

Informational/Opinion Writing

Grade 4 Sample

Dogs

Try This Exercise in Your Classroom

Use this sample to identify the lack of broad yet distinct main ideas. Create the author's pre-writing plan with students and you'll find that they are overly general and cannot support a number of specific details.

Topic: Dogs

Main Reason#1: playful

Main Reason #2: keep me company

Main Reason #3: friend

What worked:

- **Organization:** This piece includes an introduction, three main reasons and a conclusion. The student clearly understands the organization and author's purpose of informational/opinion writing.
- **Main Ideas/Reasons:** There are three main reasons, however, the nature of the main reasons is overlapping. See the prescriptive lessons below for additional commentary.

Feedback with Prescriptive Lesson:

CHOOSE a Focus Skill: What skill will make the biggest impact for this writer?

Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas/Reasons: This piece of writing displayed quite a bit of **overlapping** of main reasons. This student would benefit from a deep dive into this skill. When looking at the details that support each main reason, the reader can easily see that there are details that could fit into any one of these main reasons. For example, in the first main reason paragraph the author writes, "*We can play frisbee in my yard. We can even play tug of war with a stick.*" These details could easily fit into the paragraph all about *keep me company* or *friend*. Just about all of the details in the piece could fall under any of the main reasons. This tells us the main reasons the author chose are the same.

Developing Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas/Reasons: All lessons in this section need to be taught with an emphasis on Lesson 3 Pick, List, and Choose. The importance of choosing broad yet distinct main ideas/reasons affects every other part of the writing. Once you've established a number of main ideas/reasons through the pick, list, choose process, then it's imperative that you look at those that could potentially overlap and make sure students choose main ideas/reasons that are distinct from one another.

- Section 2 Lesson 3: Pick, List, and Choose
- Section 2 Lesson 5: Main Ideas - Don't Overlap Them!
- Section 2 Lesson 6: Main Ideas/Reasons - Broad or Too Narrow?

This student obviously understands the structure of informational/opinion writing but needs direct instruction in choosing main ideas/reasons that are distinct.

⇒ DOGS ⇒

If I could have any pet in the store I would have a dog. I would like to have a dog because dogs are playful they are friendly, and he will keep me company.

My first reason I would like to have a dog is because he will keep me company. My dog would go on walks with me every day. We would play frisbee in my yard. We could even play tug of war with a stick. Having a dog would be fun. This is a good thing because when I have to go to play with he will be ready.

My second reason that I would want to have a dog is because he will keep me company. When I am lonely he will always be ready to play. When I am sad he will cheer me up. And when I have nothing to do he will make me take him for a walk maybe I would love my dog to do this.

My last reason that I would want to have a dog is because he will be my friend. My dog will protect me and will never hurt me. And in return I will be nice to him. Give him a milkbone. Play with him more. We would be friends.

So now I hope you can see why I would want a dog he is playful, friendly, and would keep me company. After a dog is mans best friend. Oh, and by the way I would name him Alex.

PROMPT: If you got to pick any pet in the pet store what would you pick and why. Explain your reasons.

Use this sample to identify the lack of broad yet distinct main ideas. Create the author's pre-writing plan with students and you'll find that they are overly general and cannot support a number of specific details. What strategy would teach to improve this student's writing?