraph the detail belongs in.

### TOPIC: Roller Coasters

#### MAIN IDEA SENTENCES:

##### **MAIN IDEA #1:**

What would be the point of a slow roller coaster? They've got to be fast!

#### BLURB:

\_\_\_\_\_

##### **MAIN IDEA #2:**

Roller coasters will have you screaming your lungs out. They're that scary!

\_\_\_\_\_

##### **MAIN IDEA #3:**

Prior to 1959, all roller coasters, both the cars and the tracks, were made of wood.

\_\_\_\_\_

##### **MAIN IDEA #4:**

Virtual reality is the newest thing in roller coasters.

\_\_\_\_\_

#### DETAIL SENTENCES:

1. Others take you through spooky dark tunnels.
2. Strap on a pair of 3-d goggles and you are transported into an unforgettable adventure.
3. The fastest wooden roller coaster operating today is at Dollywood, an amusement park in the Great Smoky Mountains.
4. The Leviathan stands over 300 feet tall and hurls you through the air at an amazing 148 miles an hour.

#### MAIN IDEA(S):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Are the main ideas distinct enough?** (Check one)

**Yes.** Choose yes if it was clear that each detail belonged with one of the main ideas.

**No.** Choose no if the details could fit in more than one main ideas.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## MAIN IDEAS - BROAD ENOUGH OR TOO NARROW? (1)

Read this group of main ideas for an informational piece about great cities. If any one of the three is too narrow to be properly elaborated or overlaps with another, cross it out and replace it with a broad yet distinct main idea. (Remember, they may be okay as is!) Then write a main idea sentence for each main idea. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help you. Refer to the background information sheet to help you compose your main idea sentences.

**TOPIC: Great Cities**

**MAIN IDEA #1:** Paris, France

**MAIN IDEA #2:** New York, NY

**MAIN IDEA #3:** Tokyo, Japan

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #1

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MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #2

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MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #3

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**SENTENCE STARTERS:**

- As you explore \_\_\_\_\_
- It is fascinating to visit \_\_\_\_\_
- You'll start to feel at home when \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't miss \_\_\_\_\_



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### MAIN IDEAS - BROAD ENOUGH OR TOO NARROW? (1)

#### Paris, France

- Population 2.2 million
- Most recognized landmark: The Eiffel Tower
- Most visited city in the world attracting more than 80 million tourists each year
- Known as the “City of Light”

#### New York, NY

- Population: 8.4 million
- Most recognized landmark: The Statue of Liberty
- Known as the “Big Apple”
- New York was originally a Dutch settlement known as New Amsterdam

#### Tokyo, Japan

- Population: 13.5 million
- Tokyo started as a small fishing village known as Edo and grew into the world’s largest city
- Most recognized landmark: Mount Fuji
- The Tokyo SkyTree is the world’s tallest tower, soaring 2,080 feet (634 meters) in the air

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## MAIN IDEAS - BROAD ENOUGH OR TOO NARROW? (2)

Read this group of main ideas for an informational piece about life along the Nile. If any one of the three is too narrow to be properly elaborated or overlaps with another, cross it out and replace it with a broad yet distinct main idea. (Remember, they may be okay as is!) Then, use the internet or the library to gather the information you need to write a main idea sentence for each main idea. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help you.

**TOPIC: Life Along the Nile**  
**MAIN IDEA #1:** Ancient civilizations  
**MAIN IDEA #2:** Plants  
**MAIN IDEA #3:** Animals

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #1

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MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #2

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MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #3

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**SENTENCE STARTERS:**

- Since the dawn of time \_\_\_\_\_
- An area seeped in mystery \_\_\_\_\_
- One of the most important \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you imagine how \_\_\_\_\_
- It's amazing to \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS WITHIN A PROMPT

Read this prompt/assignment. Circle the topic. Underline the given main ideas.

**Write a research paper focusing on an indigenous people of the world. Make sure your paper provides a brief history of the people as well as a description of the land they inhabit.**

Use the internet, the library, or your textbook to gather the information you need to write main idea sentences for the two given main ideas in the prompt above as well as the third (or more) variable main idea, which you need to come up with on your own. (Of course, you are free to develop more than three main ideas.)

**YOUR TOPIC:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA #1:**

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

**MAIN IDEA #2:**

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

**MAIN IDEA #3:**

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

**MAIN IDEA #4:**

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## NAMING GIVENS AND VARIABLES

Before writing to an assignment or prompt, an author must determine not only the genre, but the given and variable parts of that assignment. Read each assignment below, and answer the questions about genre, givens, and variables.

1. *You have read two articles about geothermal energy. In response to these texts, write an essay explaining the benefits and limitations of this renewable energy source. Be sure to include a paragraph explaining whether you believe harnessing geothermal energy is a worthwhile pursuit. Cite evidence from both texts to support your response.*

- In what genre should the author respond? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the GIVEN in this assignment? (What every writer needs to include.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are the VARIABLES in this assignment? (What each individual writer must decide.) \_\_\_\_\_

2. *You've read two pieces titled Smart Farming and The Future of Farming. Based on information in both texts, write an essay describing the challenges of food production in the future and the agricultural practices that might meet those challenges.*

- In what genre should the author respond? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the GIVEN in this assignment? (What every writer needs to include.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are the VARIABLES in this assignment? (What each individual writer must decide.) \_\_\_\_\_

3. *You've read two stories that take place during the Cuban Missile Crisis of the 1960s, one seen through the eyes of a Cuban teen and the other from the perspective of an American adolescent. Based on these texts, imagine the emotions you might be feeling as you face this tense situation. Write a story showing how you might express these powerful emotions.*

- In what genre should the author respond? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the GIVEN in this assignment? (What every writer needs to include.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are the VARIABLES in this assignment? (What each individual writer must decide.) \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## GENERATING BROAD YET DISTINCT MAIN IDEAS

Think about the TOPIC listed in the box below. Ask yourself what you know about this topic. Then, write several distinct main idea “blurbs” about the topic on the lines below. Be sure that each main idea is distinct from the others. Use the sentence starters at the bottom of the page if needed.

**TOPIC: Science Projects**

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

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

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

MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #1:

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MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #2:

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MAIN IDEA SENTENCE #3:

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### **SENTENCE STARTERS:**

- Consider many different \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Take a close look at \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Select a topic that \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Remember that you’ll need to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Be careful not to \_\_\_\_\_ .

**BONUS:** Using your summarizing framework and informational verbs, construct a simple summarizing paragraph outlining what you intend to explain to your readers.

## THESAURUS OF GENERAL ADJECTIVES

### interesting

appealing  
fascinating  
enthraling  
intriguing  
curious

### nice

charming  
delightful  
enchancing  
captivating  
pleasant

### pretty

*(as in a person)*

beautiful  
lovely  
attractive  
handsome  
elegant  
adorable  
gorgeous  
regal

### great

terrific  
incredible  
fantastic  
awesome  
grand  
magnificent  
splendid  
marvelous  
excellent

### big

enormous  
gigantic  
huge  
immense  
colossal  
giant  
massive

### fun

enjoyable  
entertaining  
amusing  
delightful  
pleasant  
satisfying

### strange

bewildering  
bizarre  
curious  
extraordinary  
mysterious  
odd  
peculiar  
unusual  
weird

### exciting

exhilarating  
thrilling  
sensational  
electrifying  
rousing  
stimulating  
death-defying  
daring

### dangerous

harmful  
hazardous  
perilous  
risky  
challenging

### smart

clever  
skillful  
bright  
intelligent  
shrewd  
brilliant

### beautiful

*(as in a place)*  
charming  
captivating  
lovely  
lush  
majestic  
splendid  
breathtaking

### scary

frightening  
terrifying  
alarming  
shocking  
horrifying  
spooky  
eerie

### small

tiny  
petite  
puny  
microscopic  
miniature  
little

### hot

blazing  
burning  
flaming  
scalding  
scorching  
searing  
sweltering

### cold

arctic  
chilly  
cool  
freezing

### difficult

grueling  
hard  
challenging  
complex  
demanding  
perplexing  
troublesome

### easy

effortless  
simple  
uncomplicated  
comfortable  
a cinch

### special

unique  
exceptional  
distinctive  
extraordinary  
meaningful

**(animal** - although a noun, students often benefit by having word referents to use: creature, beast, monster, critter, feathered/furry/four-legged friend, varmint, carnivore, herbivore, predator, hunter.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## BORING! REVISE!

Read this author’s prewriting plan and main idea sentences. Notice the boring, redundant sentences and lack of variety. Each sentence begins the same way.

<b>TOPIC: Pinnipeds (Seals)</b>	
<b>MAIN IDEA #1:</b> Arctic pinnipeds	There are many different kinds of arctic pinnipeds.
<b>MAIN IDEA #2:</b> Fur seals	There are many different kinds of fur seals.
<b>MAIN IDEA #3:</b> Predation	There are many different kinds of marine life who prey on seals.

This kind of writing does not spark the reader’s interest or make them want to read on. Using the sentence starters below, see if you can rewrite these sentences to make them more interesting.

### ARCTIC PINNIPEDS

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### FUR SEALS

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### PREDATION

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#### SENTENCE STARTERS:

- To the north, \_\_\_\_\_ .
- With a lush coat of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Watch out! There’s a pod of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Amazingly enough, \_\_\_\_\_ .
- These frisky mammals \_\_\_\_\_ .



## STANDARD EDITING/PROOFREADING MARKS

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
¶	Start a new paragraph	It took a long time, but we finally finished. ¶ At that point, we moved onto...
# ^	Add a space	What <sup># ^</sup> do you think happened next?
≡	Capitalize	During the month of <u>≡</u> may, we have one three-day weekend.
/lc	Lower case	That <u>/lc</u> Boy certainly plays to win.
Ⓢ	Spelling mistake	Let's travel to the <u>Ⓢ</u> Caribbean and enjoy the weather.
^	Add a word or punctuation	Amazingly, our <sup>^</sup> <u>determined</u> team evened the score in the second half.
( )	Close space	Cheerleading ( ) 'ryouts take place after school on Tuesday.
S	Transpose	The carnival is to <u>S</u> town coming.
○	Add a period	The end is near ○
X	Delete	Do not overlap any <u>X</u> many of your main ideas.

The carnival is coming to town! This exciting event has Ⓢfamilys from all over the region flocking to the fairgrounds to enjoy the thrilling rides and exciting games of chance. There is so much to do as this annual celebration gets underway. Get a bird's eye view of the whole Ⓢtown from the top of the /lcFerris /lcWheel. Win yourself a big, bright /lcStuffed /lcAnimal! Of course for the younger children, there's an enchanting carousel with intricately carved horses to ride.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## EDITING & REVISING

Read the paragraph below. Revise the text by using the thesaurus feature on your computer to replace redundant words. Use the standard Editing/Proofreading Marks to indicate where the replacement words should be inserted as well as any typographical errors you may spot.

### Yeti

Yeti is a mysterious creature who lives high in the rugged himalayan Mountains of Nepal and tibet. Many doubt the existence of the mysterious creature and believe that the reported sightings of it are nothing more than hoaxes. Others are not so sure. They find it hard to dismiss the stories of those who say they've seen the mysterious creature with their own eyes. After all, these stories have persisted for decades and they have some persistent similarities too. All describe Yeti as a muscular, shaggy creature who stands about six feet tall and walks on too legs. While yeti is sometimes called the Abominable Snowman, it does not have white hair. Most often, Yeti's hair has been reported to be brownish-red in color. Supposably, its arms are long enough to reach down to its nkees. Of course, many outlandish, obviously fabricated tales have circulated about the mysterious creature throughout the centuries. Of course, the native people of the himalaya still firmly believe that Yeti is for real.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### MAIN IDEA BLURBS INTO SENTENCES

Look at the Informational Pillar Framework below. Translate each of the main idea blurbs into a complete MAIN IDEA sentence.

**TOPIC:**  
**Africa**  
Introduction: Lead/Topic Sentence

**MAIN IDEA #1:**  
**Agriculture**

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

**MAIN IDEA #2:**  
**Coastal regions**

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

**MAIN IDEA #3:**  
**Capital cities**

Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail

**CONCLUSION**

(#1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(#2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(#3) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SENTENCE STARTERS:**

- Near the ocean, \_\_\_\_\_ . Farmers cultivate \_\_\_\_\_ .
- The busy city of \_\_\_\_\_ . Some of the beaches \_\_\_\_\_ .
- If you ever get a chance, \_\_\_\_\_ . The people of \_\_\_\_\_ .

**BONUS:** Using the internet or the library, research one of the three main ideas. Identify at least two appropriate supporting details and compose complete sentences focusing on each. Write on the back of this page.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## TURNING QUESTIONS INTO RESPONSES (1)

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each question/prompt below and underline the key phrase. Then, on the lines beneath the question, use this key phrase in your TOPIC SENTENCE.

**REMEMBER:** When writing a response to text you will be given a question or prompt to consider. Within the question or prompt you'll find a key phrase that you'll need to address. One effective way of getting started is to use this key phrase in the first line of your response. This key phrase becomes your TOPIC SENTENCE.

1. Using evidence from the text, describe the inventions of artist Leonardo Da Vinci.

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2. Write an essay explaining the economic conditions leading up to the Stock Market crash of 1929. Be sure to cite examples from the text.

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3. Based on examples in the story, explain how Katniss Everdeen takes responsibility for her family and her community in the Hunger Games series.

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4. Write an essay explaining how images the poet created contribute to the exuberant tone of the poem.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## TURNING QUESTIONS INTO RESPONSES (2)

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each question/prompt below and underline the key phrase. Then, on the lines beneath the question, use this *key phrase* in your **TOPIC SENTENCE**.

**REMEMBER:** When writing a response to text you will be given a question or prompt to consider. Within the question or prompt you'll find a key phrase that you'll need to address. One effective way of getting started is to use this key phrase in the first line of your response. This key phrase becomes your **TOPIC SENTENCE**.

1. You read two articles, The Salem Witch Trials and The Cuban Missile Crisis. Write about similarities and differences between these two times of widespread panic in history. Be sure to include evidence from both texts in your response.

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2. The article on the invention of the cotton gin included charts and timelines. Using this information, write an essay about how this historic invention changed agriculture in the 19th century.

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3. You read two stories based on the theme of “family relationships.” Using examples from each story, describe what the characters, Tom and Susan, learn about the value of family relationships.

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4. Compare the biographical articles on Maya Angelou and Alice Walker. Write an essay outlining the contributions of each to literature and civil rights. Be sure to cite examples from the texts.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## THE MISSING MAIN IDEA

Read each paragraph. Think about the specific details in each sentence. Ask yourself what the paragraph is all about and write a main idea sentence on the lines provided that tells you what the entire paragraph is about.

On the average, these large, long-haired dogs cost a hefty \$3,000-\$4,000. But Tibetan mastiffs with a pure lineage have commanded far more. A Chinese businessman paid \$1.9 million for a one-year old pup that stood 31 inches high and weighed 200 pounds. Another of these colossal canines with the same lineage sold for \$968,209. It might be hard to believe that anybody would pay such a staggering amount of money for a dog, but breeders liken them to the endangered panda bear and claim that the pure-bred Tibetan mastiff is equally rare. Auburn-brown in color, these enormous canines have a fluffy, round mane that looks much like a lion's. Loyal and protective, but sometimes ferocious, they were originally bred for hunting by the nomadic tribes of Tibet.

Main Idea: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

With a gorgeous golden coat and black spots, this amazing feline is a cross between a domesticated house cat and an African serval cat. A male costs up to \$15,000 while a female can go for as much as \$22,000. This exquisite feline will cost you time as well as money. Savannah cats have endless amounts of energy and need lots of exercise. With their long, lean legs and big upright ears, they attract quite a bit of attention as they walk down a city street on a leash! They also enjoy an occasional swim and are world-class jumpers, capable of launching themselves eight feet in the air. If you get a Savannah kitten, be prepared to spend a lot of time building a bond of trust with your new pet and getting it accustomed to being around people.

Main Idea: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## THE MISSING MAIN IDEA

A perfect specimen of a lavender albino ball python has charmed snake-lovers out of \$40,000! While many are sold for far less, this unique constrictor is never in plentiful supply and always much more expensive than an ordinary ball python, which goes for about \$125. The beautiful coloration of this African native is what jacks up the price. Just imagine how striking bright yellow spots on a backdrop of soft lavender would be. Add in pair of piercing red eyes and you might understand why some people consider these rare and coveted reptiles “living art.” Easy to care for and usually quite calm in temperament, this super special snake grows to a length of 4-5 feet and can live for 40 years.

**Main Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the topic of this text? \_\_\_\_\_

Summarize the main ideas into blurbs to complete the organizational framework for this informational text:

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

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

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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## SENTENCE VARIETY AND WORD CHOICE

Read the dull main idea sentences below. Revise each by varying the sentence structure and replacing overly general adjectives with specific, vivid descriptive words to create more exciting main idea sentences for your readers. Also, try to create word referents to replace the underlined topic word in each sentence.

**Ex: Rainy days can be boring.**

*Revision:*

A steady drizzle from gray and cloudy skies can keep you indoors all day long and leave you feeling frustrated with boredom.

1. **Hamburgers are a popular choice on many occasions.**

*Revision:*

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2. **Dogs help people in many ways.**

*Revision:*

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3. **Hyenas are a common sight on the African savannah.**

*Revision:*

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## REVISING PARAGRAPHS WITH WORD REFERENTS (1)

Read the paragraph below. Notice the redundant use of the topic word. Create a list of word referents for the topic word. Then, REVISE this passage, replacing the underlined topic words with effective, informational word referents. If you don't know much about sea turtles you'll need to do a little research to learn about their appearance, habitat, and behavior. You might also want to use a thesaurus to help generate appropriate adjectives and nouns.

While most snakes pose no danger to humans, the Belcher's Sea Snake is one venomous snake that we should definitely stay away from. Found in shallow waters around Southeast Asia and northern Australia, these snakes have venom powerful enough to kill 1,000 people. However, they generally avoid humans, and are most frequently encountered by fishermen, who find them entangled in gill nets. These snakes are responsible for about 100 deaths each year but, they do not always release their deadly toxins when they strike. If they did, that number would surely increase. These snakes grow up to nine feet long and can stay underwater for up to two hours. Capable of diving to depths of up to 350 feet, they feed on eels, fish eggs and shellfish. This fascinating snake was first discovered by the British explorer Sir Edward Belcher in 1849.

**BONUS: Circle the word referent for "venom" found in the paragraph.**

### Snake/Snakes

#### Adjectives

#### Nouns

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### Your Revision:

While most \_\_\_\_\_ pose no danger to humans, the Belcher's Sea Snake is one of a few types of venomous \_\_\_\_\_ that we should definitely stay away from. Found in shallow waters around Southeast Asia and northern Australia, these \_\_\_\_\_ have venom powerful enough to kill 1,000 people. They generally avoid people, and are most frequently encountered by fishermen, who find them entangled in gill nets. These \_\_\_\_\_ are responsible for about 1,000 deaths each year but, they do not always release their deadly toxins when they bite. These \_\_\_\_\_ grow up to nine feet long and can stay underwater for up to two hours. Capable of diving to depths of up to 350 feet, they feed on eels, fish eggs and shellfish. This fascinating \_\_\_\_\_ was first discovered by the British explorer Sir Edward Belcher in 1849.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## REVISING PARAGRAPHS WITH WORD REFERENTS (2)

Read this paragraph about elephants. Find and underline each redundant use of the topic word. Then, REVISE this passage, and using carets (^), revise the underlined topic words by inserting effective, informational word referents.

### The Intelligence of Elephants

When we think of brainy animals, images of frolicking dolphins or foraging gorillas often come to mind. While primates and marine mammals have proven their intelligence over and over again, recent research suggests that the elephant is equally as smart. Several authoritative studies showed that elephants are capable of using tools. For instance, one elephant tormented by buzzing, biting insects made itself a fly swatter from a stick to keep them away. There is a compelling body of evidence showing that elephants can understand human body language and can mimic human voices. Of course, the elephant's long memory and ability to show empathy for any distressed elephant has been observed in both captive and wild elephants.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## PREPARING TO WRITE A RESPONSE TO TEXT

You've read the text titled South America, pp. 37-38. In response to this text, write an essay describing two of the geographical features found on this large continent. Be sure to use evidence from the text.

1. Underline the **given elements** in this writing assignment.
2. What are the **variable elements** in this writing assignment - in other words, what decision do you need to make as the author?
3. Skim and scan the text and **write a summarizing framework** for this piece.

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

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

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

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

4. In your summarizing framework, **circle the Main Ideas** that will be most helpful in crafting your response. Locate and **circle those paragraphs in the text**.
5. What **annotation markings** can help guide your response?
6. Select two of the geographical features of South America and highlight the descriptive text that you will refer to when composing your essay.
7. Write a **topic sentence** using the given elements that you underlined as your "topic."
8. Write a **main idea sentence** for each of the main ideas that you have selected.
9. Use **citing sentence starters** to reference evidence in the text:
  - *In the text titled South America we learn that* \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - *In paragraph \_\_\_ the author states that* \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - *The author describes the way that* \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - *Another fact the author notes is* \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - *In the information provided about \_\_\_\_\_ we learn that* \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - *The author also discusses* \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - *Additionally, the text includes the fact that* \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - *This informational text also explains* \_\_\_\_\_ .

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# The Martial Arts of the Americas

I used to think that the martial arts originated exclusively in Asia. Of course, many did, including Karate, a popular form of self-defense from Japan and its Korean cousins, Tae Kwan Do and the increasingly popular Kuk Sool Won. However, lesser known but equally challenging types of martial arts have their own rich histories in North and South America, including Okichitaw, Defendo, and Capoeira.

## The Native American Style of Self Defense

Okichitaw is the

only Native American martial art to survive the arrival of the English colonists. It combines the tomahawk throwing techniques of the Cree Indians with some of the strategic moves of the Asian martial arts. While undeniably aggressive, this form of combat was developed to end a conflict without killing an opponent and practiced by Native American tribes in conflict with one another and later, with European settlers. Along with quick offensive strikes and defensive measures, students of Okichitaw must learn the seven “Grandfather” teachings of the Cree tribes of Canada and the western United States, including love, respect, humility, honesty, bravery,

wisdom and truth. Such ethical and emotional training is common among all martial arts and practitioners of Okichitaw believe it helps them stay calm under pressure and rebound quickly from mistakes.

## A Newcomer to the World of Martial Arts

While many martial arts can trace their histories back to ancient times, the Canadian art of Defendo was created less than a century ago. This nonlethal form of self-defense was adapted from the Close Quarters Combat system developed by William E. Fairbairn and Eric A. Stykes for elite units of Canadian and U.S. troops during World War II. While brutally aggressive

on the battlefield, the Defendo practiced today focuses on restraining, rather than harming, an opponent. Easy to learn, this simple martial art is used today primarily by law enforcement officers for crowd control. The movements focus on locking the elbow and knee joints of an opponent and many zero in on pressure points such as the temples and the arch of the foot. Functional and effective, these painful but harmless actions are often compared to those of Jui Jitsu, which translates from Japanese into “Gentle Art.”

### **The Intricate Moves of Capoeira**

Combining offensive, defensive and dance movements with

music, Capoeira is probably the most acrobatic of all martial arts and the one with the most intriguing history. Some say, it was just a game played to music among African slaves on the sugar plantations of Brazil. Others are convinced that it was serious training for a slave revolt with the rhythmic music and dance moves added in just to disguise it as simply a game. Either way, this complex and graceful South American martial art is undeniably difficult to master. Two of the movements, for example, are the Chapa de Costas, a backwards kick and the Cotovelada, an elbow punch to the nose. A third dramatic move is the “Au,” known in gymnastics as the



cartwheel, that allows the capoeira artist to protect his or her face while kicking out at an opponent from an upside down position.

Would you like to study one of these martial arts? People around the world do so to develop self-discipline, achieve physical fitness and learn self-defense. Without a doubt, there are benefits to learning the American martial arts of Okichitaw, Defendo, and Capoeira.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Jake's Karate Dilemma

As we'd been doing since third grade, Oliver and I sat together on the second to last seat of the school bus. I had the window seat and our friends, Fiona and Holly, sat across the aisle. This was my favorite time of the day. School was out and I had a few hours of free time to enjoy with my friends before I had to be home to help around the house and then settle down with my homework.

"Let's all get off at my house," Fiona suggested. "We could watch a movie or shoot some hoops."

Fiona's big, old house with its basketball court and big colorful hammock strung up between two trees in the backyard was where we usually gathered. There was always something fun to do at Fiona's place.

"Sure," I said. Oliver and Holly agreed.

The bus turned onto Main Street and we passed by a big, new building. A colorful sign in the front window read: "Southside Martial Arts Center, Opening Saturday!"

Suddenly my mood took a dive. I knew what was coming next.

"I can't wait to start our Capoeira lessons," Holly said happily. She and Fiona had been talking about learning this acrobatic South American form of self-defense ever since we found out that the martial arts center was coming to our town.

"You're going to be really good at it, Holly" Oliver said. "You too, Fiona, because you're both so good at gymnastics."

"And you're going to be a black belt before you know it, Oliver," Holly said.

Oliver had vowed to be the first in line to sign up for a Karate class at the Southside Martial Arts Center on Saturday. Holly and Fiona would be right behind him registering for Capoeira lessons.

And where would I be? Lucky me. I'd be at home, babysitting for my brothers, listening to their goofy Saturday morning cartoons and washing out their cereal bowls in the kitchen sink.

Now I'm sure there are some advantages to having four little brothers, but at the moment I couldn't think of any. All it meant to me today was that my mom and dad worked six days a week and still we couldn't afford any extras, like a karate class for me.

"You too, Jake," Fiona added.

"I don't think so," I said.

"What?" Holly said, her eyes wide with disbelief. "You're not taking Karate with Oliver?"

"Nope," I said. "Just not interested."

Oliver shrugged sadly and changed the subject. He knew the truth.

"I'll show you everything I learn," he'd promised earlier in the week. Oliver was a loyal and generous friend and I really appreciated the offer, but it still wouldn't be the

same as studying karate with an actual Black Belt, wearing the crisp white uniforms and progressing from a white belt, to a yellow belt, to a green belt and beyond.

It just wasn't fair. My friends could afford martial arts classes. Why couldn't I? By the time I got home I was feeling really sorry for myself.

"Hey, how was your day? My mom greeted me at the door with a mixing bowl in her arms.

"Okay," I said, dropping my backpack on the kitchen floor.

"Would you help me chop up the carrots?" she asked – only it wasn't a question since I didn't have the option of saying no. Chores and babysitting were the story of my life.

"I want to take a Karate class," I blurted out.

"You know we can't afford that," mom said. "Danny, David, come set the table."

"We can't afford anything," I grumbled.

"That's not true," mom said, looking at me with tired, sad eyes.

"Can I ask Grandma for the money?" I asked.

"Grandma's saving for your college fund," mom snapped. She was getting irritated with me but I didn't care.

My two youngest brothers ambled into the kitchen and eyed Mom and me warily. "Are you two having a fight?" Danny asked.

"No," Mom said.

"Yes," I said, furiously chopping carrots into smithereens. "Everybody else gets everything they want and I get nothing." Even as these stupid words escaped my mouth, I knew they were not true but I just couldn't hold them back.

I sulked at the dinner table, even as 6-year-old David tried to make me laugh by telling me one ridiculous "knock-knock" joke after another.

Later that night, I was sitting on my bed trying to concentrate on my homework when little David came into the room clutching a fistful of change.

"Here," he said, thrusting the coins at me. "You can have all my money. Buy yourself some karate."

A few minutes later, Danny came in and gave me his meager savings too. My brothers Theo and Harry followed. It made me feel almost like crying and I was ashamed of the way I'd behaved earlier.

"Guys, I'm not taking your money," I said, scooping up the coins and handing them back to my awesome brothers. While the money couldn't have amounted to more than \$5 in all, the fact that they wanted me to have it meant something, something really important. "Who needs karate class when you've got brothers to wrestle!"

What followed was a free-for-all as my four rambunctious brothers and I tussled and brawled our way to the floor, laughing all the way.

My last thought before I went to sleep that night was that taking a karate class might have been nice, but having brothers was much, much nicer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## PREPARING TO WRITE A RESPONSE TO TEXT

You've read two very different texts about the martial arts, The Martial Arts of the Americas and Jake's Karate Dilemma. Write an essay comparing these two texts. Be sure to address the differences in genre, organization, and author's purpose. Also, describe at least one key characteristic in each text that is unique to the genre.

1. Underline the **given elements** in this writing assignment.
2. What are the **variable elements** in this writing assignment - in other words, what decision do you need to make as the author?
3. **Annotate and Analyze** The Martial Arts of the Americas and **write a summarizing framework** for this piece.

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

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

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

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

**What is the genre of this piece?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the author's purpose?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What prewriting tool did the author use to shape this text?** \_\_\_\_\_

4. Fill in the summarizing framework below for Jake's Karate Dilemma.

- *This story is about* \_\_\_\_\_
- *The problem was that* \_\_\_\_\_
- *His problem was solved when* \_\_\_\_\_
- *What is the genre of this piece?* \_\_\_\_\_
- *What is the author's purpose?* \_\_\_\_\_
- *How do you know?* \_\_\_\_\_
- *What prewriting tool did the author use to shape this text?* \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name one characteristic you'll describe in the narrative story. Highlight this in yellow.

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6. Name one characteristic you'll describe in the informational text. Highlight this in pink.

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7. Write a **topic sentence** based on what the prompt is asking.

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8. Write **two main idea sentences**, one for your description of the key characteristics in the informational text and another for the narrative text.

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9. Use **citing sentence starters** to reference evidence in the text:

- *In the first text the author used* \_\_\_\_\_ .
- *Another major difference is that* \_\_\_\_\_ .
- *You can recognize a narrative piece by* \_\_\_\_\_ .
- *In the second text it's clear that* \_\_\_\_\_ .
- *The organizational strategy* \_\_\_\_\_ .
- *The author's purpose was* \_\_\_\_\_ .