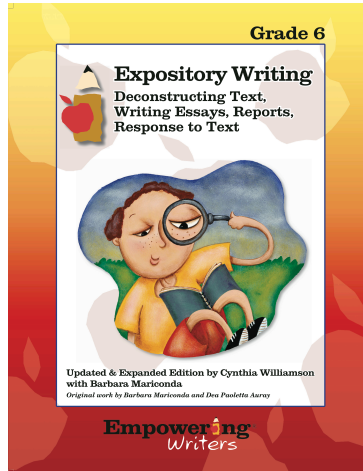




Grade 6
Expository Writing
Deconstructing Text, Writing Essays, Reports, Response to Text
Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 1: Recognizing Genre/Organization
Part 1



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Name _____

NARRATIVE, EXPOSITORY OR OPINION?

Read the following paragraphs. Determine whether each paragraph is Narrative, Expository or Opinion. Circle your response.

1. The canoe started to rock back and forth as the wind swept it farther and farther from shore. "Paddle," Darcy called from the beach. "Paddle harder, Rachel! Fight it!" I heard the panic in her voice and paddled as hard as I could, but it was a losing battle. I was no match for the powerful winds and rising white-capped waves that swept over the lake. One chilly gust later, I lost sight of shore.

Narrative

Expository/Informative

Opinion

2. I am opposed to competitive team sports like soccer and football. As everybody knows, the pressure to win makes it nearly impossible to enjoy the game. Many players have such a drive to win that they risk painful injuries such as torn muscles and fractured bones in their quest to score the next point. It is easy to understand how the overwhelming focus on winning can lead to cheating. I much prefer taking long, relaxing hikes and bike rides.

Narrative

Expository/Informative

Opinion

3. While the Pony Express lasted less than two years, it was a truly amazing mail service for the early settlers of the American west. Young, tough and adventurous, the riders of the Pony Express traveled the 1,900 mile route from Missouri to California in 9-10 days. Even in the winter, traveling over the icy Rocky Mountains and the steep Sierra Nevada range, they made the journey in no more than 12 days!

Narrative

Expository/Informative

Opinion

Name _____

EXPOSITORY, OPINION OR RESPONSE TO TEXT?

Read the following paragraphs and determine whether each paragraph is an example of Expository, Opinion or Response to Text writing. Circle your response.

1. The remotest forests of Canada and the northern United States are the realm of the beautiful and secretive Canadian Lynx. Rarely spotted by human eyes, this medium-sized wild feline lives alone and hunts at night. While often confused with the more common bobcat because of its short tail, a lynx can be easily recognized by its lush coat and the long tufts of fur on both sides of its face. On oversized paws, the handsome cat moves silently and swiftly as it stalks its favorite prey, the snowshoe hare. The skillful hunter also has the benefits of great hearing and super sharp eyes that can spot a mouse from 250 feet away! Although the Canadian Lynx is hunted for its thick golden fur, the population of these reclusive predators is considered stable.

Expository

Opinion

Response to Text

2. The article, The Genius of the Mountain Gorilla focuses on the keen intelligence of the Mountain Gorillas of central Africa. The author details an instance when the perceptive primates were observed working together to dismantle a snare set by poachers. Further, the text explains that these endangered mammals appear to have their own language. Communicating through grunts, howls and other vocalizations, the gorillas warn each other of danger and resolve conflicts. The author points out that these brainiacs even seem to joke with and comfort one another. I've known for a long time that gorillas have the ability to learn sign language, but this article opened my eyes to the other amazing abilities of our closest cousins.

Expository

Opinion

Response to Text

3. If you are struggling with math or any other subject, I think you need to enroll in summer school this July. In my opinion, this is the best thing you can do to keep yourself from falling further behind when school starts up again in the fall. Summer school is especially valuable for middle school students as we prepare for our upcoming high school years. Nothing makes learning easier than individual attention from your teacher and you will receive just that at summer school, where the classes are almost always small. Of course, you're busy during the season of sunshine, but all responsible students make time for summer school. For sure, it's an invaluable experience!

Expository

Opinion

Response to Text

IS THAT A FACT OR AN OPINION?

At first it might be challenging to tell expository/informative writing and opinion writing apart. After all, the two types of writing are organized in much the same way with introductions and conclusions as well as main ideas (expository) or main reasons (opinion). Here are some hints to help you tell the two apart.

Expository/Informative writing focuses on facts that inform you. Facts can be checked in books or online. For example:

1. The Mayan people created intricate cities of stone that still stand today.
2. A group of jellyfish is called a “bloom” and can include more than 10,000 individuals.

These two sentences would likely be found in expository texts.

While opinion writing may include facts, its purpose is to communicate an author’s personal opinion on a topic. You could agree or disagree with it.

For example:

1. Everybody knows that the Mayan people created the most prosperous and humane civilization in the ancient world.
2. I would rather be attacked by a whole hive of bees than get stung by a slimy jellyfish.

These two sentences present statements that you could agree or disagree with. They would likely be found in opinion writing.

So, as a general rule, when you’re trying to decide if text is expository or opinion, just ask yourself:

- Does this sentence say something that I could check in a book or online? If so, it’s probably a fact.
- Does this sentence say something I could agree or disagree with? If so, it’s probably an opinion.

Here’s another hint: Sentences that use phrases like “my favorite” or “my least favorite” are likely to be stating opinions. While there is no hard and fast rule about the language of opinion writing, phrases like “everybody” “nobody,” and “always” often alert you too that you are probably reading somebody’s opinion. Note the differences in the opinion vs. expository sentences below.

Opinion

Nobody enjoys math class.
My favorite food in the world is pizza.
Golf is always boring to watch.

Nobody would choose a laptop over a tablet.

Expository/Informative

Many students find math difficult.
Pizza is a favorite food around the world.
Golf is not the most popular sport to watch on TV.

Tablets have some advantages over laptops.

Remember: Opinion writing will include facts but expository writing should not include opinions.

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR OPINION WRITING



Pro

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



Con

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

Opinion Statements

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

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

Transition Words

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

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

Research confirms _____

Experts agree _____

Statistics indicate _____

An informal survey revealed _____

The fact is _____

According to _____

Numerous studies suggest _____

This is evidence that _____

This is proven by _____

A surprising percentage of _____

Research corroborates _____

It's difficult to ignore _____

Studies published in _____

It is a well-known fact that _____

Authorities claim that _____

It seems obvious that _____

When I polled my classmates, I discovered _____

I created a survey to illustrate _____

Name _____

STATING FACTS OR SHARING OPINIONS?

Look at the sets of sentences below. One states a fact; one shares an opinion. Write an “E” next to the sentence that states a fact. This is the kind of sentence that is meant to inform, which is the focus of expository text. Write an “O” next to the sentence that shares an opinion. This is the kind of sentence you would find in an opinion piece. The first one is done for you.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Science is part of the middle school curriculum. | <u>E</u> |
| Everybody loves doing science experiments. | <u>O</u> |
| 2. Alaska is a popular vacation destination. | _____ |
| I think an Alaskan vacation would be unforgettable. | _____ |
| 3. There’s nothing I enjoy more than playing board games. | _____ |
| Research confirms that many board games have educational benefits. | _____ |
| 4. You’d have to be crazy to enjoy a horror movie. | _____ |
| Comedies and thrillers are two popular movie genres. | _____ |
| 5. During the holiday season, more than 20% of all flights are delayed. | _____ |
| I am not a fan of air travel. | _____ |
| 6. More than 4 million tourists visit Rome every year. | _____ |
| It would be a dream come true to visit the city of Rome. | _____ |

Name _____

OPINION OR ARGUMENTATIVE?

Look at the sets of sentences below. One simply states an opinion. The other presents evidence that supports a point of view. This is the kind of sentence you'd find in an argumentative piece. Write an "O" next to the sentence that shares an opinion. Write an "A" next to the sentence that makes an argument in support of a point of view. The first one is done for you.

1. I am not in favor of an extended school day. O

Research indicates that an extended school day does not lead to consistent gains in academic achievement. A

2. When surveyed, 89% of all middle school students said they had their own cell phone and used it on a daily basis. _____

I believe that middle school students need their own cell phones because they're valuable in an emergency situation. _____

3. In my opinion, our school should definitely have a swimming team so that students can compete with our rival school. _____

"Competitive swimmers rarely suffer sports related injuries," said coach Mark Williamson. _____

4. Studies have shown that a great camp experience helps young teens build confidence and gain independence. _____

Everybody knows that going to sleepaway camp is an awesome experience. _____

Name _____

READING #1

Title

Since the 1600s when Italian astronomer Galileo first used a telescope to study the stars and the planets, people have been eager to understand the mysteries of outer space. Let's look at some of the highlights of our quest to understand the mysteries of our universe, from the Russian launch of Sputnik I and Neil Armstrong's historic walk on the moon to the operation of the International Space Station.

On October 4, 1957, the Space Age officially began when the Soviet Union launched the satellite Sputnik 1. The Sputnik 1 spacecraft was round and just under 2 feet in diameter with four antennas that transmitted messages back to earth. It looked like nothing more than an orb with whiskers, but it was able to orbit the earth 96 times and transmit radio messages back to earth for 21 days. The historic launch sparked the "Space Race" between the United States and Soviet Union as the two most powerful nations on earth competed to take the lead in space exploration. The Soviets got off to a good start. When they launched Sputnik 5 in 1961, it carried two small mixed breed dogs named Belka and Strelka. The two former strays became the first living beings to survive a trip into space.

The United States caught up in 1969 with Apollo 11, the first manned mission to touch down on the moon. Astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong landed the lunar module known as "The Eagle" on its four shock-absorbing legs. Then they emerged from the module via a small exit, climbed down an aluminum ladder and set foot on the surface of the moon where they collected samples of lunar material and planted the American flag. They returned to earth 21 hours and 36 minutes later and were welcomed home with one of the biggest ticker tape parades of all time. Armstrong famously called the mission "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Today the focus of the space program is more cooperative. Canada, the United States, Russia (the former Soviet Union), Japan, Brazil and eleven European nations have contributed to the construction and operation of the International Space Station, the largest space station ever built. From earth, it looks like a very bright, fast-moving star in the sky as it orbits the earth. Aboard are a crew of six scientists from all corners of the earth who are conducting ongoing experiments and research. One experiment is looking at plant growth in space and another is examining the impact of space travel on human bones. The overall goal of the space station is to make further space exploration possible.

Space exploration began with Sputnik 1 and continued with Apollo 11 and today's International Space Station. It seems clear that the competitive space race of earlier decades has evolved into a cooperative, worldwide effort to explore the universe for the benefit of all.

Name _____

READING #2

Title

Take my word for it: when you're 14 in the year 3033, the last thing you want to do is go to Mars for the weekend with your mom, your dad and your three little brothers. I took the lead as the six of us trudged into the crowded Intergalactic Spaceport. My brothers were already wearing their hefty gravity boots and every step was a struggle. They looked as if they were moving in slow motion. I was carrying my boots and my shoulders were already sore beneath their weight.

"Hold up, Zenith," my dad called. I stopped and waited for the rest of my family to catch up. We were off for a family hike up Olympus Mons, the largest volcano in the whole galaxy. How much fun would it be to hike up a gigantic volcano in heavyweight gravity boots? Not much would be my guess.

"Cheer up, Zenith. You'll see. This will be an experience you'll never forget," my mom said. "I promise." One thing about mom was that she always kept her promises. My three brothers nodded in unison and chanted, "Unforgettable, unforgettable, unforgettable."

I wasn't excited about the coming weekend, but being in a spaceport was always fascinating. Flying saucers were taking off and landing at the rate of 136 per second and the whole place bustled with beings from all over the universe. A family of Venusians, with their wrinkled, sun-scorched skin and dark, glowing eyes, scurried by beneath a gigantic umbrella. A group of rowdy earthlings, en-route to Jupiter for some deep-sea fishing, laughed and joked as they elbowed their way through the crowd. I heard one of them ask another, "Hey, what's with those great big yellow umbrellas the Venusians always carry?"

"I don't know," his friend answered. "I've never been to Venus." I had always wondered about those umbrellas too. You never saw a Venusian without one. Suddenly, something beautiful caught my eye. It was a female being with a snowy mane of pure white hair and ice-blue eyes that shimmered like a hailstone. A Neptunian! I'd always wanted to meet one! Without thinking, I followed her aboard a flying saucer and found a seat beside her for the short flight.

Wwwwwoosh. Off we went. A loud voice rang out, “Next stop, Venus! It’s a breezy day on the Morning Star with temperatures not expected to exceed 877 degrees. Of course, you’ll still need your umbrellas so keep them handy and enjoy your voyage to Venus.”

Venus? I was supposed to be going to Mars! And where was my family anyway? Instant panic. I was all alone and on my way to Venus. There was only one explanation - that Neptunian had given me a brain freeze! I turned to her.

“Why did you...”

She giggled. “Sorry. I just couldn’t resist.”

When I stepped from the saucer, the heat almost knocked me off my feet! I felt as if I were going to burst into flames when the Neptunian, who’s name I’d learned was Fria, grabbed my arm and pulled me underneath her big yellow Venusian umbrella. An icy mist spritzed from each spoke of the umbrella, making the heat not only bearable, but actually pleasant.

“Thanks,” I said. She smiled at me and reached out to take my hand.

Of course, I forgave her for the brain freeze, but I knew it could easily happen again. So, I gave her a quick handshake, bought my own umbrella at the nearest souvenir stand and boarded the next flying saucer for Mars.

Name _____

The Mayan Empire

Imagine a city of stone in a tropical jungle, ruled by kings and bustling with builders, star-gazing astronomers and fierce warriors. That could be what a Mayan settlement looked like the earliest days of **Mesoamerica**, the southern regions of North America from the year 2000 BC until the early 1500s. As the native people of this region, the Maya created one of the best known civilizations of ancient times in what is now Mexico and Central America. Let's take a look at how the Mayan empire rose and fell, and the legacy left behind by this fascinating civilization.

Early Mayan Settlements

The Maya civilization probably began as small settlements of hunter-gatherers began trading with one another. These settlements got together and formed regional **chiefdoms**, an organized system of rule usually based on kinship. They became skillful farmers, clearing acres of rain forest to grow crops such as corn, squash, beans and **cassava**, a starchy vegetable that tastes like a sweet potato and grows in the tropical regions of the Americas. As their farms thrived and their

population grew, they set down roots. They began constructing vast cities of stone with tall pyramids that had steep stairs leading up the sides to the top where powerful rulers were laid to rest. Some of these pyramids still stand today. They also built palaces for their **kuhul ajaw** or holy lords that were often situated on elevated stone platforms to keep them safe from seasonal flood waters. While the Maya were once considered a peaceful people, it is now believed that they were anything but. The inscriptions on the stonework they left behind show that the Maya went to war with their neighbors often, fighting not only to protect their cities, but for the prestige of victory and to take prisoners who became their slaves. Despite those bloody battles, the Mayan empire thrived for nearly 2,000 years.



At its peak, the Mayan Empire covered about 37,000 square miles in southern Mexico and Central America.

The Mysterious Fall of the Mayan Empire

In the 800s A.D., the Mayan empire had great leaders and mighty armies. Trade seemed to flourish, but the population began a slow decline. One hundred years later, many of the great Mayan cities had been abandoned and swallowed up by the jungle. What happened? There are many theories surrounding the mysterious decline of the Mayan civilization. One of the most recent and widely accepted is that drought and the process of clearing, but not replanting trees in a rainforest known as **deforestation**, brought it to an end. In a recent study, researchers at Arizona State University concluded that the great Mayan city of Chitzen Itza was abandoned at a time when “severe reductions in rainfall were coupled with a rapid rate of deforestation.” This makes sense when we consider that the Mayans used massive amounts of wood to fuel their fires. The rapid deforestation, combined with drought, depleted the soil of nutrients so that crops could no longer grow in the region. The people left the Mayan cities and dispersed into small villages. Centuries later, many were taken as slaves by Spanish conquistadors. In spite of the struggles of the past, an estimated 7 million Maya keep their colorful culture alive today in southern Mexico and Central America.

The Legacy of the Maya

The Mayan people were among the most advanced and innovative of their time. Amazing mathematicians, they developed the concept of zero. This feat of brilliance allowed them to work with once unimaginable sums and learn how to measure time. Simply by observing the stars and the cycles of the moon, they created an accurate calendar that is still used in some Mayan communities today. The Maya had their own complex language and kept their own historical records. They harvested rubber from the rainforest tree and used it to make glue, water-resistant cloth and book bindings. If you’re a chocolate lover, you’ll surely appreciate the Maya’s discovery and cultivation of the cocoa bean, with which they made a thick bitter version of the hot chocolate we enjoy today. It is interesting to note that the Maya people created one of the most complex looms for weaving cloth of its day, but they built their cities of stone without even using as basic a tool as the wheel.

From its primitive beginnings to its unpredictable decline, the Mayan Empire made an indelible mark on world history and left us with a legacy of innovation. Without a doubt, it is fascinating to study the rich history and culture of the extraordinary Mayan people.

The Mayan Empire

1.) Imagine a city of stone in a tropical jungle, ruled by kings and bustling with builders, star-gazing astronomers and fierce warriors. That could be what a Mayan settlement looked like the earliest days of **Mesoamerica**, the southern regions of North America from the year 2000 BC until the early 1500s. As the native people of this region, the Maya created one of the best known civilizations of ancient times in what is now Mexico and Central America. Let's take a look at how the Mayan empire rose and fell, and the legacy left behind by this fascinating civilization.

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2.) The Maya civilization probably began as small settlements of hunter-gatherers began trading with one another. These settlements got together and formed regional **chiefdoms**, an organized system of rule usually based on kinship. They became skillful farmers, clearing acres of rain forest to grow crops such as corn, squash, beans and **cassava**, a starchy vegetable that tastes like a sweet potato and grows in the tropical regions of the Americas. As their farms thrived and their

population grew, they set down roots. They began constructing vast cities of stone with tall pyramids that had steep stairs leading up the sides to the top where powerful rulers were laid to rest. Some of these pyramids still stand today. They also built palaces for their **kuhul ajaw** or holy lords that were often situated on elevated stone platforms to keep them safe from seasonal flood waters. While the Maya were once considered a peaceful people, it is now believed that they were anything but. The inscriptions on the stonework they left behind show that the Maya went to war with their neighbors often, fighting not only to protect their cities, but for the prestige of victory and to take prisoners who became their slaves. Despite those bloody battles, the Mayan empire thrived for nearly 2,000 years.



At its peak, the Mayan Empire covered about 37,000 square miles in southern Mexico and Central America.

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3.) In the 800s A.D., the Mayan empire had great leaders and mighty armies. Trade seemed to flourish, but the population began a slow decline. One hundred years later, many of the great Mayan cities had been abandoned and swallowed up by the jungle. What happened? There are many theories surrounding the mysterious decline of the Mayan civilization. One of the most recent and widely accepted is that drought and the process of clearing, but not replanting trees in a rainforest known as deforestation, brought it to an end. In a recent study, researchers at Arizona State University concluded that the great Mayan city of Chitzen Itza was abandoned at a time when “severe reductions in rainfall were coupled with a rapid rate of deforestation.” This makes sense when we consider that the Mayans used massive amounts of wood to fuel their fires. The rapid deforestation, combined with drought, depleted the soil of nutrients so that crops could no longer grow in the region. The people left the Mayan cities and dispersed into small villages. Centuries later, many were taken as slaves by Spanish conquistadors. In spite of the struggles of the past, an estimated 7 million Maya keep their colorful culture alive today in southern Mexico and Central America.

The Legacy of the Maya

- 4.) The Mayan people were among the most advanced and innovative of their time. Amazing mathematicians, they developed the concept of zero. This feat of brilliance allowed them to work with once unimaginable sums and learn how to measure time. Simply by observing the stars and the cycles of the moon, they created an accurate calendar that is still used in some Mayan communities today. The Maya had their own complex language and kept their own historical records. They harvested rubber from the rainforest tree and used it to make glue, water-resistant cloth and book bindings. If you're a chocolate lover, you'll surely appreciate the Maya's discovery and cultivation of the cocoa bean, with which they made a thick bitter version of the hot chocolate we enjoy today. It is interesting to note that the Maya people created one of the most complex looms for weaving cloth of its day, but they built their cities of stone without even using as basic a tool as the wheel.
- 5.) From its primitive beginnings to its unpredictable decline, the Mayan Empire made an indelible mark on world history and left us with a legacy of innovation. Without a doubt, it is fascinating to study the rich history and culture of the extraordinary Mayan people.

STRATEGIC READING GUIDELINES

1. Circle the ***title***. Ask students what the title reveals. (the ***topic***) Remind them that the topic tells the reader what the entire piece will be about. **Model** this for students and have them do the same.
2. Number each paragraph for reference purposes.
3. Point out and underline the ***headings***. Explain that the headings allow you to quickly skim and scan the piece and get a sense of the ***main ideas*** of the piece.
4. Fill in the summarizing framework, based solely on the title and headings.

TOPIC: _____

Main Idea #1: _____

Main Idea #2: _____

Main Idea #3: _____

- Discuss the way that identifying the topic and headings can set a purpose for learning. As readers they already have a good idea what they'll be reading about, which aids in comprehension.
 - Discuss how a summary such as this might be an excellent way for an author to begin. (Helps with organization and focus.)
5. Next, in each paragraph, have students locate all **bold-faced** or ***italicized*** words. Explain that these are key vocabulary words that might be new to the reader. These keywords are usually either preceded or followed by a definition to aid in understanding. Point out that these specially marked words indicate some of the important ***details*** in the piece.
 6. Point out the ***photograph*** and its ***caption***. Ask students why both are important.

7. Next, on the white board or chart paper, translate the information on the summarizing framework into an extended summary using the following sentence starters:

This expository text provides information about _____.
We'll discover _____, learn about _____,
and become familiar with _____.

Or...

This informative piece discusses _____. The author
explores _____, investigates _____,
and reveals _____.

8. Finally, have students read the text independently. Discuss how examining the following text conventions: title, headings, bold or italicized key words, photographs and captions guide their reading – think about how much they've learned before they've even started reading! Also point out the way that the author organized the information made it more accessible to the reader.