Nevada Department of Education

Nevada Formative Writing Tools

Eighth Grade

Formative Writing Tasks

2014

GRADE 8

Nevada Department of Education

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Introduction to the Writing Tasks

The Nevada Formative Writing Tasks (Formative Tasks) were developed to help students, teachers, and administrators implement the Nevada Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts (NACS for ELA) and prepare for the administration of the spring 2015 Smarter Balanced assessments. The tasks are intended to:

- Encourage students to read closely and analyze information;
- Enable students to produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences;
- Empower teachers to shift and improve instruction to meet the demands of the NACS;
- Inform teachers and students when timely adjustments can be made; and
- Provide an early look into the types of writing performance tasks expected on the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The Nevada Formative Writing Tasks illustrate the depth of understanding of the Nevada Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts that will be measured on the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The Formative Tasks are timed, on-demand, classroom writing assignments. They include uniform student directions for writing responses and uniform teacher directions for administering the tasks. Each task was carefully created for consistency of format, content, and administration procedures, allowing teachers to monitor student progress over time. This consistency also makes it possible for teachers to participate in collaborative groups to discuss student progress and refine delivery of writing instruction.

"[Students] need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality first-draft text under a tight deadline as well as the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it."

Nevada Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects (p. 41)

All fifth and eighth grade students are required by NRS 389.550 to participate in at least one Nevada Formative Writing Task during the 2013-14 school year. However, the NDE has provided multiple tasks for use in third through eighth grades, allowing teachers to monitor students at multiple points during the school year and adjust their instruction to match the needs of students.

Results from the Nevada Formative Writing Tasks will not be used to calculate a school's rating on the Nevada School Performance Framework. However, the NDE will collect and report participation rates on each school's report card (as required by NRS 389.550).

To improve the consistency of evaluating the tasks and other classroom writing assignments, the NDE released The Nevada Formative Writing Tools: Grade 8 Evaluation Guides (Evaluation Guides) that include:

- Analytic writing rubrics developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium;
- Checklists to support teachers when learning the rubrics and documenting student progress;
- Student writing guides to support students in all phases of the writing process (before, during, and after); and
- A glossary of terms used in the *Evaluation Guides* to establish a common vocabulary for writing.

The Evaluation Guides identify a student's level of command for each of the five characteristics of writing and can be downloaded at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/. Knowing these levels will help teachers and students identify student strengths and areas to improve. The NDE encourages districts and schools to establish policies for how and when to use the rubrics and checklists for grading other classroom assignments.

Since the results of the tasks are relatively low stakes for schools and teachers, keep them low stakes for students by not assigning grades to them.

However, the NDE **strongly** discourages teachers and schools from using the results of the Formative Tasks as part of their grading, since they were **not** designed as summative or interim assessments. Instead, teachers and schools should use the formative tasks to gather information needed to inform and enhance both teaching and learning.

Guidelines for Administering the Tasks

WHO: All fifth and eighth grade students who are enrolled in public schools, including charter schools, are required to take at least one Formative Task during the 2013-14 school year. It is strongly recommended for students in third, fourth, sixth, and seventh grades. Students with disabilities and students classified as having limited English proficiency (LEP) must also participate.

Accommodations are made for IEP, LEP, and/or 504 students who have testing accommodation plans. The classroom teacher must make certain that all students with special needs receive permissible appropriate accommodations, as indicated in IEPs, LEPs, 504 plans, and Testing Accommodation Plans.

WHAT: The Formative Tasks have students read closely and analyze information to produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences. For the 2013-14 school year, the NDE provides tasks for the three text types in the NACS (opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative).

Since the tasks are formative, classroom teachers will evaluate their own students' responses using the Evaluation Guides provided by the NDE (http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/). It is strongly recommended that each task be evaluated twice: by the student's classroom teacher and by another teacher. This will facilitate collaborative teams that build a vision of good writing and can focus on using the results of the Formative Tasks to improve teaching and student learning.

The NDE will neither score student responses nor collect student results. However, the NDE will collect participation data in May from each school and each classroom in accordance with NRS 389.550. Participation rates will be published on every school's Nevada Accountability Report.

WHERE: It is strongly recommended that the Formative Tasks be administered by the student's classroom teacher in the regular classroom or computer lab.

WHEN: March 3, 2014, through May 9, 2014, is the timeframe for administering the Formative Tasks. Each district and school may determine exact testing days and times within this testing window. Please check with your district's test director for specific days and times within the mandated timeframe.

WHY: Descriptive feedback is widely considered an important element of improved writing performance. When students understand their **strengths and weaknesses** and are taught how to improve their writing, they learn faster and retain what they have learned longer.

The Formative Tasks and Evaluation Guides can help teachers provide constructive feedback and help students become self-regulated learners. Since the tasks and Evaluation Guides are based on the NACS and performance task specifications for the Smarter Balanced assessment, they also play an essential role in aligning teaching, learning, and assessment while allowing districts, schools, and teachers to use them to begin planning the shifts in instruction that will be required to help students meet the demands of the standards and prepare for the Smarter Balanced assessment in 2015.

HOW: The Formative Tasks are timed, on-demand classroom writing assignments. The tasks include uniform student directions for writing responses and uniform teacher directions for administering the tasks. The tasks have been carefully designed for consistency of format, content, and administration procedures, allowing teachers to monitor progress over time.

Each task is administered in two timed sessions that should not exceed 45 minutes each. Teachers may administer the sessions over two consecutive days or on the same day with a 15 minute break between sessions. The first 45 minute session involves introducing students to the writing task, helping students understand how the tasks will be evaluated, having students independently read information, and beginning to draft a well-grounded response. The second 45 minute session involves writing, revising, and editing their final draft.

Teachers should provide each student with a paper copy of the student directions for the selected task. Please check with your district to determine if the district has selected a task for the entire district to use. The NDE will not provide printed copies for schools.

Teachers may also provide each student with a copy of the Student Writing Guide that matches the writing mode of the task (i.e., the Grade 8 Student Writing Guide for Argumentative Writing for eighth grade students responding to the eighth grade argumentative tasks). These guides can be found in the Evaluation Guides at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/.

Since the 2015 administration of the Smarter Balanced assessment is computer based, students should use a word processor (i.e., Microsoft Word) to write their responses. Using technology to produce and publish writing is part of the NACS and keyboarding skills are introduced in second grade in the Nevada Computer and Technology Standards (2010).

Students may use spell check and grammar check. They should **not** use any other electronic resources, including the Internet, during the task. All students are expected to word process their responses to the Formative Tasks. Students with IEPs may use pre-approved electronic devices as designated in their IEPs and are consistent with their testing accommodations.

In addition, each student should have at least one blank sheet of paper (lined or unlined) and a pencil. Students can use these tools to plan their writing (i.e., individually brainstorm, create graphic organizers) and create their first drafts. However, students may also word process their first drafts on computers, if they prefer.

Students may also use highlighters and colored pencils for planning, revising, and editing.

Regular paper Standard English dictionaries are also allowed for all students. In addition, paper bilingual dictionaries with word-to-word translations are approved for LEP students identified to receive this accommodation and used previously as part of regular instruction. Teachers do **not** need to cover bulletin boards, posters, or other materials used as part of daily instruction.

Teachers will NOT translate any part of the directions.

Teachers will NOT read any part of the student directions that call for the student to read, unless such accommodations are specified in a student's accommodation plan.

Teacher Checklist for Administering the Writing Tasks

Completing the following steps will help ensure successful administration of the Formative Tasks.

- ☐ Carefully read all of the contents of this manual.
- ☐ Check your district testing schedule for any specific test dates for your district.
- ☐ Check with your district to determine if they have selected a task for the entire district to administer.
- ☐ Check with the special education facilitators, LEP testing coordinators, and 504 building officers for any students who need to receive special accommodations.
- ☐ Ensure that procedures and materials for testing special student populations follow those specified by the Nevada Department of Education and that students with special needs receive the appropriate accommodations.
- ☐ Ensure that you have all of the materials for administering the formative task:
  - ___ Print copies of the student directions
  - ___ Optional: Print copies of the student guide that matches the task (i.e., opinion guide for opinion task) (see page 13-15 in The Nevada Formative Writing Tools: Grade 8 Evaluation Guides at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/)
  - ___ Pencils
  - ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
  - ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
  - ___ Bilingual dictionaries with word-for-word translations (only for LEP students approved to receive this accommodation and who use them as part of their classroom instruction)
  - ___ Highlighters and colored pencils or pens during testing sessions (if students have been using these during regular classroom instruction)
  - ___ Printer paper (optional for printing hard copies of student essays)
  - ___ Books for students to read if they finish early (paper only)
- ☐ Check computers to make sure they are ready.
- ☐ Check with your school/district for special procedures on how to save essays on the school/district network.
- ☐ Review computer procedures with your students:
  - ___ Open a new blank document
  - ___ Maintain default font size and color (i.e., 12 point and black)
  - ___ Save documents
  - ___ Print files
- ☐ Make arrangements with another teacher to exchange and evaluate tasks.
- ☐ Make plans for how you will provide feedback to students for improving their writing (i.e., conferences).

Teacher Checklist for Evaluating the Writing Tasks

Completing the following steps will help ensure consistent evaluation of the Formative Tasks.

- ☐ Work with another teacher so that each student's essay is evaluated twice.
- ☐ Reread the Evaluation Guides (rubric or checklist) for the type of writing that matches the task (opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory, or narrative) and highlight or underline key information. (Evaluation Guides can be downloaded at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/)
- ☐ Reread the exemplar papers for the type of writing that matches the task and review how the characteristics of the paper relate to the level of each trait. (Argumentative Exemplars can be downloaded at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/)
- ☐ Read entirely each essay before assigning a level for each of the five traits.
- ☐ Refer to the language in the rubric and the exemplar papers when assigning levels.
- ☐ Cover the first evaluator's levels before the essay is evaluated the second time (this is optional but many teachers find it helpful if they don't know how the first teacher evaluated the papers).
- ☐ Discuss the levels, understanding that it is normal for some traits to have some split levels (1-2 or 3-4).
- ☐ Discuss any discrepant levels. Levels are discrepant when one teacher evaluates a trait as proficient (4 or 3) and another teacher evaluates that same trait as not proficient (2 or 1).

  When a trait is rated 1-3, 1-4, 2-3, or 2-4, both teachers should review the rubric, checklist, and exemplar papers to determine if the paper is proficient or not (for feedback purposes).

Proficient (Meets or Exceeds Standard)		**Not Proficient** (Below Standard or Emerging/Developing)	
4 Thorough Understanding	3 Adequate Understanding	2 Partial Understanding	1 Minimal Understanding

- ☐ Identify trends (i.e., overall, what traits were strong or weak) and how that will impact instruction.
- ☐ Prioritize the weakest trends and plan instruction to remediate weaknesses.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task A

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read two passages about news media and journalism. Take notes as you read. You will later write an argumentative essay on how the role of the media has changed as technology has changed.

STEP 1

Read the passages and take notes on these sources.

Read the following passages on the changing roles of media. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.

- "The Role of the News Media"
- "Journalism and the Digital Revolution"

As you read, decide how the role of the media has changed as technology has changed.

STEP 2

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

How has the role of media changed as technology has changed?

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims
- Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

GO ON

The Role of the News Media

by Mary Harvey

1 Imagine the United States without newspapers, TV news, and Internet access. What kind of country might we be living in?

Have you picked up a newspaper or magazine in the past few days? Listened to sports radio? Surfed the Web for celebrity gossip? If so, you were enjoying a First Amendment right guaranteed to all citizens of the United States.

"The media are very important," Erik Perry, a seventh-grader in Katonah, New York, tells *JS*. "How would you know what's going on without TV, radio, magazines, the Internet, or newspapers?"

The First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law" that **abridges** (limits) freedom of the press. This means that the U.S. government has little direct control over what the media print or broadcast.

5 A free press is a key element of any democracy. "You need to have an independent fact finder out there that's able to dig up the truth and present it to the rest of us," Mike Hiestand tells *JS.* Hiestand is an attorney for the Student Press Law Center, a group that provides legal advice to school newspapers. "We talk about our government being 'of the people,'" he says. "The press's job is to make sure that it in fact belongs to us."

The press does this by reporting on the activities of state, local, and federal governments. Members of the press—magazine writers, newspaper reporters, and TV news anchors, for instance—have a right to hold the government accountable. In their role as "watchdogs" they:

- question the actions of government officials.
- confirm the truth of what officials tell the public.
- gather facts that citizens need in order to make informed decisions.

These rights "allow the free interchange of information," says Claire Lueneburg, an editor of her high school newspaper in Everett, Washington. "People throughout our country's history have fought and died for them."

"A Tug of War"

Indeed, it took a fight to win freedom of the press. When the U.S. Constitution was written in 1787, it did not include a list of individual rights. This disturbed some of the Founding Fathers. Three even refused to sign the Constitution.

After much debate, the first U.S. Congress proposed 10 Amendments to the Constitution. These Amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, protect personal freedoms. They went into effect in 1791.

GO ON

10 Although the First Amendment guarantees a free press, there have always been tensions between the press and the government. "Government officials, like the rest of us, don't like to look bad or have information they consider damaging widely publicized," Stephen Frank tells *JS*. Frank is a vice president at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "When the press finds that kind of information, it sets up a tug of war."

When the U.S. government seeks to limit press freedom, it often cites national security. During the Civil War, Union generals shut down some newspapers they thought were aiding the enemy.

President Abraham Lincoln allowed generals to do this for brief periods. Lincoln argued that parts of the Constitution must sometimes be sacrificed in emergencies. Even so, he set strict conditions on such actions. "You will only [prohibit] assemblies or newspapers when they may be [risking] injury to the military in your charge," he wrote to one general.

"The worst time for freedom of the press has almost always been during times of war," Floyd Abrams, a top First Amendment lawyer, tells *JS.* "There's a lot more tendency to limit speech that is viewed as dangerous. The public understandably becomes nervous, but it's wrong to limit the press because of that. Sometimes the [only] protection we have is a free press."

Rights for Students?

Do students have the same free-press rights as adults? In a 1969 landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." The Court said that students can engage in free speech—if it is lawful and nondisruptive.

Still, students face some restrictions. In a 1988 case, the Supreme Court ruled that public-school officials can **censor** student newspapers if they have a strong educational reason.

censor: to examine books, movies, newspapers, etc., and remove things that are considered offensive, immoral, or harmful to society

Abrams fought for that protection in a famous court battle during the Vietnam War. In 1971, the U.S. government tried to bar *The New York Times* from publishing a secret Pentagon report about the causes of the war. Abrams represented the *Times.*

15 In a victory for the press, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that both the *Times* and *The Washington Post* were allowed to publish the so-called Pentagon Papers.

Watergate and Beyond

Throughout U.S. history, the media have come in and out of the public's favor. The press gained great respect when two reporters from *The Washington Post* broke open the scandal known

as Watergate. Investigating a 1972 burglary at Washington's Watergate Hotel, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein sensed a larger story. Eventually they traced the crime and its cover-up all the way to the White House of President Richard M. Nixon.

The impact was enormous: Nixon was forced to resign—the only U.S. President ever to do so. More than 30 other government officials were convicted of crimes, including **perjury** and illegal election-campaign activities.

perjury: the crime of telling a lie in a court of law

After Watergate, the press enjoyed a favorable reputation as an aggressive government watchdog. But this reputation has suffered in recent years. A growing number of Americans are questioning the news media's fairness, according to recent studies. They also perceive the press as having a political **bias**—either liberal or conservative.

bias: prejudice against one group in favor of another

New technologies are putting additional pressures on the established mainstream media. The growth of cable TV, 24-hour news, and Internet **blogs** has pushed mainstream reporters to be even quicker in breaking stories. This can lead to the publishing or airing of stories without their facts being thoroughly checked.

blog: a personal website on which an individual records opinions, links to other sites, etc. on a regular basis

Yet some people think that the rising number of media voices is a good thing. "The idea of the First Amendment is that true ideas and accurate information will eventually push inaccurate information out of the marketplace," Stephen Frank tells *JS*. "People want the facts. When there are competing ideas, the truth comes out." JS

USA/We the People

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

—Constitution, Amendment I

"The Role of the News Media" by Mary Harvey. From *Junior Scholastic*, February 20, 2006 issue. Copyright © 2006 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

Journalism and the Digital Revolution

1 Few people would argue with the idea that the Digital Revolution has been, on balance, far more positive than negative. But this period of dramatic change has caused **upheaval** and uncertainty in certain industries. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the field of journalism.

upheaval: a big change that often causes problems

2 Not that long ago, a reporter's job required little in the way of technological savvy. If you could dial a telephone, operate a pen, and use a typewriter, you were as up-to-date as you needed to be. Other departments were responsible for taking photographs, recording conversations, and filming events. A typical reporter spent the day gathering facts, wrote a story, turned it in before the deadline, and was done for the day.

3 The Digital Revolution changed all that. Well, most of it. Reporters still use telephones and non-digital writing implements, but today's journalists need a much larger skill set. They must know how to use computers, apps, the Internet, email, **social media**, mobile phones, digital recorders, and cameras. On top of that, modern reporters operate at a much more frantic pace. In addition to filing their daily stories, many reporters are expected to submit photographs, video clips, and audio interviews.

social media: forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites) through which users create communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)

4 Reporters have also had to get over their distaste for social media. Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest have become integral parts of the reporting process and vital connections between news organizations and the public they seek to serve. Links to social media outlets on news websites flower like rain lilies after a thunderstorm. News organizations encourage the general public to submit photographs, videos, and news tips. And nearly every story on newspaper websites includes a reader comment section to encourage discussion of the story. Some news organizations, such as CNN, even encourage the public to register as official correspondents. All of this has improved reporting, says Mark Briggs, a blogger and author of the book *Journalism 2.0*. "Just like the telephone didn't replace the face-to-face meeting over coffee, and e-mail didn't replace the telephone, social media doesn't replace other forms of connecting with people," he said. "It adds to them."

5 The rise of social media has turned the traditional relationship between news organizations and readers upside down. In the past, newspaper editors and reporters decided what was important and communicated that information to a docile public. Today, social media has put the public in the decision-making process. Journalism has become less of a lecture and more of a conversation. "Social media by its very definition is a participatory medium," says University of British Columbia journalism professor Alfred Hermida. "There is a potential for greater engagement and connection with the community, but only if journalists are open to **ceding** a degree of editorial control to the community."

ceding: giving up

GO ON

6 The power of social media became apparent after the 2009 elections in Iran. Many Iranians felt that the election had been stolen, and they poured out into the streets to protest. The Iranian government responded by censoring newspapers, blocking Internet sites, and shutting down texting services. Despite these efforts, Iranian citizens still managed to post comments, photos, and videos on social media. Their postings showed the world that the protests were more widespread than the government admitted and that the government reacted more violently than was being reported. Olivia Ma, the news manager for YouTube, recalled watching hundreds of videos being uploaded during the protests. “Because journalists have been banned from operating inside Iran, these videos are proving the only window into what’s really happening there,” she said at the time. Thanks to social media, the story got out to the larger world. The Iranian protests—which people had begun calling the “Twitter Revolution”—were front-page news everywhere but in Iran.

7 Social media does not require a **repressive** government to prove its value to the news-gathering process, however. For example, college student Elliot Volkman began looking into a run-down apartment complex that catered to college students in Georgia after he received a tip from a friend. The friend sent him photographs of the complex via Facebook. Volkman then used Facebook to locate other residents of the complex. As word that Volkman was working on a story spread, more residents used Facebook to contact him. The story that Volkman eventually wrote forced the owners of the apartment complex to make repairs. It also won a Georgia College Press Association award.

repress: controlling people by force

8 Like all revolutions, the Digital Revolution has produced winners and losers. Exactly who those winners and losers are is not always immediately apparent. At first, many traditional news outlets, like newspapers and magazines, were slow to adapt to the realities of the digital age. As a result, advertising revenues declined, readership fell, and news organizations were forced to lay off employees. Some newspapers and magazines went out of business or stopped publishing printed editions. Recently, however, news organizations have shown signs that they understand what is happening to their business model. If journalism is to emerge as a winner, traditional news outlets must accept—and even welcome—the myriad changes brought about by the Digital Revolution.

"Journalism and the Digital Revolution" © WestEd.

END

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task A

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task A

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an argumentative essay about how the role of the media has changed as technology has changed. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read some information about the changing roles of the media, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passages. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may ***not*** *use any other programs on the computer, and you may* ***not*** *use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read two passages about news media and journalism. Take notes as you read. You will later write an argumentative essay on how the role of the media has changed as technology has changed.*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passages and take notes on these sources.***
>
> *Read the following passages on the changing roles of media. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *"The Role of the News Media"*
> - *"Journalism and the Digital Revolution"*
>
> *As you read, decide how the role of the media has changed as technology has changed.*

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

How has the role of media changed as technology has changed? Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

4. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read these passages, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

5. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

6. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task A

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information about the changing roles of the media, took notes on these sources, and started planning and drafting an argumentative essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passages and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task B

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read two passages about news media and journalism. Take notes as you read. You will later write an argumentative essay about the extent to which social media should be protected by the right to freedom of the press in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

STEP 1

Read the passages and take notes on these sources.

Read the following passages on the changing roles of media. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.

- "The Role of the News Media"
- "Journalism and the Digital Revolution"

As you read, decide the extent to which social media should be protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of the press.

STEP 2

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

To what extent should social media be protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of the press? Is the role of social media similar enough to the role of traditional media to merit this protection?

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims
- Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

GO ON

The Role of the News Media

by Mary Harvey

1 Imagine the United States without newspapers, TV news, and Internet access. What kind of country might we be living in?

Have you picked up a newspaper or magazine in the past few days? Listened to sports radio? Surfed the Web for celebrity gossip? If so, you were enjoying a First Amendment right guaranteed to all citizens of the United States.

"The media are very important," Erik Perry, a seventh-grader in Katonah, New York, tells *JS*. "How would you know what's going on without TV, radio, magazines, the Internet, or newspapers?"

The First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law" that **abridges** (limits) freedom of the press. This means that the U.S. government has little direct control over what the media print or broadcast.

5 A free press is a key element of any democracy. "You need to have an independent fact finder out there that's able to dig up the truth and present it to the rest of us," Mike Hiestand tells *JS.* Hiestand is an attorney for the Student Press Law Center, a group that provides legal advice to school newspapers. "We talk about our government being 'of the people,'" he says. "The press's job is to make sure that it in fact belongs to us."

The press does this by reporting on the activities of state, local, and federal governments. Members of the press—magazine writers, newspaper reporters, and TV news anchors, for instance—have a right to hold the government accountable. In their role as "watchdogs" they:

- question the actions of government officials.
- confirm the truth of what officials tell the public.
- gather facts that citizens need in order to make informed decisions.

These rights "allow the free interchange of information," says Claire Lueneburg, an editor of her high school newspaper in Everett, Washington. "People throughout our country's history have fought and died for them."

"A Tug of War"

Indeed, it took a fight to win freedom of the press. When the U.S. Constitution was written in 1787, it did not include a list of individual rights. This disturbed some of the Founding Fathers. Three even refused to sign the Constitution.

After much debate, the first U.S. Congress proposed 10 Amendments to the Constitution. These Amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, protect personal freedoms. They went into effect in 1791.

GO ON

10 Although the First Amendment guarantees a free press, there have always been tensions between the press and the government. "Government officials, like the rest of us, don't like to look bad or have information they consider damaging widely publicized," Stephen Frank tells *JS*. Frank is a vice president at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "When the press finds that kind of information, it sets up a tug of war."

When the U.S. government seeks to limit press freedom, it often cites national security. During the Civil War, Union generals shut down some newspapers they thought were aiding the enemy.

President Abraham Lincoln allowed generals to do this for brief periods. Lincoln argued that parts of the Constitution must sometimes be sacrificed in emergencies. Even so, he set strict conditions on such actions. "You will only [prohibit] assemblies or newspapers when they may be [risking] injury to the military in your charge," he wrote to one general.

"The worst time for freedom of the press has almost always been during times of war," Floyd Abrams, a top First Amendment lawyer, tells *JS.* "There's a lot more tendency to limit speech that is viewed as dangerous. The public understandably becomes nervous, but it's wrong to limit the press because of that. Sometimes the [only] protection we have is a free press."

Rights for Students?

Do students have the same free-press rights as adults? In a 1969 landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." The Court said that students can engage in free speech—if it is lawful and nondisruptive.

Still, students face some restrictions. In a 1988 case, the Supreme Court ruled that public-school officials can **censor** student newspapers if they have a strong educational reason.

censor: to examine books, movies, newspapers, etc., and remove things that are considered offensive, immoral, or harmful to society

Abrams fought for that protection in a famous court battle during the Vietnam War. In 1971, the U.S. government tried to bar *The New York Times* from publishing a secret Pentagon report about the causes of the war. Abrams represented the *Times.*

15 In a victory for the press, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that both the *Times* and *The Washington Post* were allowed to publish the so-called Pentagon Papers.

Watergate and Beyond

Throughout U.S. history, the media have come in and out of the public's favor. The press gained great respect when two reporters from *The Washington Post* broke open the scandal known

as Watergate. Investigating a 1972 burglary at Washington's Watergate Hotel, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein sensed a larger story. Eventually they traced the crime and its cover-up all the way to the White House of President Richard M. Nixon.

The impact was enormous: Nixon was forced to resign—the only U.S. President ever to do so. More than 30 other government officials were convicted of crimes, including **perjury** and illegal election-campaign activities.

perjury: the crime of telling a lie in a court of law

After Watergate, the press enjoyed a favorable reputation as an aggressive government watchdog. But this reputation has suffered in recent years. A growing number of Americans are questioning the news media's fairness, according to recent studies. They also perceive the press as having a political **bias**—either liberal or conservative.

bias: prejudice against one group in favor of another

New technologies are putting additional pressures on the established mainstream media. The growth of cable TV, 24-hour news, and Internet **blogs** has pushed mainstream reporters to be even quicker in breaking stories. This can lead to the publishing or airing of stories without their facts being thoroughly checked.

blog: a personal website on which an individual records opinions, links to other sites, etc. on a regular basis

Yet some people think that the rising number of media voices is a good thing. "The idea of the First Amendment is that true ideas and accurate information will eventually push inaccurate information out of the marketplace," Stephen Frank tells *JS*. "People want the facts. When there are competing ideas, the truth comes out." JS

USA/We the People

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

—Constitution, Amendment I

"The Role of the News Media" by Mary Harvey. From *Junior Scholastic*, February 20, 2006 issue. Copyright © 2006 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

Journalism and the Digital Revolution

1 Few people would argue with the idea that the Digital Revolution has been, on balance, far more positive than negative. But this period of dramatic change has caused **upheaval** and uncertainty in certain industries. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the field of journalism.

upheaval: a big change that often causes problems

2 Not that long ago, a reporter's job required little in the way of technological savvy. If you could dial a telephone, operate a pen, and use a typewriter, you were as up-to-date as you needed to be. Other departments were responsible for taking photographs, recording conversations, and filming events. A typical reporter spent the day gathering facts, wrote a story, turned it in before the deadline, and was done for the day.

3 The Digital Revolution changed all that. Well, most of it. Reporters still use telephones and non-digital writing implements, but today's journalists need a much larger skill set. They must know how to use computers, apps, the Internet, email, **social media**, mobile phones, digital recorders, and cameras. On top of that, modern reporters operate at a much more frantic pace. In addition to filing their daily stories, many reporters are expected to submit photographs, video clips, and audio interviews.

social media: forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites) through which users create communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)

4 Reporters have also had to get over their distaste for social media. Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest have become integral parts of the reporting process and vital connections between news organizations and the public they seek to serve. Links to social media outlets on news websites flower like rain lilies after a thunderstorm. News organizations encourage the general public to submit photographs, videos, and news tips. And nearly every story on newspaper websites includes a reader comment section to encourage discussion of the story. Some news organizations, such as CNN, even encourage the public to register as official correspondents. All of this has improved reporting, says Mark Briggs, a blogger and author of the book *Journalism 2.0*. "Just like the telephone didn't replace the face-to-face meeting over coffee, and e-mail didn't replace the telephone, social media doesn't replace other forms of connecting with people," he said. "It adds to them."

5 The rise of social media has turned the traditional relationship between news organizations and readers upside down. In the past, newspaper editors and reporters decided what was important and communicated that information to a docile public. Today, social media has put the public in the decision-making process. Journalism has become less of a lecture and more of a conversation. "Social media by its very definition is a participatory medium," says University of British Columbia journalism professor Alfred Hermida. "There is a potential for greater engagement and connection with the community, but only if journalists are open to **ceding** a degree of editorial control to the community."

ceding: giving up

GO ON

6 The power of social media became apparent after the 2009 elections in Iran. Many Iranians felt that the election had been stolen, and they poured out into the streets to protest. The Iranian government responded by censoring newspapers, blocking Internet sites, and shutting down texting services. Despite these efforts, Iranian citizens still managed to post comments, photos, and videos on social media. Their postings showed the world that the protests were more widespread than the government admitted and that the government reacted more violently than was being reported. Olivia Ma, the news manager for YouTube, recalled watching hundreds of videos being uploaded during the protests. “Because journalists have been banned from operating inside Iran, these videos are proving the only window into what’s really happening there,” she said at the time. Thanks to social media, the story got out to the larger world. The Iranian protests—which people had begun calling the “Twitter Revolution”—were front-page news everywhere but in Iran.

7 Social media does not require a **repressive** government to prove its value to the news-gathering process, however. For example, college student Elliot Volkman began looking into a run-down apartment complex that catered to college students in Georgia after he received a tip from a friend. The friend sent him photographs of the complex via Facebook. Volkman then used Facebook to locate other residents of the complex. As word that Volkman was working on a story spread, more residents used Facebook to contact him. The story that Volkman eventually wrote forced the owners of the apartment complex to make repairs. It also won a Georgia College Press Association award.

repress: controlling people by force

8 Like all revolutions, the Digital Revolution has produced winners and losers. Exactly who those winners and losers are is not always immediately apparent. At first, many traditional news outlets, like newspapers and magazines, were slow to adapt to the realities of the digital age. As a result, advertising revenues declined, readership fell, and news organizations were forced to lay off employees. Some newspapers and magazines went out of business or stopped publishing printed editions. Recently, however, news organizations have shown signs that they understand what is happening to their business model. If journalism is to emerge as a winner, traditional news outlets must accept—and even welcome—the myriad changes brought about by the Digital Revolution.

"Journalism and the Digital Revolution" © WestEd.

END

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task B

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task B

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an argumentative essay about the extent to which social media should be protected by the right to freedom of the press in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read some information about the changing roles of the media, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

*You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passages. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read two passages about news media and journalism. Take notes as you read. You will later write an argumentative essay about the extent to which social media should be protected by the right to freedom of the press in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passages and take notes on these sources.***
>
> *Read the following passages on the changing roles of media. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *"The Role of the News Media"*
> - *"Journalism and the Digital Revolution"*

As you read, decide the extent to which social media should be protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of the press.

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

To what extent should social media be protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of the press? Is the role of social media similar enough to the role of traditional media to merit this protection?

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read these passages, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You*

should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task B

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information about the changing roles of the media, took notes on these sources, and started planning and drafting an argumentative essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passages and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task C

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read a passage about cloud seeding. Take notes as you read. You will later write an editorial about whether or not cloud seeding should be funded in your community.

STEP 1

Read the passages and take notes on these sources.

Read the following passage about cloud seeding. Take notes to use later while writing your editorial. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.

- "Sowing Better Weather"

As you read, consider the innovations to increase rainfall outlined in the article and how effective they have been.

STEP 2

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your editorial on the following topic:

Should cloud seeding be funded in our community? Why or why not?

Your audience is the readers of your local newspaper, including citizens and politicians.

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims
- Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

GO ON

Sowing Better Weather

by Peg Lopata

1 Take a look up the next time you're outside. If you happen to see tall, white, fluffy clouds, you're looking at what meteorologists call "rainmakers." That's because this type of cloud can be tweaked to make more rain where and when it's needed. The clouds can also be tweaked to reduce the size and amount of damaging hail they might produce. More rain when you want it and less hail both reduce crop damage and make life better.

Cloud-tweaking techniques are called cloud seeding, and there are two methods. The first uses a plane equipped with flares that shoots silver iodide into a cloud that's likely to produce rain anyway. The second method shoots the silver iodide into the cloud from a high point on the ground where the wind carries it into the cloud. Either way, the silver iodide helps the cloud make more rain. If the cloud is likely to produce hail instead of rain, the silver iodide reduces the size or amount of hailstones.

Silver iodide is considered relatively non-toxic. As long as reasonable care is exercised, cloud seeding with silver iodide appears to be safe for the environment.

A Short History of Rainmaking

If you find it hard to believe that meteorologists can make rain or reduce hail, you're smart to be skeptical. Way back in 1905, Charles Mallory Hatfield promised and seemed to deliver rain to farmers in drought-stricken southern California. For a decade after that, Hatfield became a phenomenon, a true "rainmaker"—or so many believed. But *Science* magazine later proved that Hatfield had really only been successful at making money. (Nature was coincidentally providing rain when he used his rainmaking equipment.) The science of rainmaking would have to wait a few more years.

5 In the mid 1940s, three scientists at General Electric Laboratory in Schenectady, New York, Vincent Schaefer, Bernard Vonnegut, and Irving Langmuir, made a rainmaking discovery. Their experiments showed that dry ice or silver iodide deposited into certain kinds of clouds acted like seeds of rain or snow. The U.S. military budget funded Project Cirrus to continue the research. Federal funding peaked in the 1970s and many companies were hired to seed clouds throughout the country.

The U.S. government even funded a project called STORMFURY to try to disrupt hurricanes.

Expectations were high for weather modification of all kinds, including cloud seeding. It was widely believed that humankind would truly become capable of controlling the weather. In fact, there was so much worry about those who might use weather-control technology for the wrong reasons that in 1977 the United Nations passed a treaty forbidding the use of weather modification as a weapon of war.

GO ON

As it turned out, modifying the weather was quite beyond the control of humankind. Numerous concerns about the technology's impact on the environment arose and the high expectations were dashed; the government stopped funding weather modification research, including cloud-seeding projects. The science of weather modification fell out of favor and no longer was considered a legitimate science.

Rainmaking Returns

Today, rainmaking and hail reduction is on the horizon once more. It's considered legitimate science, but it's not without controversy. "It's been very difficult to show statistically that cloud seeding is actually making it rain more," says Dr. Hugh Willoughby, research professor at Florida International University in Miami. Willoughby wonders if the promise of the technology is worth the money that must be spent to find out if it can really deliver. Could the money be better spent on other ideas to deal with water shortages? Maybe. But, Willoughby does hope to see cloud-seeding research go forward. "We've been able to make rainy days rainier," he says. "What you'd like to do is be able to make it rain during a drought."

10 Though drought-busting is not yet possible, the science of rainmaking overall has made great strides since the 1980s. Meteorologists now know much more about cloud origin, development, and decay. Forecasting, due to better modeling and improved radar technology, has also advanced so there are fewer "misses" in cloud seeding. A "miss" means seeding the wrong kind of cloud, or not finding enough clouds to seed. Though hardly a sure bet, it has been shown that when careful cloud seeding is done by competent people, seasonal rainfall can be increased, says Dr. Joseph Golden.

"You can increase rainfall some 15 to 20 percent over a whole season," he says. "In mountain regions, you can increase snow pack 10 to 15 percent."

Today, some twenty-six countries have cloud-seeding projects underway. In places like Alberta, Canada, cloud seeding is used to reduce hail, which causes millions of dollars in property damage there. In the United States, about nine states seed clouds. In Texas alone, cloud-seeding projects cover land in about 20 percent of the state.

Cloud Seeding to the Rescue?

Cloud seeding is seen as part of a water management strategy to ensure that crops will grow, reservoirs won't dry up, and power plants that run on waterpower will keep running. In Idaho, for example, the Idaho Power Company has been seeding clouds for many years. They seed the clouds of incoming snowstorms to make them produce more snow. The result is more snow pack. When the snow pack melts in the spring, more water fills the rivers that power hydroelectric generating plants. For western states, more water means reservoirs will be replenished and hydropower plants can count on producing enough electricity.

Can cloud seeding end droughts and meet all the water needs for the future in the long term? When Willoughby entered the field he thought so. "It would be absolutely wonderful to go to India

when the monsoon fails . . . you go with a fleet of planes and you make it rain and the farmers get through the summer without a famine. This is a fantasy that I had when I started in this field," Willoughby says, admitting that it still remains a fantasy.

15 That's because during drought conditions there are usually not enough clouds around with enough water in them to seed. However, seeding clouds in drought-prone areas before droughts begin might be the answer. Taking advantage of the clouds that would probably produce rain on their own might prevent water levels from dropping to drastically low levels that cause crop failure. Wells and reservoirs might maintain enough water for people's needs.

Cloud seeding definitely holds great promise. Though not yet conclusively proven, some meteorologists are convinced that it has increased rainfall. Others have found it easier to prove that cloud seeding has reduced hailstorms and crop damage. As meteorologists' knowledge of clouds increases and forecasting tools are improved, perhaps this technology will one day move from fantasy to reality and truly become a lifesaver.

Cloud Seeding for Dummies

To seed a summertime cloud, you need a specially-equipped plane and young thunderstorms in the sky, meaning clouds that will probably produce rain. These are called cumulus or convective clouds. They are large, billowy, and look like cauliflower.

Special flares mounted on the outside of the plane are used to drop silver iodide from above the cloud. Why silver iodide? Because it acts very much like ice. The pilot of the plane is given instructions by a meteorologist about which clouds to seed. Timing and placement is critical. "It's tricky," says Bruce Boe, Director of Meteorology, Weather Modification, Inc., Fargo, North Dakota. "You have to put the right amount [of silver iodide] in the right place at the right time. All three must work for the seeding to work."

If the temperature inside a cloud is cold enough, when tiny droplets of "super-cooled" water encounter specks of dust, salt, or sand, small ice crystals form. Water vapor in the cloud freezes onto the surface of these crystals. They get heavier and fall, changing into raindrops as they encounter warmer temperatures and melt. Seeding results in many more of these ice crystals forming much earlier in the cloud's lifetime. (One gram of silver iodide can supply as many as ten trillion artificial ice crystals.) The cloud begins to "grow" precipitation more quickly than if it had not been seeded. Over its life span the cloud produces more rain or snow. Whether rain or snow falls depends upon the temperature of the air closer to the ground.

"Sowing Better Weather" by Peg Lopata. From *Odyssey*, February 2008 issue. Copyright © 2008 by Carus Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of Cobblestone Publishing.

END

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task C

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task C

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an argumentative essay about whether or not cloud seeding should be funded in your community.. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read some information about cloud seeding, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

*You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passage. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read a passage about cloud seeding. Take notes as you read. You will later write an editorial about whether or not cloud seeding should be funded in your community*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passages and take notes on these sources.***
>
> *Read the following passage about cloud seeding. Take notes to use later while writing your editorial. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *"Sowing Better Weather"*
>
> *As you read, consider the innovations to increase rainfall outlined in the article and how effective they have been.*

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your editorial on the following topic:

Should cloud seeding be funded in our community? Why or why not?

Your audience is the readers of your local newspaper, including citizens and politicians.

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *<u>Statement of Purpose/Focus</u> – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *<u>Organization</u> – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *<u>Elaboration of Evidence</u> – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *<u>Language and Vocabulary</u> – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *<u>Conventions</u> – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read this passage, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task C

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information about cloud seeding, took notes on this source, and started planning and drafting an argumentative essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passage and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *Organization – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Writing Task A

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read two passages about news media and journalism. Take notes as you read. You will later plan and write an informative essay about how journalism has changed.

STEP 1

Read the passages and take notes on these sources.

Read the following passages about the changing roles of media. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like

- "The Role of the News Media"
- "Journalism and the Digital Revolution"

As you read, identify the most important changes in journalism discussed in both articles and consider the effects these changes have had on society.

STEP 2

Plan and write your essay.

Now, review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

How has journalism in the United States changed over time? How have these changes affected society?

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea
- Organization – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

GO ON

The Role of the News Media

by Mary Harvey

1 Imagine the United States without newspapers, TV news, and Internet access. What kind of country might we be living in?

Have you picked up a newspaper or magazine in the past few days? Listened to sports radio? Surfed the Web for celebrity gossip? If so, you were enjoying a First Amendment right guaranteed to all citizens of the United States.

"The media are very important," Erik Perry, a seventh-grader in Katonah, New York, tells *JS*. "How would you know what's going on without TV, radio, magazines, the Internet, or newspapers?"

The First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law" that **abridges** (limits) freedom of the press. This means that the U.S. government has little direct control over what the media print or broadcast.

5 A free press is a key element of any democracy. "You need to have an independent fact finder out there that's able to dig up the truth and present it to the rest of us," Mike Hiestand tells *JS.* Hiestand is an attorney for the Student Press Law Center, a group that provides legal advice to school newspapers. "We talk about our government being 'of the people,'" he says. "The press's job is to make sure that it in fact belongs to us."

The press does this by reporting on the activities of state, local, and federal governments. Members of the press—magazine writers, newspaper reporters, and TV news anchors, for instance—have a right to hold the government accountable. In their role as "watchdogs" they:

- question the actions of government officials.
- confirm the truth of what officials tell the public.
- gather facts that citizens need in order to make informed decisions.

These rights "allow the free interchange of information," says Claire Lueneburg, an editor of her high school newspaper in Everett, Washington. "People throughout our country's history have fought and died for them."

"A Tug of War"

Indeed, it took a fight to win freedom of the press. When the U.S. Constitution was written in 1787, it did not include a list of individual rights. This disturbed some of the Founding Fathers. Three even refused to sign the Constitution.

After much debate, the first U.S. Congress proposed 10 Amendments to the Constitution. These Amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, protect personal freedoms. They went into effect in 1791.

GO ON

10 Although the First Amendment guarantees a free press, there have always been tensions between the press and the government. "Government officials, like the rest of us, don't like to look bad or have information they consider damaging widely publicized," Stephen Frank tells *JS*. Frank is a vice president at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "When the press finds that kind of information, it sets up a tug of war."

When the U.S. government seeks to limit press freedom, it often cites national security. During the Civil War, Union generals shut down some newspapers they thought were aiding the enemy.

President Abraham Lincoln allowed generals to do this for brief periods. Lincoln argued that parts of the Constitution must sometimes be sacrificed in emergencies. Even so, he set strict conditions on such actions. "You will only [prohibit] assemblies or newspapers when they may be [risking] injury to the military in your charge," he wrote to one general.

"The worst time for freedom of the press has almost always been during times of war," Floyd Abrams, a top First Amendment lawyer, tells *JS.* "There's a lot more tendency to limit speech that is viewed as dangerous. The public understandably becomes nervous, but it's wrong to limit the press because of that. Sometimes the [only] protection we have is a free press."

Rights for Students?

Do students have the same free-press rights as adults? In a 1969 landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." The Court said that students can engage in free speech—if it is lawful and nondisruptive.

Still, students face some restrictions. In a 1988 case, the Supreme Court ruled that public-school officials can **censor** student newspapers if they have a strong educational reason.

censor: to examine books, movies, newspapers, etc., and remove things that are considered offensive, immoral, or harmful to society

Abrams fought for that protection in a famous court battle during the Vietnam War. In 1971, the U.S. government tried to bar *The New York Times* from publishing a secret Pentagon report about the causes of the war. Abrams represented the *Times.*

15 In a victory for the press, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that both the *Times* and *The Washington Post* were allowed to publish the so-called Pentagon Papers.

Watergate and Beyond

Throughout U.S. history, the media have come in and out of the public's favor. The press gained great respect when two reporters from *The Washington Post* broke open the scandal known

as Watergate. Investigating a 1972 burglary at Washington's Watergate Hotel, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein sensed a larger story. Eventually they traced the crime and its cover-up all the way to the White House of President Richard M. Nixon.

The impact was enormous: Nixon was forced to resign—the only U.S. President ever to do so. More than 30 other government officials were convicted of crimes, including **perjury** and illegal election-campaign activities.

perjury: the crime of telling a lie in a court of law

After Watergate, the press enjoyed a favorable reputation as an aggressive government watchdog. But this reputation has suffered in recent years. A growing number of Americans are questioning the news media's fairness, according to recent studies. They also perceive the press as having a political **bias**—either liberal or conservative.

bias: prejudice against one group in favor of another

New technologies are putting additional pressures on the established mainstream media. The growth of cable TV, 24-hour news, and Internet **blogs** has pushed mainstream reporters to be even quicker in breaking stories. This can lead to the publishing or airing of stories without their facts being thoroughly checked.

blog: a personal website on which an individual records opinions, links to other sites, etc. on a regular basis

Yet some people think that the rising number of media voices is a good thing. "The idea of the First Amendment is that true ideas and accurate information will eventually push inaccurate information out of the marketplace," Stephen Frank tells *JS*. "People want the facts. When there are competing ideas, the truth comes out." JS

USA/We the People

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

—Constitution, Amendment I

"The Role of the News Media" by Mary Harvey. From *Junior Scholastic*, February 20, 2006 issue. Copyright © 2006 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

Journalism and the Digital Revolution

1 Few people would argue with the idea that the Digital Revolution has been, on balance, far more positive than negative. But this period of dramatic change has caused **upheaval** and uncertainty in certain industries. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the field of journalism.

upheaval: a big change that often causes problems

2 Not that long ago, a reporter's job required little in the way of technological savvy. If you could dial a telephone, operate a pen, and use a typewriter, you were as up-to-date as you needed to be. Other departments were responsible for taking photographs, recording conversations, and filming events. A typical reporter spent the day gathering facts, wrote a story, turned it in before the deadline, and was done for the day.

3 The Digital Revolution changed all that. Well, most of it. Reporters still use telephones and non-digital writing implements, but today's journalists need a much larger skill set. They must know how to use computers, apps, the Internet, email, **social media**, mobile phones, digital recorders, and cameras. On top of that, modern reporters operate at a much more frantic pace. In addition to filing their daily stories, many reporters are expected to submit photographs, video clips, and audio interviews.

social media: forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites) through which users create communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)

4 Reporters have also had to get over their distaste for social media. Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest have become integral parts of the reporting process and vital connections between news organizations and the public they seek to serve. Links to social media outlets on news websites flower like rain lilies after a thunderstorm. News organizations encourage the general public to submit photographs, videos, and news tips. And nearly every story on newspaper websites includes a reader comment section to encourage discussion of the story. Some news organizations, such as CNN, even encourage the public to register as official correspondents. All of this has improved reporting, says Mark Briggs, a blogger and author of the book *Journalism 2.0*. "Just like the telephone didn't replace the face-to-face meeting over coffee, and e-mail didn't replace the telephone, social media doesn't replace other forms of connecting with people," he said. "It adds to them."

5 The rise of social media has turned the traditional relationship between news organizations and readers upside down. In the past, newspaper editors and reporters decided what was important and communicated that information to a docile public. Today, social media has put the public in the decision-making process. Journalism has become less of a lecture and more of a conversation. "Social media by its very definition is a participatory medium," says University of British Columbia journalism professor Alfred Hermida. "There is a potential for greater engagement and connection with the community, but only if journalists are open to **ceding** a degree of editorial control to the community."

ceding: giving up

GO ON

6 The power of social media became apparent after the 2009 elections in Iran. Many Iranians felt that the election had been stolen, and they poured out into the streets to protest. The Iranian government responded by censoring newspapers, blocking Internet sites, and shutting down texting services. Despite these efforts, Iranian citizens still managed to post comments, photos, and videos on social media. Their postings showed the world that the protests were more widespread than the government admitted and that the government reacted more violently than was being reported. Olivia Ma, the news manager for YouTube, recalled watching hundreds of videos being uploaded during the protests. “Because journalists have been banned from operating inside Iran, these videos are proving the only window into what’s really happening there,” she said at the time. Thanks to social media, the story got out to the larger world. The Iranian protests—which people had begun calling the “Twitter Revolution”—were front-page news everywhere but in Iran.

7 Social media does not require a **repressive** government to prove its value to the news-gathering process, however. For example, college student Elliot Volkman began looking into a run-down apartment complex that catered to college students in Georgia after he received a tip from a friend. The friend sent him photographs of the complex via Facebook. Volkman then used Facebook to locate other residents of the complex. As word that Volkman was working on a story spread, more residents used Facebook to contact him. The story that Volkman eventually wrote forced the owners of the apartment complex to make repairs. It also won a Georgia College Press Association award.

repress: controlling people by force

8 Like all revolutions, the Digital Revolution has produced winners and losers. Exactly who those winners and losers are is not always immediately apparent. At first, many traditional news outlets, like newspapers and magazines, were slow to adapt to the realities of the digital age. As a result, advertising revenues declined, readership fell, and news organizations were forced to lay off employees. Some newspapers and magazines went out of business or stopped publishing printed editions. Recently, however, news organizations have shown signs that they understand what is happening to their business model. If journalism is to emerge as a winner, traditional news outlets must accept—and even welcome—the myriad changes brought about by the Digital Revolution.

"Journalism and the Digital Revolution" © WestEd.

END

Directions for Administering the
Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Writing Task A

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Informative/Explanatory Writing Task A

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Informative/Explanatory Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an informative/explanatory essay about how journalism has changed. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read some information about the changing roles of media, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passages. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may ***not*** *use any other programs on the computer, and you may* ***not*** *use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read two passages about news media and journalism. Take notes as you read. You will later plan and write an informative essay about how journalism has changed.*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passages and take notes on these sources.***
>
> *Read the following passages about the changing roles of media. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *"The Role of the News Media"*
> - *"Journalism and the Digital Revolution"*
>
> *As you read, identify the most important changes in journalism discussed in both articles and consider the effects these changes have had on society.*

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your essay.

Now, review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

***How has journalism in the United* States changed over time? How have these changes affected society?**

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea*
- *Organization – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read these passages, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Informative/Explanatory Writing Task A

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Informative/Explanatory Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information about the changing roles of media, took notes on these sources, and started planning and drafting an informative/explanatory essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passages and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *<u>Statement of Purpose/Focus</u> – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea*
- *<u>Organization</u> – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *<u>Elaboration of Evidence</u> – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information*
- *<u>Language and Vocabulary</u> – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *<u>Conventions</u> – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Writing Task B

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read two passages about animals and their use of tools. Take notes as you read. You will later write an informative essay that connects the information about gathering data and evidence with the information about animals' use of tools.

STEP 1

Read the passages and take notes on these sources.

Read the following passages about animals and their use of tools. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passages and your notes as often as you like.

- "Tools"
- "The Great Crow Fallacy"

As you read, consider how scientists gather good evidence and data.

STEP 2

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

Imagine that you are a scientist who is investigating animals' use of tools. Select one of the animals described in "Tools." Explain how you would gather evidence to prove or disprove that the animal is actually using an object as a tool.

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea
- Organization – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

GO ON

Tools

by Ross E Hutchins

1 I have always had a suspicion that many wild creatures are about as smart as we are. When we go fishing we place bait on a hook and toss the line and hook out into the water, and hope that a fish will take the bait and thus be caught.

2 Near Miami, Florida, there is a family of green **herons** that catches fish in much the same manner. One of the herons first obtains a piece of bait. Then it walks slowly down to the edge of the water and tosses the bait a short distance away from the shore. The heron then squats down to wait. Soon a small fish is apt to appear, attracted by the bait. When this occurs the heron's sharp beak flashes out and grabs the luckless fish.

heron: a large bird with very long legs and a long beak, that lives near water

3 We humans are tool-using animals. The fishing rod and line is a tool. We use screwdrivers, pliers, hammers, and numerous other tools for various purposes. This ability is supposed, by some, to set us apart from all the "lower" animals. But consider the use of tools by a number of other animals of one kind or another.

4 Take the case of the *Ammophila* wasp. These wasps excavate nesting tunnels in the ground and then stock them with caterpillars which will serve as food for their young. After a female *Ammophila* wasp has stocked her underground nest with food, she lays an egg in it, and then fills the outer portion of the tunnel with sand to prevent any enemy from entering. As a final act, the wasp then picks up a pebble in her jaws and tamps down the sand over the entrance. The pebble is a tool, just as surely as is the hammer you would use to drive a nail.

5 On the Galápagos Islands off the coast of South America, there is a tool-using bird. This is the woodpecker finch, but these small birds do not have the long tongue of a woodpecker to get grubs and other insects out of holes in trees. However, they have developed the habit of using cactus spines as tools to pry insects out of their holes. Holding the spine in its beak, the finch pokes it into the hole, spears the insect, and pulls it out.

6 Sea otters also use tools. Sea otters feed on hard-shelled abalones, and in order to break open the hard shells, they find a flat rock and bang the abalone against it until it opens. The sea otter dives to the bottom for both abalone and rock. Then, surfacing, he rolls over on his back, places the rock on his chest, and bangs away until he can pick out the abalone meat with his paws.

7 Herring gulls don't actually pick up a tool to break open the clams they like to eat. But they have devised a means of opening them by using something else. Picking up a clam, they will fly up into the air and drop it on the rocks below. Sea gulls have been seen dropping clams on the hard surfaces of a **macadam** road to break them open.

macadam: a road surface made of a mixture of broken stones and tar or asphalt

GO ON

8 There is a fish that lives in the rivers and lakes of Siam that has its own "tool." It is called the archerfish (*Toxotes jaculator*). While most fish leap out of the water to catch insects, this fish swims about just beneath the surface of the water. When it spots an insect on some overhanging plant it shoots a jet of water at it. This causes the insect to fall into the water where the fish eats it. Archerfish vary in size from three to eight inches and may squirt a jet of water up to twelve feet. As children, we often fought duels with water pistols, but it appears that the first water pistol had been developed long ago by the archer fish of Siam.

"Tools" by Ross E. Hutchins, from *Nature Invented It First.* Copyright © 1980 by Ross E. Hutchings.

The Great Crow Fallacy

by Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson

1 Terry Maple wasn't sure, but he thought he might have seen a crow using cars to crack walnuts. He had spotted the crow dropping nuts on the pavement one day as he drove through Davis, California. Maple couldn't know that his curious observation would give rise to a twenty-year legend that would significantly elevate crows' status on the avian IQ scale. We tell the story here as a cautionary tale to those with a tendency to draw fast conclusions from limited evidence.

Maple, a psychology professor at the University of California—Davis, published an article in 1974 describing the single crow and its behavior. The title was "Do Crows Use Automobiles as Nutcrackers?" Maple couldn't answer the question, and it wasn't even clear whether the crow he saw had managed to crack the nut it dropped: "I was, unfortunately, unable to return to the scene for a closer look," he wrote. The professor correctly called his observation "an anecdote," meaning an interesting story that suggested crows might use cars to crack walnuts, and that future research might settle the question.

Jump ahead three years, to a November morning in 1977. A biologist named David Grobecker observed a single crow dropping a palm fruit from its beak onto a busy residential street in Long Beach, California. The bird seemed to wait, perched on a lamppost, until a car ran over the fruit and broke it into edible fragments. Then it flew down to eat. This happened twice in the space of about twenty minutes. Grobecker and another biologist, Theodore Pietsch, published an article the following year whose title, "Crows Use Automobiles as Nutcrackers," suggested they had answered the question posed by Maple. "This is an ingenious adjustment to the intrusion of man's technology," the authors concluded.

For nearly twenty years, others cited these two published accounts as evidence of exceptional intelligence in crows. Indeed, some crow fanciers remain convinced—largely on the basis of these two anecdotes—that crows have learned how to use passing cars to crack nuts. But it turns out that although crows are smart birds, they are almost certainly not *that* smart.

5 How do we know? Because we now have some real data, not single observations or anecdotes. There is a big difference, as the rest of this story illustrates.

The data come from a study published in *The Auk*, the journal of the American Ornithologists' Union, in 1977 by the biologist Daniel Cristol and three colleagues from the University of California. Cristol's study was based on more than a couple of random observations. He and his colleagues watched crows foraging for walnuts on the streets of Davis for a total of over twenty-five hours spread over fourteen days. Just as they had expected, they saw plenty of crows dropping walnuts on the street. Crows, seagulls, and some other birds often drop food onto hard surfaces to crack it open. An estimated 10,000 crows were roosting nearby, and 150 walnut trees lined the streets where the study was conducted. But did the crows deliberately drop walnuts in the path of oncoming cars? The

scientists watched how the crows behaved when cars were approaching; then, soon after, they watched how crows behaved at the same places when cars were not approaching, during an equivalent time period.

What they found, after 400 separate observations, was that there was no real difference. In fact, crows were just slightly more likely to drop a walnut on the pavement when no car was approaching. The birds were also slightly more likely to fly away and leave a nut on the pavement in the absence of a car, contrary to what would be expected if the birds really expected cars to crack the nuts for them. Furthermore, the scientists noted that they frequently saw crows dropping walnuts on rooftops, on sidewalks, and vacant parking lots, where there was no possibility of a car coming along. Not once during the study did a car crack even a single walnut dropped by a crow.

The authors concluded, reasonably enough: "Our observations suggest that crows merely are using the hard road surface to facilitate opening walnuts, and their interactions with cars are incidental." The title of their article: "Crows Do Not Use Automobiles as Nutcrackers: Putting and Anecdote to the Test." The anecdote flunked.

LESSON: Don't Confuse Anecdotes with Data

One of our favorite sayings—variously attributed to different economists—is "The plural of 'anecdote' is not data." That means simply this: one or two interesting stories don't prove anything. They could be far from typical. In this case, it's fun to think that crows might be clever enough to learn such a neat trick as using human drivers to prepare their meals for them. It's also easy to see how spotting a few crows getting lucky can encourage even serious scientists to think the behavior might be deliberate. But we have to consider the term "anecdotal evidence" as something close to an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms.

10 Now, it's true that the crow debate continues. Millions of people saw a PBS documentary by David Attenborough that showed Japanese crows putting walnuts in a crosswalk and then returning to eat after passing cars had cracked them. The scene was inspired by an article in the *Japanese Journal of Ornithology* by a psychologist at Tohoku University. But the Japanese article wasn't based on a scientific study; it merely reported more anecdotes: "Because the [crows'] behavior was so sporadic, most observation was made when the author came across the behavior coincidentally on his commute to the campus." That was two years before Cristol and his colleagues finally published their truly systematic study. For us, the notion that crows deliberately use cars as nutcrackers has been **debunked**, until and unless better evidence comes along. Even Theodore Pietsch, who coauthored the 1978 article that said crows do use cars as nutcrackers, has changed his view. "When Grobecker and I wrote that paper so long ago, we did it on a whim, took about an hour to write it, and we were shocked that it was accepted for publication almost immediately, with no criticism at all from outside referees," he told us. "I would definitely put much more credibility in a study supported by data rather than random observation." So do we, and so should all of us.

debunk: to show that something is not true

"The Great Crow Fallacy" by Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, from *un-Spun.* Copyright © 2007 by Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Reprinted by permission of The Random House Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC.

END

Directions for Administering the
Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Writing Task B

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Informative/Explanatory Writing Task B

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Informative/Explanatory Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an informative/explanatory essay about how scientists gather good evidence and data. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read some information about animals and their use of tools, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passages. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may ***not*** *use any other programs on the computer, and you may* ***not*** *use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read two passages about animals and their use of tools. Take notes as you read. You will later write an informative essay that connects the information about gathering data and evidence with the information about animals' use of tools.*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passages and take notes on these sources.***
>
> *Read the following passages about animals and their use of tools. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passages and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *"Tools"*
> - *"The Great Crow Fallacy"*
>
> *As you read, consider how scientists gather good evidence and data.*

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

Imagine that you are a scientist who is investigating animals' use of tools. Select one of the animals described in "Tools." Explain how you would gather evidence to prove or disprove that the animal is actually using an object as a tool.

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea*
- *Organization – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read these passages, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Informative/Explanatory Writing Task B

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Informative/Explanatory Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information about animals and their use of tools, took notes on these sources, and started planning and drafting an informative/explanatory essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passages and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may* ***not*** *use any other programs on the computer, and you may* ***not*** *use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea*
- *Organization – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Writing Task C

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read two first-person narratives that describe a journey. Take notes as you read. You will later plan and write an informative essay about how the narrators in the two excerpts use imagery and detail.

STEP 1

Read the passages and take notes on these sources.

Read the following narratives about a character's journey. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.

- an excerpt from *"A Letter from Isabella Bird"*
- an excerpt from "Fire on the Mountain"

As you read, consider how the two narrators use details and imagery to convey the changing of the scenery.

STEP 2

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

How do both authors use imagery and detail to convey the changing of the scenery? What affect does this have on the reader?

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea
- Organization – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

An Excerpt from *A Letter from Isabella Bird*

CHEYENNE, WYOMING, September 8.

1 Precisely at 11 P.M. the huge Pacific train, with its heavy bell tolling, thundered up to the door of the Truckee House, and on presenting my ticket at the double door of a "Silver Palace" car, the slippered steward, whispering low, conducted me to my berth—a luxurious bed three and a half feet wide, with a hair mattress on springs, fine linen sheets, and costly California blankets. The twenty-four inmates of the car were all invisible, asleep behind rich curtains. It was a true Temple of **Morpheus**. Profound sleep was the object to which everything was dedicated. Four silver lamps hanging from the roof, and burning low, gave a dreamy light. On each side of the center passage, rich rep curtains, green and crimson, striped with gold, hung from silver bars running near the roof, and trailed on the soft Axminster carpet. The temperature was carefully kept at 70 degrees. It was 29 degrees outside. Silence and freedom from jolting were secured by double doors and windows, costly and ingenious arrangements of springs and cushions, and a speed limited to eighteen miles an hour.

Morpheus: the Greek God of dreams

2 As I lay down, the gallop under the dark pines, the frosty moon, the forest fires, the flaring lights and roaring din of Truckee faded as dreams fade, and eight hours later a pure, pink dawn divulged a level blasted region, with grey sage brush growing out of a soil encrusted with alkali, and bounded on either side by low glaring ridges. All through that day we traveled under a cloudless sky over solitary glaring plains, and stopped twice at solitary, glaring frame houses, where coarse, greasy meals, infested by lazy flies, were provided at a dollar per head. By evening we were running across the continent on a bee line, and I sat for an hour on the rear platform of the rear car to enjoy the wonderful beauty of the sunset and the atmosphere. Far as one could see in the crystalline air there was nothing but desert. The jagged Humboldt ranges flaming in the sunset, with snow in their **clefts**, though forty-five miles off, looked within an easy canter. The bright metal track, purpling like all else in the cool distance, was all that linked one with Eastern or Western civilization.

cleft: the V-shaped space between mountains

"An Excerpt from *A Letter from Isabella Bird*" in the public domain.

An Excerpt from *Fire on the Mountain*

by Edward Abbey

1 Brightest New Mexico. In that vivid light each rock and tree and cloud and mountain existed with a kind of force and clarity that seemed not natural but supernatural. Yet it also felt as familiar as home, the country of dreams, the land I had known from the beginning.

2 We were riding north from El Paso in my grandfather's pickup truck, bound for the village of Baker and the old man's ranch. This was in early June: the glare of the desert sun, glancing off the steel hood of the truck, stung my eyes with such intensity that I had to close them now and then for relief. And I could almost feel the fierce dry heat, like that of an oven, drawing the moisture from my body; I thought with longing of the cool water bag that hung from the hood latch over the grille in front, inaccessible. I wished that Grandfather would stop for a minute and give us time for a drink, but I was too proud and foolish to ask him; twelve years old, I thought it important to appear tougher than I really was.

3 When my eyes stopped aching I could open them again, raise my head and watch the highway and fence and telephone line, all geometrically straight and parallel, rolling forever toward us. Heat waves shimmered over the asphalt, giving the road far ahead a transparent, liquid look, an illusion which receded before us as fast as we approached.

4 Staring ahead, I saw a vulture rise from the flattened carcass of a rabbit on the pavement and hover nearby while we passed over his lunch. Beyond the black bird with his white-trimmed wings soared the western sky, the immense and violet sky flowing over alkali flats and dunes of sand and gypsum toward the mountains that stood like chains of islands, like a convoy of purple ships, along the horizon.

5 Those mountains-they seemed at once both close by and impossibly remote, an easy walk away and yet beyond the limits of the imagination. Between us lay the clear and empty wilderness of scattered mesquite trees and creosote shrubs and streambeds where water ran as seldom as the rain came down. Each summer for three years I had come to New Mexico; each time I gazed upon that moon-dead landscape and asked myself: what is out there? And each time I concluded: *something* is out there-maybe everything. To me the desert looked like a form of Paradise. And it always will.

"An Excerpt from *Fire on the Mountain"* by Edward Abbey. Copyright © 1962 by Edward Abbey. Reprinted by permission of University of New Mexico Press.

END

Directions for Administering the
Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Writing Task C

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Informative/Explanatory Writing Task C

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Informative/Explanatory Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an informative/explanatory essay about how the narrators in two excerpts use imagery and detail. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read two passages, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passages. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may ***not*** *use any other programs on the computer, and you may* ***not*** *use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read two first-person narratives that describe a journey. Take notes as you read. You will later plan and write an informative essay about how the narrators in the two excerpts use imagery and detail.*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passages and take notes on these sources.***
>
> *Read the following narratives about a character's journey. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *an excerpt from* "A Letter from Isabella Bird"
> - *an excerpt from* "Fire on the Mountain"
>
> *As you read, consider how the two narrators use details and imagery to convey the changing of the scenery.*

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your essay.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

How do both authors use imagery and detail to convey the changing of the scenery? What affect does this have on the reader?

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea*
- *Organization – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read these passages, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Informative/Explanatory Writing Task C

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Informative/Explanatory Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information two passages, took notes on these sources, and started planning and drafting an informative/explanatory essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passages and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your essay.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *<u>Statement of Purpose/Focus</u> – how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea*
- *<u>Organization</u> – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *<u>Elaboration of Evidence</u> – how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information*
- *<u>Language and Vocabulary</u> – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *<u>Conventions</u> – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Narrative Writing Task A

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read two first-person narratives about a journey. Take notes as you read. You will later write a narrative in which a character takes a journey.

STEP 1

Read the passages and take notes on these sources.

Read the following excerpts in which a character takes a journey. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.

- an excerpt from *"A Letter from Isabella Bird"*
- an excerpt from "Fire on the Mountain"

As you read, consider how the two narrators describe a journey.

STEP 2

Plan and write your narrative.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

Using the excerpts as a model, write a narrative in which a character takes a journey.

STEP 3

Revise and edit your narrative.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Narrative Focus – how well you maintain your focus, and establish a setting, narrator and or characters, and point of view
- Organization – how well the events logically flow from beginning to end using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Narrative – how well you elaborate with details, dialogue, and description to advance the story or illustrate the experience
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express experiences or events using sensory, concrete, and figurative language that is appropriate for your purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

GO ON

An Excerpt from *A Letter from Isabella Bird*

CHEYENNE, WYOMING, September 8.

1 Precisely at 11 P.M. the huge Pacific train, with its heavy bell tolling, thundered up to the door of the Truckee House, and on presenting my ticket at the double door of a "Silver Palace" car, the slippered steward, whispering low, conducted me to my berth—a luxurious bed three and a half feet wide, with a hair mattress on springs, fine linen sheets, and costly California blankets. The twenty-four inmates of the car were all invisible, asleep behind rich curtains. It was a true Temple of **Morpheus**. Profound sleep was the object to which everything was dedicated. Four silver lamps hanging from the roof, and burning low, gave a dreamy light. On each side of the center passage, rich rep curtains, green and crimson, striped with gold, hung from silver bars running near the roof, and trailed on the soft Axminster carpet. The temperature was carefully kept at 70 degrees. It was 29 degrees outside. Silence and freedom from jolting were secured by double doors and windows, costly and ingenious arrangements of springs and cushions, and a speed limited to eighteen miles an hour.

Morpheus: the Greek God of dreams

2 As I lay down, the gallop under the dark pines, the frosty moon, the forest fires, the flaring lights and roaring din of Truckee faded as dreams fade, and eight hours later a pure, pink dawn divulged a level blasted region, with grey sage brush growing out of a soil encrusted with alkali, and bounded on either side by low glaring ridges. All through that day we traveled under a cloudless sky over solitary glaring plains, and stopped twice at solitary, glaring frame houses, where coarse, greasy meals, infested by lazy flies, were provided at a dollar per head. By evening we were running across the continent on a bee line, and I sat for an hour on the rear platform of the rear car to enjoy the wonderful beauty of the sunset and the atmosphere. Far as one could see in the crystalline air there was nothing but desert. The jagged Humboldt ranges flaming in the sunset, with snow in their **clefts**, though forty-five miles off, looked within an easy canter. The bright metal track, purpling like all else in the cool distance, was all that linked one with Eastern or Western civilization.

cleft: the V-shaped space between mountains

"An Excerpt from *A Letter from Isabella Bird*" in the public domain.

An Excerpt from *Fire on the Mountain*

by Edward Abbey

1 Brightest New Mexico. In that vivid light each rock and tree and cloud and mountain existed with a kind of force and clarity that seemed not natural but supernatural. Yet it also felt as familiar as home, the country of dreams, the land I had known from the beginning.

2 We were riding north from El Paso in my grandfather's pickup truck, bound for the village of Baker and the old man's ranch. This was in early June: the glare of the desert sun, glancing off the steel hood of the truck, stung my eyes with such intensity that I had to close them now and then for relief. And I could almost feel the fierce dry heat, like that of an oven, drawing the moisture from my body; I thought with longing of the cool water bag that hung from the hood latch over the grille in front, inaccessible. I wished that Grandfather would stop for a minute and give us time for a drink, but I was too proud and foolish to ask him; twelve years old, I thought it important to appear tougher than I really was.

3 When my eyes stopped aching I could open them again, raise my head and watch the highway and fence and telephone line, all geometrically straight and parallel, rolling forever toward us. Heat waves shimmered over the asphalt, giving the road far ahead a transparent, liquid look, an illusion which receded before us as fast as we approached.

4 Staring ahead, I saw a vulture rise from the flattened carcass of a rabbit on the pavement and hover nearby while we passed over his lunch. Beyond the black bird with his white-trimmed wings soared the western sky, the immense and violet sky flowing over alkali flats and dunes of sand and gypsum toward the mountains that stood like chains of islands, like a convoy of purple ships, along the horizon.

5 Those mountains-they seemed at once both close by and impossibly remote, an easy walk away and yet beyond the limits of the imagination. Between us lay the clear and empty wilderness of scattered mesquite trees and creosote shrubs and streambeds where water ran as seldom as the rain came down. Each summer for three years I had come to New Mexico; each time I gazed upon that moon-dead landscape and asked myself: what is out there? And each time I concluded: *something* is out there-maybe everything. To me the desert looked like a form of Paradise. And it always will.

"An Excerpt from *Fire on the Mountain"* by Edward Abbey. Copyright © 1962 by Edward Abbey. Reprinted by permission of University of New Mexico Press.

END

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Narrative Writing Task A

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Narrative Writing Task A

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Narrative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write a narrative in which a character takes a journey. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read two passages, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passages. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may ***not*** *use any other programs on the computer, and you may* ***not*** *use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read two first-person narratives about a journey. Take notes as you read. You will later write a narrative in which a character takes a journey.*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passages and take notes on these sources.***
>
> *Read the following excerpts in which a character takes a journey. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *an excerpt from* "A Letter from Isabella Bird"
> - *an excerpt from* "Fire on the Mountain"
>
> *As you read, consider how the two narrators describe a journey.*

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your narrative.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your essay on the following topic:

Using the excerpts as a model, write a narrative in which a character takes a journey*.*

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your narrative.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Narrative Focus – how well you maintain your focus, and establish a setting, narrator and or characters, and point of view*
- *Organization – how well the events logically flow from beginning to end using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Narrative – how well you elaborate with details, dialogue, and description to advance the story or illustrate the experience*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express experiences or events using sensory, concrete, and figurative language that is appropriate for your purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read these passages, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Narrative Writing Task A

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Narrative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information two passages, took notes on these sources, and started planning and drafting a narrative. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passages and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your narrative.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Narrative Focus – how well you maintain your focus, and establish a setting, narrator and or characters, and point of view*

- *Organization – how well the events logically flow from beginning to end using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Narrative – how well you elaborate with details, dialogue, and description to advance the story or illustrate the experience*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express experiences or events using sensory, concrete, and figurative language that is appropriate for your purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

***4.* Announce 10 Minutes Remaining**

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

***5.* End Session 2**

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Student Directions
Grade 8 Narrative Writing Task B

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will read a passage about cloud seeding. Take notes as you read. You will later write a narrative in which a character attempts to make rain.

STEP 1

Read the passage and take notes.

Read the following passage about cloud seeding technology to make rain where and when it is needed. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.

- "Sowing Better Weather"

As you read, think about the descriptive details, the setting, and the characters you may wish to include in your narrative using information from the passage.

STEP 2

Plan and write your narrative.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your narrative on the following topic:

Using details from the passage, write a narrative in which a character attempts to use cloud seeding technology to make rain.

STEP 3

Revise and edit your narrative.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Narrative Focus – how well you maintain your focus, and establish a setting, narrator and or characters, and point of view
- Organization – how well the events logically flow from beginning to end using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Narrative – how well you elaborate with details, dialogue, and description to advance the story or illustrate the experience
- Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express experiences or events using sensory, concrete, and figurative language that is appropriate for your purpose
- Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

GO ON

Sowing Better Weather

by Peg Lopata

1 Take a look up the next time you're outside. If you happen to see tall, white, fluffy clouds, you're looking at what meteorologists call "rainmakers." That's because this type of cloud can be tweaked to make more rain where and when it's needed. The clouds can also be tweaked to reduce the size and amount of damaging hail they might produce. More rain when you want it and less hail both reduce crop damage and make life better.

Cloud-tweaking techniques are called cloud seeding, and there are two methods. The first uses a plane equipped with flares that shoots silver iodide into a cloud that's likely to produce rain anyway. The second method shoots the silver iodide into the cloud from a high point on the ground where the wind carries it into the cloud. Either way, the silver iodide helps the cloud make more rain. If the cloud is likely to produce hail instead of rain, the silver iodide reduces the size or amount of hailstones.

Silver iodide is considered relatively non-toxic. As long as reasonable care is exercised, cloud seeding with silver iodide appears to be safe for the environment.

A Short History of Rainmaking

If you find it hard to believe that meteorologists can make rain or reduce hail, you're smart to be skeptical. Way back in 1905, Charles Mallory Hatfield promised and seemed to deliver rain to farmers in drought-stricken southern California. For a decade after that, Hatfield became a phenomenon, a true "rainmaker"—or so many believed. But *Science* magazine later proved that Hatfield had really only been successful at making money. (Nature was coincidentally providing rain when he used his rainmaking equipment.) The science of rainmaking would have to wait a few more years.

5 In the mid 1940s, three scientists at General Electric Laboratory in Schenectady, New York, Vincent Schaefer, Bernard Vonnegut, and Irving Langmuir, made a rainmaking discovery. Their experiments showed that dry ice or silver iodide deposited into certain kinds of clouds acted like seeds of rain or snow. The U.S. military budget funded Project Cirrus to continue the research. Federal funding peaked in the 1970s and many companies were hired to seed clouds throughout the country.

The U.S. government even funded a project called STORMFURY to try to disrupt hurricanes.

Expectations were high for weather modification of all kinds, including cloud seeding. It was widely believed that humankind would truly become capable of controlling the weather. In fact, there was so much worry about those who might use weather-control technology for the wrong reasons that in 1977 the United Nations passed a treaty forbidding the use of weather modification as a weapon of war.

GO ON

As it turned out, modifying the weather was quite beyond the control of humankind. Numerous concerns about the technology's impact on the environment arose and the high expectations were dashed; the government stopped funding weather modification research, including cloud-seeding projects. The science of weather modification fell out of favor and no longer was considered a legitimate science.

Rainmaking Returns

Today, rainmaking and hail reduction is on the horizon once more. It's considered legitimate science, but it's not without controversy. "It's been very difficult to show statistically that cloud seeding is actually making it rain more," says Dr. Hugh Willoughby, research professor at Florida International University in Miami. Willoughby wonders if the promise of the technology is worth the money that must be spent to find out if it can really deliver. Could the money be better spent on other ideas to deal with water shortages? Maybe. But, Willoughby does hope to see cloud-seeding research go forward. "We've been able to make rainy days rainier," he says. "What you'd like to do is be able to make it rain during a drought."

10 Though drought-busting is not yet possible, the science of rainmaking overall has made great strides since the 1980s. Meteorologists now know much more about cloud origin, development, and decay. Forecasting, due to better modeling and improved radar technology, has also advanced so there are fewer "misses" in cloud seeding. A "miss" means seeding the wrong kind of cloud, or not finding enough clouds to seed. Though hardly a sure bet, it has been shown that when careful cloud seeding is done by competent people, seasonal rainfall can be increased, says Dr. Joseph Golden.

"You can increase rainfall some 15 to 20 percent over a whole season," he says. "In mountain regions, you can increase snow pack 10 to 15 percent."

Today, some twenty-six countries have cloud-seeding projects underway. In places like Alberta, Canada, cloud seeding is used to reduce hail, which causes millions of dollars in property damage there. In the United States, about nine states seed clouds. In Texas alone, cloud-seeding projects cover land in about 20 percent of the state.

Cloud Seeding to the Rescue?

Cloud seeding is seen as part of a water management strategy to ensure that crops will grow, reservoirs won't dry up, and power plants that run on waterpower will keep running. In Idaho, for example, the Idaho Power Company has been seeding clouds for many years. They seed the clouds of incoming snowstorms to make them produce more snow. The result is more snow pack. When the snow pack melts in the spring, more water fills the rivers that power hydroelectric generating plants. For western states, more water means reservoirs will be replenished and hydropower plants can count on producing enough electricity.

Can cloud seeding end droughts and meet all the water needs for the future in the long term? When Willoughby entered the field he thought so. "It would be absolutely wonderful to go to India

when the monsoon fails . . . you go with a fleet of planes and you make it rain and the farmers get through the summer without a famine. This is a fantasy that I had when I started in this field," Willoughby says, admitting that it still remains a fantasy.

15 That's because during drought conditions there are usually not enough clouds around with enough water in them to seed. However, seeding clouds in drought-prone areas before droughts begin might be the answer. Taking advantage of the clouds that would probably produce rain on their own might prevent water levels from dropping to drastically low levels that cause crop failure. Wells and reservoirs might maintain enough water for people's needs.

Cloud seeding definitely holds great promise. Though not yet conclusively proven, some meteorologists are convinced that it has increased rainfall. Others have found it easier to prove that cloud seeding has reduced hailstorms and crop damage. As meteorologists' knowledge of clouds increases and forecasting tools are improved, perhaps this technology will one day move from fantasy to reality and truly become a lifesaver.

Cloud Seeding for Dummies

To seed a summertime cloud, you need a specially-equipped plane and young thunderstorms in the sky, meaning clouds that will probably produce rain. These are called cumulus or convective clouds. They are large, billowy, and look like cauliflower.

Special flares mounted on the outside of the plane are used to drop silver iodide from above the cloud. Why silver iodide? Because it acts very much like ice. The pilot of the plane is given instructions by a meteorologist about which clouds to seed. Timing and placement is critical. "It's tricky," says Bruce Boe, Director of Meteorology, Weather Modification, Inc., Fargo, North Dakota. "You have to put the right amount [of silver iodide] in the right place at the right time. All three must work for the seeding to work."

If the temperature inside a cloud is cold enough, when tiny droplets of "super-cooled" water encounter specks of dust, salt, or sand, small ice crystals form. Water vapor in the cloud freezes onto the surface of these crystals. They get heavier and fall, changing into raindrops as they encounter warmer temperatures and melt. Seeding results in many more of these ice crystals forming much earlier in the cloud's lifetime. (One gram of silver iodide can supply as many as ten trillion artificial ice crystals.) The cloud begins to "grow" precipitation more quickly than if it had not been seeded. Over its life span the cloud produces more rain or snow. Whether rain or snow falls depends upon the temperature of the air closer to the ground.

"Sowing Better Weather" by Peg Lopata. From *Odyssey*, February 2008 issue. Copyright © 2008 by Carus Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of Cobblestone Publishing.

END

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Narrative Writing Task B

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

___ Student Directions Narrative Writing Task B

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Narrative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write a narrative in which a character attempts to use cloud seeding technology to make it rain. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read some information about cloud seeding, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

You have a pencil and blank paper to use for taking notes and planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions and passage. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may ***not*** *use any other programs on the computer, and you may* ***not*** *use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud. It says:

> *You will read a passage about cloud seeding. Take notes as you read. You will later write a narrative in which a character attempts to make rain.*

Next, find STEP 1. It says:

> ***Read the passage and take notes.***
>
> *Read the following passage about cloud seeding technology to make rain where and when it is needed. Take notes to use later while writing your essay. You can look back at the passage and your notes as often as you like.*
>
> - *"Sowing Better Weather"*
>
> *As you read, think about the descriptive details, the setting, and the characters you may wish to include in your narrative using information from the passage.*

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Now, find STEP 2. It says:

Plan and write your narrative.

Review your notes and sources, then plan and draft your narrative on the following topic:

Using details from the passage, write a narrative in which a character attempts to use cloud seeding technology to make rain.

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say*:* *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:*

Revise and edit your narrative.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Narrative Focus – how well you maintain your focus, and establish a setting, narrator and or characters, and point of view*
- *Organization – how well the events logically flow from beginning to end using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Narrative – how well you elaborate with details, dialogue, and description to advance the story or illustrate the experience*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express experiences or events using sensory, concrete, and figurative language that is appropriate for your purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read the passage, take notes, and start planning and drafting your essay. You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *Now, read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

___ Student Directions Narrative Writing Task B

___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Narrative Writing (optional)

___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)

___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)

___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information about cloud seeding, took notes on the source, and started planning and drafting a narrative. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the passage and use the notes you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says:

Revise and edit your narrative.

The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Narrative Focus – how well you maintain your focus, and establish a setting, narrator and or characters, and point of view*
- *Organization – how well the events logically flow from beginning to end using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Narrative – how well you elaborate with details, dialogue, and description to advance the story or illustrate the experience*
- *Language and Vocabulary – how well you effectively express experiences or events using sensory, concrete, and figurative language that is appropriate for your purpose*
- *Conventions – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

***4.* Announce 10 Minutes Remaining**

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

***5.* End Session 2**

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Teaching Tips

Citing/Using Evidence

Students need ample practice in using evidence to support their opinions/arguments with reasons and details. It is never acceptable to simply copy verbatim from a text as their reasons or details. While students are not expected to use formal citations (i.e. APA or MLA) on the Formative Tasks, it is important that they acknowledge the source of their evidence because citing sources gives credibility to their opinion and makes for proficient writing. Appropriate phrases might include: "According to the table…" or "Scientists found…." Students may also use parenthetical citations, such as, (Pros column). Students may reference their experiences as an elaborative technique, such as, "On a trip to the beach I discovered…"

Highlighters to the Rescue!

Teach students to use highlighters, colored pencils, or colored pens to emphasize important information as they read. At first it may be tempting for them to highlight everything, since it all seems important. But be patient and model the process a few times.

1. Look briefly over the entire book, article, or assignment to get a feel for its structure and how it is organized.
2. Pay particular attention to introductory and concluding paragraphs. These often contain summaries of important points.
3. Look for certain words and phrases that can tip you off that something important is coming up, such as "In sum," "The point is," "Most importantly," and so on.
4. Consider reading the conclusion first. It's like doing a maze backwards: If you know where you're trying to end up, you can find and understand the path better.
5. Look back over the book, article, or assignment the next day/class/session, reading only the highlighted material.

Elaborating Information in Tables

Tables and charts can provide a lot of information. Unfortunately, when students are writing opinions, arguments, or informative/explanatory essays using information from tables and charts, they do not elaborate. Simply repeating something from a chart is not very interesting. Teach students elaborative techniques such as adding sensory details, adding anecdotes, providing examples, and giving reasons. Students can become better writers by employing elaborative techniques that take their writing from mundane to interesting and even exciting!

To Title or Not to Title

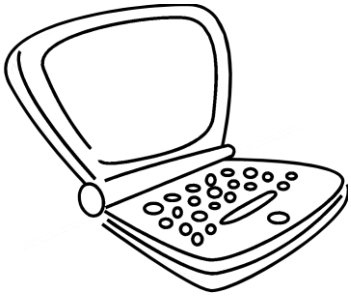
Students often ask, "Does my essay need a title?" Confront this issue while you are teaching and before you administer the formative tasks. Although the rubric does not specifically reference a title, teach students how to write effective and engaging titles.

On-Demand Writing

Remind students that authors write for different purposes. During instruction, there are definitely times when it is important for writers to take a piece through the entire writing process. However, the formative assessments are designed as "on-demand" writing, to see how well students can write to an assigned task in a finite amount of time. This is an important skill as on-demand writing will often be required of them in the college and career world. In on-demand writing, students need to be able to go from their pre-writing/brainstorming to drafting on computer, rather than a paper/pencil created draft. Be sure to incorporate opportunities for on-demand writing in regular instruction so it is not a surprise to students when they take the Formative Tasks.

Word Processing

Be sure students have ample practice and feel confident with the word processing program they will be using for the formative assessments. It is important students are familiar with how to save their documents and use the spell check and grammar check features. Ample practice drafting, re-reading, revising, and editing on-screen will also be beneficial for students so these become comfortable and expected parts of the writing process.



Word processing programs come with many bells and whistles than can enhance the publishing process. However, it is important during the Formative Tasks that students are focused on their writing and not wasting valuable time playing with features such as font and colors. While there are no specific guidelines in these areas for the assessment, it is important students understand the focus of the task is their actual writing. Teachers may want to establish their own parameters for font size/type. Only spell check and grammar check features are permitted.

Collecting the Finished Tasks

Consider setting up a shared drive where students can save their word-processed final drafts. Create folders for each of your classes on this drive. When students save their essays, have them name their file with their last name and first initial (i.e., Jamie Martinez = martinezj). The names will appear alphabetically in the file and make it easy for both you and the student to locate.

Meet with Your Colleagues

Plan to meet with colleagues after scoring all of the papers for your grade. Start a discussion about writing trends. What are some things that are working well? What are some areas that need to be addressed? Create a plan that maintains what is working well and addresses areas that need improving.

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