

## GRADE 8 English Language Arts Writing: Lesson 4

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 to you 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 4:*

In this lesson, the tutor and students will

- find clues in the writing prompt for writing a composition that explains,
- practice prewriting,
- identify a well-written topic sentence, and
- use the English Language Arts Writer’s Checklist.

### *Equipment /Materials Needed:*

- Student Worksheets Writing Lesson 4 – 1 and Lesson 4 - 2
- Pencils
- English Language Arts Writer’s Checklist (one per student)

After your introductory remarks to students, say:

**Today we will examine a writing prompt. It is important that you recognize and use the clues and hints that are built into the writing prompt.**

⇒ Distribute student worksheet Writing Lesson 4 - 1 and pencils.

Then say:

**Look at the box on your worksheet. Information in the box gives you an idea, a problem, or a situation about which to write. Your teacher may call this information a writing prompt.**

**Follow along while I read the prompt aloud.**

**“Your teacher has asked you to write a composition in which you *explain* how to be a successful student. Write a *multi-paragraphed* composition telling how to accomplish this goal of being a successful student. Include suggestions for achieving academic success (for example, making good grades, getting along with teachers) as well as for achieving personal success (for example, making new friends and getting along with your classmates.)”**

**As you look at the prompt, what clues do you see that might help you to write this composition? Circle those words.**

Pause to allow time for students to circle their responses.

(Response should include explain and multi-paragraph.)

If a student is having difficulty, you might say, “I see two clues.”

**Did you circle the word *explain*? You should have because the word *explain* tells you what kind of composition to write. If you didn't circle *explain*, circle it now.**

**Did you circle the word *multi-paragraphed*? You should have because the word *multi-paragraphed* tells you to write a composition that has more than one paragraph. If you didn't circle *multi-paragraphed*, circle it now.**

**Remember that it is very important to know who your audience is. For whom are you writing?**

Pause to allow time for students to answer. (Response: teacher)

**Yes, a teacher is your audience.**

Then say:

**You have done an outstanding job of finding the clues in the writing prompt. Identifying the clues will make it easier to write the composition.**

Say:

**Earlier we said that this writing prompt required you to explain. *To explain* means you will need to be very clear and very precise in your writing. But before you begin to write the composition, what do you need to do?**

(Possible responses: prewriting; brainstorming, clustering, making a list, thinking up ideas)

*Prewriting*, the first step in the writing process, is considered the most important step in writing. Prewriting strategies might include brainstorming, clustering, listing, and outlining.

*Brainstorming* refers to the thinking and planning that a student does before actually writing a 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.

*Clustering* means concentrating on one subject or topic. Write the topic or subject in the middle of the page. Draw a circle around it. Then write down other ideas and draw circles around them. Lines are used to connect these ideas to the topic or subject.

Now say:

**Before we do our prewriting, please reread the prompt silently.**  
Pause to allow students time to read.

Then say:

**What clues in the writing prompt might help you to think and to plan this composition?** Pause.

(Response: academic success and personal success)

If students are struggling, give a hint.

Say: I see two clues toward the end of the prompt.

If necessary, tell students the two clues.

**Now you are ready to brainstorm some ways to achieve academic success and some ways to achieve personal success.**

**On your worksheet, in the space below the prompt, do your prewriting now. Some people like to draw circles and others may like to make lists. Choose a method that you think will help you come up with ideas.**

Allow students time to work.

When students appear to be finished (6 – 8 minutes), ask a volunteer to share some prewriting ideas. Other students should add to their prewriting at this time. Remind students that the purpose of prewriting is to write down lots of words, phrases, and ideas.

It does not matter which method (cluster, list, outline) that a student uses. It is probably easier if the student breaks the prewriting down into Academic Success and Personal Success.

(Possible responses: Academic Success – do homework; ask questions; study; listen in class; read; take pencil and paper to class; stay awake.

Personal Success – be helpful; kind; polite; say please and thank you; be nice to teachers; be nice to other students)

Then say:

**Great! You have a lot of ideas and now you are ready to write a topic sentence. Before you write the topic sentence, it is a good idea to read the prompt one more time.**

Allow time for students to reread the writing prompt.

**What is a trick for writing a good topic sentence?** Pause to allow students to answer.

(Response: turn the question into the topic sentence)

If no one responds, then give students the answer.

⇒ Distribute worksheet Writing Lesson 4 – 2 and the English Language Arts Writer’s Checklist.

Say:

**On your worksheet are some topic sentences written by 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Read each one carefully. Put a check mark by those you think are the best topic sentences.**

Pause to allow time for students to read and mark the sentences. Give a hint if necessary. Say, “You will have two checks.”

**Do you think number one is a good topic sentence?**

**“You have to be nice to teachers if you want to be successful.”**

(Response: no)

**Why not?**

(Response: The composition is not just about being nice to teachers; the sentence is not broad enough for the writing topic.)

**Do you think number two is a good topic sentence?**

**“To be a successful middle school student requires effort.”**

(Response: yes)

**Yes, this sentence is a better sentence. You could write about the effort you put into academics and the effort you put into your personal life. It is not narrow like that first one.**

**Sentence number three. “Students must work hard for academic success and for personal success.”**

**Do you think that sentence is a good topic sentence?**

(Response: yes)

**Why?** (Response: It includes both ideas from the prompt.)

**Look at the last one. “I am going to write about how to be a successful student.” What do you think about this sentence? Is it okay?**

(Response: no) Students may not be able to explain why the sentence is not okay.

**This sentence is very weak sentence. It is really not a good idea to begin your composition with “I’m going to write about” – just write about being a successful student.**

**Look at your copy of the English Language Arts Writer’s Checklist. Let’s study it to find some clues that can help you write an acceptable composition. There’s a lot to remember when you are writing!**

**Look on the side titled Directions for Writing. The steps for writing a successful composition are printed in boldface type. Pause. Read them aloud with me.**

**Step one: Planning and Drafting.**

**Step two: Revising.**

**Step three: Proofreading.**

**This checklist is a handy reference that will help you stay focused and stay on task.**

**Turn the card over. Notice the main headings printed in boldface type: Composing, Style/Audience Awareness, Sentence Formation, Usage, Mechanics, and Spelling.**

**Again here are some additional clues.**

**Use this checklist to help you to remember all the things you have learned about writing.**

Student Worksheet Writing Lesson 4 – 1

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Your teacher has asked you to write a composition in which you **explain** how to be a successful student.

Write a **multi-paragraphed** composition telling how to accomplish this goal of being a successful student. Include suggestions for achieving academic success (for example, making good grades, getting along with teachers) as well as personal success (for example, making new friends and getting along with your classmates).

Student Worksheet Writing Lesson 4 – 2

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:** Here are some topic sentences written by 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Read each one carefully. Put a check mark by those you think are the best.

- \_\_\_ 1. You have to be nice to teachers if you want to be successful.
  
- \_\_\_ 2. To be a successful middle school student requires effort.
  
- \_\_\_ 3. Students must work hard for academic success and personal success.
  
- \_\_\_ 4. I am going to write about how to be a successful student.