CALIFORNIA Studysync® Reading & Writing Companion



GRADE 6 UNITS

Turning Points • Ancient Realms Facing Challenges • Our Heroes

Reading & Writing Companion

GRADE 6 UNITS

Turning Points • Ancient Realms Facing Challenges • Our Heroes



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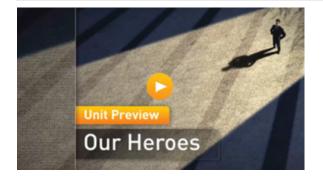


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Please note that excerpts and passages in the StudySync[®] library and this workbook are intended as touchstones to generate interest in an author's work. The excerpts and passages do not substitute for the reading of entire texts, and StudySync[®] strongly recommends that students seek out and purchase the whole literary or informational work in order to experience it as the author intended. Links to online resellers are available in our digital library. In addition, complete works may be ordered through an authorized reseller by filling out and returning to StudySync[®] the order form enclosed in this workbook.

Reading & Writing Companion

STUDENT GUIDE

GETTING STARTED

WW elcome to the StudySync Reading and Writing Companion! In this booklet, you will find a collection of readings based on the theme of the unit you are studying. As you work through the readings, you will be asked to answer questions and perform a variety of tasks designed to help you closely analyze and understand each text selection. Read on for an explanation of each section of this booklet.

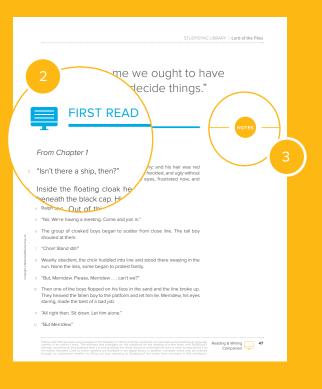
what's Due



In each Core ELA Unit you will read texts and text excerpts that share a common theme, despite their different genres, time periods, and authors. Each reading encourages a closer look with questions and a short writing assignment.



hen a plane carryi themselves turns into a increasingly the youths' attem War II, and claimed his depiction of the brutal struggle forperinces watching how men reacted in cerved in the Royal Navel to a second group. After a wary sorting out, behavior was



INTRODUCTION

An Introduction to each text provides historical context for your reading as well as information about the author. You will also learn about the genre of the excerpt and the year in which it was written.

FIRST READ

During your first reading of each excerpt, you should just try to get a general idea of the content and message of the reading. Don't worry if there are parts you don't understand or words that are unfamiliar to you. You'll have an opportunity later to dive deeper into the text.

NOTES

Many times, while working through the activities after each text, you will be asked to **annotate** or **make annotations** about what you are reading. This means that you should highlight or underline words in the text and use the "Notes" column to make comments or jot down any questions you may have. You may also want to note any unfamiliar vocabulary words here.

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THINK QUESTIONS

These questions will ask you to start thinking critically about the text, asking specific questions about its purpose, and making connections to your prior knowledge and reading experiences. To answer these questions, you should go back to the text and draw upon specific evidence that you find there to support your responses. You will also begin to explore some of the more challenging vocabulary words used in the excerpt.

CLOSE READ & FOCUS QUESTIONS

After you have completed the First Read, you will then be asked to go back and read the excerpt more closely and critically. Before you begin your Close Read, you should read through the Focus Questions to get an idea of the concepts you will want to focus on during your second reading. You should work through the Focus Questions by making annotations, highlighting important concepts, and writing notes or questions in the "Notes" column. Depending on instructions from your teacher, you may need to respond online or use a separate piece of paper to start expanding on your thoughts and ideas.

WRITING PROMPT

Your study of each excerpt or selection will end with a writing assignment. To complete this assignment, you should use your notes, annotations, and answers to both the Think and Focus Questions. Be sure to read the prompt carefully and address each part of it in your writing assignment.



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ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT TEXTS

The English Language Development texts and activities take a closer look at the language choices that authors make to communicate their ideas. Individual and group activities will help develop your understanding of each text.

Reread paragraphs			
Meaningful Interactio	8–14 of i	, complete the Using Language and	
	e past. Finall	e narrator first describes the present. y, the narrator returns to describe the -5 of <i>The Other Side</i> . Sort the details	
e Other Side uses a r	narrative te		
en, the narrator de t again. The	os a fla Details		
The sun took is pt co	t as it had countless times	before, our neighborhood slowly	
Now her eyes were begging for I	help to understand.		
Something had woken me and I I	new that there was no going bac	k to who I had been.	
I didn't mention that part when I t			
"What aren't you telling me?" she	frowned.		
First, the narrator	Then, the narrator	Finally, the narrator	0 py
describes the present.	describes the flashback.	Finally, the narrator describes the present again.	4 <i>g/t</i> © 800
l glanced at my sister, Alexandria, swaying under the sycamore tree in our backyard.			Conyright © Bo drheadE d Learning , LLC
sycamore tree in our backyard.			5
Reading & Writing Companion Reader to a strongly rock		and this workbook are intended as bouchstones to generate substitute for the reading of entire texts, and StudySync® cibi library or informational work in order to experience I als digibal library. In addition, complete works may be ordered	
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REREAD

After you have completed the First Read, you will have two additional opportunities to revisit portions of the excerpt more closely. The directions for each reread will specify which paragraphs or sections you should focus on.

USING LANGUAGE

These questions will ask you to analyze the author's use of language and conventions in the text. You may be asked to write in sentence frames, fill in a chart, or you may simply choose between multiple-choice options. To answer these questions, you should read the exercise carefully and go back in the text as necessary to accurately complete the activity.

MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS & SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

After each reading, you will participate in a group activity or discussion with your peers. You may be provided speaking frames to guide your discussions or writing frames to support your group work. To complete these activities, you should revisit the excerpt for textual evidence and support. When you finish, use the Self-Assessment Rubric to evaluate how well you participated and collaborated.

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EXTENDED WRITING PROJECT

The Extended Writing Project is your opportunity to explore the theme of each unit in a longer written work. You will draw information from your readings, research, and own life experiences to complete the assignment.

WRITING PROJECT

After you have read all of the unit text selections, you will move on to a writing project. Each project will guide you through the process of writing an argumentative, narrative, informative, or literary analysis essay. Student models and graphic organizers will provide guidance and help you organize your thoughts as you plan and write your essay. Throughout the project, you will also study and work on specific writing skills to help you develop different portions of your writing.

WRITING PROCESS STEPS

There are five steps in the writing process: **Prewrite**, **Plan**, **Draft**, **Revise**, and **Edit**, **Proofread**, **and Publish**. During each step, you will form and shape your writing project so that you can effectively express your ideas. Lessons focus on one step at a time, and you will have the chance to receive feedback from your peers and teacher.

WRITING SKILLS

Each Writing Skill lesson focuses on a specific strategy or technique that you will use during your writing project. The lessons begin by analyzing a student model or mentor text, and give you a chance to learn and practice the skill on its own. Then, you will have the opportunity to apply each new skill to improve the writing in your own project.

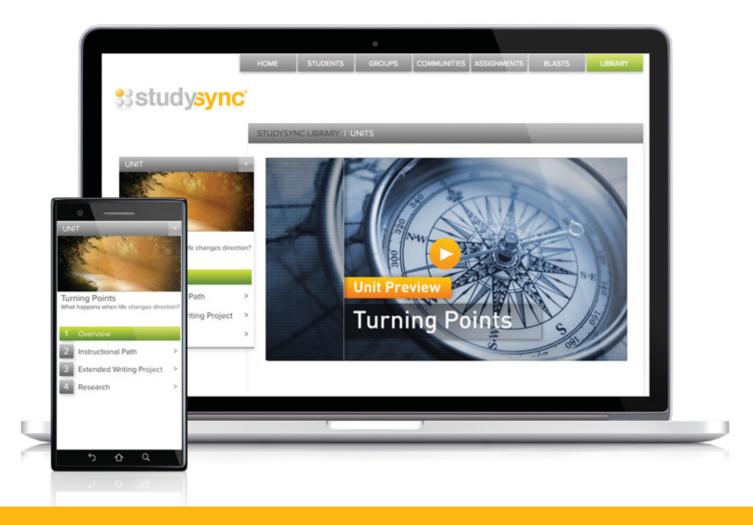


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What happens when life changes direction?

Turning Points



UNIT 1 What happens when life changes direction?

Turning Points



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16	Island of the Blue Dolphins FICTION Scott O'Dell
21	Dragonwings FICTION Laurence Yep
26	The Father of Chinese Aviation NON-FICTION Rebecca Maksel
31	I Never Had It Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson NON-FICTION Jackie Robinson
36	Warriors Don't Cry NON-FICTION Melba Pattillo Beals
41	The Story of My Life NON-FICTION Helen Keller
46	Eleven FICTION Sandra Cisneros

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- 108 SKILL: Sources and Citations
- 112 Extended Writing Project: Edit, Proofread, and Publish



Text Fulfillment through StudySync

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

POETRY Robert Frost 1915

INTRODUCTION

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obert Frost's classic poem is generally interpreted as a nod to nonconformism, but some see it differently. When asked about the *sigh* in the last stanza, Frost wrote to a friend, "It was my rather private jest at the expense of those who might think I would yet live to be sorry for the way I had taken in life."

"I took the one less traveled by ..."



FIRST READ

- 1 Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
- 2 And sorry I could not travel both
- 3 And be one traveler, long I stood
- 4 And looked down one as far as I could
- 5 To where it bent in the **undergrowth;**
- 6 Then took the other, as just as fair,
- 7 And having perhaps the better **claim**,
- 8 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
- 9 Though as for that the passing there
- 10 Had worn them really about the same,
- 11 And both that morning equally lay
- 12 In leaves no step had **trodden** black.
- 13 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
- 14 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
- 15 I doubted if I should ever come back.
- 16 I shall be telling this with a sigh
- 17 Somewhere ages and ages **hence:**
- 18 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
- 19 I took the one less traveled by,
- And that has made all the difference.





- 1. What evidence in the text of the poem shows you that the speaker is uncertain about which road to choose?
- 2. What do lines 16–20 tell you about how the speaker imagines his future? Explain using evidence from the text to support your answer.
- How does the speaker feel about the road he didn't take? Cite textual evidence to support your answer.
- Use context clues to determine the meaning of the word trodden as it is used in "The Road Not Taken." Write your definition of "trodden" and state the clue(s) from the text you used to determine your answer.
- 5. The word **diverged** is used in lines 1 and 18. What meaning of "diverged" would you guess from line 1, and how would its use in lines 18–19 help you confirm the meaning?



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CLOSE READ CA-CCSS: CA.RL.6.1, CA.RL.6.4, CA.RL.6.5, CA.RL.6.7, CA.W.6.2a, CA.W.6.2b, CA.W.6.5, CA.W.6.10

Reread the poem "The Road Not Taken." As you reread, complete the Focus Questions below. Then use your answers and annotations from the questions to help you complete the Writing Prompt.



- 1. How does the poetic structure Frost uses help to unify the poem? Highlight textual evidence and make annotations to explain your ideas.
- 2. Highlight examples of imagery in stanza 1. What effect does this create for the reader? Cite specific textual evidence and make annotations to support your response.
- 3. In stanza 4, how is the poet's use of repetition effective? Highlight evidence from the text and write annotations to support your ideas.
- 4. What can you infer about the speaker's thoughts and feelings in this poem? Highlight evidence from the text and write annotations to support your findings.
- 5. The "road" in Frost's poem serves as a symbol of the journey of life. What message does Frost want the reader to understand about this journey? How is this a turning point? What can you infer about the speaker's thoughts and feelings about life's journey in this poem? Highlight evidence from the text and write annotations to support your findings.

WRITING PROMPT

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How does Robert Frost's use of poetic structure and poetic elements in "The Road Not Taken" support the poem's meaning in both the print and audio versions of the poem? Explain what you believe the poem means, and how the poem's meaning is shaped by at least one aspect of poetic structure and at least one poetic element. Examine whether or not you experience these differently when you listen to the audio version, and whether hearing the poem read aloud changes your understanding of its meaning. Introduce your response with a thesis statement, and support your ideas with clearly organized details and quotations from the text.



English Language Development

FICTION

INTRODUCTION

ariana wakes up alone, thirsty, and hungry on a deserted island. How did she get here, and why is her head throbbing? As she slowly recalls a large wave smashing into Uncle Merlin's fishing boat, Mariana takes her first steps toward survival. "She was trapped. Stuck. Alone. Was she going to die on this horrible island?"



FIRST READ

- 1 Mariana woke up slowly.
- ² She was on her back. She felt sand in her mouth, in between her teeth. The air was hot and damp. Where am I? Her head was throbbing. Was that the smell of salt in the air, and did I just hear a seagull cry?
- ³ Turning her head to one side, Mariana opened her eyes. The bright light was too **intense** for her. At first, all she saw was damp yellow sand—sand and a big broken seashell that had sharp edges. She scanned her surroundings. Stones, weeds, and a few palm trees decorated the landscape. She could see the entire island. It was no larger than a soccer field.
- ⁴ Then Mariana remembered. She remembered fishing for flounder with Uncle Merlin. They found a good spot, so they **anchored** their boat near a little island. The summer morning was warm, and the bay was calm. Mariana and Merlin got their fishing lines ready, when suddenly an enormous, thundering wave came out of nowhere. The wave overturned the boat, tossing Mariana and her uncle into the water. She remembered rising to the surface and seeing land. She swam toward it; she swam and swam. An eternity seemed to have passed. She remembered thinking: Why don't I just give up? What had motivated her to keep swimming? She had finally reached the shore and had crawled up onto the sand. Exhausted.
- 5 Presently, Mariana looked at her surroundings, while she tried to clear her mind of the swirling thoughts. She must have passed out and slept on the beach for hours. The boat had **capsized** in early morning, but now the sun was high in the sky. It must be about noon.
- 6 Noon, and hot.

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7 Mariana wondered where her uncle was. Why hasn't he come to get me?What is he waiting for? She felt her empty stomach; her mouth was dry. She

- thought of the lunch her uncle had packed. A cool drink and an overstuffed sandwich would be perfect right now!
- 8 Then her reality became clear. Maybe her uncle wasn't coming to get her because maybe he had drowned. Maybe no **rescuer** was coming to get her. She was trapped. Stuck. Alone. Was she going to die on this horrible island?
- 9 Mariana started to cry, but she stopped herself quickly. Wait. She cautioned herself. Don't act like a baby. Use your head. That's what Uncle Merlin always said: "Use your head!"
- ¹⁰ Slowly Mariana turned onto her stomach and used her elbows to lift herself. Next, she got onto her knees and gradually stood up onto both feet. The throbbing in her head continued, but she looked into the island and took a step.



USING LANGUAGE CA-CCSS: ELD.PII.6.5.EX

Complete the chart by writing the correct answers in the second and third columns.

Statement with Some Detail Options	Statement with More Detail Options
She stopped suddenly.	She stopped suddenly, seeing the danger.
She slept uncomfortably.	She slept uncomfortably, disturbed by uneasy dreams.
She shook her head anxiously.	She shook her head anxiously, repeatedly.

Basic Statement	Statement with Some Detail	Statement with More Detail
She shook her head.		
She slept.		
She stopped.		

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MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS CA-CCSS: ELD.PII.6.1.EX

Work with your partner or group to identify time clues in the following paragraphs of "Lost Island" and complete the sentences. Use the self-assessment rubric to evaluate your participation in the activity.

- ³ Turning her head to one side, Mariana opened her eyes. The ______ was too intense for her. ______, all she saw was damp yellow sand—sand and a big broken seashell that had sharp edges. She scanned her surroundings. Stones, weeds, and a few palm trees decorated the landscape. She could see the entire island. It was no larger than a soccer field.

5	, Ma	ariana looked at her surrounding	s, while she tried to clear her mind of the swirling
	thoughts. She must have _	and _	on the
	beach	The boat had capsized in _	, but now the
	sun was	It must be	

_, and



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SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC CA-CCSS: ELD.PII.6.1.EX

	4 I did this well.	3 I did this pretty well.	2 I did this a little bit.	1 I did not do this.
I took an active part with others in doing the assigned task.				
I contributed effectively to the group's decisions.				
l understood the use of time clue words in the selection.				
I helped others understand the use of time clue words in the selection.				
I completed the time clues sentences carefully and accurately.				

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Reread paragraphs 1–5 of "Lost Island." After you reread, complete the Using Language and Meaningful Interactions activities.



USING LANGUAGE

The chart below shows different thoughts and feelings that Mariana had. Complete the chart by writing the quotations from "Lost Island" in the correct column to show how the words in the passage expressed her emotions. One has been done for you.

Quotations				
Maybe her uncle wasn't coming to get her because maybe he had drowned.	She was trapped. Stuck. Alone.			
She swam toward it; she swam and swam.	Why hasn't he come to get me?			
Was that the smell of salt in the air?	Was she going to die on this horrible island?			
Wait. She cautioned herself. Don't be a baby. Use your head.	The throbbing in her head continued, but she looked into the island and took a step.			

Confusion	Fear	Determination
Where am I?		

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MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS CA-CCSS: ELD.PI.6.1.EX, ELD.PI.6.6.a.EX, ELD.PII.6.1.EX

The story "Lost Island" is told in both present time and in flashback. What part of the story is told in flashback? How would the story be different if it had been told all in present time? Discuss these answers with your partner, using the speaking frames. Then, use the self-assessment rubric to evaluate your participation in the discussion.

- One place the story is a flashback is . . .
- Another flashback is . . .
- If there had been no flashbacks, the story could have started with this event: ...
- Because of the flashback, the reader feels . . . because Mariana felt . . .
- If the story had no flashbacks, it would be different because . . .

SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC CA-CCSS: ELD.PI.6.4.EX

	4 I did this well.	3 I did this pretty well.	2 I did this a little bit.	1 I did not do this.
l expressed my ideas about the flashback clearly.				
I listened carefully to my partner's ideas about the flashback.				
I spoke respectfully when disagreeing with my partner.				
I was courteous when persuading my partner to share my view.				

Reread paragraphs 6–10 of "Lost Island." After you reread, complete the Using Language and Meaningful Interactions activities.



USING LANGUAGE

Using the Joining Word, combine the two sentences to form a single complete sentence.

Two Sentences	Joining Word	Complete Sentence
She felt her empty stomach. Her mouth was dry.	and	
The boat had capsized in early morning. Now the sun was high in the sky.	but	
A cool drink would be perfect right now! A sandwich would be perfect right now!	and	
She was trapped. Stuck.	and	
Mariana started to cry. She stopped herself quickly.	but	

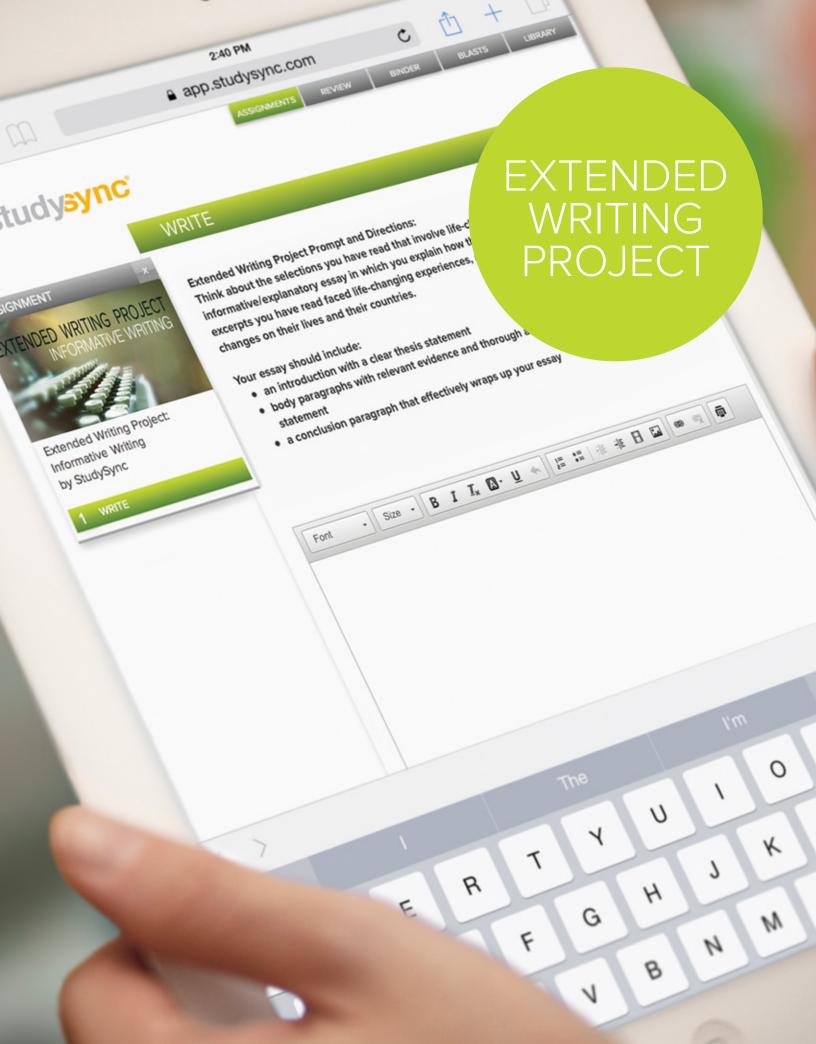
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MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS CA-CCSS: ELD.PI.6.6.a.Ex, ELD.PI.6.9.Ex, ELD.PI.6.1.Ex

The author uses flashback in "Lost Island." How does flashback help the reader understand the story? How does switching between present time and flashback create different moods in the story? Work with your partners to practice sharing and discussing your answers, using the speaking frames.

- The flashback helps the reader understand the story because
- Switching between present time and a flashback creates different moods such as . . . in the flashback and . . . in present time.
- An example of the ... mood is ...





INFORMATIVE/ EXPLANATORY WRITING

WRITING PROMPT

Think about the selections you have read that involve life-changing experiences. Write an informative/explanatory essay in which you explain how three individuals in three of the excerpts you have read faced lifechanging experiences, and analyze the impact of these changes on their lives and their countries.

Your essay should include:

- an introduction with a clear thesis statement
- body paragraphs with relevant evidence and thorough analysis to support your thesis statement
- a conclusion paragraph that effectively wraps up your essay

Informative/explanatory writing examines a specific topic and presents ideas and information about it in a logical, organized way. Informative/ explanatory writing can explain, define, classify, compare, inform, or describe. Some examples of informative/explanatory writing include: scientific studies, research reports, newspaper or encyclopedia articles, and non-fiction texts such as biographies and histories.

Strong informative/explanatory writing introduces a thesis statement, which is a statement that presents the writer's central (or main) idea about the topic. The writer then develops that thesis statement with relevant supporting details such as facts and examples. The organizational structure of the writing fits the topic, and precise language and clear explanations help the reader understand the information. Transition words not only make the writing flow smoothly but also clarify the relationships among ideas. Though informative/ explanatory writing draws a conclusion based on the facts and information, the writing is unbiased, meaning that the writer does not state his/her own opinion.



The features of informative/explanatory writing include:

- a logical organizational structure
- an introduction with a clear thesis statement
- relevant supporting details
- precise language and domain-specific vocabulary
- citations of sources
- a concluding statement

As you continue with this Extended Writing Project, you'll receive more instructions and practice to help you craft each of the elements of informative/ explanatory writing in your own essay.



Before you get started on your own informative/explanatory essay, begin by reading this essay that one student wrote in response to the writing prompt. As you read this Student Model, highlight and annotate the features of informative/explanatory writing that the student included in the essay.

The Power of Change

Turning points in life are often difficult and challenging times. This idea is explored in the memoir *Warriors Don't Cry* by Melba Pattillo Beals, the autobiography *I Never Had It Made* by Jackie Robinson, and the article "The Father of Chinese Aviation" by Rebecca Maksel. Melba Pattillo Beals, Jackie Robinson, and Feng Ru all faced life-changing experiences and, in doing so, changed their countries.

Melba Pattillo Beals helped improve education for all African American students. She was a student who chose to be one of the first African Americans to integrate Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas. On the morning of September 25,1957, Beals was greeted by "fifty uniformed soldiers" (Beals). They were there to keep her, along with eight other African American students, safe on the first day of school. The threat of violence was very real. Even some adults who supported the students cried openly with fear. Still, Beals was determined to take forward steps for both herself and her people. "Step by step we climbed upward where none of my people had ever before walked as a student" (Beals). In the face of threats, Beals and the other courageous African American students with her on that day paved the way for new racial attitudes in the United States.



Like Beals, Jackie Robinson also charted new territory for his race. He became the first African American to play major league baseball. In his autobiography, Robinson discussed some of the difficulties he faced. Because he was black, Robinson was not immediately accepted by the team. He had to "live with snubs and rebuffs and rejections" (Robinson). However, the resentment from players on other teams was even worse than from his own team members. Like Beals, he faced threats of violence and "even out-and-out attempts at physical harm" (Robinson). Despite the threats, many African Americans came out to support him. In time, acceptance for Robinson increased, and he took his place as the first of many African American ballplayers. Robinson recognized that this was an important step for African Americans. He was proud, Robinson said, "to prove that a sport can't be called national if blacks are barred from it." Robinson helped change the attitudes of major league baseball. He also helped change the attitudes of his country.

Like Beals and Robinson, Feng Ru's hard work and courage changed his own country—China. Feng Ru was an immigrant to the United States. He was also a self-taught engineer. As a young man, he learned "all he could about machines, working in shipyards, power plants, machine shops" (Maksel). After awhile, he became fascinated with the new field of aviation. In 1906, he started his own "aircraft factory, building airplanes of his own design" (Maksel). However, testing new aircraft was dangerous. During a test flight, Feng lost control of the plane "which plunged into his workshop, setting it ablaze" (Maksel). Although this would not be his last crash, he did not give up his experiments. He returned to China to bring his knowledge of aviation to that country. Feng Ru died in a crash in his homeland, but to this day, he is heralded as the "father of Chinese aviation" (Maksel).

Beals, Robinson, and Feng Ru each faced obstacles and danger. Beals faced an angry mob. Robinson faced threats of violence. Feng Ru faced death itself. However, all three acted with courage, and their determination had an impact on their countries as a whole. Each individual's choices led to a greater good.

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Companion

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THINK QUESTIONS

- 1. Which sentence in the first two paragraphs most clearly states what the entire essay will be about?
- In the second paragraph, what evidence does the writer use to support the statement that "Melba Pattillo Beals helped improve education for all African American students"?
- 3. In the final paragraph of the essay, what conclusions does the writer make about these three individuals and their experiences? Write two or three sentences that sum up in your own words the writer's conclusion.
- 4. Thinking about the writing prompt, which selections or other resources would you like to use to create your own informative/explanatory essay?
- Based on what you have read, listened to or researched, how would you answer the question: What happens when life changes direction? Explain what you believe are some challenges associated with life changes.

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PREWRITE

CA-CCSS: CA.RI.6.1, CA.W.6.2a, CA.W.6.2b, CA.W.6.5, CA.SL.6.1a, CA.SL.6.1b, CA.SL.6.1c, CA.SL.6.1d

WRITING PROMPT

Think about the selections you have read that involve life-changing experiences. Write an informative/explanatory essay in which you explain how three individuals in three of the excerpts you have read faced lifechanging experiences, and analyze the impact of these changes on their lives and their countries.

Your essay should include:

- an introduction with a clear thesis statement
- body paragraphs with relevant evidence and thorough analysis to support your thesis statement
- a conclusion paragraph that effectively wraps up your essay

In addition to studying techniques authors use to convey information, you have been reading and learning about stories that feature life-changing experiences. In the Extended Writing Project, you will use informational writing techniques to compose your own informative/explanatory essay.

Since the topic of your informative/explanatory essay will have to do with the impact of life-changing experiences, you'll want to consider how the people you've read about have been impacted by the turning points in their lives. Think back to what you read about Jackie Robinson in *I Never Had It Made*: What important life decision did Robinson face? What were the circumstances of the decision? How easy was the decision to make? What happened as a result of his decision? What did the decision teach him about life? How did his experiences and his reactions to them impact his country?

Reading & Writing Companion



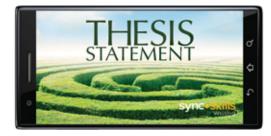
Make a list of the answers to these questions for Robinson and at least two other individuals you've read about in this unit. As you write down your ideas, look for patterns that begin to emerge. Do the experiences have anything in common? Do you notice ideas that are repeated? Looking for these patterns may help you solidify the ideas you want to discuss in your essay. Use this model to help you get started with your own prewriting:

Text: I Never Had It Made, by Jackie Robinson

Life Decision: Robinson decided to fight to be the first African American player in major league baseball.

What Happened: He faced discrimination from both his fellow ballplayers and fans.

In the face of resentment and threats, he proved to be a remarkable baseball player. Eventually, many of the players on his team accepted him, and he drew strength from his relationships with Mr. Rickey and his wife, Rachel.



SKILL: THESIS STATEMENT

DEFINE

The **thesis statement** is the most important sentence in an informative/ explanatory essay because it introduces what the writer is going to say about the essay's topic. The thesis statement expresses the writer's central or main idea about that topic, a position the writer will develop in the body of the essay. The thesis statement usually appears in the essay's introductory paragraph and is often the introduction's last sentence. The rest of the paragraphs in the essay all support the thesis statement with facts, evidence, and examples.

IDENTIFICATION AND APPLICATION

A thesis statement:

- makes a clear statement about the writer's central idea
- lets the reader know what to expect in the body of the essay
- responds fully and completely to an essay prompt
- is presented in the introduction paragraph

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MODEL

The following is the introduction paragraph from the Student Model, "The Power of Change":

Turning points in life are often difficult and challenging times. This idea is explored in the memoir *Warriors Don't Cry* by Melba Pattillo Beals, the autobiography *I Never Had It Made* by Jackie Robinson, and the article "The Father of Chinese Aviation" by Rebecca Maksel. **Melba Pattillo Beals**, **Jackie Robinson, and Feng Ru all faced life-changing experiences and, in doing so, changed their countries.**





Notice the bold-faced thesis statement. This student's thesis statement responds to the prompt. It reminds readers of the topic of the essay—the impact of life-changing experiences. It also specifically states the writer's central or main idea about that topic. The writer asserts that Beals, Robinson, and Feng Ru all faced these kinds of amazing experiences, and that both they and their countries were affected by them.



Write a thesis statement for your informative/explanatory essay that introduces your central idea in relation to the essay prompt. When you are finished, trade with a partner and offer each other feedback. How clear was the writer's central idea? Is it obvious what this essay will focus on? Does your thesis statement specifically address the prompt? Offer each other suggestions, and remember that they are most helpful when they are constructive.



SKILL: ORGANIZE INFORMATIVE WRITING



The purpose of writing an informative/explanatory text is to inform readers, so authors need to organize and present their ideas, facts, details, and other information in a logical way. Experienced authors carefully choose an **organizational structure** that best suits their material. They often use an outline or other graphic organizer to determine which organizational structure will help them express their ideas effectively.

For example, scientific reports and studies often use a cause and effect structure. This mirrors the information scientists need to relay—the experiment and the results of the experiment. Historians and memoirists often use a chronological structure, discussing events in the order they occurred. Other organizational structures include: **comparison-contrast, problem-solution, definition, classification,** and **order of importance.**



- When selecting an organizational structure, writers must consider the purpose of their writing. They often ask themselves questions about the kind of information they are writing about. They might consider:
 - > "What is the central idea I'd like to convey?"
 - > "Would it make sense to relay events in the order they occurred?"
 - > "Is there a specific problem discussed in the texts? What solutions seem likely answers to the problem?"
 - > "Is there a natural cause and effect relationship in my information?"
 - » "Can I compare and contrast different events or individuals' responses to events?"
 - > "Am I teaching readers how to do something?"



- _____ NOTES _____
- Writers often use word choice to create connections and transitions between ideas and to suggest the organizational structure being used:
 - > Sequential order: first, next, then, finally, last, initially, ultimately
 - > Cause and effect: *because, accordingly, as a result, effect, so*
 - > Compare and contrast: like, unlike, also, both, similarly, although, while, but, however
- Sometimes, within the overall structure, writers may find it necessary to organize individual paragraphs using other structures a definition paragraph in a chronological structure, for instance. This should not affect the overall organization.
- Sometimes a writer may include special formatting elements in an informative/explanatory text if these are useful in clarifying organization. These elements may include headings, or phrases in bold that announce the start of a section of text. Headings are usually included only if called for in a prompt or when needed to guide a reader through a long or complex text.

MODEL

The writer of the Student Model understood from her prewriting that she was mostly comparing and contrasting the life-changing experiences of three different figures in history.

In this excerpt from the introduction of the Student Model, the writer makes the organizational structure clear with her word choice:

Like Beals and Robinson, Feng Ru's hard work and courage changed his own country—China.

The writer uses the word "like" to identify something the three subjects (Beals, Robinson, and Feng Ru) had in common.

The writer of the Student Model, "The Power of Change," knew that she was comparing and contrasting crucial turning points in the lives of three historic figures. She used a three-column chart to organize her ideas during her prewriting process. She color-coded the information so that it was clear what either two or all three of the figures had in common. What was unique to each individual is unmarked.

MELBA PATTILLO BEALS	JACKIE ROBINSON	FENG RU
One of Little Rock 9 Threat of danger Integrated Central High African American Changed their country Many people were against it Had courage The first to integrate an institution Determination Death threats African American community supported her	Changed their country Played major league baseball Had courage The first to integrate an institution Team did not initially support him Determination African American community supported him African American Ihreat of danger	DeterminationBuilt planes of his own designChanged their countrySelf-taughtAsianThreat of dangerBrought aviation to homeland of ChinaHad courage



PRACTICE

Using an Organize Informative/Explanatory Writing Three-Column Chart like the one you have just studied, fill in the information you've gathered during your prewriting process.

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