Purposes for Writing

The Common Core Writing Handbook spirals writing instruction up the grade levels to coincide with the writing standards that spiral in the Common Core State Standards. Over the years, as students explore and practice writing, their sophistication in writing for different purposes and audiences will grow. Students across all grades will learn about and practice opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing.

Purpose and Form

Writers choose specific writing forms to communicate their intended meaning. To choose effectively, they target their purpose and audience before and while they write. Over the years, students will practice writing in different genres to build up a repertoire of writing forms from which to choose. This increasing practice as well as access to information about writing will help students feel more comfortable about writing and, hopefully, enjoy doing it.

In this handbook, the writing forms and models presented coincide primarily with the purposes expressed through the Common Core State Standards. These are to inform, to explain, to narrate, and to persuade. There are other purposes for writing as well, but these four are emphasized to best prepare students for college and career readiness.

TO INFORM The purpose for writing to inform is to share facts and other information. Informational texts such as reports make statements that are supported by facts and truthful evidence.

TO EXPLAIN The purpose for writing to explain is to tell *what, how,* and *why* about a topic. An example is to explain in writing how to do or make something.

TO NARRATE The purpose of writing to narrate is to tell a story. The story can be made up or truthful. Most forms of narrative writing have a beginning, middle, and end. Examples are fictional stories and personal narratives.

TO PERSUADE Writing that has a purpose to persuade states an opinion or goal and supports it with reasons and supporting details in order to get the audience to agree, take action, or both. At Grade 6, the emphasis shifts to argument.

Over the years, as their writing grows more sophisticated, students may find that their purpose for writing is a hybrid of two or more purposes. An example would be literary nonfiction that includes elements of storytelling although it may be written primarily to inform and explain. Another example would be historical fiction that tells a story but relates events accurately in order to inform the reader as well.

Success in School and Life

Students and adults are often judged by how well they can communicate. Students are encouraged to learn to write effectively to be successful in their studies. In particular, by the upper grades, they need to master the basic essay format that includes

- An introductory paragraph that identifies the topic or statement of purpose.
- Supporting paragraphs that provide related details and examples.
- A closing paragraph that sums up and concludes.

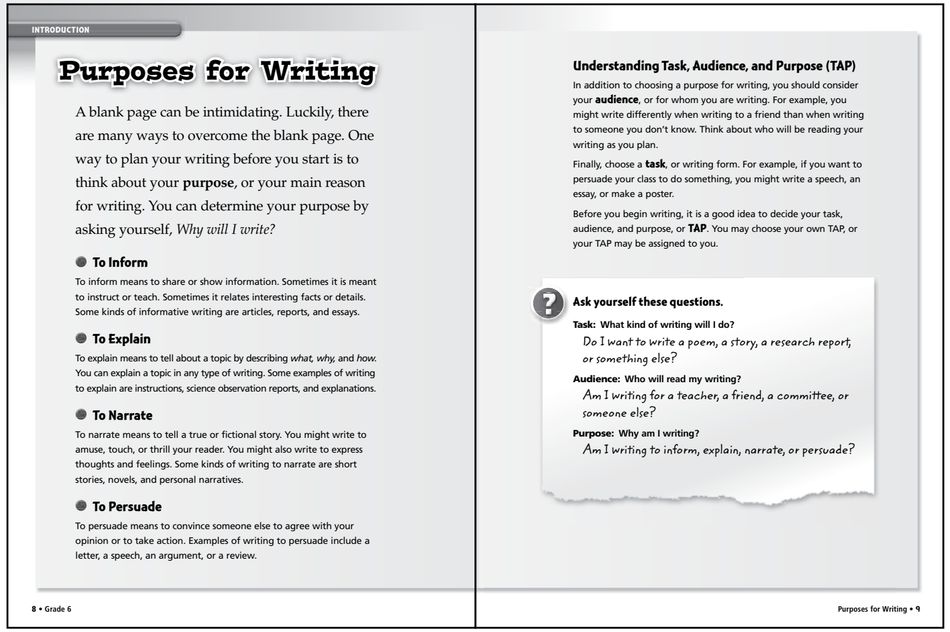
Students will use this essay form to produce reports, literary analyses, theses, and critiques throughout their academic career. They will also be tested on their ability to write effective essays in standardized tests. In later life, as adults, they will need to be able to communicate clearly in writing to coworkers, bosses, and clients. This requires extensive and ongoing exposure to exemplary writing models and explicit instruction in a variety of areas, as well as opportunities to practice different forms of writing. In all cases, their purpose for writing must be clear. Evidence suggests that the more time student writers spend on writing, developing their writing skills, and deepening their writing experience, the better writers they become.

The Reading-Writing Connection

The ability to communicate their thinking about texts for a variety of purposes and audiences will serve students well in preparation for college and career readiness. When students write about what they read, reflecting on content, craft, or another aspect of a text, they provide evidence of their thinking. This helps teachers know how well students have understood a text. Additionally, the more students write in response to texts, the more they increase their ability to reflect and improve their critical writing ability. Also, students learn to cite evidence from texts in supporting their claims or supporting their main ideas. This ability becomes particularly useful in writing reports and opinion pieces.

Introduce the Purposes

Have students turn to page 8 and read the text. Explain that these are the key purposes for writing that will be explored in their handbooks. Give or elicit an example of a writing form that might be used for each purpose. Examples might include an informational paragraph or a research report *to inform,* directions or a how-to essay *to explain,* a story or personal narrative *to narrate,* and an opinion essay or letter to the editor *to persuade*. Then have students read the next page. Discuss how students should always consider their TAP—or task, audience, and purpose—to help them better target the message of their writing.



The Writing Process

The *Common Core Writing Handbook* presents the writing process as a strategy that students can use to help them write for any task, audience, or purpose. Students can use the writing process independently or as part of writing workshops in which they respond to each other's writing. The writing process can help students understand how to plan, write, and revise for various purposes and genres. It is thus useful in helping students meet the Common Core State Standards for opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing.

What Process Writing Is

The writing process, or process writing, is an instructional approach to writing that consists of five basic stages. The stages are prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The stages are recursive in nature, meaning that students are encouraged to go back and forth between the stages as needed.

The characteristics of the stages of the writing process are as follows:

Prewriting

This is the stage where students begin to plan their writing. Students:

- Define a task and purpose.
- Identify an audience.
- Brainstorm ideas.
- Narrow and choose a topic.
- Plan and organize information.

Drafting

During drafting, students make their first attempt at fleshing out the prewriting idea and forming it into a written work. In other words, students put their ideas in writing. In this stage, students:

- Write a first draft.
- Do not yet worry about perfecting their writing.
- Know that they can revise, edit, and proofread later.
- Use their plan and checklists to help them write or to return to prewriting, as needed.

Revising

A draft is reread and decisions are made to rework and improve it. In this stage, students might:

- Read aloud their work to others to determine how it sounds and how it might be improved.
- Conference with other students or their teachers.
- Add information.
- Delete unnecessary information.
- Rearrange sentences and paragraphs.
- Combine sentences.

Editing

During editing, the draft is polished. In this stage, students reread and correct their writing for the following:

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Mechanics
- Usage

Publishing

Students share their writing with others. In this stage, students typically:

- Make a final, clean copy.
- Use their best handwriting, if writing by hand. If they are sharing their work electronically, they typically choose typefaces and other elements to make their writing readable and attractive.
- Combine their writing with art or graphics.
- Make multiple copies, read their writing aloud, post it electronically, or share and display it in some other way.

Introduce the Process

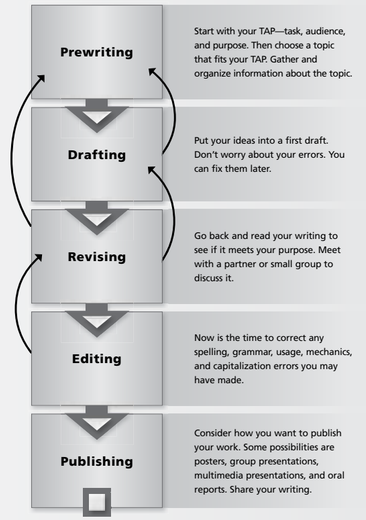
Have students read pages 10–11. Explain that the writing process is a strategy that they can use to help them write about any topic. Point out how the graphic on page 11 has arrows, indicating that students can go back and forth between the stages as needed. For students who have no previous orientation to the writing process, simplify your introduction by emphasizing at first only the three key stages of planning, drafting, and revising. Elicit how most tasks of any nature require planning, doing or making something, and then thinking about what might be done better and making those improvements. Compare how these same basic stages can be used each time students write.

Have students turn to the table of contents and locate the section in their handbooks devoted to the writing process (pages 74–81). Explain that they can use these handbook pages whenever they need help with specific stages or writing in general. Point out that each stage in the handbook has one or two pages devoted to it that tell more about the stage. As an example, have students turn to the Prewriting pages 76–77, and point out how they show the different organizational plans students can use for the different kinds of writing they will do. Encourage students to use their handbooks as a resource whenever they write.

The Writing Process

Writing can be like taking a journey through your own imagination. You begin with a destination in mind, but the road you take to get there may not be direct. As you travel, you sometimes make discoveries that lead you in new directions. There is no right or wrong road, but the writing process provides a map to guide you.

As you write, you may choose to exit to another stage in the writing process before continuing. You may choose the same exit more than once. You may pass an exit and return to it later. It's your choice—you, the writer, are in the driver's seat.



The Writing Traits

Along with understanding the writing process, students will benefit from having an understanding of the characteristics, or traits, of good writing covered in the *Common Core Writing Handbook*. The "Traits of Writing" is an approach in which students analyze their writing for the characteristics, or qualities, of what good writing looks like. These qualities include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

A Common Language

One of the advantages of instructing students in the traits of writing is that you give them a working vocabulary and thus build a common language for writing that they can all use and understand. Students can use the traits as a framework for improving any kind of writing they are doing. To this end, a systematic, explicitly taught focus on the traits of writing has proved to be an effective tool for discussing writing, enabling students to analyze and improve their own writing, and providing teachers with a way to assess students' compositions in a fair, even-handed manner.

Writers typically focus on six traits, with presentation—or the appearance of writing—sometimes considered an additional trait.

- **Ideas**—the meaning and development of the message.
- **Organization**—the structure of the writing.
- **Voice**—the tone of the writing, which reveals the writer's personality and affects the audience's interpretation of the message.
- **Word Choice**—the words the writer uses to convey the message.
- **Sentence Fluency**—the flow and rhythm of the writing.
- **Conventions**—the correctness of the grammar, spelling, mechanics, and usage.
- **Presentation**—the appearance of the writing.

The Writing Workshop

Since writing is an involved process that students accomplish at varying speeds, it is usually a good idea to set aside a block of time for them to work on their writing. One time-tested model that has worked well in classrooms is the Writing Workshop. In this model during a set period of time, students work individually and collaboratively (with classmates and/or with the teacher) on different writing activities. One of these activities is for students to collaborate in reviewing each other's manuscripts. One effective technique used in many workshops as a way for students to comment on aspects of each other's writing is to use the language of the traits when they comment.

Some tasks are started and finished during a workshop, while others are ongoing. A writing workshop can serve many writing-related functions:

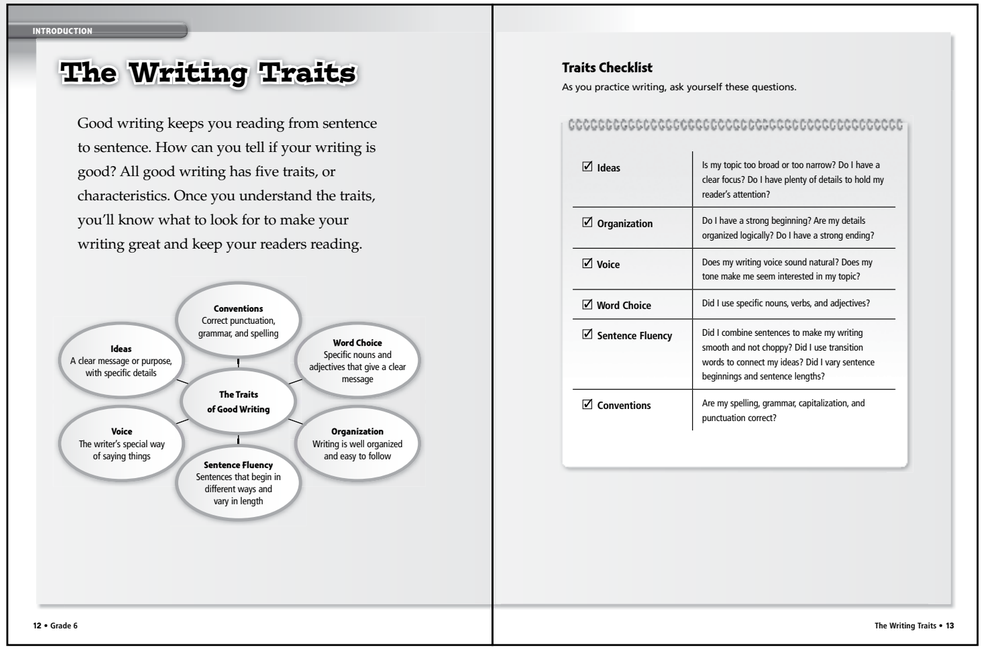
- Students can work on a class writing assignment (ongoing or quickly accomplished).
- Students can engage in independent writing, jotting down or consulting ideas in their writing log or journal, starting or working on pieces of their own devising.
- As previously mentioned, students can engage in peer-conferencing, giving one another advice about a piece of writing or sharing writing ideas.
- Students can select pieces for inclusion in their writing portfolio, where they keep their best work.
- Teachers can conference with individual students, reviewing student writing and discussing a given student's strengths and weaknesses as well as instructional progress.
- Teachers can engage in small-group instruction with students who need extra help with practice in specific areas of writing.

Writing Workshops are often most effective when they adhere to a dependable schedule and follow a set of clearly posted guidelines (for example, keep voices down, point out the good things about someone's writing as well as comment on aspects that might be revised, listen politely, put away materials when the workshop is over). In addition, students should know what areas of the classroom they can use during the Workshop and should have free access to writing materials, including their handbooks.

You may want to refer to the Writing Workshop pages in this *Common Core Writing Handbook Teacher's Guide* and teach one or two minilessons on writing workshop behaviors and activities so that students have a solid understanding of what is expected of them.

Introduce the Traits

Share the Writing Traits overview pages with students. Discuss each trait briefly and explain to students that their handbooks contain more information on the traits, which they can use to help them as they plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish their writing. Guide students to use their tables of contents or indexes to locate where additional information can be found in their handbooks.



Sample Lesson Writing Forms

Research Report: Prewriting

WRITING FORMS

Minilesson 37

Researching Online

Common Core State Standards: W.6.7, W.6.8

Objective: Assess the credibility of online sources.

Guiding Question: Is this reference source trustworthy?

Teach/Model—I Do

Read aloud and discuss handbook p. 50. Ask *Where do you think the writer found this information about blue whales?* As students suggest sources ranging from encyclopedias to the Internet, list their suggestions on the board. Then discuss how writers can determine whether a source can be trusted. Emphasize that writers can use the 5 Ws to evaluate sources: *Who?* (Is the author an expert?); *What?* (Is it an in-depth report or something lesser?); *When?* (Is the information up to date?); *Where?* (Is the source sponsored by a university or respected organization?); *Why?* (Did the author write to give information or to persuade?) Then, using the 5 Ws, show how to rank students' suggested sources according to trustworthiness, from 1 (the most trustworthy) to 5 (the least).

Guided Practice—We Do

Tell students that an Internet search for "giant squid" will yield information from many sources, from government agencies to an elementary school class project. Work with students to list a number of possible sources on the board. Help students use the 5Ws to rank the sources for trustworthiness.

Practice/Apply—You Do

COLLABORATIVE Have groups work together to make a list of possible sources for a report on sharks and rank them by trustworthiness.

INDEPENDENT Have students choose a marine mammal to be a topic for a report and write a list of possible sources for the report. Have them rank the sources for trustworthiness.

Conference/Evaluate

Ask students to justify their *1* ranking for sources.

Minilesson 38

Developing an Outline

Common Core State Standards: W.6.2a, W.6.7

Objective: Organize information from digital sources.

Guiding Question: Which details relate to my main ideas?

Teach/Model—I Do

Direct students to the outline on handbook p. 50. Point out that an outline is like a skeleton: it provides an organizing structure for an essay. Explain that each main idea in an outline is set off with a Roman numeral; key points that develop the main idea are set off with capital letters; supporting details are set off with Arabic numerals. Tell students that, for balance, every *A* is followed by at least a *B*, and every *1*, by at least a *2*. There may be more items (C, D, E etc. or 3, 4, 5), but there should be at least two.

Guided Practice—We Do

We Do 1 Direct students to Activity 1 on handbook p. 51. Work with students to research information about manatees and what is being done to protect them. Together, write an outline about manatees. Have students write in their books as you write on the board.

Practice/Apply—You Do

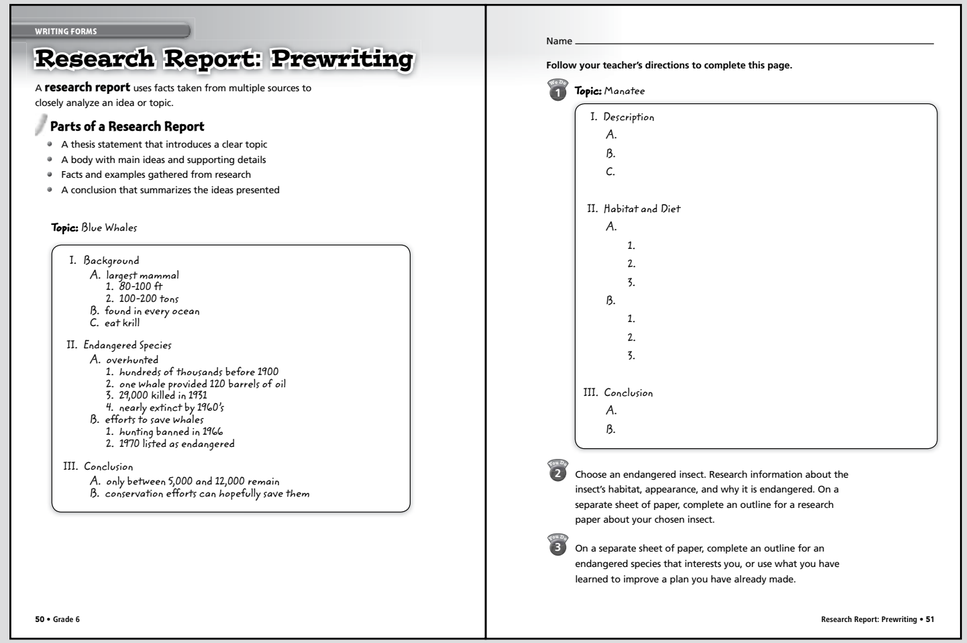
You Do 2 **COLLABORATIVE** Have groups complete Activity 2. Point out that each main idea (habitat, appearance, and reason it is endangered) will get a Roman numeral.

You Do 3 **INDEPENDENT** Have students read and follow the directions. Tell them to use their prewriting plan from Lesson 19 or to brainstorm a new plan using an outline.

Conference/Evaluate

As students draft, have them evaluate their work using the rubric on p. 104.

Digital
- eBook
- WriteSmart
- Interactive Lessons



WRITING FORMS

Research Report: Prewriting

A **research report** uses facts taken from multiple sources to closely analyze an idea or topic.

Parts of a Research Report

- A thesis statement that introduces a clear topic
- A body with main ideas and supporting details
- Facts and examples gathered from research
- A conclusion that summarizes the ideas presented

Topic: Blue Whales

I. Background
  A. largest mammal
    1. 80-100 ft
    2. 100-200 tons
  B. found in every ocean
  C. eat krill

II. Endangered Species
  A. overhunted
    1. hundreds of thousands before 1900
    2. one whale provided 120 barrels of oil
    3. 29,000 killed in 1951
    4. nearly extinct by 1960's
  B. efforts to save whales
    1. hunting banned in 1966
    2. 1970 listed as endangered

III. Conclusion
  A. only between 5,000 and 12,000 remain
  B. conservation efforts can hopefully save them

50 • Grade 6

Name _____

Follow your teacher's directions to complete this page.

Step 1 **Topic:** Manatee

I. Description
  A.
  B.
  C.

II. Habitat and Diet
  A.
    1.
    2.
    3.
  B.
    1.
    2.
    3.

III. Conclusion
  A.
  B.

Step 2 Choose an endangered insect. Research information about the insect's habitat, appearance, and why it is endangered. On a separate sheet of paper, complete an outline for a research paper about your chosen insect.

Step 3 On a separate sheet of paper, complete an outline for an endangered species that interests you, or use what you have learned to improve a plan you have already made.

Research Report: Prewriting • 51

Corrective Feedback

IF . . . students find it difficult to develop an outline,

THEN . . . suggest that they create a reverse outline. First, have them list all of the details they can. Then have them sort the details into categories. For example, a list including pizza, spaghetti, tacos, calzones, and enchiladas might be sorted into *Italian Food* and *Mexican Food* or *Foods to Eat with Fingers* and *Foods to Eat with Knife, Fork, and Spoon.* Finally, have students number the groups they want to include in their report in the order they plan to write about them.

Focus Trait: Organization

Tell students that some reports use headings to help the reader understand how information is organized. These boldfaced headings tell the reader what topic that section of the report will focus on.

Have students turn to the outline on handbook p. 50. Point out that *I. Background* can be written as the section heading **Introduction** in the draft. **Endangered Species** will be the heading of the second section of the draft. Explain that a section can contain more than one paragraph as long as they all relate to the heading. Tell students that headings are particularly useful when writing a longer, more in-depth research report.

Ask students to suggest other subject headings for the outline on blue whales, such as *Evolution* and *Life Cycle*. Remind students that adding more subject headings often means expanding the focus of the research paper and that they should make sure to only add headings that relate to their specific topic.

Sample Lesson Writing Forms

Research Report

WRITING FORMS

Minilesson 39

Paraphrasing Details

Common Core State Standards: W.6.2b, W.6.8

Objective: Use supporting details in a research report.

Guiding Question: How do I put information from sources into a research report?

Teach/Model—I Do

Read aloud and discuss handbook p. 52. Explain that writers sometimes quote words from their sources, but when they do this, writers need to quote the words exactly as written. Writers must also enclose those words in quotation marks. Note that writers also may choose to paraphrase material, stating it in their own words. This material does not go in quotation marks. Explain that, either way, writers must credit sources of information. Point to the parenthetical citations in the model.

Guided Practice—We Do

Choose a textbook or other book in the classroom and copy a quotation from the book onto the board. Then work with students to paraphrase the quote. Remind them to use their own words and not to copy directly from the source.

Practice/Apply—You Do

COLLABORATIVE Have groups look up information in a textbook, other book, or the Internet on great white sharks. Have them choose a passage from their source and work together to paraphrase the passage.

INDEPENDENT Have students look up information about octopuses and paraphrase a passage from their source.

Conference/Evaluate

Circulate and make sure students are using their own words when paraphrasing.

Minilesson 40

Drafting a Research Report

Common Core State Standards: W.6.5, W.6.8

Objective: Drafting a research report.

Guiding Question: How can I draft a research report?

Teach/Model—I Do

Review handbook p. 52 with students, making sure they understand the elements indicated by and discussed in the call-outs. Emphasize that a good introductory sentence clearly tells readers what the research report will be about. Also emphasize that a good conclusion wraps up the information in the report and gives readers a final statement of the main ideas and facts. Finally, remind students that each paragraph in a research report should begin with a main idea statement and go on to include facts and details that support the main idea.

Guided Practice—We Do

We Do 1 Direct students to the frame on handbook p. 53, working with them to gather information about manatees. Help students form main idea statements for two paragraphs. Guide them to complete the activity. Have students write in their books as you write on the board.

Practice/Apply—You Do

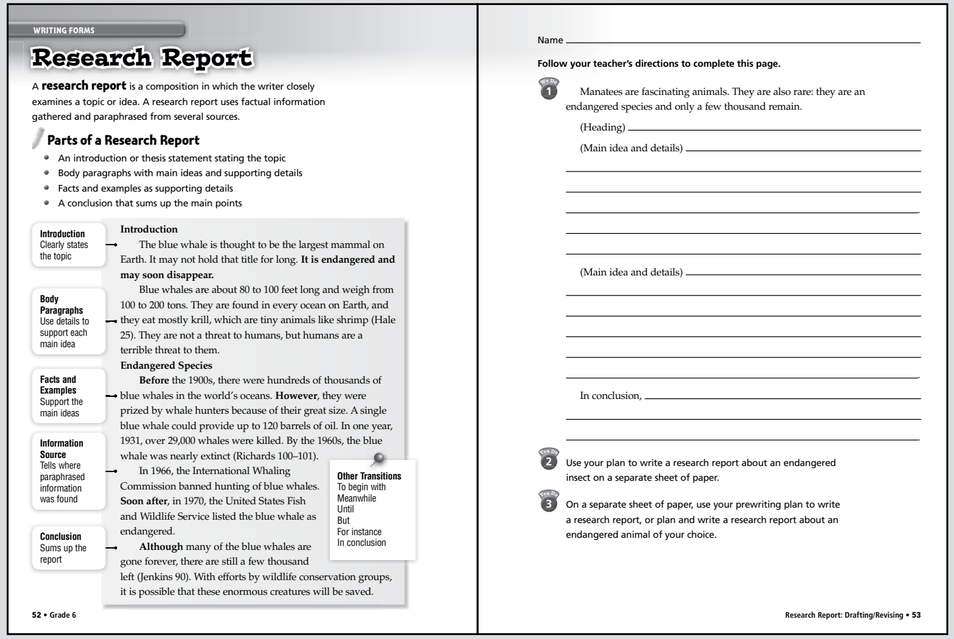
You Do 2 **COLLABORATIVE** Have groups complete Activity 2. Remind them to use quotation marks when they use the exact words of a source.

You Do 3 **INDEPENDENT** Have students read and follow the directions. Tell them to use their prewriting plan from the previous lesson or to brainstorm a new plan.

Conference/Evaluate

As students draft, have them evaluate their work using the rubric on p. 104.

Digital
- eBook
- WriteSmart
- Interactive Lessons



WRITING FORMS

Research Report

A **research report** is a composition in which the writer closely examines a topic or idea. A research report uses factual information gathered and paraphrased from several sources.

Parts of a Research Report

- An introduction or thesis statement stating the topic
- Body paragraphs with main ideas and supporting details
- Facts and examples as supporting details
- A conclusion that sums up the main points

Introduction Clearly states the topic

Introduction

The blue whale is thought to be the largest mammal on Earth. It may not hold that title for long. **It is endangered and may soon disappear.**

Body Paragraphs Use details to support each main idea

Blue whales are about 80 to 100 feet long and weigh from 100 to 200 tons. They are found in every ocean on Earth, and they eat mostly krill, which are tiny animals like shrimp (Hale 25). They are not a threat to humans, but humans are a terrible threat to them.

Endangered Species

Facts and Examples Support the main ideas

Before the 1900s, there were hundreds of thousands of blue whales in the world's oceans. **However**, they were prized by whale hunters because of their great size. A single blue whale could provide up to 120 barrels of oil. In one year, 1931, over 29,000 whales were killed. By the 1960s, the blue whale was nearly extinct (Richards 100–101).

Information Source Tells where paraphrased information was found

In 1966, the International Whaling Commission banned hunting of blue whales. **Soon after**, in 1970, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service listed the blue whale as endangered.

Conclusion Sums up the report

Although many of the blue whales are gone forever, there are still a few thousand left (Jenkins 90). With efforts by wildlife conservation groups, it is possible that these enormous creatures will be saved.

Other Transitions
To begin with
Meanwhile
Until
But
For instance
In conclusion

52 • Grade 6

Name _____

Follow your teacher's directions to complete this page.

1 Manatees are fascinating animals. They are also rare: they are an endangered species and only a few thousand remain.

(Heading) _____

(Main idea and details) _____

(Main idea and details) _____

In conclusion, _____

2 Use your plan to write a research report about an endangered insect on a separate sheet of paper.

3 On a separate sheet of paper, use your prewriting plan to write a research report, or plan and write a research report about an endangered animal of your choice.

Research Report: Drafting/Revising • 53

Corrective Feedback

IF . . . an attempt at paraphrase is still too close to the original because students changed only a few words,

THEN . . . suggest that students write notes about the information in their own words and then paraphrase. Explain that plagiarism means copying words exactly, and that plagiarism is like stealing the words an author wrote. When writers paraphrase, they restate information accurately using their own words and phrases. Have students find another passage and guide them to take notes before they paraphrase.

Focus Trait: Ideas

One way to identify the most important ideas in a source is to make a copy of the information and underline key words as you read.

Write an example on the board, such as, *Blue whales are about 80 to 100 feet long and weigh from 100 to 200 tons.*

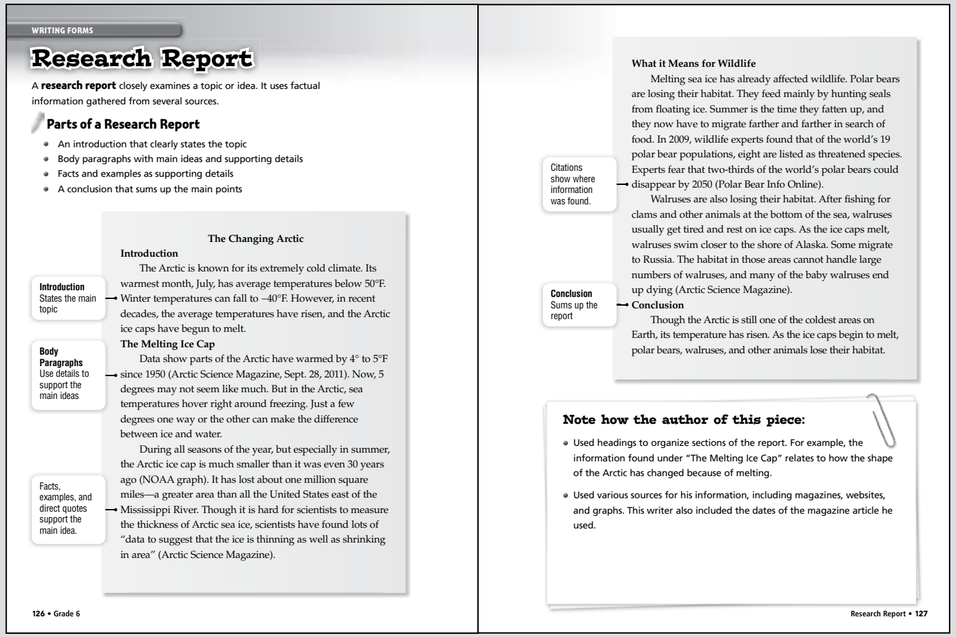
Ask students to identify the key words and phrases: *blue whales; 80 to 100 feet long; 100 to 200 tons.*

Ask volunteers to restate that information, encouraging them to change the order. For example, *Blue whales are immense. They may weigh up to 200 tons and grow up to 100 feet long.*

Have students compare the paraphrase to the original. Ask *Is the important information included? Does the paraphrase sound too much like the original?* Have students work with a partner to paraphrase three sentences from a source they used.

Sample Lesson Writing Models

Research Report



WRITING FORMS

Research Report

A **research report** closely examines a topic or idea. It uses factual information gathered from several sources.

Parts of a Research Report

- An introduction that clearly states the topic
- Body paragraphs with main ideas and supporting details
- Facts and examples as supporting details
- A conclusion that sums up the main points

The Changing Arctic

Introduction

The Arctic is known for its extremely cold climate. Its warmest month, July, has average temperatures below 50°F. Winter temperatures can fall to –40°F. However, in recent decades, the average temperatures have risen, and the Arctic ice caps have begun to melt.

The Melting Ice Cap

Data show parts of the Arctic have warmed by 4° to 5°F since 1950 (Arctic Science Magazine, Sept. 28, 2011). Now, 5 degrees may not seem like much. But in the Arctic, sea temperatures hover right around freezing. Just a few degrees one way or the other can make the difference between ice and water.

During all seasons of the year, but especially in summer, the Arctic ice cap is much smaller than it was even 30 years ago (NOAA graph). It has lost about one million square miles—a greater area than all the United States east of the Mississippi River. Though it is hard for scientists to measure the thickness of Arctic sea ice, scientists have found lots of "data to suggest that the ice is thinning as well as shrinking in area" (Arctic Science Magazine).

What it Means for Wildlife

Melting sea ice has already affected wildlife. Polar bears are losing their habitat. They feed mainly by hunting seals from floating ice. Summer is the time they fatten up, and they now have to migrate farther and farther in search of food. In 2009, wildlife experts found that of the world's 19 polar bear populations, eight are listed as threatened species. Experts fear that two-thirds of the world's polar bears could disappear by 2050 (Polar Bear Info Online).

Walruses are also losing their habitat. After fishing for clams and other animals at the bottom of the sea, walruses usually get tired and rest on ice caps. As the ice caps melt, walruses swim closer to the shore of Alaska. Some migrate to Russia. The habitat in those areas cannot handle large numbers of walruses, and many of the baby walruses end up dying (Arctic Science Magazine).

Conclusion

Though the Arctic is still one of the coldest areas on Earth, its temperature has risen. As the ice caps begin to melt, polar bears, walruses, and other animals lose their habitat.

Introduction States the main topic

Body Paragraphs Use details to support the main ideas

Facts, examples, and direct quotes support the main idea.

Citations show where information was found.

Conclusion Sums up the report

Note how the author of this piece:

- Used headings to organize sections of the report. For example, the information found under "The Melting Ice Cap" relates to how the shape of the Arctic has changed because of melting.
- Used various sources for his information, including magazines, websites, and graphs. This writer also included the dates of the magazine article he used.

WRITING MODELS AND FORMS

Minilesson 113

Understanding the Research Report

Common Core State Standard: W.6.7

Objective: Understand how to use the information presented about the research report.

Guiding Question: How can I use these pages to help me write a good research report?

Teach/Model

Have students read the definition and bulleted points. Tell students that a research report should cover a topic that is clearly defined in the introduction and summed up in the conclusion.

Practice/Apply

Have students read the model. Go over the parts of the report with students. Ask students to rewrite the conclusion in their own words.

Minilesson 114

Citing Sources in a Research Report

Common Core State Standard: W.6.8

Objective: Write citations for sources used in a report.

Guiding Question: How do I write citations for my sources?

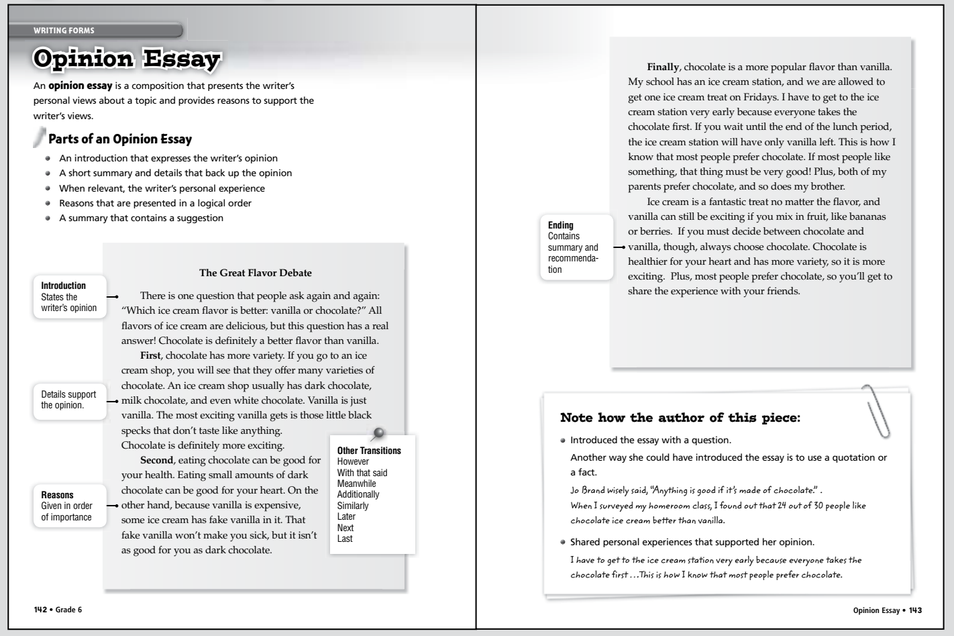
Teach/Model

Explain to students that each source used to write a research report will need a citation either in the report itself or on a separate Works Cited page. Point out to students how the writer of the model cited his sources in the report.

Practice/Apply

Have students find another source that contains information about the Arctic ice caps. Have them write a sentence with a citation that could be added to the model.

Opinion Essay



WRITING FORMS

Opinion Essay

An **opinion essay** is a composition that presents the writer's personal views about a topic and provides reasons to support the writer's views.

Parts of an Opinion Essay

- An introduction that expresses the writer's opinion
- A short summary and details that back up the opinion
- When relevant, the writer's personal experience
- Reasons that are presented in a logical order
- A summary that contains a suggestion

The Great Flavor Debate

There is one question that people ask again and again: "Which ice cream flavor is better: vanilla or chocolate?" All flavors of ice cream are delicious, but this question has a real answer! Chocolate is definitely a better flavor than vanilla.

First, chocolate has more variety. If you go to an ice cream shop, you will see that they offer many varieties of chocolate. An ice cream shop usually has dark chocolate, milk chocolate, and even white chocolate. Vanilla is just vanilla. The most exciting vanilla gets is those little black specks that don't taste like anything. Chocolate is definitely more exciting.

Second, eating chocolate can be good for your health. Eating small amounts of dark chocolate can be good for your heart. On the other hand, because vanilla is expensive, some ice cream has fake vanilla in it. That fake vanilla won't make you sick, but it isn't as good for you as dark chocolate.

Finally, chocolate is a more popular flavor than vanilla. My school has an ice cream station, and we are allowed to get one ice cream treat on Fridays. I have to get to the ice cream station very early because everyone takes the chocolate first. If you wait until the end of the lunch period, the ice cream station will have only vanilla left. This is how I know that most people prefer chocolate. If most people like something, that thing must be very good! Plus, both of my parents prefer chocolate, and so does my brother.

Ice cream is a fantastic treat no matter the flavor, and vanilla can still be exciting if you mix in fruit, like bananas or berries. If you must decide between chocolate and vanilla, though, always choose chocolate. Chocolate is healthier for your heart and has more variety, so it is more exciting. Plus, most people prefer chocolate, so you'll get to share the experience with your friends.

Introduction States the writer's opinion

Details support the opinion.

Reasons Given in order of importance

Other Transitions
However
With that said
Meanwhile
Additionally
Similarly
Later
Next
Last

Ending Contains summary and recommendation

Note how the author of this piece:

- Introduced the essay with a question.
  Another way she could have introduced the essay is to use a quotation or a fact.
  Jo Brand wisely said, "Anything is good if it's made of chocolate." .
  When I surveyed my homeroom class, I found out that 24 out of 30 people like chocolate ice cream better than vanilla.
- Shared personal experiences that supported her opinion.
  I have to get to the ice cream station very early because everyone takes the chocolate first . . . This is how I know that most people prefer chocolate.

WRITING MODELS AND FORMS

Minilesson 129

Introducing the Opinion Essay

Common Core State Standards: W.6.1a, W.6.1e

Objective: Understand how to use the handbook pages to write an effective opinion essay.

Guiding Question: How do I write about my opinion?

Teach/Model

Have students read pp. 142–143. Point out that the boldfaced transitions highlight each reason. Add that the writer's opinion is stated strongly. She did not say, "I think…" Instead, she stated, "Chocolate is definitely a better flavor…" Her strong language helps to convince readers.

Practice/Apply

Have students identify the writer's reasons for her opinion. Discuss how transition words help to organize the ideas.

Minilesson 130

Supporting an Opinion

Common Core State Standard: W.6.1b

Objective: Include evidence to support opinions.

Guiding Question: How do I explain the reasons why my opinion is valid?

Teach/Model

Point out that the student writer included three reasons to support her opinion and that each of these reasons is the topic sentence of a separate paragraph. Rather than simply stating the reasons, she included an entire paragraph of details to explain each.

Practice/Apply

Have students write a topic sentence about their favorite flavor of ice cream. Then have them add sentences with details and examples to support their opinion.