



Writing to Texts

Prepare for
New Text-Based Writing Assessments!

- Mini-Lessons
- Practice
- Assessments

- Writing to texts mini-lessons
- Practice passages with text-dependent prompts
- Graphic organizers and student writing checklists
- Evaluation rubrics with differentiated instruction



CCSS	Grade 4 Writing Standards	
W.4.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	✓
W.4.1a	Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.	✓
W.4.1b	Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.	✓
W.4.1c	Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., <i>for instance, in order to, in addition</i>).	✓
W.4.1d	Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.	✓
W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	✓
W.4.2a	Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.	✓
W.4.2b	Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.	✓
W.4.2c	Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., <i>another, for example, also, because</i>).	✓
W.4.2d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.	✓
W.4.2e	Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.	✓
W.4.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	✓
W.4.3a	Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.	✓
W.4.3b	Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.	✓
W.4.3c	Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.	✓
W.4.3d	Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.	✓
W.4.3e	Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.	✓
W.4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)	✓
W.4.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards.)	✓
W.4.6	With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.	✓
W.4.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.	✓
W.4.8	Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.	✓
W.4.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	✓
W.4.9a	Apply <i>grade 4 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., "Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions]").	✓
W.4.9b	Apply <i>grade 4 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., "Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text").	✓
W.4.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.	✓

Common Core Writing to Texts

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Introduction

What Is the Common Core?

The Common Core State Standards are an initiative by states to set shared, consistent, and clear expectations of what students are expected to learn. This helps teachers and parents know what they need to do to help students. The standards are designed to be rigorous and pertinent to the real world. They reflect the knowledge and skills that young people need for success in college and careers.

If your state has joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, then teachers are required to incorporate these standards into their lesson plans. Students need targeted practice in order to meet grade-level standards and expectations, and thereby be promoted to the next grade.

What Does It Mean to Write to Texts?

One of the most important instructional shifts in the Common Core State Standards is writing to texts, or sources. What exactly does this mean? Haven't standardized assessments always used reading texts as a springboard to writing? Yes, but the required writing hasn't always been **DEPENDENT** on the key ideas and details in a text.

A prompt that is non-text-dependent asks students to rely on prior knowledge or experience. In fact, students could likely carry out the writing without reading the text at all. The writing does not need to include ideas, information, and key vocabulary from the text.

Writing to texts requires students to analyze, clarify, and cite information they read in the text. The writing reveals whether students have performed a close reading, because it is designed to elicit ideas, information, and key vocabulary from the text as well as students' own evidence-based inferences and conclusions. These are all skills that prepare them for the grades ahead, college, the workplace, and real-world applications in their adult daily lives.

An example of a passage with non-text-dependent and text-dependent sample prompts is provided on page 3.

Sample Passage

Simple and Compound Machines

1. A simple machine is a tool that does work with one movement. Like all machines, a simple machine makes work easier. It has few or no moving parts and uses energy to do work. A lever, a wedge, a screw, a pulley, a wheel and axle, and an inclined plane are all simple machines.
2. You use simple machines all the time, too. If you have ever played on a seesaw or walked up a ramp, then you have used a simple machine. If you have opened a door, eaten with a spoon, cut with scissors, or zipped up a zipper, you have used a simple machine.
3. A compound machine is made of two or more simple machines. For example, the pedals, wheels, and gears on a bicycle are wheels and axles, and the hand brakes on the handlebars are levers. Cars, airplanes, watches, and washing machines are also examples of compound machines. Compound machines are very useful because they can do the work of many simple machines at the same time.
4. Life would be very different if we did not have machines. Work would be much harder, and playing wouldn't be as much fun.

Standard	Sample Prompt: Non-Text-Dependent	Sample Prompt: Text Dependent
W.4.1 (Opinion/ Argument)	Do you prefer zippers, buttons, buckles, or another type of fastener for your clothing? Why?	The author makes three claims in the last paragraph. Choose one of the claims, tell whether you agree or disagree, and support your opinion with evidence from the text.
W.4.2 (Informative/ Explanatory)	Think about a machine you have used to do a task. How did you use it? How did using the machine make the task easier?	Compare and contrast simple and compound machines. Use details from the text to support your explanation.
W.4.3 (Narrative)	Write a story in which a character invents a machine that no one has seen or heard of before.	Imagine that all the machines mentioned in the passage disappeared for twenty-four hours. Write a journal entry about how your life was different that day and what you learned.

Using This Book

How Does This Book Help Students?

This book is organized into four main sections: Writing Mini-Lessons, Practice Texts with Prompts, Graphic Organizers and Checklists, and Rubrics and Assessments. All mini-lessons and practice pages are self-contained and may be used in any order that meets the needs of students. The elements of this book work together to provide students with the tools they need to be able to master the range of skills and application as required by the Common Core.

1. Mini-Lessons for Opinion/Argument, Informative/Explanatory, and Narrative Writing

Writing mini-lessons prepare students to use writing as a way to state and support opinions, demonstrate understanding of the subjects they are studying, and convey real and imagined experiences. The mini-lessons are organized in the order of the standards, but you may wish to do them with your class in an order that matches your curriculum. For each type of writing the first mini-lesson covers responding to one text, while the second mini-lesson models how to respond to multiple texts.

Each mini-lesson begins with a lesson plan that provides step-by-step instruction.

The collage displays several pages from the book, illustrating the structure of the writing mini-lessons. Key elements include:

- Lesson Plan Template:** A page titled "Writing an Opinion/Argument" with a "COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD" section. It includes a prompt: "Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, stating a position and providing reasons that are supported by relevant facts and details." and a checklist for students to follow.
- Student Model:** A page titled "Why I Would Like to Explore Carlsbad Caverns" by Jim Campbell. It shows a student's response to a prompt, including a thesis statement and supporting details.
- Checklist:** A page titled "Writing Decision: Opinion/Argument" with a checklist of criteria for evaluating student work, such as "The writer introduced the topic," "The writer stated a strong opinion, position, or point of view," and "The writer used relevant facts and details to support his opinion."
- Prompts and Texts:** Pages showing various prompts and texts, such as "Carlsbad Caverns" and "The Big Room," which are used to guide student writing.

◀ Distribute the passages and prompts. Model how to analyze the prompt. Sample questions are provided to help guide the discussion. Work with students to fill out a graphic organizer to plan a response to the prompt.

◀ All passages fall within grade-appropriate text-complexity bands as required by the Common Core State Standards. Passages also provide exposure to a variety of genres.

◀ All prompts require a close reading of text and text-dependent responses.

◀ Distribute the grade-level student model and the checklist that follows. This model is a response to the prompt and the checklist can help students analyze how successful the writing is in accomplishing the task.

2. Practice Texts with Prompts

Passages and prompts provide students with real experience writing to a single text and multiple texts. The first ten lessons require students to respond to one text. The last ten require students to respond to multiple texts.

Each passage or pair of passages is followed by three text-dependent prompts: Opinion/Argument, Informative/Explanatory, and Narrative. You may wish to assign a particular prompt, have students choose one, or have them execute each type of writing over a longer period of time.

For more information on how to use this section, see page 48.

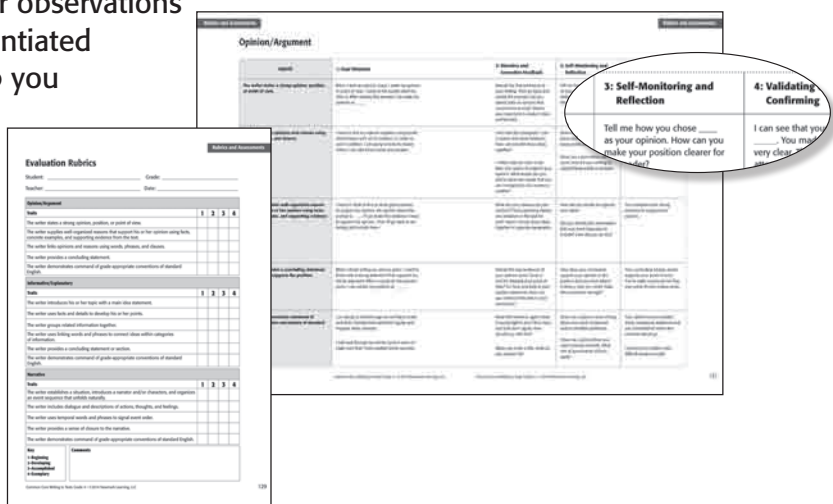
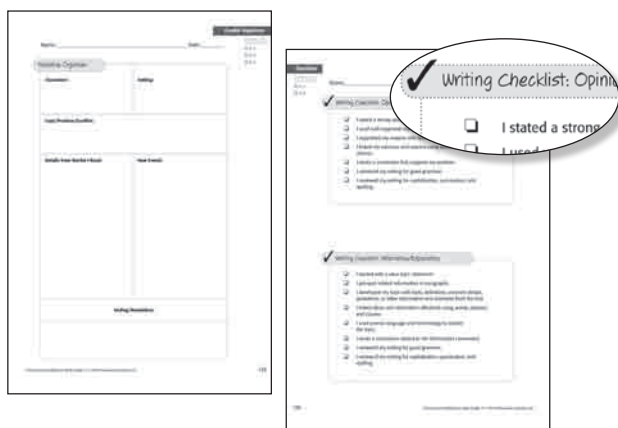
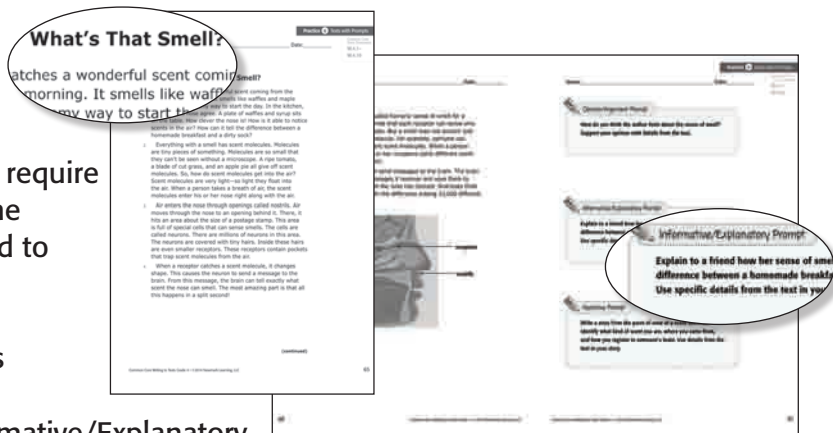
3. Graphic Organizers and Checklists

For each type of writing, you can distribute a corresponding graphic organizer and checklist to help students plan and evaluate their writing. A chart with editing and proofreading marks can also be found on page 136 if you choose to have students work through the full editing and revising process.

4. Rubrics and Assessments

The section includes Evaluation Rubrics to guide your assessment and scoring of students' responses. Based on your observations of students' writing, use the differentiated rubrics. These are designed to help you conduct meaningful conferences with students and will help differentiate your interactions to match students' needs.

For each score a student receives in the Evaluation Rubrics, responsive prompts are provided. These gradual-release prompts scaffold writers toward mastery of each writing type. w



Writing an Opinion/Argument

Mini-Lesson 1: Writing to One Text

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD W.4.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

- a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
- b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- c. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., *for instance*, *in order to*, *in addition*).
- d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Explain to students that they will often encounter opinion/argument writing prompts that instruct them to respond directly to a passage they have read. Tell them that the passage might be nonfiction or fiction. Then take the following steps to guide students through the process of writing an opinion/argument piece in response to one text.

Read the passage. Distribute pages 8–9 to students. Depending on students' needs, you may wish to read the passage aloud, have students read it with a partner, or have them read it independently.

Read and analyze the prompt. Read the prompt at the bottom of page 9 with students. Model how to analyze the prompt. Ask questions such as the following:

- *What form of writing does the prompt ask for?* (opinion/argument)
- *How can you tell?* (The prompt is asking what I think about the topic.)
- *What is the purpose of the assignment?* (state my opinion and support it)
- *What information do I need to complete the task?* (I need to use evidence from the passage "Carlsbad Caverns.")

Plan the writing. Draw the following graphic organizer on the board. You may also wish to distribute the matching graphic organizer located on page 120. Use the following think-alouds to model how to complete the graphic organizer. Ask for student input as you fill in the chart on the board.

- *The writing prompt asks me to form an opinion. Would I like to explore the Carlsbad Caverns? After reading the passage, my opinion is that I would like to explore the caves.*
- *Now I will think about the second part of the prompt. It asks me to find evidence from the passage to support my opinion.*
- *I will record my evidence—or reasons and supporting details—in the second part of each column on the chart. I will also show where I got my information.*
- *To finish my writing, I need a concluding statement or paragraph. I will restate my opinion by telling why I would like to explore the caverns.*

My Opinion: I would like to explore the Carlsbad Caverns because I think it would be fun and because it would be worthwhile to learn more about them.		
Reason 1: The caves have an interesting history. (paragraphs 2 and 3)	Reason 2: I would like to go into the large chambers called rooms. (paragraph 5)	Reason 3: I would like to see the animals that live in the caves. (paragraph 6)
Supporting Details: 1. The area was once covered by a sea. 2. Prehistoric people used the caves for shelter. 3. A man named Jim White began exploring them in 1898.	Supporting Details: 1. The Big Room is more than 4,000 square feet. 2. The Bifrost Room is colorful. 3. The Chocolate High Room is a recent discovery.	Supporting Details: 1. Birds live in the entrance to the caves. 2. Thousands of bats fly out of the caves each evening.
My Opinion Restated (Conclusion): I think I would really enjoy exploring the caves and learning more about them.		

Read and analyze the model. Distribute the student writing model and checklist on pages 10–11 to students. Read them aloud. Discuss with students whether or not the writer was successful at accomplishing the task. Ask them to complete the checklist as you discuss the opinion/argument piece.

Read the passage below.

Carlsbad Caverns

1. Many people enjoy exploring national parks when they travel. Sometimes, they even get to see what's under a park. They can explore caverns and caves, openings in the rocks below the earth that are large enough for people to go into.

History of Carlsbad Caverns

2. The Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico have an interesting history. About 250 million years ago, a sea covered this area. Bits of limestone sank to the bottom of this sea. Over centuries, the sea floor rose and became hard and dry. Parts of the limestone washed away. Caves were left deep in the rock. Prehistoric people used them for shelter.
3. In 1898, a sixteen-year-old cowhand named Jim White began exploring the caves. Most people didn't believe the caves were very deep, but White knew otherwise. He built a special ladder and spent a great deal of time exploring the caves. White wanted to show others the amazing caves, but people didn't believe they existed. It wasn't until they saw photographs of the caves that people began exploring them. Early visitors were lowered down into the caves in large buckets using ropes and pulleys.
4. In 1930, the area became a national park. Stairs were built and electric lights and elevators were installed in the caves. White spent most of his life exploring the caves and even became involved in overseeing their care and protection.

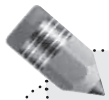


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Inside the Cool Caves

5. People today continue to explore the caves and rock shapes that have formed within them. They can explore the caves with a park guide or follow the trails on their own. Enormous chambers inside the caves where many people can stand are called rooms. The Big Room is more than 4,000 square feet! Cave scientists have recently discovered other rooms. In 1982, they discovered the colorful Bifrost Room. In 1992, they discovered the Chocolate High Room.
6. People are not alone in exploring the caves. Many animals and insects live inside them. Birds called cave swallows live in the entrance of the caves during the summer. Many kinds of bats sleep inside the caves. At the end of the day, park visitors wait near the caves to watch thousands of bats fly out. These bats eat insects all night and fly back into the cool caves in the morning.

Read and analyze the prompt.**Opinion/Argument Prompt**

Would you like to explore the Carlsbad Caverns? Be sure to state your opinion and explain why exploring these caves would be a worthwhile activity or why it would not be. Support your opinion with reasons and information from the text.

Read and analyze the model.

Why I Would Like to Explore Carlsbad Caverns

by Jim Campbell

After reading the passage, I would like to explore Carlsbad Caverns, and I believe it would be worthwhile to learn more about them.

The caverns have a really interesting history. For instance, the area was covered by a sea many millions of years ago. In time, the sea floor rose and hardened. Then parts of it washed away, leaving the caves. A man named Jim White explored the caves back in 1898. He wanted others to see them, but people did not believe the caves were there until they saw photographs of them.

In addition, I would like to see the chambers in the caves that are called rooms. The Big Room is more than 4,000 square feet. I would like to go into this gigantic room. I would also like to see the colorful Bifrost Room and the Chocolate High Room.

I would like to see the wildlife living in and around the caverns. I would like to see the birds that live in the opening of the cavern. However, I would most like to be there when thousands of bats fly out of the caves in the evening. I think this would be an amazing sight to see! For all these reasons, I would really like to visit the park and explore the Carlsbad Caverns.



Writing Checklist: Opinion/Argument

- ☐ The writer introduced the topic.
- ☐ The writer stated a strong opinion, position, or point of view.
- ☐ The writer used well-organized reasons to support his opinion.
- ☐ The writer supported his reasons with facts and details.
- ☐ The writer used linking words and phrases to connect his opinion and reasons, such as *for instance*, *in order to*, and *in addition*.
- ☐ The writer ended with a conclusion that sums up and supports his position.
- ☐ The writer used correct grammar.
- ☐ The writer used correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.