

Introduction and Pretest

PREPARATION It's recommended that the students complete the five proofreading lessons in the Writer's Guide before beginning this unit.

The pretest in this introduction to the unit should be used to determine if your students are working at the intermediate level of Report Writing. Administer and score the pretest before the students are introduced to the content of the unit.

Each student will need a copy of pages 7, 8, and 9 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 by writing a report. 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 their topic. Before you start to work on your research project, I'm going to 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 working through the research process as well as on the content of a piece of sample writing. Administer the pretest to the class before beginning the unit. 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 a 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 11. Combine the scores for Parts 1 and 2 of the pretest to determine a total score to use for placement.

Administering the Pretest

Give the students a copy of pages 7 and 8, and ask them to write their names and the date at the top of each page.

Pandas are popular animals. People love pandas because their appearance is very different from that of other animals and because they're interesting animals to learn about. For this part of the test, we're going to imagine we're writing a report about pandas.

Touch Item 1 on your paper. I'll read the item; you follow along. *The topic of a report tells what the report is about. What's the topic of the class report?* Write the topic of the report on the line.

Touch Item 2. *When people do research, they often begin by asking questions about the topic. Write three questions you could ask if you were doing research about pandas.*

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 of the paragraph. Touch the paragraph in Item 3. One of the sentences in this paragraph tells the main idea of the paragraph. I'll read the paragraph; you follow along.

Pandas are interesting animals to observe. When you look at a panda, the first thing you notice is its appearance. Pandas are black and white. The markings on their faces make them look as if they're wearing masks. Pandas are plant eaters, so their claws are shorter than the claws of meat eaters. Some people say pandas look like cuddly teddy bears.

Underline the sentence that tells the main idea of the paragraph.

Touch Item 4. The person who wrote the paragraph about pandas was answering a question. *What question do you think the writer*

answered when she wrote the paragraph in Item 3? Write your answer on the lines.

Touch Item 5. *The purpose of a report is the reason you're writing the report. Write a sentence to tell why you would write a report about pandas.*

Touch Item 6. *There are many places to get information about pandas. Write three places you could get information about pandas.*

Touch Item 7. When you write a research report, it's important to stay on the topic. That means you write only about the topic. You don't write information about another topic. *Some of the information in this paragraph doesn't belong. It's not about the topic. I'll read the paragraph; you follow along.*

There are not many parts of the world where pandas live. Pandas may be found high in the mountains in southwestern China. The climate is hot in Africa. Pandas thrive in mountainous areas that have forests of bamboo. Bamboo is good to eat. A few pandas can be found living in zoos throughout the world. Pandas do not like people to look at them.

What is the topic of this paragraph? Write your answer. Draw a line through the sentences in the paragraph that don't tell about the topic.

Collect the students' papers.

Give each student a sheet of lined paper. You learned some information about pandas in Part 1 of the pretest. Now you'll write a short report to tell what you know about pandas. Give each student a copy of the "Panda Fact Sheet" (page 9). You can use the information you learned in Part 1 and the information on the fact sheet to help you write your report. You may also add to your report any other information you know about pandas. You have forty-five minutes to write your report.

After forty-four minutes, tell the students to finish writing the sentence they're working on. Give the students fifteen minutes to edit and proofread their reports. Evaluate the pretests using the rubric and scoring guide on pages 10 and 11. Answers for Part 1 follow this paragraph. Keep the writing sample and the scoring rubric for comparison at the end of the unit.

Answer Key for Report Writing Pretest, Part 1

1. Pandas
2. (Accept reasonable responses that are stated as questions.) Ideas:
 - a. Where do pandas live?
 - b. What do pandas eat?
 - c. How long do pandas live?
3. When you look at a panda, the first thing you notice is its appearance.
4. Idea: What do pandas look like?
5. (Accept reasonable responses.) Idea: To help people learn about pandas
6. (Accept reasonable responses.) Ideas: Internet, library, book, magazine, television, video
7. a. Idea: Places pandas live
b. The climate is hot in Africa. Bamboo is good to eat. Pandas do not like people to look at them.

Introduction to the Unit

The students will write reports on endangered animals of the United States. You may wish to introduce the topic to the students by inviting a guest speaker from a local conservation group or by showing a videotape to help the students understand the concept of endangered species. The students can also start thinking about the endangered animals they'll choose as subjects for their reports. If your science curriculum includes a unit on animals, conservation, or environmental studies, you may be able to integrate this report writing unit with the science unit.

This unit will be most effective if each student chooses a different animal to investigate. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service provides a list of all endangered and threatened species. The number of endangered animals in the United States is large and changes continually. You may wish to narrow this list so your students won't be overwhelmed by the number of choices. The Web site www.endangered.fws.gov includes lists of threatened and endangered animals by groups—mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Here are additional sites where you and your students can find information.

Massicot, Paul. Animal Info—Information on Rare, Threatened and Endangered Mammals. 2003 Animal Info: www.animalinfo.org

NatureServe Explorer: An Online Encyclopedia of Life. 2003. Version 1.8: www.natureserve.org/explorer

The Wild Ones: The Children's Education Program of Wildlife Trust: thewildones.org

You may also wish to collect from a library printed materials on endangered species, including magazines, pamphlets, books, and encyclopedias. Ask your school librarian to have materials available for your students.

As part of each lesson, you'll model the steps of the research process, so you should select an endangered animal for this modeling. The animal used to model the process in this unit is the red wolf (*Canis rufus*).

Introduce the students to this unit with an explanation like the following: **We're going to have fun learning to be researchers and report writers by writing a report about an animal on the endangered species list. The word *species* means "a kind of animal." Animals on the endangered species list are animals that are**

dying or being killed at a rate faster than they reproduce. This means that not enough baby animals of these species are being born. This is a serious problem. Earth has thousands of different species, or kinds, of animals. It's important that humans not let them become extinct. Animals that are extinct are no longer living. An example of an extinct animal is the dinosaur. We can see only their bones in museums.

The students should choose animals from the endangered animals list of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They will research a particular animal and then write a report. The report should include maps, pictures, and other visual materials as well as paragraphs about the animal.

The students should have an opportunity to learn about endangered animals in their own state, as well as those in other states, by visiting a Web site such as www.endangeredspecies.com.

Provide a sign-up chart so the students can write the names of the animals they choose for the subject of their reports. The students should choose animals that have not been chosen by others in the class. After the students have made their choices and written them on the sign-up chart, you'll be ready to begin the ten-lesson instructional sequence.

Name _____ Date _____

Report Writing Pretest, Part 1

page 1

1. The topic of a report tells what the report is about. What's the topic of the class report?

2. When people do research, they often begin by asking questions about the topic. Write three questions you could ask if you were doing research about pandas.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. Underline the sentence that tells the main idea of the paragraph.

Pandas are interesting animals to observe. When you look at a panda, the first thing you notice is its appearance. Pandas are black and white. The markings on their faces make them look as if they're wearing masks. Pandas are plant eaters, so their claws are shorter than the claws of meat eaters. Some people say pandas look like cuddly teddy bears.

4. What question do you think the writer answered when she wrote the paragraph in Item 3?

5. The purpose of a report is the reason you're writing the report. Write a sentence to tell why you would write a report about pandas.

Name _____ Date _____

Report Writing Pretest, Part 1

page 2

6. There are many places to get information about pandas. Write three places you could get information about pandas.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

7. Some of the information in this paragraph doesn't belong. It's not about the topic.

There are not many parts of the world where pandas live. Pandas may be found high in the mountains in southwestern China. The climate is hot in Africa. Pandas thrive in mountainous areas that have forests of bamboo. Bamboo is good to eat. A few pandas can be found living in zoos throughout the world. Pandas do not like people to look at them.

a. What is the topic of this paragraph? _____

b. Draw a line through the sentences in the paragraph that don't tell about the topic.

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Panda Fact Sheet

Live high in the mountains of southwestern China

Eat bamboo

Sometimes eat eighty pounds of food a day

Can eat more than 10,000 pounds of food a year

Eat mostly plants, but sometimes eat small animals

Some scientists think giant pandas are in the bear family. Other scientists think giant pandas are in the raccoon family.

Like to live alone rather than in groups

A male panda can weigh up to 240 pounds. Females weigh about 200 pounds.

Black-and-white fur with black ears and black fur around eyes

Fur is thick and oily.

Live to be twenty-five to thirty years old

Move slowly

Climb trees to get away from their enemies

Can see well in the dark and have a good sense of smell

Use smell and many different sounds to find each other

Baby pandas are born in late summer or early fall.

Born in hollow trees or in caves

Very tiny when born

Babies drink milk from their mothers.

Panda mothers take good care of their babies.

Stay with their mothers for about a year and a half

Name _____ Date _____

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 a report.	2 points	
2. Frames questions to direct research.	3 points for each question 1 point for capital at beginning 1 point for correct end mark	
3. Identifies the main idea of a paragraph.	5 points	
4. Identifies the question that was answered by a paragraph in a report.	4 points for the question 1 point for capital at beginning 1 point for correct end mark	
5. States the purpose of a report.	5 points	
6. Names three sources of information for a report.	2 points for each source	
7.a. Identifies the topic of a paragraph.	5 points	
7.b. Eliminates information not related to the topic.	2 points for each item	
Total Points for Part 1	50 points	

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Name _____ Date _____

RUBRIC

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 a fact sheet in his or her own words.	
Writes complete sentences about the topic.	
Stays on the topic.	
Uses a variety of sentence structures.	
Varies the first word of sentences.	
Indents paragraphs.	
Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
Uses correct capitalization at the beginnings of sentences and in proper nouns.	
Uses correct end marks.	
Presents the report in a legible and well-organized manner.	
Total Points for Part 2	

Total Points for Part 1 and Part 2 _____

If the student scores . . .	
85–100 points	Administer the pretest for the advanced level of Report Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the intermediate level of Report Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the pretest for the beginning level of Report Writing.

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