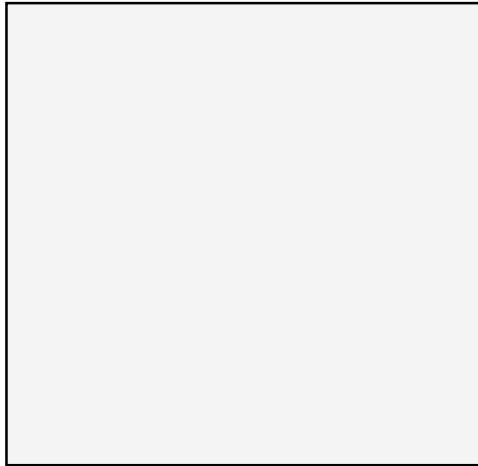


Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Elementary

Context



**Student
Work
Sample
Report**

Performance Indicators

Students can:

- ... gather and interpret information from [appropriate sources]
- ... select information appropriate to the purpose of their investigation and relate ideas from one text to another
- ... present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms
- ... select a focus, organization, and point of view
- ... use a few traditional structures for conveying information
- ... use details, examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences to explain or clarify information
- ... include relevant information and exclude extraneous material
- ... use "the writing process" to produce well-constructed informational texts
- ... observe basic writing conventions.

The Iroquois

Iroquois were people of strong beliefs. They respected the world of nature and knew of its importance.

Hunting was very important to the Iroquois. Bullheads, sunfish, suckers and perch were main parts of their diet. They ate other foods such as corn, squash, and beans. These were called the three sisters because of their importance to the Iroquois. They also ate meat and a variety of nuts. They grew and hunted only what they needed and wasted nothing. They used fish for fertilizer and rotated their crops. Today we use chemicals, and often we do not let the soil rest.

Building shelter took about a week, seven suns. They sent some men to get bark while the others built the frame, which was made from young saplings. Trees were not clear cut for money as we do today. They used every part of the tree, too. The bark used, if laid out, would be seventy-seven feet long.

Ceremonies usually started in the evenings. The Iroquois first gave thanks and then danced and feasted. They sometimes threw tobacco in the fire as an offering. They gave thanks to the Spirits for their good fortune, harvests, good weather, and plentiful crops. They worshiped the natural world, they didn't hurt it.

The Iroquois used bones, rocks, and wood to make tools and

Commentary

The sample:

- reflects use of a range of resources, including audio tapes and exhibit labels at the museum
- demonstrates a clear understanding of information gathered from the exhibits
- shows student's flexibility in introducing topic by highlighting the Iroquois' way of life and its environmental impact to engage the reader
- demonstrates independence in organization by weaving in details on hunting, building, ceremonies, and tools to support main ideas
- makes appropriate connections by developing a paragraph for each subtopic showing the way of life of the Iroquois and how they used their environment rather than abused it
- shows skillful use of language conventions, including some complex sentences, the use of commas in a series, and paragraphing.

Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
√	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
	Student Choice
√	Research Required

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Elementary

Context

As part of the spring 1995 elementary language arts pilot assessment, third graders were asked to read excerpts from a guide to rabbit care, then write a letter to a friend relating the important information and ideas about caring for rabbits. They began by brainstorming a "shopping list" of items they would need, drafted their letter, shared their draft in small groups, then revised the letter based on the responses of their peers.

Student Work Sample

Letter of Information

Dear Friend:

I am going to Virginia, so please take care of my pet. I am sending you a Rabbit Care Guide Book.

In case you can't read and do not know how to take care of the rabbit, I will explain how to do so in this letter.

Bring the hutch, the cage, the bedding, and all the other things the rabbit needs to your house. If the rabbit goes to the bathroom often, you may regularly have to change the litter box and bedding.

Let the rabbit out daily for exercise, be sure to

Performance Indicators

Students can:

...gather and interpret information from appropriate sources

...select information appropriate to the purpose of their investigation and relate ideas from one text to another

...present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms

...use a few traditional structures for conveying information

...include relevant information and exclude extraneous material

...use "the writing process" to produce well-constructed informational texts

...observe basic writing conventions.

Commentary

The sample:

- reflects a clear understanding of information from the text
- establishes a friendly, informational tone which is appropriate to the request being made for help
- demonstrates an orderly arrangement of information; eg., elements of rabbit care
- illustrates correct use of basic writing conventions.

Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
	Student Choice
√	Research Required

Now back to the rules. You are not allowed to trip, slash, or crosscheck a person. Otherwise you are penalized 2 minutes in the penalty box. A cross-check is when you have your arms up, your stick held in both hands, and hit the person. Slashing is when you swing your stick at a person, and a trip is a trip. Once you reach a certain age you are allowed to hit and use slapshots. Slapshots are when you wind up to hit the puck, unlike wrist shots which are regular on the puck shots. There are certain ways you are allowed to check and certain ways you aren't. You are supposed to hit with your chest, keeping your arms in with your shoulder or with your hip. You're not allowed to elbow, rough or hit a person out of a 10 foot range from the puck. Elbowing is when you lift your elbow to the person. Roughing is when you have your arms and hands up too high when you hit the other player. Also you can't hit from behind. There are many rules to the game, but it is not as complicated as it seems.

The only other thing you need to play hockey is the courage and the mental strength, then you add ability to the game. I know I said the most important thing about playing hockey was knowing how to play—but, if you're going to play, first get the equipment!

Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
√	Student Choice
	Research Required

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Commencement

Context

This essay was written as a timed response to supplementary reading by an eleventh grade student in a Regents level class. The assignment was to use information from the text to explain how an individual in the book matures as a result of experiencing a "rite of passage."

Student
Work
Sample

Literary
Essay

Performance Indicators

Students can:

... interpret and analyze complex informational texts and presentations

... make distinctions about the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas

... make perceptive and well developed connections to prior knowledge

... write and present research reports, feature articles, and thesis/support papers on a variety of topics related to all school subjects

... present a controlling idea that conveys an individual perspective and insight into the topic

... support interpretations and decisions about relative significance of information with explicit statement, evidence, and appropriate argument

... use standard English skillfully, effectively applying established rules and conventions for presenting information.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Though perhaps not [a reflection of] the traditional view of "rite of passage," two very powerful experiences made Malcolm X mature mentally and actually changed his life forever. Working as a hustler and pimp in Boston and Harlem, he was destined to be imprisoned sooner or later. The vast majority of people accept imprisonment as something which just occurs, and when released revert to their original lifestyle of drugs and crime. Malcolm X, however, used jail as an opportunity for self-improvement and, through the education he gave himself there, became an important member of his community.

The change started when family members who had been converted to a new type of American Islam began talking to Malcolm about it. The idea grew in him until he wrote daily letters to the movement's leader and believed more strongly in Allah than any of his family did. Educating himself by copying the dictionary and reading classics, he became the equivalent, in speech and writing, of a college-educated man. The way Malcolm dealt with the experience of jail - abstaining from cigarettes and drugs, educating himself, refusing to eat pork - was virtually unknown . . .

After his conversion to Islam and longtime work as an assistant to Mr. Elijah Mohammed, the nation's leader, Malcolm decided to fulfill the dictum of the Koran that all able Muslims should make a pilgrimage to Mecca. A black American Muslim, member of two minorities who had learned to hate the white man because of the personal gain or ego underlying his motives, Malcolm was shocked at the way he was

Commentary

The sample:

- demonstrates the writer's flexibility and independence by acknowledging that the "rite of passage" presented in this book may not reflect the traditional view
- presents an orderly discussion of the two major influences on Malcolm's life that could be considered his "rite of passage": the education he acquired in jail and his place as a leader in the Muslim community
- incorporates a wide range of specific information from the text
- makes appropriate connections between the text and prior knowledge ("Working as a hustler . . . destined to be imprisoned"; "the majority . . . revert to their original lifestyle") and among ideas in the text to support the writer's thesis and to elaborate on the two major influences in Malcolm's life
- shows a controlled and elegant use of language conventions, including sophisticated word choice, complex sentence structures, accurate use of introductory adverbial clauses, and appropriate use of semi-colons.

received in Mecca. Welcomed with open arms by people of every color, deluged with offers of translation help (he didn't speak Arabic), homes, food, guides, even given his own suite to stay in during his tour, Malcolm began to revise his views concerning the "evil white man." Having met so many brotherly whites truly unconcerned with the color of his skin, Malcolm concluded that it must be the society in America, not the people, which fosters the inequality seen by blacks and other minorities. Breaking, upon return to the United States, with Elijah Mohammed and his white-hating group, Malcolm started his own temple founded on an ever-changing set of beliefs, as what he had seen led him to convert to the true Islam and teach his people brotherhood and help for their fellow man. Eventually killed for these new beliefs, or the failure of the United States to acknowledge them, Malcolm became almost a martyr to the black people he had helped.

Though the rites of passage Malcolm underwent were not necessarily conventional, they were nevertheless rites applicable to the society in which he lived. Malcolm was changed enormously in thought, knowledge, and even action by these experiences; it is clear that his time in prison and his journey to Mecca had a direct influence on the life of Malcolm X.

Circumstances of Performance:

✓	Timed Assignment
	Extended Project
✓	First Draft
	Revised Draft
✓	Teacher-generated Topic
✓	Student Choice
	Research Required

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Commencement

Context

An eleventh grade student chose an issue of personal significance and read works in a variety of genres in order to explore the broad dimensions of that issue. She responded to questions of what new information or understandings she had gained, as well as to what opinions and judgments or evaluations she had formed through her reading. The report is one portion of an extended project which included journal entries and reflective pieces about her reading, as well as literary critiques of films and works of fiction dealing with her chosen issue. The selection is a final, revised version of earlier drafts.

**Student
Work
Sample

Report**

Performance Indicators

Students can:

. . . write and present research reports . . . on a variety of topics related to all school subjects

. . . present a controlling idea that conveys an individual perspective and insight into the topic

. . . develop information with appropriate supporting materials, such as facts, details, illustrative examples . . .

. . . use the "writing process" to produce well-constructed informational reports

. . . use standard English for formal presentation of information.

Commentary

The sample:

- Introduces the topic with attention-getting

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Elementary

Context

Fifth-grade students on.

Performance Indicators

Students can:

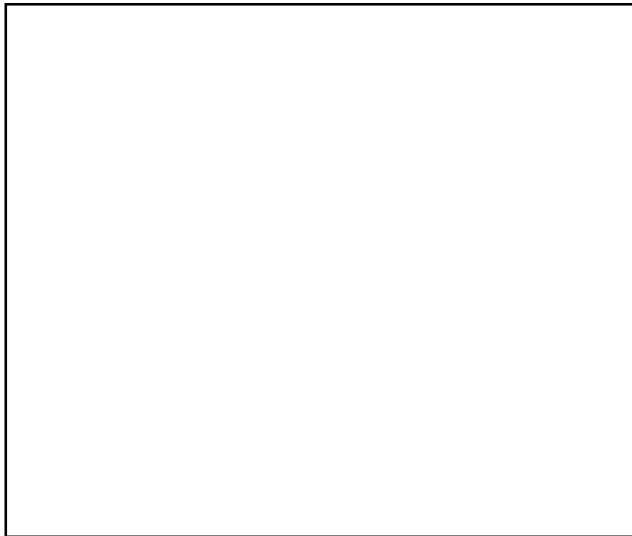
. . . recognize some features that distinguish the genres

. . . create their own stories, poems, and songs, using the elements of the literature they have read and appropriate vocabulary

. . . observe the conventions of grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation.

**Student
Work
Sample**

Narrative



Circumstances of Performance:

√	Timed Assignment
	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
	Student Choice
	Research Required

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Intermediate

Context

This tenth-grade story was written in response to an English/Biology interdisciplinary project. Students were asked to assume the voice and personality of a living organism and present a view of the world through its eyes. Students were expected to write creatively for a wide audience, using accurate scientific information. Later, they would incorporate factual information from this project into a formal science research paper and compare both writing experiences.

Performance Indicators

Students can:

... write stories, poems, literary essays, and plays that observe the conventions of as Tm9d.091

Student Work Sample

Short Story

The Leafy Seadragon

"Gather around," said Grandma Leafy Seadragon, "It's story time."

My seahorse cousins and I swam over to Grandma Leafy Seadragon as quickly as we could, which is not very fast, even though our dorsal fin goes back and forth 30 times in one second.

"I love story time," said my cousin Horace.

"What story are you going to tell?" I asked.

"Today's story is a little different than usual. I'm going to tell you about my life, and how I grew up as a leafy seadragon," said Grandma.

"But I'm a seahorse! exclaimed Horace.

"I know," said Grandma, "but just like leafy seadragons, you have a head like a horse, a pouch like a kangaroo, a tail like a monkey, and a mouth like a straw. The only difference is that I have extra skin on me that looks like seaweed."

"Start the story," yelled Damian.

Grandma began by telling us that she grew up off the southern coast of Australia, among the coral reefs. After she hatched from her egg and emerged from her father's pouch, she was about half an inch long.

"Grandma, was I that small too?" asked my youngest cousin Bert?

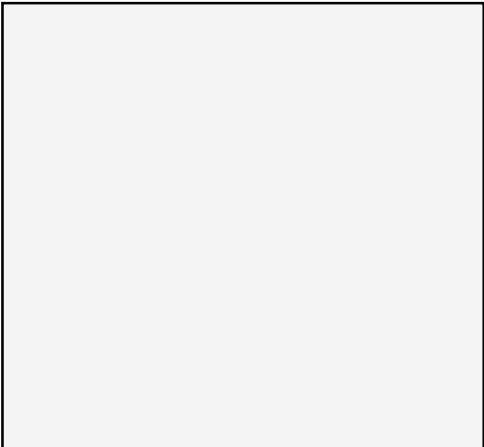
Commentary

The sample:

- demonstrates understanding of form and genre by using the technique of a story within a story
- demonstrates use of story conventions ("It's time for you to go to sleep now.")
- shows effective use of dialogue to characterize other seahorses in story; uses conventions of dialogue correctly
- includes evidence of scientific research
- uses language to arouse range of responses; e.g., humor, caution.

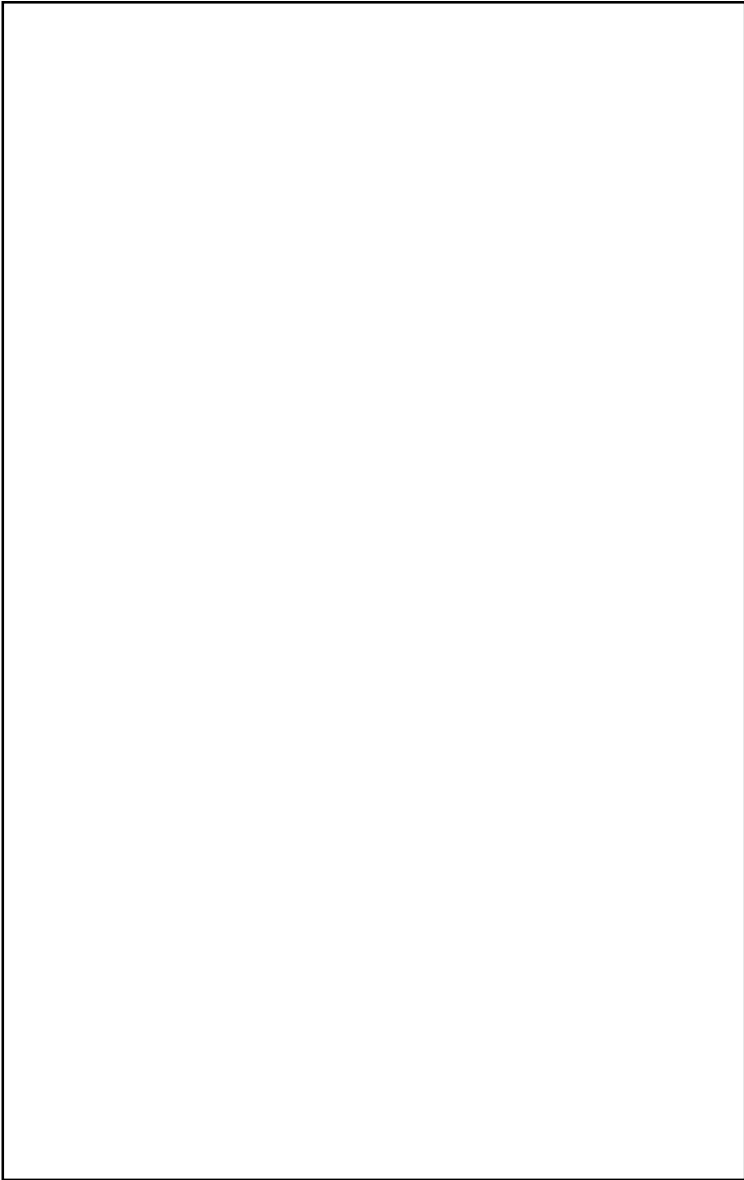
Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Commencement



**Student
Work
Sample**

Poem

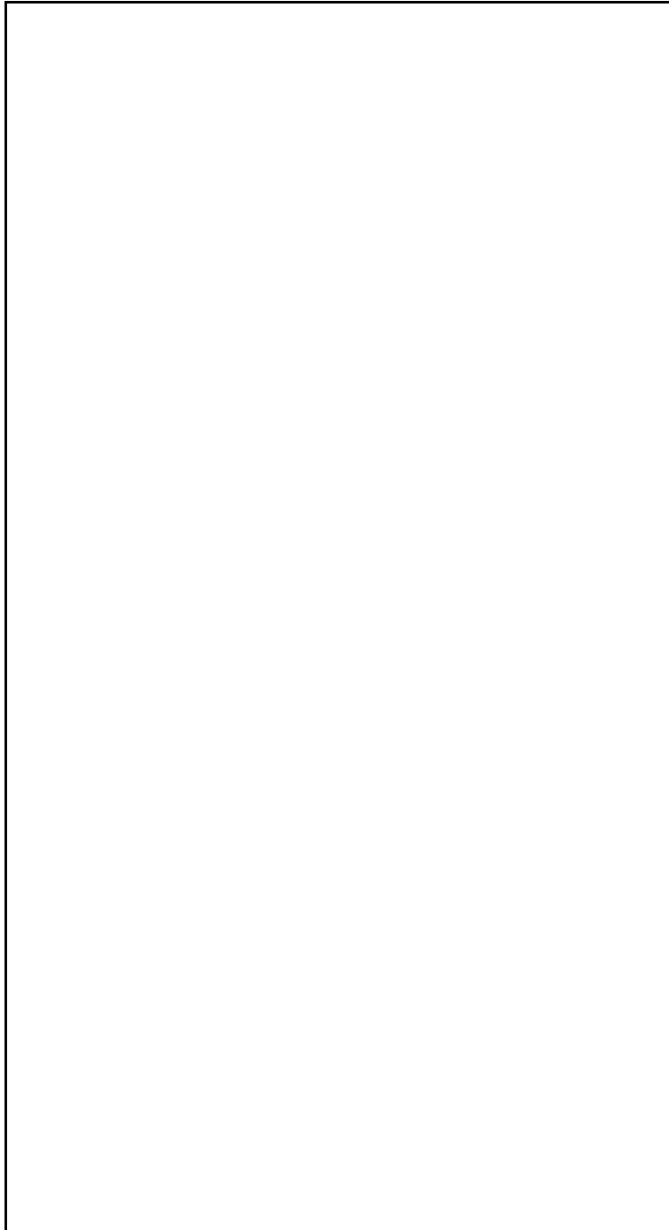
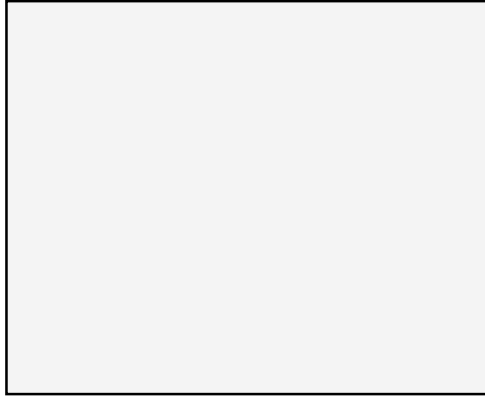


Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
√	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
	Teacher-generated Topic
√	Student Choice
	Research Required

Performance Indicators

Students can:



Up in the stands a vendor with a stack of paper shouted "Programs." I thought about what it was that he was selling because I did not know what a "program" was. 'Twas unknown to me, but I knew I'd no need for one since I couldn't read.

Suddenly, an actor came out of the doors in the back of the stage and announced that the play was about to begin. Quickly, the crowd fell silent as they prepared for the action to commence. A man and a woman led a group of people through the doors onto the stage. The man and woman were both in pretty clothing. I knew that that meant they were supposed to be a lord and 'is lady. I figured out their names by what they called

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Commencement

Context

This eleventh-grader's response to an assignment to write a four paragraph essay to the poem "The Road Not Taken," reveals the student's reflections on his/her own decision-making. The student was asked to discuss choices available in a particular situation and how those choices related

**Student
Work
Sample**

Performance Indicators

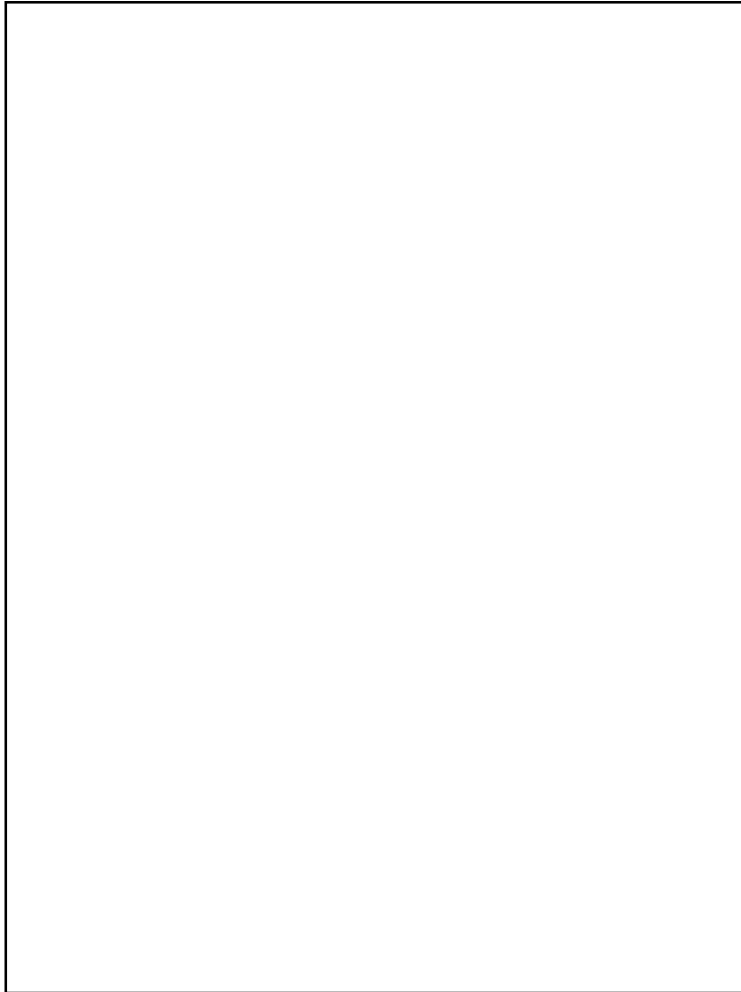
Students can:

. . . read and listen independently and fluently across many genres of literature

. . . understand how multiple levels of meaning are conveyed in a text

. . . produce oral and written responses to and interpretation of works of recognized literary merit.

***Response to
Literature***



was letting other people's discomfort with my arm affect me. I was not raised to allow others' opinions to make my decisions.

I think a fitting symbol for my choice not to have the surgery is a bottle of foundation. People use cover-up to hide their imperfections, to make themselves look and feel better. I chose not to have the surgery because I never needed to make myself feel better. As Robert Frost said once, "I took the one less traveled by and that has made all the difference."

Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
	Student Choice
√	Research Required

Circumstances of Performance:

√	Timed Assignment
	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
√	Student Choice
	Research Required

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Intermediate

Context

This high school freshman writes a weekly column for the local newspaper. In this column, he evaluates the offerings at a nearby mall.

Student
Work
Sample

Review

Performance Indicators

Students can:

... present clear analyses of issues, ideas, texts, and experiences, supporting their opinions with well-developed arguments

... develop arguments with effective use of details and evidence that reflect a coherent set of criteria

... use Standard English, precise vocabulary, and presentational strategies effectively to influence an audience.

Colonie-Center: It's a great mall for kids

While in Albany during the middle of the week recently, I stopped at Colonie Center for a few hours in the afternoon. The first thing I noticed was that it was air conditioned. In fact, I found myself going outside to warm up every now and then.

Colonie Center is a good place for younger kids because of the Disney studio store, the Waldenkids bookstore and the toy stores around the mall.

The Disney store is full of different articles of clothing with Disney characters, puzzles, miniature Disney character toys and Disney movies. A movie is always playing on the large screen in back of the store for kids to watch.

Waldenkids, a new bookstore for kids just built a few months ago, is full of all sorts of books and toys for young children. There are Barney books, Disney books and many other children's books.

I found that the mall was not very crowded and there were no "traffic jams" because of the wide hallways, which are filled with various types of live foliage, including many palm trees, a rarity in the North. Not only that, but the decor is very tasteful, the mall is kept extremely clean and the staff is friendly.

One unique thing I noticed was the circular glass elevator in the middle of the mall. It was very popular with the customers, as it was always crowded.

In the food court there were many different kinds of food for breakfast, lunch or dinner, ranging from hamburgers to cheese steaks, and for dessert there was the Great American Cookie Company, The Sweet Factory and a Haagen-Daz.

Commentary

The sample:

- clearly states the writer's impression of the mall; that is, it provides a favorable review of the mall's features, while also acknowledging some of its flaws
- balances the use of conventional criteria for evaluating public places such as cleanliness, attractiveness, and availability of food, with some personal criteria, such as appeal to children of different ages and availability of inexpensive items
- provides support for the writer's opinion through numerous, relevant, and specific details and examples
- uses language that is somewhat sophisticated ("palm trees, a rarity in the North," "decor . . . tasteful") while still accessible to the teenage audience
- engages the reader through use of humor (e.g., the reference to air conditioning) and direct address ("Is this a good mall, or what?").

The food court is always busy and the far end has many window seats overlooking the parking lot and Wolf Road.

Colonie Center has many interesting stores for teenagers, including The World of Science, which has treasures for everyone including a mini planetarium, a whole model rocket center, puzzles, books of tricks, models and carved figures.

All the time you are in The World of Science, there is soothing, pleasant music playing from overhead. The music was from albums such as "Sounds of the Rainforest" and "The Cry of the Loon."

I noticed another store at the far end of the mall, called "Everything's \$1.00." Is this a good mall, or what?

While traversing the mall, I found that it was inconvenient to get up to the second floor and then down again because of the very few escalators and stairs. I was always having to go to one end of the mall to find some stairs, then to the other end to find the store I wanted.

During my visit I discovered that although the mall doesn't have an organized mall walking program, people who want to walk for exercise do so freely.

Macy's takes up about one half of the entire mall. Almost all of the items in the store were completely out of my price range. It is filled with clothing, lamps, bedroom sets, and all kinds of household items—almost everything you'd ever want!

Colonie Center is filled with stores for all types of people and is easily accessible from either Wolf Road or Central Avenue. There is adequate parking for a very large number of people. It is obvious that any "back to school" shopping done here would be a great success.

Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
	Extended Project
	First Draft
✓	Revised Draft
	Teacher-generated Topic
✓	Student Choice
✓	Research Required

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Commencement

Context

This historical narrative was prepared by a ninth-grade student as an interdisciplinary research project for Global Studies/English. Students were asked to research a topic and then to write a story using the research. Student writers tried to “share information about a particular character, in a particular time and place, with a particular problem.”

language of a wide range of general and technical texts and presentations across subject areas

... evaluate the quality of the texts and presentations from a variety of critical perspectives

... present orally and in writing well-developed analyses of issues, ideas, and texts

... make effective use of details, evidence, and arguments and of presentational strategies

... use standard English, a broad and precise vocabulary.

Student Work Sample

Performance Indicators

Students can:

... analyze, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, organization, and

Historical Narrative

My Lai Massacre

The bright Asian sun slowly begins to dip below the horizon as my sister, Mui, and I carry buckets of water to our home in My Lai Village for dinner. (Rutledge, 1993, 63) As we enter our well-built bamboo home, I can smell the dried pork served with noodles that will be accompanied by rice and noodle soup. (West, 1991, 139) When the whole family is quietly eating, Mama tells us there is an important announcement that she will make after dinner. I know by the tone of Mama's voice it is something that concerns the war, but that isn't unusual. That is all I hear about since my older brothers Do and Dam have gone to war. While the rest of my family discuss the latest news on the upcoming rice harvest, I drift off into a land where there are no wars, and peace is the only subject people talk about. This peaceful land does not know the meaning of war and never will for all the inhabitants are friends. I keep on dreaming until Grandmama's firm voice interrupts my thoughts. . .

I wake up early the next morning to a rising sun that has just begun to peek out from the single white cloud surrounded by endless blue. Even though I had a restless sleep, I manage to get myself up and ready to work in the rice fields. . .

Before I head out to the rice fields, I sit down in the empty kitchen and get my fill of rice for the long, hot work day ahead. When I am finished, I grab my cone-shaped hat and a bag filled with rice seeds. (Rutledge, 1993, 62) I am then off for a day of seed planting, for the wet monsoon will be upon us soon. (West, 1991, 36)

I am one of the first villagers out on the fields. Cam, a family friend and neighbor, waves as he enters the rice fields to do his share of work. I smile and wave back at the kind-hearted man who is still getting over the death of his mother. Cam says that she will probably be reincarnated into a bird because she had such a free spirit and this is the only way to let it soar. (Rutledge, 1993, 54). . .

Commentary

The sample:

- shows how the student responds imaginatively to a variety of texts
- reflects the range of historical data selected, manipulated and interpreted
- establishes a first person narrator voice which establishes a tone, uses contrast effectively; e.g., pre and post attack conditions; regeneration of rice field vs. destruction of village
- uses imagery to good effect; e.g., image of family eating together creates a sense of calm before storm; image of father's body shielding children creates a sense of terrible loss and futility of war
- demonstrates the student's ability to present an alternative point of view; e.g., massacre from perspective of Vietnamese, not American girl
- shows skillful command of language conventions in correct dialogue, spelling, punctuation.

As I spread, as Mama would say, the “seeds of life”, I hear a loud explosion come from the village. I immediately look up and see the few villagers on the rice field running at full speed to the village. I want to run too but I can't, something is keeping me from running, keeping me away from whatever danger envelops the village. . . As I round the last corner of the path, my stomach does a flip. Lying in a ditch is my dying mother and in her arms, screaming, is Tu. I try not to cry but I can't help from crying seeing my mother in such pain. As I am pulling my mother out of the ditch she tells me to stop and to come kneel by her side.

“Trinh,” Mama whispers, struggling even to get words out of her mouth. “There is nothing you can do, I am dying. Take your brother and bring him to safety. Don't forget, my child, I will always love you. . .”

I sit by my lifeless mother in disbelief, thinking this isn't really happening to me. I cradle Tu who is still crying loudly, but of course he is still crying. I don't know how he survived being



I will always be quick to admit that the most difficult goal I have set for myself involves public speaking. I don't do it well, but I am improving. Gone are the days of cold sweats and deep freezes. Well, nearly gone. But I have had the opportunity to demonstrate my improved confidence on several occasions. First of all, I managed to create a successful debate based on *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, and by doing so demonstrated an ability to successfully organize and interpret information, as well as present it to my peers. Not to mention that we were victorious. Also, I spoke to the class in regard to the play *A Doll's House*, in an attempt to convince them of the wisdom of a specific interpretation. Finally, I presented a piece

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Commencement



**Student
Work
Sample**

***Critical
Essay***

Performance Indicators

Students can:

... analyze, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, organization, and language of a wide range of general and technical texts

... make precise determinations about the perspective of a particular writer or speaker by recognizing the relative weight they place on particular arguments and criteria

... present orally and in writing well-developed analyses of issues, ideas, and texts



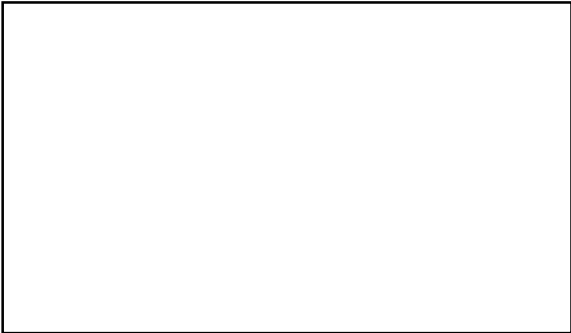
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Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Elementary

**Student
Work
Sample**

Acknowledgments



Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
√	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
√	Student Choice
√	Research Required

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Intermediate

Context

As part of a class assignment, seventh grade students wrote letters to teachers who had influenced their lives. Students knew that letters would be mailed.

**Student
Work
Sample**

Performance Indicators

Students can:

. . . write social letters, cards, and electronic messages to friends, relatives, and community acquaintances

. . . use appropriate language and style for the situation and the audience and take into account the ideas and interests expressed by the person receiving the message.

***Friendly
Letter***

Dear _____,

I was in your class in the year of 1982-83. I am in Mrs. L---'s 7th grade English class now, and have an assignment to write to our favorite teacher. So I, with no hesitation, decided to write to you. While I wrote this letter I thought about all the wonderful things you did with the class.

I can remember clearly how you used to read stories to us everyday. You made it sound like we were really in

Commentary

The sample:

- anticipates the needs of the reader by establishing a purpose for the letter
- supports the choice of this teacher as the student's favorite with specific, personal examples and reasons that clearly illustrate the nature of the relationship
- uses a tone of respect and admiration as appropriate in a letter of appreciation
- reflects awareness of the conventions of letter writing, such as the expectation that the reader would respond to the communication

Circumstances of Performance:

	Timed Assignment
√	Extended Project
	First Draft
√	Revised Draft
√	Teacher-generated Topic
√	Student Choice
	Research Required

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Commencement

Context

An eighth grade student wrote a letter to a teacher who had made a difference in his life. Students knew that letters would actually be mailed.

Student
Work
Sample

Friendly
Letter

Henry Adams said "A teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence stops." Our assignment in English class is to write a letter to a teacher who has made a difference in our lives. Since I'm currently in the eighth grade, I've had many teachers over the years. Some were good, some were bad, but most were indifferent.

A teacher is like a gardener. She plants a seed, and she watches it grow. If she nurtures it carefully, a flower will eventually bloom. Mrs. L---, you have made the greatest impact in my school life. Before I was in your class, I didn't have any confidence in my writing ability. Now, I'm becoming more self-assured.

You showed me that you really care about my progress. When I had difficulty with some of the chapters in our assignments, you set up conferences to talk about it. You encouraged me with your suggestions. The many hours you spent in class giving us ideas on how to improve our writing helped a lot. The result is that two of your students won the County Reading Council's 1991 Young Authors Writing Contest. This is the first time in my life that I've ever been in first place. I'm very grateful to you.

Performance Indicators

Students can:

... use a variety of print and electronic forms for social communication with peers and adults

... make effective use of language and style to connect the message with the audience and context

... study the social conventions and language conventions of writers from other groups and cultures and use those conventions to communicate with members of those groups.

Commentary

The sample:

- makes effective connections among message, audience and context; e.g., begins with a quote about a teacher, develops a simile for 'teacher', and substantiates with details
- engages the reader by establishing and maintaining conversational style throughout letter
- makes good use of the third person to personalize examples selected to show how teacher made a difference in the student's life
- demonstrates appropriate use of conventions, including sentence and paragraph structure, punctuation, spelling and usage.

