

Writing across core units

Over the course of a core unit, students will write 2–3 times a week for 10–12 minute increments. Throughout these practice opportunities, students respond to a prompt with clear, focused claims, paired with evidence from the text. These responses are autoscored for productivity, focus, use of evidence, and conventions by our automatic writing evaluation tool.

These short, sustained writing activities not only help students to build endurance and confidence as they sharpen and hone their writing skills, but also support their learning as they synthesize their comprehension of the text and practice responding to argumentative and informative writing prompts. Additionally, these writing activities will allow teachers the opportunity to monitor student writing and provide actionable feedback that celebrates student strengths, fosters growth, and encourages revision.

Formative writing prompts build and scaffold towards the end-of-unit summative essay, and students can draw from them as they develop their claims and select their evidence.

Appearing in the latter half of the unit, the Write an Essay Sub-Unit builds on the analytical reading and writing skills students have developed throughout the unit. Within 4–8 lessons, students will engage in the critical phases of the writing process as they learn about essay structure and prepare a multi-paragraph essay in response to an essay prompt.

The Write an Essay Sub-Unit is not considered by the AWE. Instead, a [Grade 6–8 Essay Rubric](#) is provided for teachers in the lesson materials to support their evaluation of this summative assessment. In this rubric, teachers will evaluate student essays for use of evidence, focus and logical structure, and conventions on a four-point scale. Unlike the AWE rubrics, these criteria consider whether or not student work is aligned to essay structure and features appropriate evidence from the unit text(s).

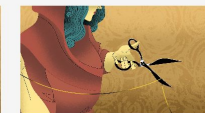
Sub-unit 4: Write an Essay ⓘ



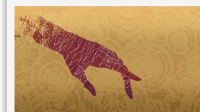
LESSON 1
Making a Claim and
Gathering Evidence



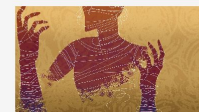
LESSON 2
Writing Body Paragraphs



LESSON 3
Essay Flex Day



LESSON 4
Revising and Writing an
Introduction



LESSON 5
Writing a Conclusion and
Editing the Essay

Grade 6–8 Essay Rubric

At the end of each unit, students write a longer, more developed essay over a sequence of 4–5 lessons. Students draw on their core lesson writing practice, in which they focus on one claim or claim-response to a prompt and develop text evidence to support their claim or idea. In the essay lessons, students then apply these skills to a more developed piece of writing, and also practice additional skills as they create an introduction, craft a strong claim statement, develop a conclusion, and revise and polish their writing for an audience.

This 4–8 rubric reflects students' core practice with focus, use of evidence, and conventions, as well as the particular skills they practice during these essay lessons.

Rubrics

Use of Evidence: Selecting, Describing, and Explaining

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
The evidence is not relevant or developed to support the claim. - The evidence selected is not relevant. - The key parts and elements of the evidence are not described. - There is not sufficient explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.	The evidence is somewhat relevant and developed to support the claim. - The evidence selected is somewhat relevant. - The key parts and elements of the evidence are somewhat described. - There is some explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.	The evidence is mostly relevant and clearly developed to support the claim. - The evidence selected is mostly relevant. - The key parts and elements of the evidence are described. - There is a mostly clear explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.	The evidence is relevant and well-developed to support the claim. - The evidence selected is relevant. - The key parts and elements of the evidence are described clearly. - There is a clear explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.

Identifying key lessons within a core unit

As you start to plan to teach a core unit, you will find the Summative Essay Prompt described in the Unit Overview. To learn more about this assessment, we recommend that you consult the Unit Formative and Summative Assessments article in the Teacher Preparation section of the Unit Overview page. There, you will find details about the type of essay students are expected to write, the prompt, and information about the Solo assignments within the Sub-Unit.

To ensure your students are adequately prepared for this task, we highly recommend reviewing the Reading & Writing Assignments article to identify key passages and prompts that will provide scaffolding for your students. While it is critical for students to fully engage in the close reading and writing practice within these lessons, it is equally important that teachers prioritize these formative writing pieces in their review and feedback cycle – encouraging students to revise these pieces where needed to ensure that they have ample opportunities to practice, improve, and refine their writing skills in anticipation of the essay assignment. In the space below, you will find key lessons that we have identified for Unit 6A: Dahl & Narrative.

Essay Prompt:

Whom does Dahl describe as causing more trouble: the boys or the adults? Use details from one moment in the book to show who is really causing more trouble.

Sub-Unit 3 Lesson 3:

Dahl says earlier in the chapter that Mrs. Pratchett was “a horror” (24).

Do you agree or disagree? Describe two or three details from the passage to develop your claim about Mrs. Pratchett.

Sub-Unit 3 Lesson 9:

Does Dahl regret playing the mouse trick on Mrs. Pratchett? Describe 2 or 3 details from the reading (including a direct quote) to explain your answer.

Sub-Unit 3 Lesson 12:

Write one idea you have about the type of person the Matron is after reading this chapter. Describe 2-4 details from two moments in the chapter to convince your reader of your idea.

Write an Essay Sub-Unit: Overview

The Write an Essay Sub-Unit has unique features and structures, and will vary over the course of the school year as students develop and sharpen their writing skills. The information on this page will support you in understanding these nuances as you engage in planning and prepare to teach this Sub-Unit with students.

Sub-Unit Structure

Lessons are structured to help students develop organizational skills, beginning with the body paragraphs, then circling back to the introduction and conclusion. The reason behind this approach is to allow students to draw from their formative writing prompts as they select evidence and craft a multi-paragraph essay where the structure supports the development of their central claim or idea. You will find more information about the rationale behind the Sub-Unit Structure on the Lesson Brief page for the first lesson in each Write an Essay Sub-Unit.

Collections Units

The research-based Collection units provide the same regular routines and essay activities as the other core units, but also have students conduct short research projects where they develop a research question, identify relevant and credible sources of information, and integrate information into a short piece of writing. As you examine the Write an Essay Sub-Unit within a Collections Unit, you will notice that these Sub-Units are longer (8 lessons) as they include lessons that are focused on citations and developing a Works Cited page, a Media Project, and timeline or media presentation.

Essay Flex Days

Essay Flex Day lessons offer flexibility so that you can guide each student to select the revision activities that will benefit them most. Essay Flex Day Activities include whole-class reflections that support students in inventorying their own progress to define their next steps. Individual activities are focused explicitly on routines and skills that students have developed throughout the Write an Essay Sub-Units over the course of the year. These lessons also give teachers the opportunity to engage in conferences with their students and provide useful tools like the [Essay Graphic Organizer](#) or [Essay Rubric](#) to support students as they work to improve their writing.

Essay Solos

Many Solos in the Essay Lessons ask students to revisit or continue to work on their essays after class. Students writing essays in the digital lessons will need access to the digital curriculum to complete these Solos, and will not be able to complete them on a mobile device (phone). There are no assigned Solos for students writing essays in Writing Journals; any Solo work is at your discretion.

Write an Essay Sub-Unit: Prompts & Progression of skills

Grade 6

Unit	Essay type	Prompt				
Unit 6A: Dahl & Narrative	Argumentative	<i>Whom does Dahl describe as causing more trouble: the boys or the adults? Use details from one moment in the book to show who is really causing more trouble.</i>				
		Sub-Unit 4	Lesson 1: Introducing the essay	Lesson 2: Writing the Body Paragraph	Lesson 3: Revising and Writing the Introduction	Lesson 4: Editing for Clarity and Cohesion
Unit 6B: Mysteries & Investigations	Informative	<i>People—like scientists, detectives, health workers—take many approaches to solving problems. They take bold and brave actions; they work methodically; they think carefully and logically; they collaborate with others; they try new approaches.</i> <i>Based on the texts you have read, what stands out to you as one important characteristic to have as a problem solver or investigator? Include two examples of individuals demonstrating this characteristic in your response.</i>				
		Sub-Unit 5	Lesson 1: Making a Claim and Gathering Evidence	Lesson 2: Writing Body Paragraphs	Lesson 3: Essay Flex Day	Lesson 4: Revising and Writing an Introduction Lesson 5: Concluding and Polishing the Essay

Write an Essay Sub-Unit: Prompts & Progression of skills

Grade 6

Unit	Essay type	Prompt							
Unit 6C: The Chocolate Collection	Student Choice	Informative Essay Prompt: <i>Chocolate and Slavery</i> <i>Chocolate and slavery? When did slavery become a part of chocolate production? Is slavery still used on cacao plantations today? Write an informative essay about the history of slavery in the production of chocolate.</i> <i>As you conduct your research in both the Collection and on the Internet, be sure to look for relevant facts, concrete details, and clear evidence to support your claim.</i>				Argumentative Essay Prompt: <i>Chocolate = Happiness...or Does It?</i> <i>Can eating chocolate affect your mood? Your brain chemistry? Is it addictive? Study the scientific research on chocolate and determine what experts have found. Research the texts in the Collection and on the Internet to find the information you need. Be ready to make a claim and cite sources.</i> <i>You will write an argumentative essay stating your claim that chocolate equals happiness or it does not. Be sure to identify at least two sources you can use in your work. As you conduct your research in both the Collection and on the Internet, be sure to look for relevant facts, concrete details, and clear evidence to support your claim.</i>			
		Lesson 1: Gathering Evidence	Lesson 2: Making a Claim and Writing a Body Paragraph	Lesson 3: Writing a Body Paragraph and an Introduction	Lesson 4: Revising and Writing a Conclusion	Lesson 5: Finishing and Editing the Essay	Lesson 6: Creating Citations and a Works Cited List	Lesson 7: Media Project	Lesson 8: Timeline Presentations

Write an Essay Sub-Unit: Prompts & Progression of skills

Grade 6

Unit	Essay type	Prompt				
Unit 6D: The Greeks	Argumentative	<i>Using two of the following characters—the humans from “Prometheus,” Odysseus from The Odyssey, or Arachne from “Arachne”—answer the following question:</i> <i>Are humans destroyed by their pride? Why or why not?</i> <i>Use your answer to make a claim about whether or not these characters have been destroyed by their pride. Be sure to support your claim with textual evidence.</i>				
Sub-Unit 6		Lesson 1: Making a Claim and Gathering Evidence	Lesson 2: Writing Body Paragraphs	Lesson 3: Essay Flex Day	Lesson 4: Revising and Writing an Introduction	Lesson 5: Writing a Conclusion and Editing the Essay
Unit 6E: Summer of the Mariposas	Informative	<i>What is a special characteristic or source of strength for one of the Garza sisters? How does this characteristic or strength help her succeed in any two moments of her hero’s journey?</i>				
Sub-Unit 2		Lesson 1: Gathering Evidence and Making a Claim	Lesson 2: Writing Body Paragraphs	Lesson 3: Essay Flex Day	Lesson 4: Revising and Writing an Introduction	Lesson 5: Concluding and Polishing the Essay

Write an Essay Sub-Unit: Prompts & Progression of skills

Grade 6

Unit	Essay type	Prompt							
Unit 6F: The Titanic Collection	Student Choice	Informative Essay Prompt: <i>Who were the Titanic Orphans? Write an informative essay detailing the experience of the 2 young children known as the Titanic Orphans.</i> <i>As you conduct your research, be sure to look for relevant facts and concrete details about their lives before they boarded the doomed Titanic, how they managed to survive the sinking, and what happened to them after the disaster.</i> <i>Be sure to include a list of resources used while researching this project.</i>				Argumentative Essay Prompt: <i>Who's to blame for the loss of life on the Titanic? Research a list of several parties involved in the tragedy. Some options include the Titanic's Captain Smith, the telegraph officers, the Titanic's lookouts, the captain of the Carpathia, and the White Star Line's owners and shipbuilders.</i> <i>Research sources in the Collection and on the Internet to collect evidence and prove your case. Write an argumentative essay identifying the guilty party and include 2 pieces of evidence proving their guilt. Be sure to include a list of the resources you used in your research.</i>			
		Lesson 1: Gathering Evidence	Lesson 2: Making a Claim and Writing a Body Paragraph	Lesson 3: Writing a Body Paragraph and an Introduction	Lesson 4: Revising and Writing a Conclusion	Lesson 5: Finishing and Editing the Essay	Lesson 6: Creating Citations and a Works Cited List	Lesson 7: Media Project	Lesson 8: Timeline Presentations