



# Writing On Demand

Teaching Students to Write for the  
Common Core State Standards

Beth Burke, NBCT  
[baburke@aacrc.net](mailto:baburke@aacrc.net)

## Contents

<b>Why Teach Writing On Demand?</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Value of Writing On Demand .....	2
Infusing Technology .....	3
The Writing Process .....	3
<b>Focusing on Text Types &amp; Purposes</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Writing from Sources</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Writing from Sources Prompts .....	5
<b>Opinion Writing</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Opinion Writing Forms .....	7
Prompts .....	7
<b>Informative/Explanatory Writing</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Return of the Essay .....	8
Informative/ Explanatory Writing Forms .....	8
Informative and Explanatory Writing Prompts .....	9
<b>Narrative Writing</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Narrative Writing Forms .....	10
Narrative Prompts .....	11
<b>A Writing On Demand Lesson</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Modeling .....	12
<i>Tips for Teaching Time Management</i> .....	12
Guided Practice .....	12
Closure .....	12
<b>Writing On Demand Mini-Lesson Ideas</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Assessing Writing On Demand</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Rubric .....	14
<b>Sample Think Aloud Language</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Scoring Key .....	14
Promote Self-Assessment .....	14
<b>Writing On Demand Rubric</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Blank Rubric Form</b> .....	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Online Resources .....	17

## Why Teach Writing On Demand?

### Grades 1-6

The *Common Core State Standards* has brought about a renewed emphasis on writing. Students will be required to write more than ever. Students will be expected to write not only for extended times, but also to create shorter, complete pieces in one sitting. *Writing On Demand*, as this is called, is essential to help prepare students for realistic writing experiences. Research shows that most jobs require workers to do some form of writing, and much of the writing is done without an opportunity to revise, edit, or “publish” by rewriting neatly. Most of the writing we do as adults is quick; we write notes or e-mails to friends or colleagues, lists, etc. It is critical for today’s students to be able to create cohesive, thoughtful pieces which include accurate spelling and grammar in order to communicate clearly in the workforce.

In *Writing On Demand*, students must complete a complete draft in a single writing session. This may be as short as 10 or up to 60 minutes. The teacher shows a brief prompt to students and sets a visible timer. *Writing On Demand* pieces should address a variety of text types and purposes, including opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative. Students may type or write their piece, and are expected to draft, revise, and edit within the time period.

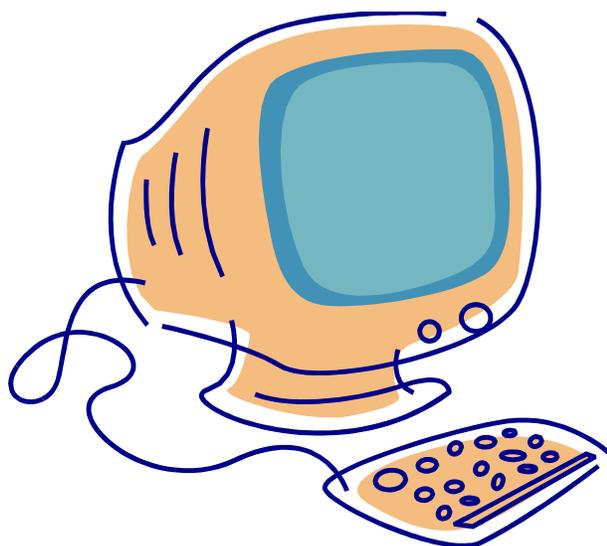
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.  
--CCSS Anchor Standard W10

### Value of Writing On Demand

Producing writing pieces *On Demand* has become more popular recently, and with good reason. It is the single best way to formatively assess students to determine if your mini-lessons are sticking—if students are applying what you have taught them in actual writing. *Through On Demand* writing, teachers get a true sample of students’ abilities. Because an *On Demand* piece is produced rather quickly, teachers can have the results and use them right away to make informed decisions about what lessons to teach next, what has to be retaught, and which students may need some small group instruction because they haven’t quite understood something yet. *On Demand* pieces are great to use in student portfolios. It is easy to accumulate several *On Demand* pieces that represent a variety of text types, or genre, to show a sampling of what students can do.

When writing from sources, students do not use personal or background experiences to explain their ideas. Writing must connect directly to the text or texts associate with the task. This means students must use evidence from the text/texts to justify the response/writing. Written responses for opinion/argument or for informative/explanatory pieces (but not narrative) will be assessed in part based on how well the writer demonstrates comprehension of the text(s).

## Infusing Technology



As technology permeates every aspect of students' lives, it becomes an ever-present force in education. In the future, students will be completing much of their work, including writing assessments, on computers. Therefore, it is essential that students have frequent opportunities to type their work as well as practice in keyboarding. Offer a variety of opportunities for students to write on demand—paper/pencil as well as typing.

Both consortiums that are building Common Core assessments, *Partnership for the Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* and *Smarter Balanced*, intend for the tests to be

administered online. This has implications for instruction:

- Keyboarding
- Navigating back and forth through several screens
- Manipulating multiple screens of information (i.e. reading a text in one window and answering a question in another on the side)
- Reading, highlighting, and note-taking via technology (laptops, tablets, etc.)
- Producing a full typed page in a single sitting in fourth grade

## The Writing Process

Even though **Writing On Demand** is concentrated in one sitting, students should still go through the writing process. **Writing On Demand** is concentrated in one sitting, but students should still use the stages of the writing process. Here is a sample of how to teach students to go through each stage while writing in a single sitting:

- *Prewriting*: *Think-Pair-Share*, class brainstorming activity, or jot a list of ideas on the side of the page.
- *Drafting*: Encourage students to write the entire time, not putting their pencils down.
- *Revising*: After completing their draft, they should read it to themselves to ensure that the ideas are complete and accurate.
- *Editing*: They should check capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and spelling to ensure that it is easy for the reader to understand.

## Focusing on Text Types & Purposes

In order to grow students as writers, teachers should vary the type of writing: opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, or narrative. Prompts for teaching students how to **Write On Demand** should generally be on topics about which students have a great deal of background knowledge. If students can't access their knowledge about the topic, their *Writing On Demand* will be weak.

**Writing On Demand** can be done in content areas—try journal writing about the math skill you taught that day. Vary the type of writing: opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, or narrative. While assessment, including narratives, will focus on writing from sources (text-based), it is important that students have opportunities to write a variety of text types, including personal narratives and other pieces that are not based in their readings. This helps students develop as storytellers, weaving their own events while applying techniques they learn from authors they study.



## Writing from Sources

**Writing from Sources** is a term appearing in the Common Core State Standards that refers to writing that is rooted directly in texts or other sources, relying on specific textual evidence. When writing from sources, students do not rely on personal or background experiences to explain their ideas. Writing must connect directly to the text(s) or other sources associated with the task. It relies on specific evidence from one or more texts or sources, such as media.

While students should continue to be encouraged to write a wide range of text types, standardized assessment in the CCSS will be *Writing from Sources*. This means that students will need to include text-based evidence in their writing. Writing from Sources is a term that refers to writing that is directly rooted in texts or other sources.

This means that students must use evidence from the text/texts to justify the response/writing. Writing responses for opinion or informative/explanatory pieces (but not narrative) will be assessed in part based on how well the reader responds to and demonstrates understanding of the text(s).

### Writing from Sources Prompts

- You have just read *Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School*. Write a story about how Ike met Mrs. LaRue. In your story, use details about both characters to describe events.
- Write a familiar story from the point of view of a different character.
- After reading about tornados, write a story about a family that experiences a tornado.
- After reading *Where Are You Going, Paul Revere?*, write a story from the point of view of [the horse, a British soldier, Paul Revere's wife, etc.].

### What Sources Can You Write From?

- art
- books
- data charts or graphs
- magazine articles
- music
- newspaper articles
- online resources
- podcasts
- poems
- short stories
- speeches
- websites
- video clips

## Opinion Writing

**Opinion Writing** is stating your belief or conclusion and proving that it is valid. According to Appendix C in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (page 2), Opinion writing is “...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.” In elementary grades, opinion writing should account for 30% of the writing students do; the percentage increases significantly by the time students get to high school.

Opinion writing focuses on writers expressing an opinion and supporting it with proof and evidence. This type of writing should begin with an opinion statement and include reasons and evidence to support it. Writing should be logically organized and have a conclusion that links the opinion with the reasons and evidence. Most importantly, the opinion statement must be backed up with factual evidence gathered from print and other sources.

Opinion or argument writing is a natural fit for content areas. In Social Studies, students may present a claim and provide support for it from primary and secondary sources. In Science, they may make a claim that is a statement or conclusion about an experiment or investigation. Evidence may be from one or more text sources as well as data.

**What’s the difference between opinion or argument writing and persuasive writing?** The truth is that persuasive writing based on opinion writing, but its goal is to persuade the audience. Therefore, it is not always supported with facts and evidence. For example, propaganda or advertisements are types of persuasive writing, but they often include unsupported claims. In addition, persuasive writing often appeals the audience on an emotional level, while argument or opinion writing limits its appeal to logical. Opinion or argument writing presents an opinion, position, or thesis and proves it using relevant evidence.

When creating **Opinion Writing**, writers should include:

- a clearly stated opinion
- several important facts and/or examples to prove your opinion
- explanations for each fact
- a clear connection between the opinion and support
- a conclusion that calls the reader to action

---

### **Opinion vs. Argument**

*Opinion writing shifts to Argument in grades 6-12. Opinion writing is a more elementary version of crafting and argument. An argument is a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer’s position, belief, or conclusion is valid. It includes evidence from text(s).*

*The main difference is that when writing an argument, the writer includes evidence intended to change the reader’s point of view or calls the reader to action.*

---

### Opinion Writing Forms

Book Reviews	Explanations	Persuasive Letters
Brochures	Letters	Reports
Descriptions	Magazine Articles	Reviews
Encyclopedia or Wiki Entries	News Articles	Science Articles
Essays	Pamphlets	Speeches

### Opinion Writing Prompts

*When creating writing prompts, include specific information from the rubric that tells students what should be included.*

- Write a book review about your favorite book. In your book review, be sure to include your opinion, strong reasons for your opinion, and specific evidence from the book to prove the reasons.
- Write an opinion letter to your parents to convince them to visit your favorite restaurant. In your letter, be sure to include your opinion, strong reasons for your opinion, and specific evidence from the texts you read to prove the reasons.
- Write an opinion essay for your principal to convince him/her to have longer recess. In your essay, you should include your clear opinion, and reasons and evidence that will convince the principal to have longer recess.
- Write an opinion article for the school newspaper to convince others of a way to save the environment. Be sure that your essay includes your clearly stated opinion about one way to save the environment. Also include reasons and evidence from the articles you read to support your opinion.
- Write an opinion letter to your parents to convince them to allow you to get a pet. In your writing, be sure to include your clearly stated position, reasons that will convince your parents, and evidence to prove those reasons.
- In science, you have just observed an experiment. What conclusion could you draw from this experiment? Write a paragraph or more. In your report, include your conclusion, reasons for reaching this conclusion, and specific evidence and data from the experiment to prove your conclusion.
- Max wrote this to solve a problem. Is Max's answer correct? Explain your answer. In your explanation, be sure to include your opinion and specific reasons why you think your answer is correct.
- You have read two stories about friendship. Write an essay that explains how the main characters' words and actions in each story are important to the plot of the story. Use what you learned about the characters to support your essay.

## Informative/Explanatory Writing

**Informative/Explanatory Writing** conveys factual or personal information accurately. It explains, clarifies, or defines something. Informative/explanatory writing is also important in the Common Core. This text type accounts for 35% of students' writing. Since most of the writing we do as adults is nonfiction, it makes sense to incorporate more of these first two types of writing in order to prepare students to be College and Career Ready. Informative/Explanatory writing begins with a sentence that introduces the topic, moves to logically organized facts and information, and finishes with a conclusion statement or paragraph. Writing to inform or explain may include a variety of products, such as brochures, encyclopedia or wiki entries, essays, letters, or reports.

### Return of the Essay

On Common Core-based assessments, students will be writing a variety of pieces, including essays. Do you remember the five paragraph essay, with topic sentence, supporting details in multiple paragraphs, and a conclusion? This is the basic format of informational writing. Students need to be able to read about a topic in one or more sources, and then write about that topic, organizing and paraphrasing what they have learned.

When creating **Informative/Explanatory Writing**, include:

- a main idea or message
- carefully selected key points and details that connect to the main idea
- a text structure that supports your message
- text features that make the writing easier to understand

### Informative/ Explanatory Writing Forms

Brochures	Explanations	Reports
Character Sketches	How-to-do-it articles	Reviews
Descriptions	Letters	Science articles
Diaries	Magazine articles	Speeches
Encyclopedia or Wiki entries	News articles	
Essays	Pamphlets	

## Informative and Explanatory Writing Prompts

- Write a description of two characters from the books we just read in class. In your description, you should include specific evidence from both texts.
- Explain how you solved the math problem. Be sure to include numbers and details that support your explanation.
- Based on the information in the text “Biography of Amelia Earhart,” write an essay that summarizes and explains the challenges Earhart faced throughout her life. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.
- Compare how the articles by AUTHOR A and AUTHOR B and the video describe penguin rescue efforts after oil spills. Support your essay with information from all three sources.
- The stories A and B both include events that didn’t happen exactly how the narrators expected them to happen. Write an essay describing how each narrator’s point of view influenced how these events were described. Be sure to include details from both stories.
- You just read a story about a boy who went on a trip. Write a journal entry about the trip. Include information about how his character responded to events in the story as you write the journal entry.
- You have read two texts about famous people in American history who solved a problem by working to make a change. Write an article for your school newspaper describing how each of these people made a difference in America.
  - In your article, be sure to describe in detail why some solutions they tried worked and others did not work.
  - Tell how the challenges each one faced were the same and how they were different.
- Based on the information in the text “Biography of Amelia Earhart,” write an essay that summarizes and explains the challenges Earhart faced throughout her life. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.
- Your class has been studying about THIS. Use information from the articles and from the video, describe the role people have in THIS. Use information from both the article and the video to support your answer.
- Identify a theme in “STORY A” and “STORY B”. Write an essay that shows how the theme of the stories are shown through the characters. Include specific details from both stories to support your essay.
- You have read STORY A and STORY B. Both texts develop the theme of freedom. Write an essay that compares and contrasts the approach each text takes to develop the theme of freedom.
- You have read two stories in which one family member saved another. Write an essay describing the main characters. For each character described:
  - Explain how the thoughts, words, and actions of the character help you to know what the character is like
  - Explain why the character chooses to save his/her family member
  - Be sure to include specific details from each story to support your ideas.

## Narrative Writing

**Narrative Writing** is telling a story. This type of writing should include all kinds of stories—adventure, fantasy, historical, myths, personal, etc. Narratives are the root of all writing; students should be able to tell a story as a precursor to other types of writing. A good narrative begins with a lead that introduces the reader to the characters, setting, and situation. It incorporates narrative elements, such as dialogue and descriptive language. Its closure satisfies the reader. Narrative writing should account for 35% of students’ writing in elementary grades, but this decreases as students get older.

On Common Core-based assessments, narrative writing and all other text types will be *Writing from Sources* (see sidebar). They may be asked to create alternate endings, new versions of stories or sequels, blending their understandings of story structure with their understandings of a particular text. Though students will create their writing in response to a text, their rubric scores on narrative pieces will only reflect the writing content, not whether they included specific details or information from a text source.

When you create **Narrative Writing**, you should include:

- a beginning that hooks the reader’s attention
- vivid details and feelings that engage the reader
- characters, actions, and dialogue that enhance the plot
- an ending that satisfies the reader

### Narrative Writing Forms

Adventure Stories	Diaries	Fiction	Scenes (from a play)
Autobiography	Endings	Humorous Stories	Short Stories
Biography	Fables	Legends	Science Fiction Stories
Character Sketches	Fantasy Stories	Myths	Sequels

## Narrative Prompts

- Write a story about a time you played in the snow (pool, etc.), a special day, a time you went someplace special, etc. In your story, include details to describe the beginning, the middle, and the end.
- Write an original story to continue where the passage ended. In your story, be sure to use what you have learned about [the main character] as you tell what happens next.
- We have just read a story about a cat being left home alone. Write a story about what a pet does when alone all day.
- Write an ending for the story by adding details to tell what happens next.
- Write about a day in the life of a whale [or some other creature]. In your story, include a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- You just finished reading \_\_\_\_\_. Write a new ending for this story. In your new ending, be sure that you resolve the character's problem.
- Write a sequel to the story we just read in class. In your sequel, tell events that happened next.
- You have just read "The Growin of Paul Bunyan." Think how the story would be different if it were told by Johnny's point of view. Be sure to use supporting details from the passage.
- We have read several texts about the Revolutionary War. Select one event in the war and write a narrative from the perspective of someone who lived through the war. In your narrative, be sure to include characters, a problem, and a solution.
- We have been studying about measurement in mathematics. Write a story that tells about a measurement concept. For example, you could write a story about a boy who was having a problem. Your story should include...
- You just read two articles about weather. Write a narrative that includes true, factual information about weather. In your story, be sure to include characters, a problem, and a solution.
- In *Those Amazing Shoes*, a girl has to outsmart a pair of shoes. Think about the details the author uses to create the characters, setting, and events. Imagine that you, like the girl, find a pair of wacky shoes that won't come off. Write a story about how you would find a pair of wacky shoes and what happens to you when you are wearing them. Use what you have learned about the wacky shoes as you write your story.

## A Writing On Demand Lesson

**Writing On Demand** is creating a complete piece of writing in a set time frame. This may be as short as 10 or as long as 60 minutes. This lesson is one way to teach students how to manage their time in order to brainstorm, draft, and review their piece within a very short time frame. Students should have opportunities to write for different time periods, and should be taught how to manage their time.

### Modeling

- Begin teaching students to be successful on-demand writers by explaining why it's important for them to learn: Most of the writing that adults do is on demand. For example, we email our bosses or clients, or we must write a summary or report within a short deadline.
- Model the process of writing quick pieces; use a Think-Aloud to show students how you decide a topic, brainstorm and select supporting details, and organize them into a product.
- Display the rubric you will use to score the writing. You may wish to have the students create the rubric as a class.
- It is crucial to model time management. For example, if students are allowed 20 minutes to write, discuss how much time students should devote to the beginning, middle, and end of the product.

### Guided Practice

- Give students several prompts to write to during the week and select one of the writing pieces to expand upon later.
- As students are working, circulate to offer suggestions.
- Have students revise and edit **Writing On Demand** occasionally to receive a higher score.

### Closure

- Have students share writing in small groups. This increases engagement by giving all students the opportunity to share and allows students to hear different ideas for the same prompt.

#### *Tips for Teaching Time Management*



- When introducing how to write on demand, break the time into chunks. For example, if the total time allotment is 20 minutes, do the math with students and ask them how long to spend on each section. (Six minutes for the beginning, 6 for the middle, 6 for the conclusion, and 2 to reread, revise, and edit.)
- Use a visible timer so that students learn to budget their time. Encourage students to work the entire time (no putting the pencil down.)
- Expect students to write a **complete piece** in the set time (with beginning, middle, and end, parts of a letter, and/or topic sentence/conclusion).

## Writing On Demand Mini-Lesson Ideas

Students need to be taught how to write on demand, just as they need to be taught other writing skills. Specific mini-lessons can enhance Writing on Demand. For each mini-lesson, be sure to model using a think aloud, guide students in completing the skill, and encourage students to reflect about how well they are doing/why the skill is important.

- **Time management**
  - using time wisely
  - writing the entire time
  - not spending too much time on one section
- **Focus on the topic**
  - Staying on topic
  - Avoiding unnecessary details
  - Including appropriate supporting details
- **Text structure**
  - Organizing text by text structure
  - Creating paragraphs
  - Topic sentence or hook and concluding sentence
- **Self-Assessment**
  - Using a rubric to “grade” own work
  - Revising to get a higher score



## Assessing Writing On Demand

**Writing On Demand** is brief and focused; therefore the assessment tool should be brief and focused as well. Use **On Demand** writing to guide instruction; select mini-lesson topics from patterns you see in students' writing samples.

### *Rubric*

A rubric is a general, holistic scoring tool that can be used for a variety of writing pieces. See page 15 for a sample rubric that is based on Common Core Standards and includes common elements from PARCC and *Smarter Balanced* assessment tools.

### *Scoring Key*

A Scoring Key may be appropriate for an On Demand piece of writing because it is shorter and more focused than a rubric. A key can be tailored to meet the instruction and needs of the students. For example, if you have taught several mini-lessons on ideas and sentence fluency, include those in your rubric and don't emphasize voice or organization.

### *Promote Self-Assessment*

The goal should be for students to be able to use a rubric to reflect and improve their own writing. To guide students to this, model how to use a rubric or scoring key. Students could score their own writing as an assignment during independent work time. Score the writing samples in a variety of ways: Collect and score, show samples on the overhead and score, have students self-score have cooperative teams score, etc.

### Sample Think Aloud Language

*Let me read my writing sample to you. [Read first sentence of sample.] It says here in the rubric that my writing should have. I am looking at my first sentence here and it says.... I think that it really matches the rubric so I'm going to check it off.*

*Now, the rubric says that I should have ....let me reread my last paragraph. [Reread last paragraph of sample.] I don't think that I have a concluding sentence at all. I just end with my last reason. I am not going to check this off, and I need to fix this so that my writing has a conclusion.*



***Expanded Prose Constructed Response Rubric***  
***VUgYX'cb D5F77***  
***Analytic or Narrative Writing***

<b>Reading</b>	<p><b>Comprehension of Key Ideas and Details</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> provides an <b>accurate analysis</b> of what the text says explicitly and inferentially</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>References the text explicitly</b> to support the analysis</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Shows full comprehension</b> of complex ideas expressed in the texts</li> </ul>	<b>___/3</b>
	<p><b>Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>addresses the prompt</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> provides effective and comprehensive <b>development of the topic</b> and/or narrative elements by using clear reasoning, details, and/or description</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the development is consistently <b>appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience</b></li> </ul>	<b>___/3</b>
<b>Writing</b>	<p><b>Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates effective <b>coherence, clarity, and cohesion</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> includes a <b>strong introduction</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> includes a <b>strong conclusion</b></li> </ul>	<b>___/3</b>
	<p><b>Clarity of Language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>uses language well</b> to attend to the norms and conventions of the discipline</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> includes <b>concrete words and phrases, sensory details, linking and transitional words</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> includes <b>domain-specific vocabulary</b> effectively to clarify ideas</li> </ul>	<b>___/3</b>
	<p><b>Knowledge of Language and Conventions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English consistent with effectively edited writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <b>correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation</b></li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> few minor errors in <b>grammar and usage</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>meaning is clear</b> throughout the response</li> </ul>	<b>___/4</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>___/16</b>

## Sample Scoring Key

	POINTS
<b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes text-based evidence</li></ul>	
<b>Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Answers question</li><li>• Includes topic sentence and conclusion</li><li>• Has three details</li></ul>	
<b>KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE AND CONVENTIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes Capital Letters And Punctuation For All Sentences</li><li>• High Frequency Words Are Spelled Correctly</li></ul>	
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	

**Online Resources**

*Common Core State Standards* [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org)

*PARCC Writing Forms*. Partnership for the Readiness for College and Careers. [parconline.org](http://parconline.org)

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium [smarterbalanced.org](http://smarterbalanced.org)