

GRADE 8 English Language Arts Writing: Lesson 1

Read aloud to the students the material that is printed in **boldface type** inside the boxes. Information in regular type inside the boxes and all information outside the boxes should **not** be read to students. Possible student responses are included in parentheses after the questions.

Any directions that ask you to do something, such as to turn to a page or to hand out materials to students, will have an arrow symbol (\Rightarrow) by them.

Purpose of Lesson 1:

In this lesson, the tutor and students will

- examine the instruction page of the Writing section,
- find key words on the instruction page, and
- practice prewriting strategies.

Equipment/Materials Needed:

- Student Worksheets Writing Lesson 1 – 1 and 1 - 2
- Pencils

LESSON 1: Writing

After your introductory remarks to students, say:

Sometimes you are asked to write in response to a given prompt. Today we will spend some time talking about how to decide what kind of composition to write and how to get started writing. You will have to plan, write, and check what you write. Today we will look for clues to help you do well when writing to a prompt.

It is very important that you understand the instructions your teacher gives for any activity. Also I want to be sure you understand the terms or the words that are used in writing prompts or on writing activities.

Then say:

On the day of the test, your teacher will read directions to you from the test manual. If the teacher says to “follow along while I read,” what should you do?

Pause to allow students time to answer. (Response should include “look at what he/she is reading” and “read along silently.”)

Why should you read along silently?

Pause to allow students time to answer. (Responses should include “helps me to see and hear the directions at the same time”; “keeps me from making an error; helps me to score higher.”)

Then say:

Yes. And remember that sometimes it’s the little things that help you to stay focused and to do a good job.

⇒ Distribute Student Worksheet Writing Lesson 1 – 1 and pencils.

Now say:

On the worksheet, you see a sample page from the Writing part of the test. This page is from an old test, so we will examine it to find the clues that help you to know what to do.

Say:

Let’s walk and talk through this page of instructions. We will begin at the top of the page. Starting at the beginning is a good plan to follow for any writing assignment.

Follow along while I read aloud. “Read the topic in the box below and write a well-organized composition of at least 150 – 200 words. Be sure to follow the suggestions listed under the box.”

Now say:

Look at the information in the box. Why do you think it is boxed in? Pause. (Response: It is important; it has the question inside.)

Do you think it would be helpful to read the information in the box more than once? (Response: YES!)

Why? (Pause. Responses might include “to be certain I understand it”; “to be sure I am clear on what I am to write about.”)

Now say:

Follow along while I read aloud.

“A community group is sponsoring a composition contest, and you decide to enter. In your composition, you should explain the following:

What is the best thing about the neighborhood or area in which you live?

Before you begin to write, think about the area where you live. What is the best thing about it? Why do you think the way that you do?

Now write a multi-paragraph composition explaining the best thing about the neighborhood or area in which you live.”

Now say:

Why do you think the word *explain* is in bold type?

(Response: It is important.)

Yes, it is the most important word. Circle the word *explain*. Pause. The word *explain* tells you what kind of composition to write. For this part of the test, you are to write a composition that explains.

Let's continue looking at the information in the box to see what else is important.

Then say:

What is the next thing you see in bold type?

(Response: the writing prompt; the question; what we're supposed to write about.)

Some students may jump around and answer *why* or *multi-paragraph*. Try to guide the student not to skip around, but to move in order from step to step through the boxed material. The students who skip around may miss an important step.

Say:

Yes, this prompt is what you write about: "What is the best thing about the neighborhood or area in which you live?" Circle that question. Pause.

Your teacher may call this a writing prompt. The test makers have given you an idea, a problem, or a situation they want you to write about on this test. You will write and explain what the best thing is about your neighborhood or the area in which you live.

Now say:

What's the next thing you see that is in bold type?

(Response: why) **Circle the word *why*. Pause.**

Say:

The word *why* tells you to give some reasons, some support when answering the question “What’s the best thing about the neighborhood or area in which you live?”

What is the next thing you see in bold type?

(Response: multi-paragraph) **Yes, multi-paragraph. Circle the word *multi-paragraph*.** Pause.

What does *multi-paragraph* mean?

(Response: more than one paragraph)

Then say:

Now look at the two items under the box. Read the first statement to yourself and circle the key words or phrases.

Pause. **What words or phrases did you circle?**

(Response: specific details and explain why.)

Students should circle *specific details* and *explain why*. Students may circle the whole phrase or each word. Students may circle some additional words or phrases like *contest judges* and *will understand*.

Now say:

Now look at the second statement. Read it to yourself. What does this statement want you to do? Circle the key words or phrases.

Pause.

What words or phrases did you circle?

(Response: *write clearly* and *correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar*.)

Say:

You notice that we have spent several minutes making sure you understand this page. Understanding the instructions is very important. Let's move to the next step.

You will want to be sure to follow the instructions your teacher gives. When you begin the test, it is also a good idea to reread the prompt and to think about who your audience is.

Who is your audience? For whom are you writing? The answer is in the box. (Response: the contest judges.)

Yes, the audience is the contest judges. Do you think these judges will probably be adults? (Response: yes)

Therefore, you need to write for an adult audience that is interested in knowing what you think about your neighborhood.

Then say:

Now you are familiar with the words and the directions used in writing prompts. This information will help you to do better on any writing assignment in any subject. Once you understand what kind of composition to write and your intended audience, you will then need to think of lots of ideas. Thinking of possible information to include is called brainstorming.

Let's just practice thinking of ideas today. We aren't actually going to write a story; I want you to think of just as many ideas or words as possible.

Brainstorming refers to the thinking and planning that a student does before actually writing the composition. It is a technique used to get ideas before writing. It may include making a list, making a chart, making an outline, or clustering.

The brainstorming activity that follows is an example of clustering.

⇒ Hand out Student Worksheet Writing Lesson 1 – 2.

Then say:

Look at Student Worksheet 1 –21. At the top of the page, you see a sample from an 8th grader’s prewriting for the writing prompt “What is the best thing about the neighborhood or area in which you live?” Notice how the student put the topic in the center circle and then wrote down lots of words and phrases.

We are now going to practice brainstorming. Let’s pretend your teacher assigned you to write a composition on “Good Things About Summer.” You will brainstorm on the worksheet. Write words or phrases that come to mind when you think about what makes summer good.

Allow 4 minutes for this prewriting activity.

If a student is not writing, give a hint. You might say: “What’s something that you can do only in the summer?” Pause. “When I was in the 8th grade, I always loved summer because…” and share a personal experience.

(Possible responses: no school; no homework; get to stay up late; get to sleep late; go on vacation; swim; play baseball; go to my cousin’s house; sleep over at a friend’s house.)

Prewriting, the first step in the writing process, is considered the most important step in writing. There are no rules that say exactly how this step should look. The student needs to write down all the thoughts, words, phrases that pop into his head. Students do not talk; they write.

Say:

I want us to share a few of the good things about summer. Remember that the purpose of prewriting is to gather lots of ideas so you should add words or phrases to your cluster at this time.

Ask for a volunteer or call on a student to share.

Thanks for sharing. Because you have so many ideas, writing a composition about summer will be easier.

Session 3: Writing

Read the topic in the box below and write a well-organized composition of at least 150 – 200 words. Be sure to follow the suggestions listed under the box.

A community group is sponsoring a composition contest, and you decide to enter. In your composition, you should **explain** the following:

What is the best thing about the neighborhood or area in which you live?

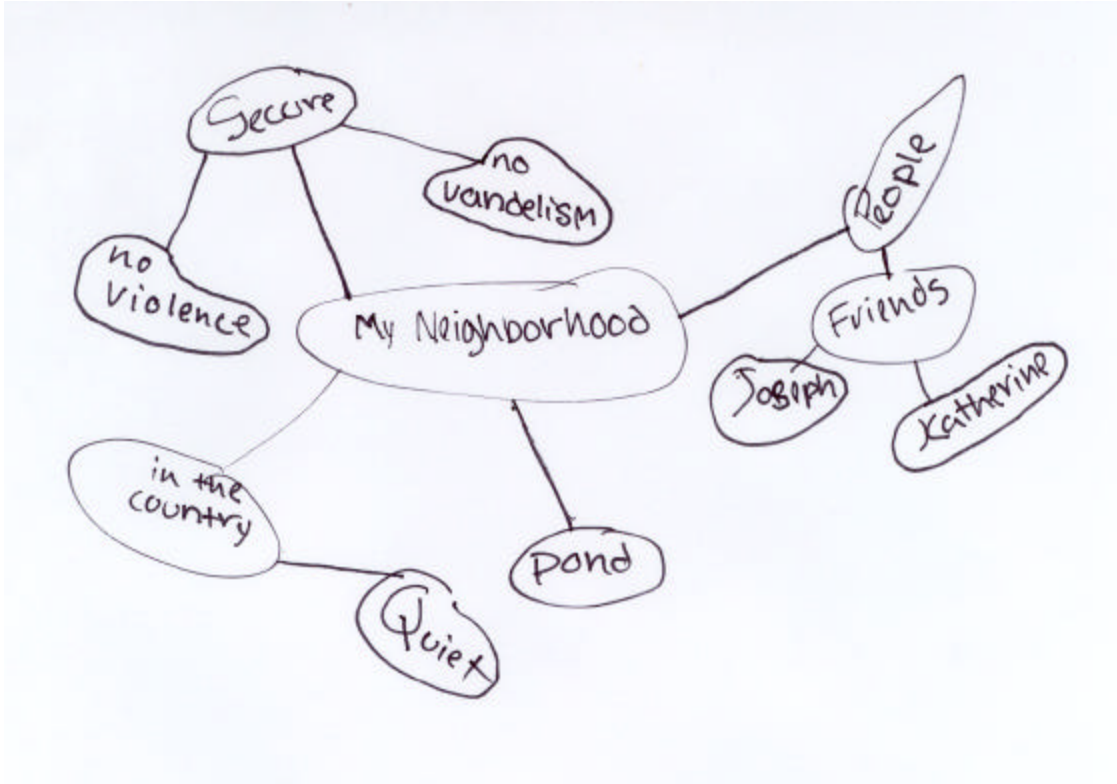
Before you begin to write, think about the area where you live. What is the best thing about it? **Why** do you think the way you do?

Now write a **multi-paragraph** composition for the contest explaining the best thing about the neighborhood or area in which you live.

- Give specific details and explain why you think the way you do so that the contest judges will understand what you mean.
- Be sure to write clearly and to check your composition for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

- Student Worksheet Writing Lesson 1 – 2

NAME _____



Good Things About Summer