



Narrative Literature Response Letters – Grade Three

Ohio Standards Connection

Writing Applications

Benchmark A

Write narrative accounts that develop character, setting and plot.

Indicator: 1

Write stories that sequence events and include descriptive details and vivid language to develop characters, setting and plot.

Benchmark B

Write responses to literature that summarize main ideas and significant details and support interpretations with references to the text.

Indicator 2

Write responses to novels, stories and poems that demonstrate an understanding of the text and support judgments with specific references to the text.

Benchmark C

Write formal and informal letters that include important details and follow correct letter format.

Indicator 3

Write formal and informal letters (e.g., thank you notes, letters of request) that include relevant information and date, proper salutation, body, closing and signature.

Lesson Summary:

Students write a formal letter to an author offering an alternative ending to a story the author has written.

Estimated Duration: *Four days*

Commentary:

“Distributing the rubric to students makes expectations clear.”

Pre-Assessments:

Hand out template of formal letter.

- Instruct students to locate and label the five parts of a letter. (See Attachment A, *Scoring Checklist and Formal Letter Template*)
- Collect for scoring.
- Return after scoring.

Scoring Guidelines:

Use Pre-Assessment Scoring Checklist included on Attachment A to score student ability to locate and label the five parts of a formal letter.

Note: Pre-Assessment Scoring Checklist and Outline of the Formal Letter appear on Attachment A, *Scoring Checklist and Formal Letter Template*.

Post-Assessment:

Formal letter to an author that reflects

- Correct formal letter format,
- Content knowledge,
- Accurate use of conventions and
- Ability to continue or recreate the end of a story.

Post Assessment Scoring Rubric:

Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric, Attachment B, gives criteria to measure student knowledge of content, organization and conventions.

Instructional Procedures:

Part One: Reviewing Parts of a Formal Letter

3. Introduce formal letter writing to students.
4. Ask for the reasons/examples for writing a letter.



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3. Discuss sections of a formal letter.
4. Ask guiding questions for students to record in writing journal.
 - a. How does a formal letter begin? (date and salutation)
 - b. What is in the middle of the formal letter? (the body)
 - c. How does a formal letter end? (closing and signature)
5. Assign students task of brainstorming answers.
6. Return Attachment A, *Outline of Formal Letter*, to the students.
8. Review formal letter template on Attachment A.
9. Have students locate each letter part.
10. Guide class to construct one class model of a formal letter.
11. Record on chart or poster paper, projection equipment, dry-erase board or other resource that can be used for whole class viewing.
12. Display in classroom for future reference.

Part Two: Introduce Literature Response and Narrative Writing.

13. Review story elements by asking students the following:
 - a. What are characters? (Person or people represented in a piece of literature.)
 - b. What is a setting? (Where the story takes place, time, location.)
 - c. What is a plot? (Tell what is happening in the story; sequences, events or identifies a problem.)
14. Read aloud a large format literary text.
15. Encourage students to read along.

Instructional Tip:

Picture books support focus on character development, setting and plot. Use authors familiar to the students. Remember to read aloud the author and illustrator of the literature story.

16. Students record in writing journal:
 - a. Description of the characters,
 - b. Location and time of the setting and
 - c. Events that lead to the plot.
17. Instruct students to support each story element with details from story.
18. Students use notes to participate class discussion on story elements and supporting details.
19. Assign students to write a different story ending.
20. Post for prompting student writing:
 - a. What do you think happened after this book was over?
 - b. If you were going to change the ending, what would happen?
 - c. Pick one of the characters and write about the character's adventures after the story ends.
21. Remind students to use descriptive language with all story elements.
22. Have students draft stories in writing journal.
23. Conduct mini-conferences by:
 - a. Circulating classroom to facilitate construction of story ending.
 - b. Calling on individual students.
24. Remind students to employ original characters, setting and plot.



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25. Tell students to finish ending before beginning next section.

Part Three: Writing a Formal Letter with Narrative Literature Response

26. Distribute *Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric* and a sheet of blank writing paper. Tell the students to use writing journals. Hand out *Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric*, Attachment B.
27. Review handout with the students.
28. Tell students to construct a formal letter to the author of the previously read story offering an alternative ending.
29. Encourage students to use the *Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric* as a guide.
30. Students (in turn) read aloud letters to the author, which include different endings.
31. Allow students time to make revisions based on how their letters “sounded” to the class.
32. Collect formal letters.
33. Use the *Post- Assessment Scoring Rubric*, Attachment B, for assessment.

Instructional Tip:

Lesson may go into Day Four if letter reading takes longer. Complete the Post-Assessments during the reading of the letters or collect and assess them. Use the Post-Assessment as a reference tool for intervention and enrichment depending on the student’s abilities.

34. Review purpose of writing a formal letter.
35. Focus on the five parts introduced in Part One of lesson.
36. Review purpose of characters, setting and plot to convey story in literary text.
37. Display final letters, mail them to the author and/or place them in the students' portfolios.

Differentiated Instructional Support:

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s):

- For students demonstrating evidence of meeting and exceeding the standard, pair students to read a poem of their choosing.
 - a Have students write formal letter to each other.
 - b Tell students to identify main idea(s) and support choice with details from poem.
 - c Students comment on each other’s formal letter responses to poem.
- Students meeting or exceeding the standard may choose selected novels, articles, poetry and stories.

Have students:

 - a. Take on the persona of character or object and
 - b. Continue story plot based on text interpretations.
 - c. Extend development of characters, setting and plot.
- Have students showing evidence of not meeting the standard listen to a poem or other literary text and identify characters, setting and plot.
 - a Conduct teacher-guided discussion.
 - b Focus attention on supporting details that convey interpretations of characters, setting and plot.



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- c Ask students to illustrate main characters, setting and plot.
- d Encourage students to describe orally their illustrations.

Extensions:

- Ask the class to write and illustrate a story.
- Use *Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric* results to organize class into groups based on similar levels of performance.
- Brainstorm no more than five ideas for a writing topic. Class selects one topic on which to write.
- Organize groups.
 - Group One brainstorms characters and creates one.
 - Group Two brainstorms setting possibilities and develops one.
 - Group Three brainstorms plot ideas and develops one plot sequence.
- Use students' information to complete a shared writing activity.

Home Connection:

In response to newspaper articles or headlines, students can write formal letters to the authors of the articles or the editors of the papers and comment on the topics or offer feedback on problems or proposals. Family members may assist with the formal letters.

Materials and Resources:

The inclusion of a specific resource in any lesson formulated by the Ohio Department of Education should not be interpreted as an endorsement of that particular resource, or any of its contents, by the Ohio Department of Education. The Ohio Department of Education does not endorse any particular resource. The Web addresses listed are for a given site's main page, therefore, it may be necessary to search within that site to find the specific information required for a given lesson. Please note that information published on the Internet changes over time, therefore the links provided may no longer contain the specific information related to a given lesson. Teachers are advised to preview all sites before using them with students.

For the teacher: literary texts, chart or poster paper, markers, overhead projector, *Formal Letter Outline*, *Pre-Assessment Scoring Rubric*, *Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric*

For the students: writing journals, pencil, crayons, colored pencils, *Formal Letter Outline*, *Pre-Assessment Scoring Rubric*, *Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric*, blank sheet of paper

Vocabulary:

- brainstorming
- characterizations
- persona
- plot



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- rubric
- setting
- writing journals

Technology Connections:

- Students may access the Internet to research the author they are writing a letter to, or locate reference sites for formal letter writing examples.
- Students may e-mail the editor of the local newspaper or the writer of a story to ask questions about the written piece and to gain a personal insight.
- Use the computer connected to a television to model the formal letter outline and show the students how to access and search the Internet so they can research on-line for the given assignment.
- Present the lesson in software presentation.
- Suggested Web sites for teacher and student use:
<http://www.education-world.com>
<http://www.scholastic.com>
<http://www.teach-nology.com>
<http://www.abctech.com>

Research Connections:

Arter, Judith and Jay McTighe. *Scoring Rubrics in the Classroom: Using Performance Criteria for Assessing and Improving Student Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2001.

An *analytical trait rubric* divides a product or performance into essential traits or dimensions so they can be judged separately. A product or performance may be analyzed for essential traits. A separate score is provided for each trait.

Analytical rubrics address some of the limitations of the holistic rubric. They:

- 1 Judge complex performances involving several significant dimensions,
- 2 Break performances into traits in order to more readily grasp the components of quality and
- 3 Provide more specific feedback to students, parents and teachers.

Atwell, Nancie. *In the Middle: Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1987.

The Writing Conference

Status of the Class Conference

In a whole-class session, a simple call out is made to determine what each student is currently working on and where he/she is in the piece.

Conferring About Content

Conducted one-on-one, the teacher should follow these guidelines:

1. Keep conferences short, a minute or two. Ask kids to tell you about the piece, not read the entire draft.
2. See as many writers as possible.
3. Go to the students so you can control the length of the conference and see many writers.



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4. Make eye contact with the writer. Kneel or sit alongside their desks as necessary.
5. Don't tell writers what they should be writing, or worse, write on their pieces. Honor ownership.
6. Build on what writers know and have done, rather than focusing on the negatives.
7. Resist making judgments about the writing. If you say it's good, what motivation is there for improvement?
8. In questioning students, ask about something you're curious about as a person. Forget you're an English teacher.

Cawletti, Gordon. *Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service, 1999.

RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

- Encourage parents to stimulate their children's intellectual development.
- Require and grade homework.
- Utilize mastery learning techniques for teaching subject matter.
- Incorporate cooperative learning.

LANGUAGE ARTS (Squire 1995)

- Incorporate extensive reading of varied kinds of material.
- Utilize meaning-making skills and strategies such as summarizing, questioning and interpreting.
- Teach critical reading/writing skills.
- Stress the composing process.
- Expose students to varied kinds of literature.
- Provide assessment that reflects the content and process of instruction.

Spiegel, D. L. & J. Fitzgerald. "Improving Reading Comprehension through Instruction About Story Parts." *The Reading Teacher*, 39 (1986) 676-683.

Literature can help young children develop an important type of discourse knowledge – knowledge about *narrative discourse structure*. Narrative discourse structure refers to the structural organization common to most stories and narratives and includes the special structural characteristics common to particular types of narratives such as fairy tales, mysteries, science fiction, fables and fantasies.

Zemelman, Steven, Harvey Daniels and Arthur Hyde. *Best Practice: New Standards of Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.

READING

- Read literature aloud more often
- Provide children authentic and challenging literature to read.
- Introduce regular journal writing
- Publish more student work
- Help children actively use reading and writing as tools for learning



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- Provide low-risk situations
- Spend less time completing workbook pages and skill sheets

WRITING

- All children can and should write.
- Help students find real purposes for writing.
- Encourage students to take ownership and responsibility.
- Give students real audiences and a classroom context of shared learning.
- Teach grammar and mechanics in context, at the editing stage of students' writing.

Attachments:

Attachment A, *Pre-Assessment Scoring Rubric and Formal Letter Outline*

Attachment B, *Post- Assessment Scoring Rubric*

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Attachment A

Pre-Assessment Scoring Rubric and Formal Letter

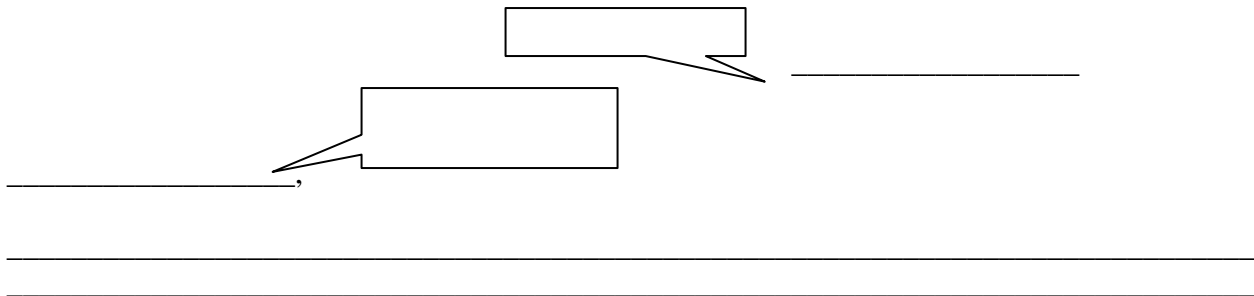
Scoring Checklist: Pre-Assessment:

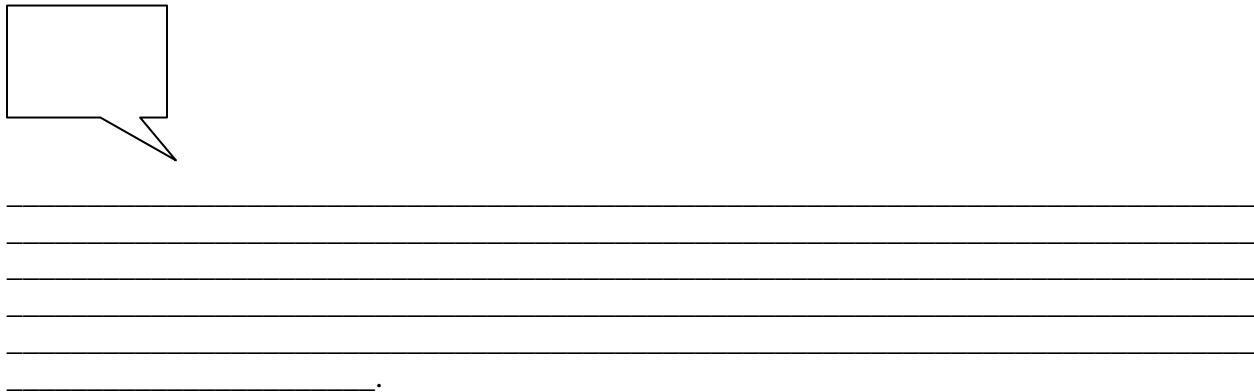
The scoring mark shows your understanding of locating and labeling correct letter format.

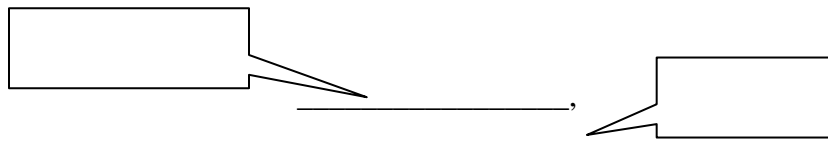
On Track/Off Track	Skill
	Locates and labels heading, body and closing.
	Omits one part of a formal letter, such as the heading, body or closing.
Teacher Comments:	

Formal Letter Outline:

On the formal letter outline below, write the correct name on each part.







Score: /5

On Track +

Not On Track –

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Attachment B Post-Assessment Scoring Rubric

Scoring	Content	Organization	Conventions
Effective 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter clearly addresses the rationale for character, setting and plot changes for alternate ending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal letter includes date, salutation, body, closing and signature. The body of the letter addresses alternate story ending. Uses grade-level sentence structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and parts of speech. Handwriting is legible.
Adequately 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly addresses reasoning for character, setting and plot changes for alternate ending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes heading, body and closing. Body of letter addresses alternate ending. Uses complete sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation and parts of speech most of the time. Mostly legible handwriting.
Partially 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not clearly address reasoning for character, setting and plot changes for alternate ending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of letter to author incomplete. Omits one or two parts of letter. Alternate story ending confusing. Incomplete sentences impede meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial use of correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation and parts of speech. Handwriting difficult to read
Minimally 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to write a letter Does not address reasoning for character, setting and plot changes for alternate ending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of the letter is minimal. Omits three to four parts of the letter. Alternate story ending is confusing. Incomplete sentence structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays minimal usage of correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation and parts of speech. Illegible handwriting.

Teacher Comments: