

Grade 1 Informative/Explanatory Writing Standard W.1.2

Grade 1 Informative/Explanatory

W.1.2 Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

The Reading/Thinking/Writing Task

Students listened to the story, *The Little Elephant's Trunk* by Hazel Lincoln, after hearing several nonfiction books about how elephants use their trunks. Texts were read aloud multiple times before summarizing and discussing the topic as a group. The teacher created public notes from the ideas generated by the students and used illustrations when available from the texts to match the notes. Students were then given the focusing question, "*How is an elephant's trunk useful?*"

Students were provided with a focus if needed, reminded of the parts of a basic essay, and then wrote independently. Students were asked to revise and edit their own pieces before handing them in to the teacher.

Note: Some of the pieces in this set did not originally have titles. Each was given a basic title for ease of reference.

Focus of the Writing Task

How is an elephant's trunk useful?

The Writing Task in the Curriculum

How is it embedded in curriculum/content?

- ★ *Class: grade 1 ELA and Science in a unit on animals*
 - focus on how animals survive in their habitat
- ★ *Curriculum unit*
 - students researched the usefulness of an elephant's trunk
 - emphasis on finding evidence in text, recording that evidence, and writing a basic essay
- ★ *Standards*
 - Reading: RI.1.1, RI.1.2, RI.1.10
 - Writing: W.1.2, W.1.8, W.1.10

How did students build the knowledge they needed?

- ★ *Texts*
 - *The Elephant's Trunk* by Hazel Lincoln, and multiple non-fiction texts about elephants
- ★ *Reading and re-reading*
 - students heard the texts read aloud multiple times
 - students discussed the uses of an elephant's trunk orally with a partner
 - students orally rehearsed their piece with a partner before writing independently

What instructional approaches were used to teach writing?

- ★ *Craft lessons*
 - students were introduced to basic expository structures (Painted Essay® in many forms and more) including such elements as introductions, grouping related information together, and conclusions
 - students had access to the texts and to the public notes in the classroom
- ★ *Writing approaches*
 - students were reminded of the elements that make up a strong essay in the directions. They then wrote and proofread independently.

What was the timeframe?

Brief (2-3 class periods)

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Proficient

Elephant's Trunks

An elephant's trunk is useful. ElePhant's use their trunks to great each other. ElePhant's use their trunks to hug and snogle. ElePhants use their trunks to drink wordr. They use their trunks to get water and put it in Their moths. ElePhans use their trunks to kamacate to eatch other. An elePhants trunk has 100,000 mosals. So they can rech hiy, likte branchis and eat lefes.

ElePhants use their trunks to smell for dancher.

These are some good facts abot elePhants trunks and how they are useful.

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Approaching

Trunk Uses

Eleafints tunk are vere useful. Elafints trunk help them snorkel And swimm. Eleafints use ther trunks to pat and greet. Eleafints use ther trunks to sprae mud on them.

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Beginning

Elephants

Wow the elpents trunk can Waugh about two men. but It Is very useful. And, the trunk is very Good. And they are mammals. When they go in the mud they splash themselvs. It is very ussful

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Exceeds

An Elephant's Useful Trunk

An elephant's trunk is very useful. It helps them in many different ways. An elephant uses it's trunk to drink. If an elephant drank water with it's mouth it's trunk would get in the way. An Elephant uses it's trunk to spray water on it's back to cool off on hot days. An elephant uses it's trunk to spray dollops of mud on it's back. The mud protects it from the sun. An Elephant uses it's trunk to hug or snuggle with it's mom. An elephant uses it's trunk to grab leaves off the branches for them to eat. An elephant's trunk has 100,000 muscles and no bones. An elephant uses it trunk to talk to other elephants. An elephant's trunk has two fingers on the end to help grab leaves. An elephant's uses it's trunk to snorkel while swimming in the river. And elephant's trunk really is very useful.

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Proficient

Elephant's Trunks

An elephant's trunk is very useful. ElePhant's use their trunks to greet each other. ElePhant's use their trunks to hug and snogle. ElePhants use their trunks to drink wordr. They use their trunks to get water and put it in their moths. ElePhans use their trunks to kamacate to eatch other. An elePhants trunk has 100,000 mosals. So they can rech hiy, likte branchis and eat lefes. ElePhants use their trunks to smell for dancher. These are some good facts about elePhants trunks and how they are useful.

Names the topic in the first sentence

The focus, that an elephant's trunk is useful, is maintained throughout the piece.

Supplies some facts (details, evidence) **about the topic** to develop the point

Provides a sense of closure that restates the focus, that elephants' trunks are useful, and adds a comment about the quality of the facts the writer chose for their piece

Final Thoughts
(Gr 1 Informative: Proficient)

Overall, this first grade essay shows solid understanding of the topic, the usefulness of the elephant's trunk for survival. The writer establishes the focus in the first sentence and maintains that focus throughout the piece. The writer develops the topic with multiple facts and some elaboration to help the reader understand how the trunk is useful. For example, when the writer states the fact that an elephant uses its trunk to drink water, they add the point that the trunk is then put in the elephant's mouth. The ending sentence restates the topic, comments on the quality of the facts the writer chose, and provides a sense of closure. Although not part of the first grade standard, multiple illustrations add to the reader's understanding of the topic.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 1 Informative: Proficient)

Although there are some errors, this first grade writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Approaching

Trunk Uses

Eleafints tunk are vere useful. Elafints trunk help them snorkel and swimm. Eleafints use ther trunks to pat and greet. Eleafints use ther trunks to sprae mud on them.

Names the topic and states the focus, that elephants' trunks are useful

The writer maintains the focus throughout the piece.

Supplies some facts (details, evidence) **about the topic** to develop the point

A sense of closure is missing from this piece.

Final Thoughts
(Gr 1 Informative: Approaching)

Overall, this first grade essay shows some understanding of the topic, the usefulness of an elephant's trunk. The focus is clearly stated at the beginning of the piece and is maintained throughout the piece. The relationship between the fact and the usefulness to an elephant is unclear even though there are illustrations that go along with the facts.

This writer would benefit from practice in using elaboration to explain how each piece of evidence supports the focus. This student would also benefit from oral practice in restating the focus in different ways to provide a sense of closure.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 1 Informative: Approaching)

Minimal Control of Conventions: The writer shows little control over language and conventions. The student would benefit from instruction in the following skill:

- spelling

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Beginning

Elephants

Wow the elpents trunk can Waugh about two men. but It Is very useful.

And, the trunk is very Good. When they go in the_mud they splash
themselvs. It is very ussful

Names the topic

The writer attempts to maintain the focus, that an elephant's trunk is useful, throughout the piece.

The writer attempts to **supply facts** (details, evidence) **about the topic**, but adds extraneous information.

In the last sentence, the writer restates the focus **to provide a sense of closure.**

Final Thoughts
(Gr 1 Informative: Beginning)

Overall, this essay shows limited understanding of the topic. The writer attempts to maintain the focus, that an elephant's trunk is useful, but adds extraneous facts (details, evidence). For example, the writer says that the trunk was "very good" and "they are mammals," facts that don't provide information that answers the focusing question. The last sentence adds closure to the piece by restating the focus.

This writer would benefit from guided practice in understanding a focusing question and in identifying evidence to support a focus.

Errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are frequent and often obscure meaning.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 1 Informative: Beginning)

Minimal Control of Conventions: The writer shows little control over language and conventions. The student would benefit from instruction in the following skills:

- spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
- sentence structure

Standard W.1.2
Grade 1
Exceeds

An Elephant's Useful Trunk

An elephant's trunk is very useful. It helps them in many different ways.

An elephant uses it's trunk to drink. If an elephant drank water with it's mouth, it's trunk would get in the way. An elephant uses it's trunk to spray water on it's back to cool off on hot days. An elephant uses it's

trunk to spray dollops of mud on it's back. The mud protects it from the sun. An elephant uses it's trunk to hug or snuggle with it's mom. An

elephant uses it's trunk to grab leaves off the branches for them to eat. An elephant's trunk has 100,000 muscles and no bones. An elephant's uses it trunk to talk to other elephants. An elephant's trunk has two fingers

on the end to help grab leaves. An elephant's uses it's trunk to snorkel while swimming in the river. An elephant's trunk really is very useful.

Names the topic

The focus, that an elephant's trunk is useful, is stated in the first and second sentences. The focus is clearly communicated and strongly maintained throughout the piece.

Facts supplied about the topic are well-chosen, relevant, and elaborated.

Extensive elaboration shows how the **fact** about an elephant's trunk is useful to the elephant.

Provides **a sense of closure** for the piece by restating the focus

Final Thoughts
(Gr 1 Informative: Exceeds)

Overall, this piece exceeds the standard for proficient for first grade. It meets all the criteria for proficient, showing solid understanding of the topic, an elephant's trunk is useful in many ways. The writer consistently sticks to the focus with relevant, well-chosen facts from the texts. In the conclusion, the writer re-states the focus.

In addition, the elaboration throughout this first grade piece shows a deep understanding of the content and the ability to group like ideas together to develop points. For example, the first four sentences are all about the usefulness of the trunk to spray water and mud on its back to keep its body cool and protect the elephant from the sun. This elaboration helps the reader understand the usefulness of the trunk to the elephant throughout the piece. Although not part of the first grade standard, the detailed illustrations for each fact add to the reader's depth of understanding about the usefulness of the elephant's trunk.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 1 Informative: Exceeds)

Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.