

## Grade 4 Informative/Explanatory Writing Standard W.4.2

### Grade 4 Informative/Explanatory

W.4.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

- a. 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.
- b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- c. Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

### The Reading/Thinking/Writing Task

This task was part of an integrated global studies/ELA unit on how people use resources when given help to do so. This piece was written after working with the picture book, *Beatrice's Goat*, a true story of how a goat from Heifer International changed the lives of a family in Uganda. Students were given the Focusing Question, “*How was Beatrice's life different before and after Mugisa arrived?*” The pieces in this set are independent, first draft writing.

This is a question that requires gathering evidence from a nonfiction text and selecting and organizing relevant information to respond to a question. Students needed to think in terms of “before and after” when selecting and organizing information/evidence.

### Focus of the Writing Task

*How was Beatrice's life different before and after Mugisa arrived?*

## The Writing Task in the Curriculum

### *How is the writing embedded in curriculum/content?*

- ★ *Class:*
  - heterogeneous 4<sup>th</sup> grade class
- ★ *Curriculum unit*
  - part of a social studies/ELA unit on global issues about resources
- ★ *Standards*
  - Social Studies: local curriculum standard
  - Reading: RI.4.1, RI.4.9, RI.4.10
  - Writing: W.4.2, W.4.9, W.4.10

### *How did students build the knowledge they needed?*

- ★ *Texts*
  - Picture Book: *Beatrice's Goat* by Page McBrier
- ★ *Reading and re-reading*
  - teacher read text aloud while students read along in their heads
  - students re-read texts several times with full class and small group
  - students discussed text as they re-read, with emphasis on how Beatrice's life had changed because of the goat Mugisa
  - students took group notes on texts

### *What instructional approaches were used to teach writing?*

- ★ *Craft lessons*
  - earlier in the school year, students worked with The Painted Essay® and wrote several informative/explanatory pieces.
- ★ *Writing approaches*
  - students planned and wrote independently, using both class notes and personal notes

### *What was the timeframe?*

6 – 7 class periods (including reading)

*Standard W.4.2*  
*Grade 4*  
*Proficient*

### **How Mugisa Changed Things**

We read the book “Beatrice’s Goat”. Its about how Beatrice gets a goat and how her life changes. Beatrice’s life was hard before Mugisa made her way in Beatrice’s life, but got easier after.

Beatrice’s life was hard before the goat got there. One reason is her family did not have much money. That was because it was hard for them to earn money. Another reason was she was not educated. This was because they did not have enough money. One last reason is there roof leaked. This was because did not have nice steel roof to Block rain. Those where some ways how Beatrices life was hard before the goat got there.

Beatrice’s life was hard Before the goat got there and got easier after. One reason Beatrice’s life was easier is she got a new steel roof. This made her life easier because the steel roof did not leake. Another reason was they earned more money. They earned the money from selling the milk that Mugisa prodused. That made her life easier because they were able to use the money to buy the things they needed. One last reason was they earned enough money from Mugisa’s milk that Beatrice was able to go too school. They sold milk until they had enough money to go to school.

those were some reasons why Beatrice’s life got easier after the goat got there.

those were some reasons how Mugisa changed the course of Beatrice’s life from harder to easier. This is important because wether you think so or not, you are very luckey to have cleen water a place to live and good nutrtrion. And while you mighte be compainig that you cant have

your favorite video game, other people, in other places might be complainig that they don't have a place to live or they don't have any food or simpley because they dont have enough.

*Standard W.4.2*  
*Grade 4*  
*Approaching*

**Beatrice**

In my reading class we read a true story called “Beatrice’s Goat”. Beatrice is a hardworking girl who would do anything for her family. She was having a rough life until her family was one to receive a goat. She named her goat Mugisa. Beatrice had a rough life before Mugisa arrived, but after she arrived things were much easier for her and her family.

Before Mugisa arrived, Beatrice’s family was struggling. One way they were struggling is they did not have a lot of ways to make money. This made them struggle because they became very poor. They were also struggling to do a lot of chores. This made things hard for them because they always have a lot going on. This probably caused a lot of stress in Beatrice’s family. The thing Beatrice wanted most was to go to school. Beatrice’s family did not have enough money for her to go school which caused no education. Beatrice would often stop by the school house pretending she was a student to. Yes, Beatrice was having a rough life before Mugisa arrived, but, after Mugisa arrived things got much easier.

After Mugisa arrived things were much easier for Beatrice and her family. One way things were much easier was they sold leftover milk for money. This gave them the opportunity to get things they need. They also only had to focus on Mugisa. This made things alot easier for beatrice and her family because they were not rushing around everywhere doing all sorts of different things. Finally, beatrice got to go to school. This gave her a better education for learning. It also gave Beatrice the thing she wanted most.

Not every family is as lucky as some. Beatrice has one of those families. But just imagine, anything can help. Even one small goat.

***Standard W.4.2***  
***Grade 4***  
***Beginning***

No piece available at this level.

*Standard W.4.2*  
*Grade 4*  
*Exceeds*

### **Life Before and After Mugisa**

Once there was and still is girl called Beatrice who lived in a village in a small African village of kiniga in the many hills of western Uganda. At the time Beatrice was helping her mom hoe and plant many varieties of seeds in the fields, tend to the chickens, take care of the young one's, and grind the cassava flour that they would sell at the market.

Beatrice was a poor child that didn't have much until a girl called Mugisa arrived and changed their whole lifestyle. Mugisa changed their lifestyle because she could provide many different opportunities for Beatrice and Beatrice's family. Beatrice's life was different before and after Mugisa arrived.

Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's life. One way Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's is Mugisa provided money for Beatrice and her family. Beatrice's family used that money to make upgrades to their house such as buying a steel roof, buying a blue chair, and allowing Beatrice to go to school which Beatrice really wanted to do. Another way Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's is Mugisa provided milk. In this situation Beatrice and her family didn't have very good nutrition so milk could provide nutrition and give Beatrice and her family the strength that they need. One other way Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's is it could give Beatrice an education. Beatrice's lifelong dream was to get an education and because of Mugisa it was going to happen. Mugisa brought happiness to Beatrice's life and her family's

**Standard W.4.2**  
**Grade 4**  
**Proficient**

### **How Mugisa Changed Things**

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Beatrice’s life was hard before the goat got there. One reason is her family did not have much money. That was because it was hard for them to earn money. Another reason was she was not educated. This was because they did not have enough money. One last reason is there roof leaked. This was because did not have nice steel roof to Block rain.

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Beatrice’s life was hard Before the goat got there and got easier after. One reason Beatrice’s life was easier is she got a new steel roof. This made her life easier because the steel roof did not leake. Another reason was they earned more money. They earned the money from selling the milk that Mugisa prodused. That made her life easier because they were able to use the money to buy the things they needed. One last reason was they earned enough money from Mugisa’s milk that Beatrice was able to go too school. They sold milk until they had enough money to go to school.

A brief **introduction** provides context on the topic.

The focus/**topic** is clear and maintained.

Information **is grouped in related paragraphs**: the first body paragraph describes how difficult Beatrice’s life was before Mugisa arrived and the second body paragraph describes how Beatrice’s life got easier once Mugisa arrived.

**Uses transitional phrases** (*Another reason...*, *This made her life easier...*) **to link evidence from the text to the main idea of the paragraph**

**Develops the topic with concrete details and examples** from the text: elaboration explains how each example relates to a specific change in Beatrice’s life.



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those were some reasons how Mugisa changed the course of Beatrice’s life from harder to easier. This is important because whether you think so or not, you are very lucky to have clean water a place to live and good nutrition. And while you might be complaining that you can’t have your favorite video game, other people, in other places might be complaining that they don’t have a place to live or they don’t have any food or simply because they don’t have enough.

**The concluding paragraph** restates the focus/topic and reflects on the greater significance of the events in the story.

**Final Thoughts**  
**(Gr 4 Informative: Proficient)**

This piece shows solid understanding of the topic, how Beatrice’s changed because of Mugisa. The focus of the piece (*Beatrice’s life was hard before Mugisa made her way in Beatrice’s life, but got easier after*) is clearly stated and well supported by evidence. The body paragraphs are organized to clearly address the focus. The first body paragraph describes how difficult Beatrice’s life was before Mugisa arrived, and the second body paragraph describes how it became easier after Mugisa. The writer effectively uses transitions and elaboration to connect each example to the topic of the paragraph (*This made her life easier because...*). Precise language (*educated, produced, changed the course of Beatrice’s life*) conveys ideas and information clearly. Voice and tone are appropriate to this purpose and audience. Overall, this piece is proficient for grade four.

**A Word About Language and Conventions**  
**(Gr 4 Informative: Proficient)**

Partial Control of Conventions: Although the writer has some control over language and conventions, there are some significant areas of weakness. The student could benefit from instruction in the following skills:

- capitalization
- spelling
- punctuation
- recognizing and correcting run on sentences and fragments

**Standard W.4.2**  
**Grade 4**  
**Approaching**

**Beatrice**

In my reading class we read a true story called “Beatrice’s Goat”.

Beatrice is a hardworking girl who would do anything for her family. She was having a rough life until her family was one to receive a goat. She named her goat Mugisa. Beatrice had a rough life before Mugisa arrived, but after she arrived things were much easier for her and her family.

Before Mugisa arrived, Beatrice’s family was struggling. One way they were struggling is they did not have a lot of ways to make money. This made them struggle because they became very poor. They were also struggling to do a lot of chores. This made things hard for them because they always have a lot going on. This probably caused a lot of stress in Beatrice’s family. The thing Beatrice wanted most was to go to school. Beatrice’s family did not have enough money for her to go school which caused no education. Beatrice would often stop by the school house pretending she was a student to. Yes, Beatrice was having a rough life before Mugisa arrived, but, after Mugisa arrived things got much easier.

After Mugisa arrived things were much easier for Beatrice and her family. One way things were much easier was they sold leftover milk for money. This gave them the opportunity to get things they need. They also only had to focus on Mugisa. This made things alot easier for

A brief **introduction** provides needed context from the book.

The focus/**topic** is stated and maintained.

**Information is grouped in related paragraphs:** the first body paragraph describes what Beatrice’s life was like before Mugisa arrived and the second body paragraph describes the changes in Beatrice’s life after she got Mugisa.

Although the writer attempts to **develop the topic/focus**, elaboration is often vague and repetitive.

**Uses transitional phrases** (*One way things were much easier*) **to link evidence from the text to the main idea of the paragraph**

beatrice and her family because they were not rushing around everywhere doing all sorts of different things. Finally, beatrice got to go to school. This gave her a better education for learning. It also gave Beatrice the thing she wanted most.

Not every family is as lucky as some. Beatrice has one of those families. But just imagine, anything can help. Even one small goat.

Although the thinking is insightful, imprecise language makes the **conclusion** a bit difficult to understand.

### **Final Thoughts** **(Gr 4 Informative: Approaching)**

This piece is very close to proficient for fourth grade. The writer demonstrates an understanding of key ideas; the focus (*Beatrice had a rough life before Mugisa arrived, but after she arrived things were much easier for her and her family.*) is accurate and supported by evidence. The writing is well organized to address the focus: the first body paragraph describes what Beatrice’s life was like before Mugisa arrived, and the second body paragraph describes the changes in Beatrice’s life after she got Mugisa. Transitions connect examples to the topic of the paragraph (*This made things a lot easier for Beatrice because...*).

However, the piece falls below grade level expectations for topic development and language use. Although the writer attempts to develop the topic with evidence and elaboration, in most places this elaboration does not add to the reader’s understanding (*Beatrice’s family did not have enough money for her to go school which caused no education.*), or offers inferences only loosely supported by the text (*This made things alot easier for beatrice and her family because they were not rushing around everywhere doing all sorts of different things.*). In addition, the language in some spots is imprecise, which can leave the reader confused (*Not every family is as lucky as some. Beatrice has one of those families.*). Weaknesses in these key areas make this piece slightly less than proficient for grade 4.

This writer could benefit from practice in using elaboration to connect evidence from the text to the focus (explaining more specifically how each piece of evidence provided made Beatrice’s life hard or easier), as well as oral practice in expressing ideas more clearly.

### **A Word About Language and Conventions** **(Gr 4 Informative: Approaching)**

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

***Standard W.4.2***  
***Grade 4***  
***Beginning***

No piece available at this level.

*Standard W.4.2*  
*Grade 4*  
*Exceeds*

### **Life Before and After Mugisa**

Once there was and still is girl called Beatrice who lived in a village in a small African village of kiniga in the many hills of western Uganda. At the time Beatrice was helping her mom hoe and plant many varieties of seeds in the fields, tend to the chickens, take care of the young one's, and grind the cassava flour that they would sell at the market.

**Related information is grouped in paragraphs:** a two-paragraph introduction provides needed context by concisely summarizing the book and then **introducing the topic**/focus of the piece.

Beatrice was a poor child that didn't have much until a goal called Mugisa arrived and changed their whole lifestyle. Mugisa changed their lifestyle because she could provide many different opportunities for Beatrice and Beatrice's family. Beatrice's life was different before and after Mugisa arrived.

The **topic**/focus is clearly stated and strongly maintained throughout the piece.

Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's life. One way Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's is Mugisa provided money for beatrice and her family. Beatrice's family used that money to make upgrades to their house such as buying a steel roof, buying a blue chair, and allowing Beatrice to go to school which Beatrice really wanted to do. Another way Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's is Mugisa provided milk. In this situation Beatrice and her family didn't have very good nutrition so milk could provide nutrition and give Beatrice and her family the strength that they need. One other way

Ideas progress logically from beginning to end. Rather than using a simple "before and after structure", the writer smoothly weaves together information about each change Mugisa caused and how this affected Beatrice's life.

Consistently uses a variety of **transitions** to clarify the relationships between ideas

Well-chosen **evidence from the text develops the topic**/focus and is integrated, relevant, and specific.

Mugisa changed Beatrice's life and her family's is it could give Beatrice an education. Beatrice's lifelong dream was to get an education and because of Mugisa it was going to happen. Mugisa brought happiness to Beatrice's life and her family's.

The single sentence **conclusion** is weak, and does bring closure to the piece.

### **Final Thoughts** (Gr 4 Informative: Exceeds)

This piece exceeds expectations for grade 4 because of its sophisticated structure, insightful elaboration, and precise use of language. The multi-paragraph introduction offers a concise summary of the story, providing detailed context for the reader. The writer chooses an organizational structure that discusses one change at a time in depth, using evidence from the text and elaborating where needed (*allowing Beatrice to go to school which Beatrice really wanted to do.*). A variety of transitions (*allowing...In this situation... because of Mugisa...*) express the relationship between ideas and move the reader through a logical progression of thinking about each change that shows a solid understanding of the text. Precise vocabulary (*upgrades, provided, nutrition*) allows the writer to express ideas clearly, packing meaning into fewer sentences. The single sentence conclusion in the piece is weak and could be improved on in a second draft, but overall, this essay shows a clarity and coherence of thinking and expression unusual for a fourth grader.

### **A Word About Language and Conventions** (Gr 4 Informative: Exceeds)

Partial Control of Conventions: Although the writer has some control over language and conventions, the student could benefit from instruction in the following skills:

- using commas
- capitalization
- paragraphing