

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.

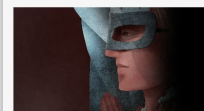
These short, sustained writing activities not only help students to build endurance and confidence as they sharpen and hone their writing skills, but also support their learning as they synthesize their comprehension of the text and practice responding to argumentative and informative writing prompts. 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.

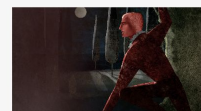
Appearing in the latter half of the unit, the Write an Essay Sub-Unit builds on the analytical reading and writing skills students have developed throughout the unit. Within 4-8 lessons, students will engage in the critical phases of the writing process as they learn about essay structure and prepare 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 2: Write an Essay ⓘ



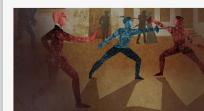
LESSON 1
Making a Claim



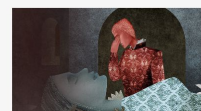
LESSON 2
Writing Body Paragraphs



LESSON 3
Essay Flex Day



LESSON 4
Revising and Writing an Introduction



LESSON 5
Concluding and Polishing the Essay

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 those 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 does not 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 skillfully 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 that your students are adequately prepared for this task, we highly recommend that you then review 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 engage fully 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 8A: Perspectives & Narrative.

Essay Prompt:

Are the mothers featured in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden” role models for their daughters? Why or why not?

Sub-Unit 3 Lesson 2:

In writing *Going Solo*, Dahl chooses to put the scene with David Coke almost immediately after the scene with the Corporal. What impact does putting these scenes back-to-back have on the reader’s understanding?

Sub-Unit 3 Lesson 6:

What is one important difference between how Amy Tan felt about the Christmas Eve dinner as a teenager and how she feels about it as an adult? Develop your idea with evidence from the text that supports your thinking.

Sub-Unit 3 Lesson 8:

Why do you think Greenidge chooses to combine the story of her experience at school and the story of her mother’s garden into one narrative?

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 8

Unit	Essay type	Prompt				
Unit 8A: Perspectives & Narrative	Argumentative	Are the mothers featured in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden” role models for their daughters? Why or why not?				
Sub-Unit 4		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
Unit 8B: Liberty & Equality	Informative (Students choose between 2 prompts)	How does Lincoln, in the Gettysburg Address, try to change what his readers/listeners believe about what it means to be dedicated to the American idea that “All men are created equal”?		How does Douglass, in Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, try to change what his readers believe about what it means to be dedicated to the American idea that “All men are created equal”?		
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

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

Grade 8

Unit	Essay type	Prompt				
Unit 8C: Science & Science Fiction	Argumentative	<i>Is Frankenstein's creature human?</i>				
Sub-Unit 2		Lesson 1: Make an Outline	Lesson 2: Draft Paragraph 1	Lesson 3: Draft Paragraph 2	Lesson 4: Draft Paragraph 3	Lesson 5: Review and Revise
Unit 8D: Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet	Argumentative	<i>Did the power of love contribute more to Romeo's death or were the forces of hatred more of an influence on Romeo's death, or both?</i>				
Sub-Unit 2		Lesson 1: 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 8

Unit	Essay type	Prompt
Unit 8E: Holocaust: Memory & Meaning	Informative	<i>The Holocaust did not happen overnight. As the Nazis laid the groundwork for what would eventually become known as the Holocaust, they used a number of strategies to isolate, oppress, and control the Jewish population of Europe, and to convince others to go along with their plan.</i> <i>Choose two of the strategies that stood out to you as you explored this unit. Using examples from the texts and images you analyzed, describe each strategy and the impact it had.</i>
Sub-Unit 6		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 8

Unit	Essay type	Prompt
Unit 8F: The Space Race Collection	Student Choice	Informative Essay Prompt: <i>How did Katherine Johnson and the other women who worked with her at NASA impact the Space Race?</i> <i>Write an informative essay about Katherine Johnson and the other key women who worked at NASA during the Space Race era. Who were the other key women who worked with Katherine Johnson and what roles did they play? What barriers did they face? How was the Space Race impacted by their work?</i> <i>As you conduct your research, be sure to look for relevant facts and concrete details to support your thinking. Be sure to include a list of resources you used while researching this project.</i> Argumentative Essay Prompt: <i>Was animal testing necessary during the Space Race?</i> <i>Research and discover what the Soviets and the Americans were trying to understand when they sent animals into space. Was animal testing necessary? Was it fair or moral to send animals into space for research purposes? Could the scientists have found the answers they were looking for without sacrificing animals? If so, how?</i> <i>Research sources in the Collection and on the Internet as you collect evidence and prove your case. Write an argumentative essay persuading your reader of your way of thinking. Be sure to include a list of the resources you used in your research.</i>
Sub-Unit 5		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