



Grade 8 Informational Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 4: Research

**www.empoweringwriters.com
1-866-285-3516**

KEY VOCABULARY: FINDING INFORMATION WITHIN TEXT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

GLOSSARY

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

INDEX

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

CHAPTER TITLE

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

HEADINGS

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

KEYWORDS

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

DIAGRAMS

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

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

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

COPYRIGHT PAGE

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

SIDE BAR

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

Name _____

THE BOOK DETECTIVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

_____.

HINTS FOR EXPLORING WEBSITES

Websites are organized with several general features that are similar to the text conventions you find in books. Understanding them can help you skim and scan websites in order to find the information you need quickly. Here are some hints:

Site map = table of contents

Many large web sites make their site maps (organizational chart of all of the pages on the site) available to the user - usually at the very bottom of the homepage. It was intended to be an at-a-glance table of contents for the user.

In many cases, you can use site maps as a search engine to help you find and identify information on the site.

Tab structure = chapters

The tabs can be thought of as chapter titles.

Drop Down Menu = headings

These can be thought of as the subheadings you find in books.

Of course, these are just hints. Some websites do not follow this type of organizational structure. However, whenever possible, use the techniques that you use when researching from text (skimming and scanning for headings, italicized and bold-faced print, photos, etc.) to pinpoint the information you need from a website. Some even provide video clips that offer a multitude of valuable information.

General search engines such as google and yahoo may yield an overwhelming amount of information. Instead, try using search engines designed especially for students, such as:

<http://www.infotopia.info/>

<http://www.sweetsearch.com/>

Name _____

DETAILS FROM IMAGES

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

List some of the details you see in the images.

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

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

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

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

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST (1) - YOUR FIRST CAR

Let's fast-forward a few years. Imagine you're a newly licensed driver and you can buy any car you want, but you'll have to cover the costs of owning a vehicle, including gas, insurance, and maintenance. Which car would be the most sensible choice? Would you buy it new or used? Why?

1. List your **research questions**:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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

3. What search terms yielded the best results? _____

4. Based on the sites you discovered, decide upon two types of cars you'd most like to own. Research both thoroughly using the model name as a key word for your search. Add the word "images" and see what this reveals.

5. Cite your best sources here: _____

6. Make your final decision about the model car you want. Will you buy it new or used? Why?

7. How did this research help you decide on the perfect vehicle for you?

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST (2) - CAJUN CULTURE

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

Cajun Culture

If you like spicy food and toe-tapping music, you will surely appreciate the culture of the Cajun people. Let's travel to the **bayous** of the southern United States and learn about the history, folklore, food and music of this charismatic ethnic group.

The Cajun people of today are descendants of French settlers who arrived in the Nova Scotia province of Canada in the 1600s. At the time, this part of Canada was a French colony known as Acadia. Following the War of Spanish Succession in 1713, the colony fell under the control of the British, who demanded that the Acadians pledge their loyalty to England. Refusing to do so, many headed south and started their own communities clustered in the isolated bayous of Louisiana. They became known as Cajuns, a word derived from the mispronunciation of Acadian. Today, about 800,000 Cajuns keep their unique and vibrant culture alive.

Some of the spookiest folklore of all times evolved in the shadowy southern swamps of the Cajuns. The legendary **Rougarou**, for example, is a werewolf with glowing red eyes who haunts the bayous looking for someone to bite. Once it bites, Rougarou will be restored to human form, but its victim will be transformed into a bloodthirsty werewolf. The Alligator Boy is another creepy character that evolved in the Cajun imagination. As the story goes, the Alligator Boy was abandoned in a swamp as a baby and raised by alligators. Once grown, the **Alligator Boy** vows to exact vengeance on all humans in retaliation for the callous way he was treated as an infant. If you're ever exploring the bayou, beware of a creature that stands upright like a human, but has the tail and sharp claws of an alligator. It could be the Alligator Boy!

A rustic cuisine with some of the flavors of classic French cooking, Cajun food is deliciously spicy and rich. **Jambalaya**, for instance, is a meat and seafood stew with rice that is simmered in vats on the porches of bayou homes. Dried cayenne pepper brings the heat to Cajun dishes while the zest of celery, bell pepper and onion deliver loads of flavor. Keep in mind that this regional cuisine evolved to feed large, usually impoverished, rural families and, thus often incorporates local wild game such as

alligator, crawfish and duck. As food writer and chef Marcelle Bienvenu puts it: “When a Cajun cook is planning a meal, he or she simply opens the kitchen door and whatever is flying, swimming, walking by or growing in the garden may well end up in the pot.” This simple strategy has produced some truly tantalizing dishes.

Hard to describe in words, Cajun music has to be heard to be appreciated to its fullest. In its purest form, this exuberant music recalls the emotional European ballads, songs that tell narrative stories. Sung without accompanying instrumentals, **ballads** telling tales of lasting love were often sung at weddings and funerals in France and Italy. Funny ballads entertained children. As the music of the bayou developed, the fast-paced twang of the fiddle provided the first instrumentals and the tradition of twin fiddles, one playing the melody and the other providing backup, was born. Over time, the music evolved to include other instruments, including the accordion and the banjo. Whatever the combination of brass, strings and vocals, the music is upbeat, heartfelt and fun to dance to.

With its rich history, mesmerizing folklore, delectable food and irresistible music, this distinctive French-American culture is certainly fascinating. Learning about the Cajuns sparks questions about **French-Canadian** history and culture. With their shared European roots, it seems likely that the two cultures may have some striking similarities.

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST (2) - CAJUN CULTURE

An eighth grade student read the text titled Cajun Culture and wanted to learn more about French-American culture. What key words and questions might he or she research to find more information on this topic? List the key words and questions below.

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

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

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

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

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST - ENDANGERED SPECIES

There are more than 40,000 endangered plant and animal species here on earth. Choose one of these plants or animals and use your research skills to learn more about its appearance and habitat as well as the factors that caused it to become endangered.

1. Write the name of the endangered species of your choice:

2. Conduct online research to find answers to your questions about this plant or animal
List several research questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. What search terms yielded the best results? _____

6. Cite your best source here: _____

7. What did you learn? Do you think this endangered species will make a comeback? Why or why not?

Name _____

RESEARCHING A TOPIC OF INTEREST - THE FRILLED SHARK

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

The Frilled Shark

If there's any such thing as a sea monster, chances are it looks much like a frilled shark! This fearsome but fascinating creature is one of the most rarely sighted species on earth. Let's take a closer look at the habitat, appearance and feeding behavior of the frilled shark,

While very little is known about the frilled shark, it is thought to inhabit the deepest, darkest reaches of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and only come to the surface when sick or injured. It is believed that they are capable of surviving at a depth of about 5,150 feet but are more commonly found in waters 50-200 feet deep. There is a small but compelling body of research that suggests the Frilled Shark is a vertical migrator, moving from deep to deeper waters on a cyclical basis.

While this mysterious beast is called a shark, many believe it looks more like an eel with a long, slender body about five to six feet in length. It has a head that's triangular in shape similar to that of a venomous snake and large oval eyes with an eerie green glow. The bizarre critter has six pairs of gills, each with the frilled edges for which the serpentine swimmer was named.

The feeding behavior of the frilled shark has never been studied or even observed by human eyes. However, it is almost certainly a predator. After all, why else would it need 300 razor sharp teeth! Scientists theorize that these treacherous choppers make it possible for a slow-moving fish like the frilled shark to capture prey such as squid and other deep sea dwellers.

As research into the habitat, appearance and feeding behavior of this bizarre creature continues, there's a good chance that we will gain a better understanding this elusive species one day. Until then, the frilled shark remains one of the great mysteries of the deep.

After one middle school student read this passage, she wondered:

Are there other mysterious creatures in the ocean?

1. Write down the search phrases you might use to find an answer to that question on the lines below. Be sure to include any symbols that help narrow your search.

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

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

2. Now conduct your search. Circle the phrase that yielded the best results.
3. On another sheet of paper, write a short paragraph based on your research. Be sure to use good sentence variety, and check your spelling and punctuation. Use these sentence starters below if needed.
4. Finally, you need to **cite your source**, revealing where you discovered this information. Authors cite online sources by including author's name, last name first, (if there is one), title of the work, date, and full http address.

Author's or website name _____

Title of article _____

Date _____ full http address _____

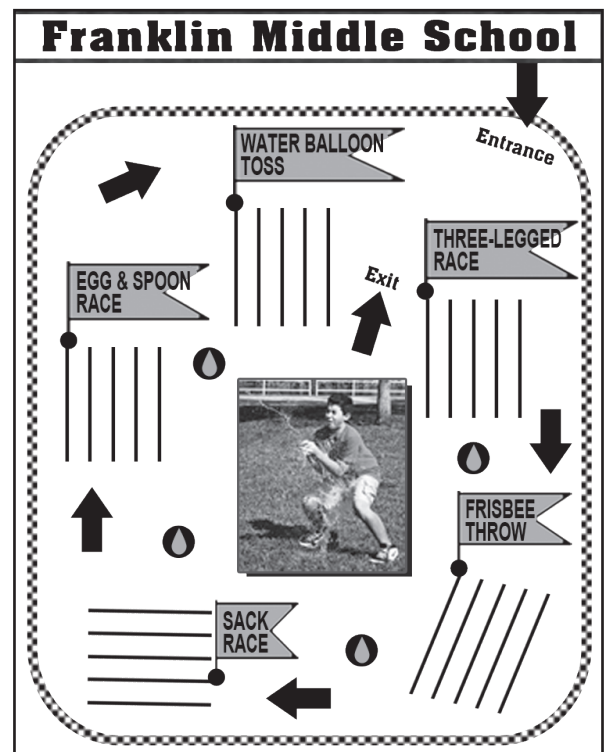
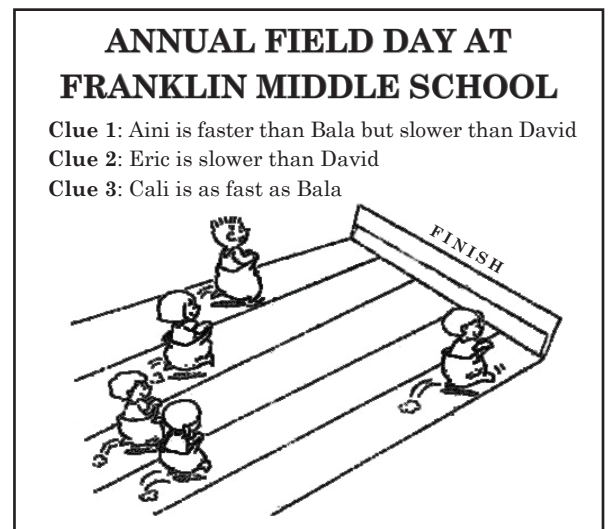
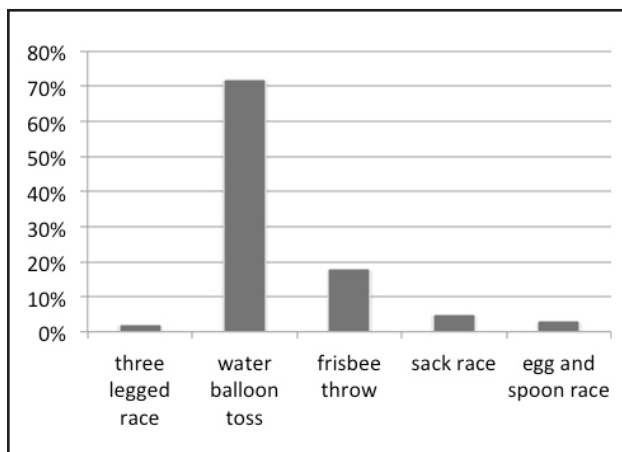
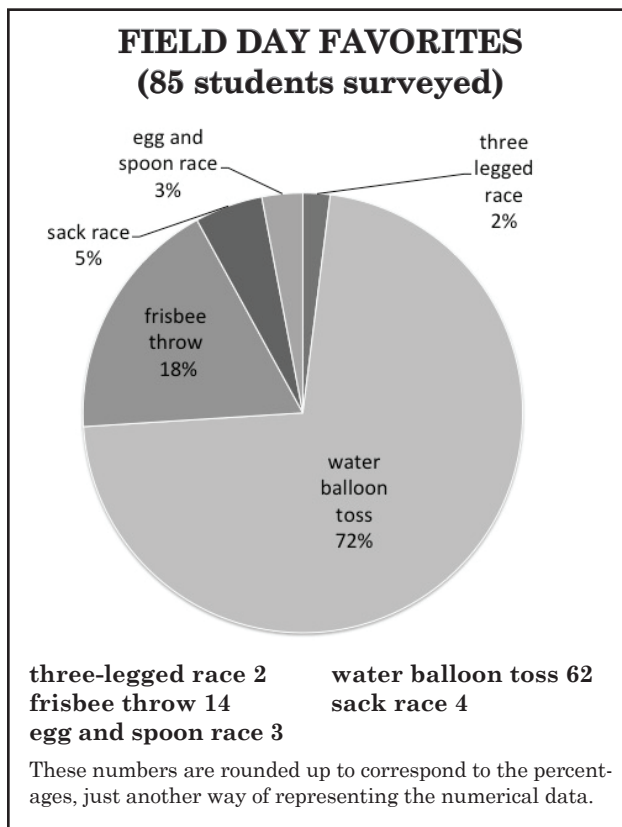
SENTENCE STARTERS:

- Sighted only during _____ .
- Scientists believe _____ .
- Learning more about _____ .
- Quite possibly _____ .
- Maybe someday we'll understand _____ .

Name _____

GLEANNING INFORMATION FROM DIAGRAMS, CHARTS, GRAPHS, MAPS

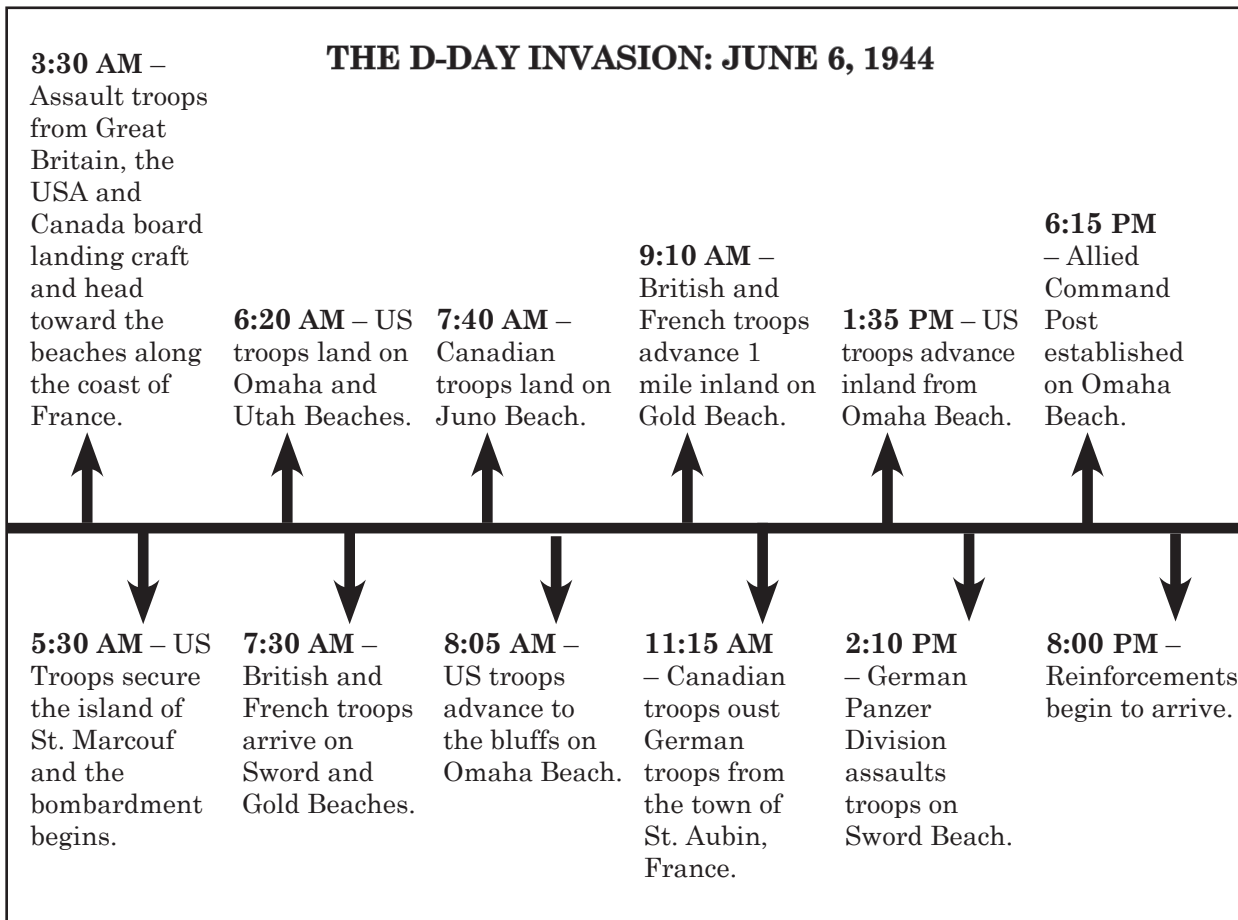
While researching, authors often come across valuable information communicated through diagrams, charts, graphs, timelines, and maps. Information presented graphically can be incorporated into an essay, report, or research paper. Examine and discuss each example, below. Then, on another sheet of paper,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



Name _____

GLEANNING INFORMATION FROM TIMELINES

While researching, authors often come across valuable information communicated through diagrams, charts, graphs, and maps. Certain kinds of information about events and when they happened can also be presented graphically in a timeline. Examine and discuss the timeline, below. Then, on a separate piece of paper, write an informational paragraph explaining the events of June 6, 1944 using facts from the timeline and additional research if necessary.



CHALLENGE: Research the events that followed the D-Day invasion and write a paragraph incorporating the information you uncover.

SENTENCE STARTERS:

- On a historic day in _____ .
- Troops from, _____ .
- The invasion continued on _____ .
- Troops fought their way _____ .



Name _____

TAKE SOME NOTES

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

1. Often called the Seven-Year War, the French and Indian War was fought between Britain and France and spanned the years 1756 and 1763.

Your notes: _____

2. When the war broke out, France controlled the Louisiana Territory and Canada. Spain, which allied with France, controlled Florida.

Your notes: _____

3. It is often assumed that the native peoples of North America sided with the French and some did. However, the Iroquois Confederacy formed an alliance with the British and many other tribes remained neutral.

Your notes: _____

4. A turning point of the war was the 1759 British victory in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. This conquest brought Quebec and months later, the city of Montreal, under British control.

Your notes: _____

5. The official end to the war came in 1763 when the Treaty of Paris was signed. This treaty gave Britain control of all the land west of the Mississippi and took Florida from the Spanish. The French ceded the Louisiana Territory to Spain.

Your notes: _____

6. The treaty also gave France control of the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. While defeated in battle, the French profited from the sugar industries on these islands for many years to come.

Your notes: _____

7. Britain tried to recoup the costs of the war by imposing heavy taxes on the North American colonies, which set the stage for the American Revolution.

Your notes: _____

CITING SOURCES

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

HERE ARE THE FORMATS YOU NEED TO FOLLOW WHEN CITING SOURCES

From Books

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

From Magazine Articles

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

From Websites

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

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

If you are using *footnotes*, the information cited is numbered in superscript (like this:¹) and the numbered footnote appears at the bottom of the page in the format shown above. *Endnotes* use the same format but appear not on each page, but collectively at the end of the paper.

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

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

Name _____

RESEARCH/TAKE NOTES/WRITE/CITE (1)

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

*Excerpt: Staples, Allegra. “The Strange and Fearless Mantis Shrimp,”
www.dogonews.com, February 9, 2014.*

When one thinks of nature’s most fierce predators, the images that come to mind are those of lions and sharks. While they are certainly dangerous, there are other unlikely ones that are even more so. Among them are the Tasmanian devil, the honey badger and . . . the mantis shrimp? Indeed, the beautiful marine animals that belong to the stomatopods family, are among the most vicious creatures on earth. A distant cousin of crabs and lobsters, the 400 known species of mantis shrimp that can be found in shallow tropical or sub-tropical waters across the world, range in size from just an inch long to over a foot. However, they are willing to take on targets many times their size - ranging from fish to octopus to even human. While you might encounter a colorful mantis shrimp in the shallow waters of your local beach, you can be assured that you won’t ever see them in an aquarium. That is because not only do they kill all their neighbors, but they also have been known to shatter the glass of the tanks they are housed in. Clearly, the mantis shrimp is surely not a creature to be trifled with!

Notes: _____

Name _____

RESEARCH/TAKE NOTES/WRITE/CITE (2)

Excerpt: p. 48 , 1968: *The Year that Changed the World* edited by Kelly Knauer, Time Inc. Home Entertainment © 2008

Three weeks and four days in the early spring of 1968 transformed Cesar Chavez from an obscure regional labor leader into a working man’s hero. At the start of the year, Chavez, the Mexican-American co-founder and leader of the United Farm Workers, was caught between Scylla and Charybdis. The California grape growers against whom he was leading a 35-month-old strike were increasingly resorting to the use of physical force against their underpaid workers. Chavez’s constituents, many of them Mexicans, were seething with frustration and becoming more inclined to meet violence with violence. Chavez, a devout Roman Catholic, embarked on a 25-day fast, subsisting only on water and daily Communion wafers. Deeply committed to nonviolence, he intended to shame the growers into making concessions while also leading his followers, by example, away from the use of force and into the embrace of passive confrontation.

When Chavez’s fast ended on March 10, five of nine major growers had signed contracts with the United Farm Workers, and his followers were newly inspired to peaceful resistance. With Senator Robert F. Kennedy (who called Chavez “one of the heroic figures of our time”) at his side, Chavez attended Mass and then spoke to more than 8,000 assembled admirers. “I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice,” said the man who had lost 30 lbs. and was too weak to walk without assistance.

Notes: _____

THE GOLDEN BRICKS

Five Powerful Building Blocks That Give Your Pillar Strength

QUOTE:

The words of an authority or an expert on the subject you're writing about. Be sure to tell the reader who the expert is and what his/her qualifications are.

Ex. Eva Jackson, executive director, says, "We hope to raise twice as much money at this fundraiser than we did last year."

NOT just: Ms. Eva Jackson says....

STATISTIC:

Information presented as a number, ratio or percentage.

Ex. According to the Wall Street Journal, automakers sold 17.5 million cars and trucks in the U.S. in 2015, a 5.7% increase over the previous year.

AMAZING FACT:

An unusual, amazing little-known fact that will surprise your readers.

Ex. It is hard to believe, but for every pound of fat we gain, we add seven miles of new blood vessels. - this according to Coach Tom Kelso at breakingmuscle.com.

ANECDOTE:

A SHORT explicit story used to illustrate a main idea.

Ex. That reminds me of the time when I wore my clogs and slipped on the icy path. This is just another example of why it is important to dress appropriately for the weather.

DESCRIPTIVE SEGMENT:

A vivid 2 or 3 sentence description that uses the five senses to illustrate an example of some kind.

Ex. Cars and buses rush past in a blur. Taxi horns blare. The air is filled with the smells of exhaust. Pedestrians crowd the sidewalks. Skyscrapers tower overhead. The city is a bustling place.

MENU OF TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

Transitional Words/Phrases to express similar ideas

Also, _____ Not only that, but _____

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

Another example of this is _____ Plus, _____

Furthermore, _____ Besides that, _____

Likewise, _____ Incidentally, _____

Similarly, _____ In the same way, _____

Transitional Words/Phrases to show an example

For example, _____ An example of this is _____

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

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

Transitional Words/Phrases to express alternate ideas

However, _____ On the other hand, _____

But, _____ Still, _____

Despite this _____ Nevertheless, _____

Nonetheless, _____ Regardless, _____

In spite of this _____ Yet _____

Transitional Words/Phrases to express cause and effect

For this reason _____ As a result _____

Due to this, _____ Consequently, _____

Then, _____ In view of this _____

On account of this _____ Therefore, _____

Name _____

TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

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

DOES IT:

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

- # _____ On the other hand, there are some practical issues to consider.
- # _____ Despite the fact that we overslept, we managed to make it to the airport on time.
- # _____ Not only that, but the mall is always crowded on Saturdays.
- # _____ As a result, we had to postpone our camping trip.
- # _____ Regardless, I'm not going to give up on the idea of becoming a world-class chef.
- # _____ For example, a large tree provides shelter from the sun for many creatures.
- # _____ Consequently, we knew we were in trouble.
- # _____ On the other hand, my brother can infuriate me in the blink of an eye.
- # _____ Not only that, but we knew we couldn't miss the party.
- # _____ For instance, our other friends might feel left out.
- # _____ On account of this, I missed the bus again this morning.
- # _____ Furthermore, I had chores waiting for me at home.
- # _____ In view of this, we decided to see a different movie.
- # _____ Still, you've got to wonder how she finished so quickly.
- # _____ As a result, I broke a bone and had to wear a cast for the next month.
- # _____ However, we got lost at the country fair and missed the pie-eating contest.
- # _____ Besides that, she's good at sports.
- # _____ Nevertheless, we trudged on through the mud and driving rain.
- # _____ Similarly, the lion's mane is shaggy and golden brown in color.
- # _____ In addition to this, I still had to study for a social studies test.
- # _____ For this reason, we're both grounded for the next two weeks.

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

Name _____

RECOGNIZING AND ANALYZING TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

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

1. Imagine diving from a jagged rocky peak that soars 125 feet into the sky and juts out into the crystalline waters of Pacific ocean. It's all in a day's work for the daring divers of La Quebrada. Since the 1930s, these bold athletes have been famous around the globe for their perfectly timed dives from the rugged cliffs of Acapulco, Mexico. To the delight of tourists and cruise ship passengers, the divers perform several times a day in all kinds of weather. Plus, they even dive at night, holding torches so that onlookers can follow their graceful descents. While the sport is clearly fraught with danger, not a single La Quebrada diver has ever been killed while executing these breathtaking leaps. That may be because the divers are literally born to the sport. "You can't dive at La Quebrada unless your father, grandfather or uncle was a diver. It's a legacy," says 33-year old diver Angel David.

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

2. If you think things occasionally get a bit wild in your school cafeteria, try to picture this: 3,000 hungry macaque monkeys attacking a buffet of their favorite foods prepared just for them. That's exactly what happens at the annual Monkey Banquet in Thailand's Lopburi province, where the pampered primates are thought to bring good luck and prosperity to the area. Prepared by chefs and served on long tables draped with bright red cloths, the banquet consists of sweet sticky rice, tropical fruit salads and the monkey's favorite, egg yolk pudding. Hundreds of laughing spectators are treated to the sight of the unruly animals sipping from cans of soda, dancing enthusiastically on the tables and, of course, flinging food at one another. In spite of their bad table manners, the Thai people are quite happy to serve the monkeys their annual banquet. The Lopburi Monkey Banquet is not only a way of giving thanks, but it attracts hordes of tourists to the province.

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

Name _____

USING TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

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

Ex. TOPIC: The Hmong People

For about 7,000 years, the Hmong people lived a simple life in the mountainous regions of southern China. They raised livestock, grew crops and established their own system of government. **But** that peaceful, self-sufficient way of life was interrupted for this Asian ethnic group when the first war of the Qing Dynasty erupted in 1739. Historians say that the Hmong people “won nine battles but lost the tenth.” Defeated, their land was taken from them and many were taken into slavery. Some managed to flee to nearby Laos and Vietnam. **However**, they did not find freedom or prosperity in Southeast Asia for long. **Instead**, they were heavily taxed when the French colonized Vietnam and further persecuted when the communist regime seized power in Laos. Following the Vietnam War, many immigrated to the United States and settled primarily in the states of California, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Since then, these hard-working Asian-Americans have assimilated successfully into their new lives. **Nevertheless**, there is a very real concern among the elder Hmong that their culture will not be passed along to the next generation. **After all**, most Hmong youth today are too busy preparing for college to learn the traditional dances and intricate textile arts of their ancestors.

Your Topic: _____

Your Main Idea Sentence: _____

Sentences using Transitional Phrases:

HOW TO WRITE A FULLY ELABORATED, WELL-SUPPORTED PARAGRAPH

AUTHORS INCLUDE:

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

AUTHORS AVOID:

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

Name _____

REVISE THIS PARAGRAPH

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

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

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

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

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

Hyenas live in Africa. They look like wild dogs and they are very good hunters. They will also steal the kill of another predator if they can get away with it. They are kind of funny looking with a short hair, black spots and legs that are longer in the front than the back. They don’t bark like dogs. Instead, they make a weird laughing sound that can be heard from far away.

SENTENCE STARTERS:

- The distinctive sound of _____ .
- Hyenas live in _____ .
- It is truly amazing how _____ .
- These carnivores must _____ .
- Of course, hyenas are _____ .

Name _____

WRITING A PARAGRAPH USING SUPPORTING DETAILS

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

MAIN IDEA	Venezuela is a fascinating nation on the northern coast of South America.	
	Angel Falls	Pico Bolivar
DETAILS	Bird watching	Sand dunes

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

Notes: _____



THE COMPARE/CONTRAST PIECE

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

Organizational strategies to avoid include:

The Two Paragraph Approach

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

The Ping-Pong Strategy

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

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

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

Similarities and Differences

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

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

Example: TOPIC: The Arctic vs. The Antarctic

MAIN IDEA #1: Mammals

MAIN IDEA #2: Birds

MAIN IDEA #3: Indigenous People

MAIN IDEA #4: Natural resources

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

The next step involves _____ . Be sure to _____ .

Pay close attention to _____ . Continue by _____ .

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

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

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

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

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR USE IN A “RESPONSE TO LITERATURE”

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

Specifically, _____. This is evidenced by _____ .

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

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

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

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

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

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

Similarly, _____. On the other hand _____ .

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

One trait they share is _____. Conversely, _____ .

Another similarity is _____. An additional difference is _____ .

Likewise, _____. A like characteristic is _____ .

They deviate in that _____. Both share _____ .

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

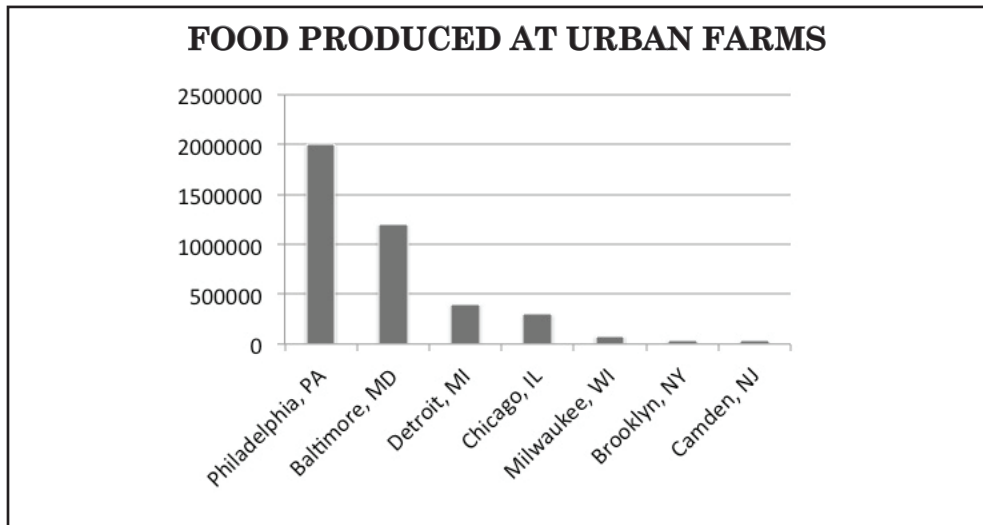
Name _____

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

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

City dwellers across the nation are reaping the benefits of urban farming.

Begin your research by viewing the video Urban Farming at www.pbs.org/video/2209093103 and studying the bar graph below:



Take notes below (*and on another piece of paper if needed*) both from the video, the graph and your own online research gathered when you conduct a **search with the keywords “Urban Farming.”**

