

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR  
**English Language Arts**  
&  
**Literacy in**  
**History/Social Studies,**  
**Science, and Technical Subjects**

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Appendix C:  
Grade 4  
Samples of Student Writing

## Samples of Student Writing

Following are writing samples that have been annotated to illustrate the criteria required to meet the Common Core State Standards for particular types of writing—argument, informative/explanatory text, and narrative—in a given grade. Each of the samples exhibits at least the level of quality required to meet the writing standards for that grade.

The range of accomplishment within each grade reflects differences in individual development as well as in the conditions under which the student writers were expected to work. Some of the samples were written in class or as homework; others were written for on-demand assessments; still others were the result of sustained research projects. Where possible, each sample includes information about the circumstances under which it was produced. The samples come from students in kindergarten through grade 12. The students attended school in a number of states and districts across the country.

At the lower grades, the samples include “opinion” writing, an elementary type of argument in which students give reasons for their opinions and preferences. Because reasons are required, such writing helps prepare students for drafting the arguments they will be expected to create beginning in grade 6.

## Acknowledgment

The Standards work group would like to express its appreciation to teachers and students at Monte Vista High School in California and the Randolph Technical Career Center in Vermont; other colleagues in California, Massachusetts, and Washington state; and ACT, Inc., and the *Concord Review*, which helped find and obtain permission for several of the samples included in the set. The group also would like to express its appreciation to the New Standards Project and to the International Reading Association, which allowed the use of several samples from their publications, and to the other student writers who granted permission to reproduce their work here.

**This document contains text excerpted from the CCSS ELA Appendix C.**

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## Permissions

The following student writing samples have been reprinted for the Common Core State Standards Initiative with the express permission of the following organizations and individuals.

ACT, Inc.:

Untitled essay on dress codes

California Department of Education:

“Football”; “Miss Sadie”

The *Concord Review*:

“In the Wake of the Spanish Lady: American Economic Resilience in the Aftermath of the Influenza Epidemic of 1918” by Brooke Granowski, *Concord Review*, 20(1), 203–216 (©2009 Concord Review, Inc.)

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

“Dear Mr. Sandler”; “A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus”; “Animal Farm”

Monte Vista High School in California:

“The True Meaning of Friendship”; “Lives on Mango, Rides the Whale”; untitled essay on civil disobedience in India; “Marching to His Own Beat”; “Summary of Key Points”

The National Center on Education and the Economy, on behalf of New Standards:

“My fabit Book is do you Want to be my FRIEND”; “Fraggs (Frogs)”; “I Went to Disnand”; “My Big Book About Spain”; “I bot a little cotton ball”; “Owl Moon”; “My first tooth is gone”; “Horses”; “When my Puppys Ranaway”; “Zoo Field Trip”; “Author Response: Roald Dahl”; “Getting Shot and Living Through It”; “A Geographical Report”; “The Old Man and the Sea”; “\_\_\_\_\_ School Bond Levy”

Randolph Technical Career Center in Vermont:

“Wood Joints”; “TIG/GTAW Welding”

Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:

“Glowing Shoes”; “Video Cameras in Classrooms”

Permission to reprint each of the following samples was granted by its author:

“Freedom From Structure”; “Fact vs. Fiction and All the Grey Space in Between”; “The Making of a Human Voice and How to Use It”

## Student Sample: Grade 4, Argument (Opinion)

This argument was produced in class, and the writer likely received feedback from her teacher and peers.

### Zoo Field Trip

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience. In addition, we will provide a study guide to \_\_\_\_\_ to identify the animals and provide information about conservation of endangered wildlife.

If we went on a field trip, we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money. These skills will be very useful again and again. We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates. This will provide us with a plan that covers the entire project from start to finish. The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.

The first thing to do is research, research, research! Next, we will choose a fund raiser (with your approval, of course). This will earn money for the field trip. The parents will hopefully chip in their time and money, if we don't get enough. We will prepare a plan schedule. This will provide the dates that team members will need to accomplish the steps toward our goal. My competent adult model is the Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World. It shows us step by step how to plan a trip and what to see.

Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_? How does this help \_\_\_\_\_ and the students? Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation. This project will be evaluated by its successful planning and its ability to involve our class in wildlife conservation. The trip will be evaluated by the student participation on the trip and a plan of conservation that identifies what we can all do to protect and respect wildlife so they will still be around when we have children.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces a topic clearly, states an opinion, and creates an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer’s purpose.**
  - *We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience.*
- **provides reasons that are supported by facts and details.**
  - *If we went on a field trip, we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money. . . . We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates. . . . The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.*
- **links opinion and reasons using words and phrases.**
  - *The first thing to do . . . Next . . . Now, you are asking . . . Besides the fact . . .*
- **provides a concluding section related to the opinion presented.**
  - The final paragraph details possible objections to the field trip and argues against each one:

*Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_? . . . Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation.*
- **demonstrates exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.**
  - This piece has been edited by student response groups as well as by adults, so it is nearly flawless in terms of observing the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 4, Narrative

This narrative was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were asked to respond to the following prompt: “One morning you wake up and find a strange pair of shoes next to your bed. The shoes are glowing. In several paragraphs, *write a story* telling what happens.”

### Glowing Shoes

One quiet, Tuesday morning, I woke up to a pair of bright, dazzling shoes, lying right in front of my bedroom door. The shoes were a nice shade of violet and smelled like catnip. I found that out because my cats, Tigger and Max, were rubbing on my legs, which tickled.

When I started out the door, I noticed that Tigger and Max were following me to school. Other cats joined in as well. They didn’t even stop when we reached Main Street!

“Don’t you guys have somewhere to be?” I quizzed the cats.

“Meeeeeeooooow!” the crowd of cats replied.

As I walked on, I observed many more cats joining the stalking crowd. I moved more swiftly. The crowd of cats’ walk turned into a prance. I sped up. I felt like a rollercoaster zooming past the crowded line that was waiting for their turn as I darted down the sidewalk with dashing cats on my tail.

When I reached the school building . . . SLAM! WHACK! “Meeyow!” The door closed and every single cat flew and hit the door.

Whew! Glad that’s over! I thought.

I walked upstairs and took my seat in the classroom.

“Mrs. Miller! Something smells like catnip! Could you open the windows so the smell will go away? Pleeeeease?” Zane whined.

“Oh, sure! We could all use some fresh air right now during class!” Mrs. Miller thoughtfully responded.

“Nooooooo!” I screamed.

When the teacher opened the windows, the cats pounced into the building.

“It’s a cat attack!” Meisha screamed

Everyone scrambled on top of their desks. Well, everyone except Cade, who was absolutely obsessed with cats.

“Awww! Look at all the fuzzy kitties! They’re sooo cute! Mrs. Miller, can I pet them?” Cade asked, adorably.

“Why not! Pet whichever one you want!” she answered.

“Thanks! Okay, kitties, which one of you wants to be petted by Cade Dahlin?” he asked the cats. None of them answered. They were all staring at me.

“Uh, hi?” I stammered.

Rrrriiing! The recess bell rang. Everyone, including Mrs. Miller, darted out the door.

Out at recess, Lissa and I played on the swings.

“Hey! Look over there!” Lissa shouted. Formed as an ocean wave, the cats ran toward me.

Luckily, Zane’s cat, Buddy, was prancing along with the aroma of catnip surrounding his fur. He ran up to me and rubbed on my legs. The shoes fell off. Why didn’t I think of this before? I notioned.

“Hey Cade! Catch!”

Cade grabbed the shoes and slipped them on.

The cats changed directions and headed for Cade.

“I’m in heaven!” he shrieked.

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## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **orients the reader by establishing a situation and introducing the narrator and characters.**
  - *One quiet, Tuesday morning, I woke up to a pair of bright, dazzling shoes, lying right in front of my bedroom door.*
- **organizes an event sequence that unfolds naturally.**
  - The teacher opens the window; cats come into the classroom; at recess the cats surge toward the narrator; her shoes fall off; another student (one who loves cats) picks up the narrator’s shoes; the cats move toward him; he is delighted.
  - *. . . Tigger and Max were following me to school. Other cats joined in as well. . . . When I reached the school building . . . SLAM! WHACK! “Meeyow!” The door closed and every single cat flew and hit the door.*
- **uses dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.**
  - *I felt like a rollercoaster zooming past the crowded line that was waiting for their turn . . .*



- *Whew! Glad that’s over! I thought.*
- *“Awww! Look at all the fuzzy kitties! They’re sooo cute! Mrs. Miller, can I pet them? Cade asked, adorably.*
- **uses a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.**
  - *When I started out the door . . . As I walked on . . . When I reached the school building . . .*
- **uses concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.**
  - *The shoes were a nice shade of violet and smelled like catnip. I found that out because my cats, Tigger and Max, were rubbing on my legs, which tickled.*
  - *“Awww! Look at all the fuzzy kitties! They’re sooo cute! . . .”*
- **provides a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.**
  - The narrator describes Cade earlier in the piece as a student obsessed with cats. The story concludes logically because such a character would likely be pleased with the effects of wearing catnip-scented shoes.
- **demonstrates exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.**