

Introduction and Pretest

Your students should be familiar with the proofreading and technology skills in the advanced level of the Writer's Guide before beginning this unit.

PREPARATION Use the pretest to determine if your students are working at the advanced level of Report Writing. Administer and score the pretest before introducing the students to the content of the unit.

Each student will need a copy of pages 7 and 8 and lined paper.

Introduction to the Pretest

Explain to the students that they're going to have fun learning to be researchers and report writers. When you write a research report, you first gather information about your topic. Often people who write research reports don't know much about their topic before they begin. They just know the topic is something they're interested in learning more about. People who do research follow a procedure to collect information about a topic. Before you start to work on your research project, I'll give you a pretest. The pretest will help me learn what you know about doing research and writing a report.

The pretest for this unit differs from the pretests in other units because of the nature of writing a research report. Placement in the Report Writing unit is based on the students' knowledge of the research process as well as on the content of a piece of writing. The pretest has two parts. Part 1 tests the students' knowledge of the report-writing process. Part 2 tests the students' ability to write about the topic in their own words. The mini-report produced for the pretest will give you information about the students' actual writing ability and should be scored using the rubric on page 9. Combine the scores for Parts 1 and 2 of the pretest to get a total score for placement.

Administering the Pretest

Give each student a copy of page 7. Ask the students to write their names at the top of a sheet of lined paper.

The Abenaki (a-buh-NAH-kee) are an American Indian people of the northeastern United States. Before Europeans came to America, the Abenaki were a strong farming civilization. For this part of the test, we'll imagine we're writing a report about the ancient Abenaki nation.

Touch Item 1 on the Report Writing Pretest. I'll read the item; you follow along. *The topic of a report is what the report is about. What's the topic of our report? Write the number 1 on your paper. Write the topic of the report beside the number 1.*

Touch Item 2. *When people do research, they often begin by thinking about different categories or subcategories they might use to collect information. For example, "Economy" is a category you might use. The economy of a community includes the production and distribution of goods and services. Under the category "Economy," you might list subcategories such as food, clothing, and shelter. On your paper, write the number 2. Write three categories or subcategories you might want to find out about if you were doing research about the Abenaki nation.*

Touch Item 3. When people do research, they often make a plan, called an outline, that tells the most important ideas they'll write about. They organize their ideas in paragraphs. A paragraph is a group of sentences about one topic. The most important idea in a paragraph is called the main idea. The sentence that tells the main idea of the paragraph is called the topic sentence. Touch the paragraph under Item 3. One of the sentences in this paragraph is the topic sentence. I'll read the paragraph; you follow along. Read the paragraph to the students. Write the number 3 on your paper. Then write the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Touch Item 4. Transition words and phrases show how the sentences in a paragraph are related. They help the reader move from one detail to the next. Write the number 4 on your paper, and list four transition words or phrases in the paragraph I just read.

Touch Item 5. In multiparagraph passages, transition sentences are used to show how the paragraphs are related. They help the reader move from one paragraph to the next. The last sentence in this paragraph was written as a concluding sentence for the paragraph and as a transition sentence to the next paragraph. *What do you think the topic of the next paragraph will be?* Write the number 5 on your paper and the answer to the question.

Touch Item 6. The person who wrote the paragraph about the toys of the Abenaki children also wrote this introductory paragraph as the first paragraph of his report. One of the sentences in this paragraph is the topic sentence. I'll read the paragraph; you follow along. Read the paragraph aloud. Write the number 6 on your paper. Then write the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Touch Item 7. The person who wrote this report wanted to give some background information to help the reader better understand the report. Write the number 7 on your paper. List two important pieces of background information presented in this introductory paragraph.

Reread the first two sentences of the introductory paragraph aloud. Touch Item 8. *Why do you think the author wrote the first sentence of the introductory paragraph?* Write the number 8 on your paper. Write your answer beside the number 8.

Reread the last sentence of the introductory paragraph aloud. Touch Item 9. *Why do you think the author wrote the last sentence of the introductory paragraph?* Write the number 9 on your paper. Write your answer beside the number 9.

Touch Item 10. *There are many places to get information about the Abenaki nation.* Write the number 10 on your paper. *Write three places you could find such information.* Collect the students' papers.

Give each student another sheet of lined paper. You learned some information about the Abenaki

nation in Part 1 of the pretest. Now you'll write a short report to tell what you know about the Abenaki nation. Give each student a copy of page 8. You can use the information you learned in Part 1 and the information on these research cards to help you write your report. You may also add any other information you know about the Abenaki nation. You have forty-five minutes to write.

After forty-four minutes, tell the students they should finish writing the sentence they're working on. Give them fifteen minutes to edit and proofread their reports. Evaluate the pretests using the rubric and the scoring guide on page 9. Answers for Part 1 follow. Keep the writing sample and the scoring rubric for comparison at the end of the unit.

Answers for Report Writing Pretest, Part 1

1. the Abenaki nation
2. (Accept reasonable responses.) Ideas: Geography, climate, location, economy, food, clothing, shelter, trade, transportation, society, villages, roles of men, roles of women, language, religion, leaders, medicine.
3. Toys were a part of every Abenaki child's life.
4. Ideas: While, at first, as they grew older, in this way, thus, too, but it was also
5. Idea: Adult life
6. In this report, you'll learn more about the life of the Abenaki people before the Europeans came, especially their economy and their society.
7. Ideas: The Abenaki lived in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. They numbered forty thousand. They were self-sufficient.
8. Idea: To grab the reader's attention
9. Idea: To give the reader an idea of what the author wants the reader to learn
10. Ideas: Nonfiction books, textbooks, encyclopedias, the Internet, magazines, historical museums

Background

In the intermediate level of Report Writing, the students wrote reports on endangered animals in the United States. In the advanced level of Report Writing, the students will develop more sophisticated research and writing skills. The subject matter for this level is ancient civilizations. This topic correlates with many social studies and history topics and can be integrated with those subjects. If your social

studies curriculum includes a unit on ancient civilizations, you may be able to integrate the report writing unit and the social studies unit, thus allowing time to cover both curriculum areas more thoroughly.

You may wish to introduce the topic of ancient civilizations by inviting a guest speaker from a local museum, by going on a field trip to see local historical artifacts, or by showing a video to help the students understand the concept of ancient civilizations. The students can also start thinking about the civilizations they'll choose as subjects for their reports. It's important for each student to work independently on a topic; therefore, it would be best for each student to choose a different civilization to investigate. However, if resources are limited, more than one student may work on a single civilization. The students will be expected to use a minimum of three different sources for their reports: an encyclopedia, an Internet site, and a nonfiction book or textbook.

In the context of this unit, an ancient civilization is an advanced society that developed established patterns of political, economic, and social institutions, providing a stable environment that allowed the people to exist as a group.

List the following civilizations on chart paper: Africa—Egypt, Zulu; North America—Blackfoot, Cherokee, Plains, Iroquois, Nez Perce, Sioux, Aztec, Maya; South America—Inca; Asia—China, Japan, Mongol; Europe—Greece, Rome; Middle East—Babylonia, Phoenicia; India—Gupta, Maurya. The focus of this report-writing unit is the research and writing skills necessary to produce a research report, not the specific subject matter. The availability of material will determine the degree of freedom the students will have in choosing their topics. If there is enough research material, the students should be allowed to narrow their choice of topics to smaller units. For example, while some students may research the Plains Indians of North America, others may focus on the Blackfoot Indians.

You may wish to find appropriate Internet sites and provide the students with a list of the most useful sites for research. (Preview all Internet sites for appropriate content.) You may also wish to collect from the library printed materials on ancient civilizations, including magazines, nonfiction books, and encyclopedias. If your

school has a librarian, you may wish to plan together to have materials available for your students.

As part of each lesson, you'll model the steps of the research process. Sample materials are provided for the Mayan civilization, including textbook, Internet, and encyclopedia samples. A sample report on the Maya is included, as well as samples of research note cards. You'll find these materials at the end of the appropriate lessons.

Introduction to the Unit

Introduce the students to this unit with an explanation like the following: **For the next few weeks, you'll learn how to do research, and you'll write a report about an ancient civilization. Here are some examples of ancient civilizations. Display the list. Ancient civilizations developed in all parts of the world.** Call on individual students to read a name on the list. Explain to the students that they'll investigate the ancient civilization of their choice and then write a report on that topic. **You may wish to investigate an ancient civilization related to your family or one that once inhabited the area where you live.** Provide a sign-up sheet so the students can write their names after the topic of their choice. Encourage them to choose topics not chosen by other students. After the students have made their choices and written them on the sign-up sheet, you'll be ready to begin the unit.

Report Writing Pretest, Part 1

Use your own paper to answer the questions.

1. The topic of a report is what the report is about. What's the topic of our report?
2. When people do research, they often begin by thinking about different categories or subcategories they might use to collect information. Write three categories or subcategories you might want to find out about if you were doing research about the Abenaki nation.
3. Write the topic sentence of the following paragraph.

Toys were a part of every Abenaki child's life. While babies were on cradleboards, they enjoyed seeing dangling toys, such as a string of animal teeth or a rabbit's foot, and reaching for them. Young boys had small bows and blunt arrows, slings, and fishing equipment. At first, their fathers made these toys for them, but as they grew older, Abenaki boys made their own toys. In this way, they learned important toolmaking skills they would use in their adult lives. Mothers made dolls for their little girls from cornstalks, corncobs, or cattails. Abenaki girls decorated and beaded cradleboards and dolls' clothing for these simple handmade dolls. Thus, girls, too, learned adult skills from their toys. Playing with toys was fun, but it was also a way to learn useful skills for adult life.

4. List four transition words or phrases in the paragraph above.
5. What do you think the topic of the next paragraph will be?
6. Write the topic sentence of this introductory paragraph.

Have you ever wondered about the first people to inhabit North America? Long before Europeans came to America, the Abenaki people lived in the area that is now Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The Abenaki nation, which once numbered forty thousand, was a nation of proud, strong, self-sufficient people. In this report, you'll learn more about the life of the Abenaki people before the Europeans came, especially their economy and their society.

7. List two important pieces of background information presented in the introductory paragraph above.
8. Why do you think the author wrote the first sentence of the introductory paragraph?
9. Why do you think the author wrote the last sentence of the introductory paragraph?
10. There are many places to get information about the Abenaki nation. Write three places you could find such information.

Abenaki Nation Research Cards

II. Geography

A. Location

- northern New England states
- fertile floodplains

III. Economy

A. Food

- “The Three Sisters”: beans, corn, squash
- fish, game
- roasting, rotisserie, boiling stones
- dried for storage

III. Economy

B. Clothing

- handmade needles with eyes
- deerskin shirts, leggings
- woven hide shirts made from vegetable fiber, animal hair
- finger-woven sashes in bright colors with intricate designs
- moccasins

III. Economy

C. Shelter

- dome-shaped wigwams
- frame of saplings
- cover of birch or elm bark
- room for fifteen people
- hearth in center, smoke hole
- individual space for each person

IV. Society

A. Villages

- clusters of wigwams
- summer activities outdoors
- winter activities indoors—
storytelling
- construction and repair of tools, weapons, clothing
- ceremonies

IV. Society

B. Role of Men

- fought enemies
- hunted, trapped in winter—
moose, deer, rabbits, turkeys
- fished in spring, summer
- cleared trees
- built wigwams, longhouses
- made canoes
- taught young boys

IV. Society

C. Role of Women

- planted and tended crops
- picked berries, nuts
- gathered roots, wild rice, garlic
- gathered herbs for medicines
- made clothing
- cooked food
- cared for children
- taught young girls

IV. Society

D. Language

- Algonquian
- called “people of the dawn”
- storytelling
 - to entertain
 - to teach lessons
 - to discipline children
- stories of Glooscap, Azban

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RUBRIC

Scoring Part 1

Evaluating the Elements of a Short Report		
The author of this report . . .	Possible Points	Points Earned
1. Identifies the topic of the report.	2 points (2)	
2. Identifies three categories to direct research.	2 points each (6)	
3, 6. Identifies the topic sentence of a paragraph in two different locations.	3 points each (6)	
4. Identifies four transition words or phrases.	3 points each (12)	
5. Uses a transition sentence to predict the content of the next paragraph.	4 points (4)	
7. Identifies two examples of background information from the introductory paragraph.	3 points each (6)	
8. Identifies the strategy for gaining the reader's attention.	4 points (4)	
9. Identifies the purpose of the last sentence in an introductory paragraph.	4 points (4)	
10. Names three sources for information for a report.	2 points each (6)	
Total Points for Part 1	50 points	

Scoring Part 2

- Give the student a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.
- Give the student a score of 1 for each element at the emergent or minimum level.
- Give the student a score of 3 for each element at a satisfactory level.
- Give the student a score of 5 for each element at the mastery level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Short Report	
The author of this report . . .	Points Earned
Writes information from research note cards in own words.	
Writes clear, coherent sentences about the topic.	
Has an introductory paragraph that states the purpose of the report.	
Has a content paragraph for each research card category.	
Has a concluding paragraph that restates the purpose of the report using words different from those in the introduction.	
Uses a variety of sentence structures.	
Uses transition words effectively within and between paragraphs.	
Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
Uses correct capitalization.	
Uses correct punctuation.	
Total Points for Part 2	

Total Points for Part 1 and Part 2 _____

If the student scores . . .	
85–100 points	The student has mastered the skills and concepts taught in the advanced level of Report Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the advanced level of Report Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the pretest for the intermediate level of Report Writing.