

**Key Writing Assignments – 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
Including Pacing Guides and Student Samples

1	Fall Semester Pacing Guide
3	Baseline 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Assessment
7	Student #1 Sample of Baseline Assessment
11	Student #2 Sample of Baseline Assessment
14	Extended Writing (including Graphic Organizers) for Fall
23	Spring Semester Pacing Guide
25	2-Week Writing Unit

Fall Semester 2021  
 CP English 9  
**Unit 1: Empathy**

WEEK	CONTENT	KEY ASSIGNMENTS
1 August	NWEA MAP Assessment	None
2 August	Baseline Writing Assessment	*Text-Based Argumentative Essay: <i>Take a position for or against pushing back the start time of high schools</i>
3 Aug./Sept.	SS#1: Marigolds	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Skill:</b> Character <b>Spotlight Skill:</b> Word Patterns and Relationships Grade 9 <b>Skill:</b> Greek and Latin Affixes and Roots
4 Sept.	SS#1: Marigolds	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & *Write (One Informative Paragraph) <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Clauses – Parallel Structure Grade 9
5 Sept.	SS#2: The Jungle	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Spotlight Skill:</b> Theme Grade 9 <b>Skill:</b> Theme <b>Blast:</b> Media Matters
6 Sept.	SS#2: The Jungle	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & Write (Two Narrative Paragraphs) <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Verbals – Participles and Participial Phrases Grade 9
7 Sept.	SS#3: Statement on the Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Skill:</b> Arguments and Claims <b>Skill:</b> Author’s Purpose and Author’s Point of View
8 October	SS#3: Statement on the Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & Write (Argumentative Essay) <b>Blast:</b> Powers of Persuasion <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Conjunctions – Conjunctive Adverbs Grade 9
9 October	SS#4: Harvest Gypsies	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Spotlight Skill:</b> Informational Text Elements Grade 9 <b>Skill:</b> Informational Text Elements <b>Blast:</b> Moving Words

10 October	SS#4: Harvest Gypsies	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & Write (One Informative Paragraph) <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Colons and Semicolons – Semicolons Grade 9
11 October	Extended Writing Project	<b>Extended Writing Project:</b> Argumentative Writing <b>Spotlight Skill:</b> Thesis Statement – Argumentative Writing Grade 9 <b>Skill:</b> Thesis Statement #Begin Draft of Argumentative Essay
12 Nov.	Extended Writing Project	#Finish Draft of Argumentative Essay <b>Skill:</b> Organize Argumentative Writing <b>Spotlight Skill:</b> Introductions -Argumentative Writing Grade 9 <b>Skill:</b> Introductions <b>Spotlight Skill:</b> Conclusions – Argumentative Writing Grade 9 <b>Skill:</b> Conclusions #Revise & Edit Argumentative Writing
13 Nov.	Novel: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee**	<p><i>Finish revising/editing Extended Writing Project Essay</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Novel study guide*</li> <li>• Teacher-selected comprehension, vocabulary, and short writing activities</li> <li>• Culminating essay or project</li> </ul>
14 Nov.	Novel: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	
15 Nov./Dec.	Novel: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	
16 December	Novel: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	
17 December	Make-up work and end of semester review	

\* = Printable Material

\*\* = Or other novel selected by teacher/family

**BOLD** = Must be assigned by teacher in StudySync online (all **BOLD** assignments included in the grade level Community Classes)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Source #1

**Adapted from “Let Them Sleep: AAP Recommends Delaying Start Times of Middle and High Schools to Combat Teen Sleep Deprivation”**

by The American Academy of Pediatrics

Studies show that teens who don't get enough sleep often suffer physical and mental health problems. They are also at an increased risk of car accidents and a decline in school grades. But getting enough sleep each night can be hard for teens. Their natural sleep cycles make it difficult for them to fall asleep before 11 p.m. Many of them face a first-period class at 7:30 a.m. or earlier the next day.

The American Academy of **Pediatrics** (AAP) recommends middle and high schools delay the start of class to 8:30 a.m. or later. Doing so will align school schedules to the natural sleep rhythms of teens, or adolescents. Their sleep-wake cycles begin to shift up to two hours later at the start of puberty.

“**Chronic** sleep loss in children and adolescents is one of the most common . . . public health issues in the U.S. today,” said Dr. Judith Owens, MD. Dr. Owens is the author of the policy statement. “The research is clear that adolescents who get enough sleep have a reduced risk of being overweight or suffering depression. [They are] less likely to be involved in automobile accidents. [They] have better grades, higher standardized test scores and an overall better quality of life,” Dr. Owens said. “Studies have shown that delaying early school start times . . . can help adolescents get the sleep they need to grow and learn.”

Many studies have shown that the average teen in the U.S. is sleep-deprived. A National Sleep Foundation poll found 59 percent of 6th through 8th graders in the U.S. were not getting enough sleep. The figure jumps to 87 percent of high school students. The AAP recommends 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep on school nights.

The reasons for teens' lack of sleep are complex. They include homework, after-school activities, and jobs. Teens' use of technology can also keep them up late on week nights.

But the evidence strongly suggests that a too-early start to the school day is a critical contributor to this lack of sleep. An estimated 40 percent of high schools in the U.S. currently have a start time before 8 a.m. Only 15 percent start at 8:30 a.m. or later. The average middle school start time is 8 a.m. But more than 20 percent of middle schools start at 7:45 a.m. or earlier.

Napping, getting more sleep on weekends, and having caffeine can temporarily **counteract** sleepiness. However, they cannot replace regular, sufficient sleep, according to the AAP.

The AAP urges middle and high schools to aim for start times that allow students to receive 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep a night. In most cases, this means a school start time of 8:30 a.m. or later. Schools, though, should also consider average commuting times and other local factors.

“The AAP is making a powerful statement about the importance of sleep to the health, safety, performance and well-being of our nation's youth,” Dr. Owens said.

**Work Cited:** The American Academy of Pediatrics. “Let Them Sleep: AAP Recommends Delaying Start Times of Middle and High Schools to Combat Teen Sleep Deprivation.” *American Academy of Pediatrics*. American Academy of Pediatrics, 25 Aug. 2014. Web. 31 Jan. 2014.

**pediatrics:** medical care related to babies and children

**chronic:** constant

**counteract:** prevent, stop

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Source #2****Schools Should Not Change Start Times for Teens**

by Sean McCollum

Some school districts in the U.S. have been weighing whether or not to push back the start times at their middle and high schools. The reason? To give teens another hour or two of sleep. At first glance, that may seem easy to do. However, shifting the first bell of the morning to 8:30 a.m. or later, as some medical experts have called for, can create big scheduling problems for students, families, and school districts. School schedules are simply too complicated to make such a major change.

For example, students who take part in sports and other extracurricular activities would face many difficulties due to this later start time. Practices would run later. Darkness might even be a problem for some outdoor sports teams. To travel to away games, student athletes would likely have to skip the last class or two of the day. Other after-school activities, like theater rehearsals and music lessons, could be disrupted, too. Similarly, teens with after-school jobs would be forced to work later in the evening. Homework would still need to be completed, most likely even later at night.

Family schedules could be negatively affected, as well. Many families rely on older brothers and sisters to care for younger siblings after school. If the older siblings are no longer available, it might mean families have to pay for additional childcare.

Perhaps the biggest problem with changing school start times involves transportation. Many school districts have to carefully schedule bus routes to get all their students to and from school on time. Often, each bus must run two routes. The first carries students to the middle schools and high schools in the early morning. The second picks up the elementary school students. Therefore, changes to the middle and high school schedules means changes to the elementary schedule, too. Some districts considering the switch in start times have discussed running the elementary school routes first. However, parents and guardians of younger students do not like this plan. It means kids as young as five waiting for the bus in the dark, sometimes on cold winter mornings.

Yes, scientific evidence suggests teens benefit from getting more sleep. Studies show those who get enough shut-eye are healthier. They also do better in school. But there is no guarantee that a later school start will mean that students will actually get more sleep. They may have to stay up later due to extracurricular activities, jobs, or homework. Or they may simply stay up because they don't have to get up so early the next day.

The bottom line is this: school districts are carefully planned systems. They must meet the needs of thousands of students. That does not even include the many educators and family members involved. Teens must do their part to help the system run smoothly. They need to practice the self-control to get to bed on time, and spend their recommended 8.5 to 9.5 hours in dreamland.

**Works Cited:** Bruce, Giles. "Lawrence School Officials Weigh Pros and Cons of Later Start Times for Teens." *LJWorld.com*. The World Company, 27 Aug. 2014. Web. 31 Dec. 2014.

Pannoni, Alexandra. "Later High School Start Times a Challenge for Districts." *U.S. News & World Report*. U.S. News & World Report LP, 24 Mar. 2014. Web. 31 Dec. 2014.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions****Directions:** Refer back to the sources on pages 2 and 3. Fill in the correct bubble to answer the questions.

1. According to source #1, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends teens
  - Ⓐ go to bed earlier.
  - Ⓑ get 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep a night.
  - Ⓒ do not watch TV on week nights.
  - Ⓓ catch up on sleep on weekends.
2. **PART A:** As stated in source #1, studies suggest what percentage of high school students are not getting enough sleep?
  - Ⓐ 15 percent
  - Ⓑ 40 percent
  - Ⓒ almost 60 percent
  - Ⓓ almost 90 percent
3. **PART B:** Based on the answer to Part A, what was the American Academy of Pediatrics' purpose in writing this article?
  - Ⓐ to address lack of sleep for a small group of high school students
  - Ⓑ to explain the changing sleep habits of most adolescent students
  - Ⓒ to advise high school students how to get more sleep
  - Ⓓ to argue that later school start times would help most middle and high school students
4. What can readers infer from source #2 about how pushing back middle and high school start times would affect schools and families?
  - Ⓐ Pushing back start times would be difficult and costly.
  - Ⓑ Pushing back start times would be successful with some careful planning.
  - Ⓒ Pushing back start times would cause extracurricular activities to be before instead of after school.
  - Ⓓ Pushing back start times would mean that parents/guardians would have to leave work early to care for their younger children.
5. Which of the following **best** describes the main argument of source #2?
  - Ⓐ Pushing back school start times is no guarantee teens will get enough sleep.
  - Ⓑ School districts do not have enough buses to adjust to changes in school start times.
  - Ⓒ Teens' need for more sleep should not be more important than the needs of everyone who would be affected by changes in school schedules.
  - Ⓓ Changing school start times will reduce opportunities for students to take part in sports and other extracurricular activities.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Prompt:** Write an essay taking a position either for or against this statement: High schools should push back start times to 8:30 a.m. or later. Use evidence and expert opinions from both sources to support your argument.

- Directions:**
1. Plan in the space provided below.
  2. Write your response on the pages that follow.

**Checklist:** Use this checklist to do your best writing. The items below directly relate to essay scoring:

- |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write an introduction that clearly states the claim.               | <input type="checkbox"/> Write a conclusion that follows from the claim and argument.              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Present reasons and evidence in logical order, with transitions.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Use precise word choice and varied sentence structures.                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support your claim with reasons and evidence from the sources.     | <input type="checkbox"/> Use appropriate formal style, objective tone, and standard English.       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge and address opposing claim(s) fairly and convincingly. | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit for proper capitalization, grammar/usage, punctuation, and spelling. |
|                                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Proofread the final copy.                                                 |

**Planning Space:** Use the following space to plan your writing.

**Questions**

**Directions:** Refer back to the sources on pages 2 and 3. Fill in the correct bubble to answer the questions.

1. According to source #1, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends teens
  - Ⓐ go to bed earlier.
  - Ⓑ get 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep a night.
  - Ⓒ do not watch TV on week nights.
  - Ⓓ catch up on sleep on weekends.
  
2. **PART A:** As stated in source #1, studies suggest what percentage of high school students are not getting enough sleep?
  - Ⓐ 15 percent
  - Ⓑ 40 percent
  - Ⓒ almost 60 percent
  - Ⓓ almost 90 percent
  
3. **PART B:** Based on the answer to Part A, what was the American Academy of Pediatrics' purpose in writing this article?
  - Ⓐ to address lack of sleep for a small group of high school students
  - Ⓑ to explain the changing sleep habits of most adolescent students
  - Ⓒ to advise high school students how to get more sleep
  - Ⓓ to argue that later school start times would help most middle and high school students
  
4. What can readers infer from source #2 about how pushing back middle and high school start times would affect schools and families?
  - Ⓐ Pushing back start times would be difficult and costly.
  - Ⓑ Pushing back start times would be successful with some careful planning.
  - Ⓒ Pushing back start times would cause extracurricular activities to be before instead of after school.
  - Ⓓ Pushing back start times would mean that parents/guardians would have to leave work early to care for their younger children.
  
5. Which of the following **best** describes the main argument of source #2?
  - Ⓐ Pushing back school start times is no guarantee teens will get enough sleep.
  - Ⓑ School districts do not have enough buses to adjust to changes in school start times.
  - Ⓒ Teens' need for more sleep should not be more important than the needs of everyone who would be affected by changes in school schedules.
  - Ⓓ Changing school start times will reduce opportunities for students to take part in sports and other extracurricular activities.



Grade: 9 Class: Date: 12/8/21

**Prompt:** Write an essay taking a position either for or against this statement: High schools should push back start times to 8:30 a.m. or later. Use evidence and expert opinions from both sources to support your argument.

- Directions:**
1. Plan in the space provided below.
  2. Write your response on the pages that follow.

**Checklist:** Use this checklist to do your best writing. The items below directly relate to essay scoring:

- |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Write an introduction that clearly states the claim.               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Write a conclusion that follows from the claim and argument.              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present reasons and evidence in logical order, with transitions.   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use precise word choice and varied sentence structures.                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support your claim with reasons and evidence from the sources.     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use appropriate formal style, objective tone, and standard English.       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge and address opposing claim(s) fairly and convincingly. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Edit for proper capitalization, grammar/usage, punctuation, and spelling. |
|                                                                                                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proofread the final copy.                                                 |

**Planning Space:** Use the following space to plan your writing.

Intro - Explain Topic  
 Explain why I think this way  
 Evidence from the sources  
 Acknowledge the other Argument  
 Conclusion  
 Edits  
 Re-Write Final Draft on official  
 Paper

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 12/9/21

Some people believe that high schools and middle schools should start school later so that their students can get more sleep. I'm going to tell you why this shouldn't happen.

Middle and high school students' schedules are very busy both during and outside of school. Lots of teenagers have after school activities such as sports, clubs, and jobs. If school were to start later then it would end later as well. Pushing those activities later into the night. This could result in students having to stay up even later than they already do to complete these tasks. Also, lack of sunlight can be a problem for some activities such as outdoor sports.

According to source 2, lots of households rely on older siblings for babysitting. If these siblings are still at school when the babysitting is needed then the parents would have to hire a babysitter, resulting in more money paid by parents. Also, according to the source, bus schedules would be heavily affected if school were to start later. This is because most school bus schedules are structured around elementary

Name: Barrett Dimiduk Grade: 9 Class: Williams Date: 12/9/21

School kids and when they get out of school. If the change happens, then schools will have to hire more bus drivers resulting in more money paid.

Though it is true that most teenagers don't get enough sleep, this is almost entirely their own fault. You might believe that when these students are staying up late it's because they stay up doing homework, but for most students this isn't the case. Many teenagers stay up on electronics. This problem can be solved by the parents making sure the child isn't doing this and making sure they get enough sleep.

Sleep deprivation is a real problem for teenagers, but it does not need to be solved by making school start later.

12/7/2021

English 9<sup>th</sup>

## Should School Start Times Be Pushed Back?

There has been a hot debate on if schools should push back school start times by one or two hours for high schoolers and middle schoolers, why? because there has been a huge problem of these older kids not getting enough sleep. Although I think these kids need more sleep, I will explain why pushing back school start times isn't the solution to this big problem.

Before I explain why I think pushing back school start times is a bad idea, I think it's a good idea to point out the positives of this strategy. First teens tend to stay up later so this better fits their sleep schedule. Second, this could really help kids physically and mentally. Studies show that lack of sleep makes students have physical and mental problems and this solution has the potential to fix that. Those are the only positives I have for this solution so now it's time for me to explain why I think this idea is not a good one.

First, this will heavily conflict with other schedules such as school buses, sports, other activities outside of school, jobs, and if their families need help with something. Let's first look at the bus schedules. If buses have different places to go, then they might not be able to change, which then means the students' parents will have to drive their kids to school, which they might not be able to do because they might have to go to work. Next, this could also interfere with sports and other activities outside of school. If the students have sports they have got to go to, the school schedule could interfere with that which would force the kids to play their sports in the dark, which might not work for all sports. You also must factor in jobs that students might have, and I don't think actual businesses would change their hours just to comply with students being able to get their hours in. There are just too many scheduling problems that would get in the way if schools were to really push back start times.

I have another big reason why this plan won't work and that is that this might not even work, why? Because the students will just be up even later. This is because the same amount of homework will be assigned. Also say the jobs and sports schedules of the students can change, then the students will be up later doing that. That means that those two hours that the students gain in the mornings are just going to get lost at night. Also, if this somehow works and there is a spare hour or two, then there is still the chance that instead of sleeping during it, that some of the students will just use that time with friends or playing video games or doing something else with that time that's not sleeping. I simply do not see how you could argue this and still say that pushing back school start times would help.

Now I do still think there needs to be a solution, if there is no solution at all then the problem still won't be fixed. I have three solutions and I personally think they are all worth trying. First off, we have what is probably the easiest, and simplest solution, less homework. Homework is one of the biggest reasons why students are up so late, and I don't think reducing it would be a big issue. I know there are some teachers who have already done this because they say homework is not that important since it's just a review of what you learned in class. Second is probably the hardest and least likely to happen, paying students who are in sports. I think there are two major pros to this, first it encourages students to participate in sports which would then help the students get more physically healthy. Secondly, this allows students to not have to do sports and work and instead only must pick one. There are some people who have to work and play a sport and they are probably the most effected by lack of sleep, so only having to do one would be helpful for them. My third and final solution is actually the proposed idea of pushing back school start times, with a twist. My idea is to only try it in a few different school districts and see how it goes. If it goes well then sure let's do it at all schools across the United States, but if it fails then we should not push back school start times.

To summarize my essay, although I see potential positives with the plan of pushing back school start times, I don't think that's the best plan to solve the lack of sleep many high schoolers and middle schoolers struggle with. I believe that there are many solutions better than that, but what do you think, is

pushing school start times the right move or is it not? I'm interested in what you think.

# Extended Writing Project

## *Empathy*

For the next two weeks, you will work on a full-length essay that addresses the Unit Question: *How does human compassion inform our understanding of the world?*

### **PROMPT:**

Write an argumentative essay that makes a claim about which form of art or communication (stories, novels, speeches, news articles, photography, documentaries, movies, or poetry) best evokes compassion or empathy from their audience to inspire action or change and while bringing about a deeper understanding of the world. Base your argument on two selections from the “Empathy” unit, **or** one selection from the unit and another selection from your own reading/viewing.

### **Week 11**

- 1) Read the sample student essay (Pages 2-3 of this handout). Use the **Annotation Guide** just below to mark/highlight the sample student essay.
- 2) Review the ABC + MEAT (x2) + AND So + XYZ Paragraph Acronyms (Page 4)
- 3) Brainstorm ideas for your essay (Page 5)
- 4) Do Assignment #2 Spotlight Skill: Thesis Statement – Argumentative Writing & Assignment #3 Skill: Thesis Statement (online)
- 5) Complete the ABC + MEAT (x2) + AND So + XYZ Essay Builder (Page 6)

### **Annotation Guide**

Use the following annotation guidelines to help you annotate the student model as you read back through the essay. Be sure to make annotations or highlights to the text to complete each line.

- Using a **blue** pen or highlighter, underline or highlight the author’s thesis statement (the sentence that responds to the prompt and tells what the entire essay will be about.)
- Using a **green** pen or highlighter, underline or highlight the first sentence of every paragraph. Using a regular pen or pencil, to explain how these sentences connect to or express the author's thesis.
- Using a **yellow** pen or highlighter, underline or highlight all the quotes, examples, or details from the texts that the model body paragraphs contain. Put a star ★ next to the

one that you think is the best piece of textual evidence in each body paragraph. In the margins near the stars, write why you think the writer included this evidence.

Using a red pen or pink highlighter, underline or highlight the explanations that the writer has added after the quotes/details/evidence to explain the nature and the importance of the missions undertaken.

Using a blue pen or highlighter, highlight the sentence (or sentences) in the final paragraph that you think best summarizes the thesis. In the margins, explain why you think this sentence or these sentences summarize what the author has tried to communicate.

Using a regular pen or pencil, underline circle every transitional word or expression that helps you understand or follow how one sentence or section leads to the next or connects to the ideas in the essay as a whole. Hint: there are at least 12!

## Sample Student Essay

### Words to Change the World

One of the key messages an author, a poet, a playwright, an artist, a photographer, or a politician can convey to an audience is the need for human compassion or empathy to inspire action or change and to bring about a deeper understanding of humanity and the world. Precise word choice and sensory details are an author's keys to unlocking a reader's deepest emotions, but startling illustrations, paintings, or photographs can also move people. The excerpt from the informational text *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California*, by California historian Kevin Starr, and the article "The Harvest Gypsies," by the famous American author John Steinbeck, both inform readers about the hardships faced by migrant workers during the Great Depression. While the photographs of Dorothea Lange and artists like her provide important insights into the terrible living conditions of the migrant workers, the deeper human stories provided by John Steinbeck is more effective in bringing about social change.

In the first case in *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California*, Kevin Starr shows the world that photographer Dorothea Lange captured information which the photographs themselves could not contain, providing readers with insights into the subjects of Lange's pictures. For example, sensory details such as "a cold wet miserable day" give context for the moment when she debates the importance of turning her car around to visit the pea pickers' camp (Starr). This was important because her "instinctive" decision to turn around leads her back to the camp, where she encounters the subject of her famous photograph that would eventually help change the fate of many starving migrant workers in California during the Great Depression. In addition, Starr explains Lange's own empathy for the woman by revealing Lange's thoughts that she "seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it." While the picture went on to become known around the world, Lange's comments are absent from the image. Words as well as photographs, Starr shows, changed America in those times of human need.



With the powerful words of his article "The Harvest Gypsies," Steinbeck also presents a vivid account of the plight of families migrating through California during the Great Depression. For example, Steinbeck begins his article by introducing precise words to describe a family's home: the "rot" in the "tattered" canvas held in place with "rusty" wire; the "filth" of the tent and the flies that fill the tent with their "buzzing"; the "foul clothes of the children" and "the baby, who has not been bathed nor cleaned for several days." These words are important because of the emphasis on the time passing in the camp, "for several days," is something a photograph could not show. Additionally, when Steinbeck reveals that a four-year-old boy who was sick for weeks from lack of nourishment has died, his words capture a problem that developed over time. This is an example of how Steinbeck uses words to gain compassion for the parents, who now live in "paralyzed dullness." All in all, Steinbeck's recreates the suffering of the migrant workers in a hundred different ways throughout the excerpt. creates a continuous feeling that a single photograph, which only captures a specific moment in time, cannot communicate or express.

Some people will argue that photography is the most powerful medium for evoking empathy from others. After all, there is that saying that a picture is worth a thousand words, like Dorothea Lange's famous image "Migrant Mother," which came to symbolize the hunger, poverty and hopelessness endured by so many Americans during the Great Depression and is still recognized all over the world today. However, writers can use their craft to say even more about the situation. For example, in his article, there are particular words that Steinbeck deliberately does not include: He does not name any of the people he describes. His decision to use only generic terms, such as "the father," "the mother," or "the child," helps readers see that these things could happen to anyone. As readers, we are reminded that any of us could fall on tough times that change our lives drastically, and we are compelled to feel greater empathy for more families than just the one mother.

Certainly, a powerful image crafted by a photographer, such as Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother," draws a viewer in and makes it hard to look away. However, as the news story that accompanied her photos indicates, images alone are not enough to bring about social change. Writers have the power to interpret a moment for a reader based on evidence that they have provided. Together, the craft of the photographer and the craft of the writer can influence how citizens respond to the needs of society, but it is words that change the world.

## Paragraph Acronyms for Argumentative Essay

### ABC + MEAT (x2) + AND so + XYZ

#### INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH ACRONYM

**A** – Attention Getter/Hook

**B** – Bridge/Background

**C** – Claim/Thesis

#### BODY PARAGRAPH ACRONYM

**M** – Main Point/Topic Sentence

**E** – Evidence/Example

**A** – Analysis (make connections to “M” and “C”)

**T** – Tie Together (Restate “M”)

#### CONCESSION PARAGRAPH ACRONYM

**A** – Acknowledge opposition

**N** – Now turn it back!

**D** – Defend your viewpoint with evidence

**So** – So, what’s your point?

#### CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH ACRONYM

**X** – re-eXplain Claim/Thesis

**Y** – Why should your audience care?

**Z** – Zing them with a lasting thought

**NOTE:** the E-A sequence can be repeated up to 3 times in a body paragraph: M + EA + EA + EA + T

**Brainstorm Ideas**

Best form of communication or art to create empathy/inspire change & action:			
WHY:			
Runner-up form:			
WHY:			
<b>Text #1 from Empathy Unit (title &amp; author):</b>		<b>Text #2 from Empathy Unit or outside (title &amp; author):</b>	
<b>How/Why?</b>		<b>How/Why?</b>	
<b>Specific details/parts I will use to prove my point:</b>		<b>Specific details/parts I will use to prove my point:</b>	
1)	<b>What it shows:</b>	1)	<b>What it shows:</b>
2)	<b>What it shows:</b>	2)	<b>What it shows:</b>
3)	<b>What is shows:</b>	3)	<b>What is shows:</b>

**THESIS:**

**Body Paragraph #1**

**M**ain Idea:

**E**vidence (quote):

**A**nalyze (explain):

**T**ie it together (to Main Idea of Paragraph #1):

**Body Paragraph #2**

**M**ain Idea:

**E**vidence (quote):

**A**nalyze (explain):

**T**ie it together (to Main Idea of Paragraph #2):

**Body Paragraph #3**

**A**cknowledge Opposition

**N**ow turn it back (to your argument):

**D**efend (with new evidence):

**S**o, what's your point? Say it one more time:

## Week 12

- 1) Do Assignment # 1 Skill: Organize Argumentative Writing (online)
- 2) Do Assignment # 2 Spotlight Skill: Introductions Argumentative Writing (online)
- 3) Do Assignment # 3 Spotlight Skill: Conclusions Argumentative Writing (online)
- 4) Upon approval from your teacher, tutor or other writing coach, use the *ABC + MEAT (x2) + AND So + XYZ Paragraph Acronyms* plus the *Body Paragraph Builders* to type your complete first draft of your essay in Word or Google Docs. Use **Transitions** provided on pages 8-9 with all key sentences in your essay: new ideas, examples, explanations and concluding ideas.
- 5) Edit carefully for **Capitalization, Word Usage, Punctuation, and Spelling (CUPS)**. Turn in your first draft at the end of Week 12.
- 6) Be prepared to revise your essay based on teacher and/or peer feedback next week.

## Transition Words for Argument Writing

<p><b>Introducing Examples</b></p> <p>That is to say          In other words          For example          For instance          Namely          An example of this          As in the following examples          Such as          Including          Especially          Particularly          In particular          Notably          Chiefly          Mainly          Mostly</p>	<p><b>Writing in Lists/Sequence</b></p> <p>First(ly)          Second(ly)          Third(ly)          Another          Yet another          In addition          Finally          To begin with          In the second place          Moreover          Additionally          Also          Next          Then          To conclude          Lastly          Finally</p>	<p><b>Introducing an Alternative Viewpoint</b></p> <p>By contrast          Another way of viewing this is          Alternatively          Again          Rather          One alternative is          Another possibility is          On the one hand          On the other hand          In comparison          On the contrary          In fact          Though          Although</p>
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<p>Putting the Same Idea in a Different Way</p> <p>In other words Rather Or Better</p> <p>In that case</p> <p>To put it (more) simply With this in mind</p> <p>To look at this another way</p>	<p>Adding more to a Point Already Made</p> <p>Moreover Furthermore Again Further</p> <p>What is more In addition Besides Above all As well (as) Either Neither Not only Similarly</p> <p>In the same way Indeed In fact Really In reality</p> <p>It is found that With respect to Regarding</p>	<p>Returning to Emphasize Your Earlier Viewpoint</p> <p>However Despite In spite of</p> <p>While ___ may be true. . .</p> <p>Although Though After all</p> <p>At the same time On the other hand</p> <p>All the same</p> <p>Even if ___ is true</p> <p>Although ___ may have a good point</p>
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Spring Semester 2021

CP English 9

### Unit 3: Dreams and Aspirations

WEEK	CONTENT	KEY ASSIGNMENTS
1 January	NWEA MAP Testing	N/A
2 January	"Writing Reviews with the New York Times" Unit*	Activities 1 - 4
3 January	"Writing Reviews with the New York Times" Unit*	Activities 5-9
4 January	SS#1: The Necklace	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Skill:</b> Theme <b>Blast:</b> The Long Haul (search in Blasts)
5 February	SS#1: The Necklace	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & Write (One Argumentative Paragraph) <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Commas—With Interjections, Parenthetical Expressions, and Conjunctive Adverbs Grade 9
6 February	SS#2: Sympathy	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Skill:</b> Connotation and Denotation <b>Blast:</b> The Case for Poetry (search in Blasts)
7 February	SS#2: Sympathy	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & Write (Two Informative Paragraphs) <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Modifiers—Absolute Phrases Grade 9
8 March	SS#3: The Joy Luck Club	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Skill:</b> Character <b>Blast:</b> Year of the Pig (search in Blasts)
9 March	SS#3: The Joy Luck Club	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & Write (Narrative Essay) <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Sentence Structure—Run-On Sentences Grade 9



10 March	Unit 3 Performance Task: Explanatory Essay	<b>Individual teachers assign through StudySync Assessments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read sources</li> <li>• Answer questions 1-3</li> </ul>
11 March	Unit 3 Performance Task: Explanatory Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review sources</li> <li>• Take notes</li> <li>• Plan &amp; draft essay</li> <li>• Revise &amp; edit essay</li> </ul>
12 April	SS#4: The Case of Susan B. Anthony	<b>First Read:</b> Think Questions 1-5 <b>Skill:</b> Author's Purpose and Author's Point of View <b>Spotlight Skill:</b> Informational Text Structure Grade 9
13 April	SS#4: The Case of Susan B. Anthony	<b>Close Read:</b> Vocabulary & Write (One Argumentative Paragraph) <b>Grammar Skill:</b> Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers Grade 9 <b>Blast:</b> Roadblocks (search in Blasts)
14 April	Novel: <i>Of Mice and Men</i> **	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Novel study guide*</li> <li>• Selected comprehension, vocabulary, and short writing activities</li> <li>• Culminating essay or project</li> </ul>
15 May	Novel: <i>Of Mice and Men</i>	
16 May	Novel: <i>Of Mice and Men</i>	
17 May	Novel: <i>Of Mice and Men</i>	
18 May	Make-up work and semester wrap-up	

\* = Printable Material

\*\* = Or other novel selected by teacher/family

**BOLD** = Must be assigned by teacher in StudySync online (all **BOLD** assignments included in the grade level Community Classes)

## A Case Study: Reviews



Day	Activity	Learning Goal
Monday	Activity 1	Learn about the genre of reviews and make connections through writing
Tuesday	Activity 2	Learn about critics and write a summary of article excerpt
Wednesday	Activity 3	Practice a short "glowing" review and post online in the "Comments" section
Thursday	Activity 4	Read and analyze one published review
Friday	Activity 4	Read and analyze a second published review
Monday	Activity 5	Select a topic and plan your review with the resources provided
Tuesday	Activity 6	Write the first draft of your review
Wednesday	Activity 7	Get feedback on your draft from a trusted reader
Thursday	Activity 8	Revise (tighten, brighten, sharpen!) your review draft
Friday	Activity 9	Complete any final edits (corrections) and submit the review document together with all the activities

You will need:

- Internet access
- Microsoft Word or Google Docs
- A helpful adult reader for feedback

Directions:

- ✘ Create a single document that includes Activities 1, 2, & 3. Clearly label each activity. Submit a single document containing these activities and a single document for the review itself (Activities 6, 8, & 9)
- ✘ Complete forms in this packet for Activities 4, 5 & 7

## ACTIVITY #1

### ➡ FREE RESPONSE WRITING (250 – 300 words)

Consider the role of reviews in your life, in the lives of others, and in today's culture in general. This can be reviews of any kind (movies, restaurants, video games, electronics, etc.). Use the questions in the box below to guide your free response (free response means focus on your ideas, not the format of your writing--it doesn't have to be a super organized paragraph or an essay).

Do you ever read reviews of movies, music, books, games, restaurants or anything else? How much do they determine whether you will or won't choose to experience something?

Have you ever reviewed something online? What was that like?

Where are you most likely to read reviews? Do you tend to turn to professional critics, like those you find writing for *The Times* and other newspapers, or do you tend to read user reviews on sites like Amazon, Yelp, Goodreads or Rotten Tomatoes?

Is there any difference between professional reviews and the kinds of user reviews you find on those sites? Why do newspapers pay critics to write about culture? What role do you imagine New York Times critics in particular play in shaping public opinion about the things they review?

## ACTIVITY #2

### ➡ READ

In "A Times Arts Critic Reviews His Own Role," the movie critic A.O. Scott explains what he does:

By the end of this year, if recent history is any guide, around 900 movies will have opened in theaters in the United States. Hundreds more will have made their debuts on streaming platforms, along with more than a million hours of serial programming on traditional networks, cable channels and web-based broadcasters like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon. Defying periodic reports of its demise, live theater is flourishing: on Broadway and off, in Brooklyn and Chicago,

in London and Louisville. Nearly every week brings new dance recitals, chamber music concerts, pop albums, museum and gallery exhibitions — am I missing anything?

Everyone is always missing something, but the critics who write for *The New York Times* — in staff positions and as regular freelancers — collectively strive to miss as little as possible, and to provide some help to readers faced with the overwhelming abundance of contemporary culture. How to make sense of it all? How to choose?

Those are difficult questions, and they aren't the same question. Part of the critic's job is to offer consumer advice. You want to know if a given performance or exhibit is worth your time. But criticism doesn't stop with warnings and recommendations. (The Times doesn't use stars, thumbs or letter grades, but especially worthy productions are designated Critic's Picks.) Whether or not we like the thing we're reviewing, we are interested in what it means, how it works (or doesn't), why it matters (or doesn't), and how it reflects and is part of the larger world. We assume that readers are looking not only for advice, but also for ideas, arguments, provocations and the occasional joke. We hope that, even if you skip the movie, give up on the show or can't get tickets to the opera, you'll at least find something worth reading.

➔ WRITE A SUMMARY (100 - 150 words)

*What is the role of professional critics in today's culture as explained by movie critic A.O. Scott? Write a summary of a critic's job and the ways that their writing is intended to help readers.*

### ACTIVITY #3

➔ TRY YOUR HAND AT A REVIEW (1500-character limit (approx. 250 words maximum))

Go to: *New York Times* article ["What Work of Art or Culture Would You Recommend That Everyone Experience?"](#)

- Read the short article that includes excerpts from four "critical raves" (glowing reviews)
- Click the blue "Read Comments" box at the bottom and read the responses of at least 5 other teenage readers as inspiration/models
- Prepare a response to the questions posed at the bottom of the article (relisted here):

What artistic or cultural experience would you rave about? Keep in mind that you can recommend a book, a movie, music, a TV show, a live performance, fashion, architecture, dance, a work of visual art, a video game, a restaurant, or even technology. Think about something that has deeply impressed, moved, delighted or taught you — something you think others would benefit from experiencing too.

Then, tell why. What could you say to convince others that the experience is worth having? What details would you focus on? How does this work compare with others like it?

Note: There is a 1500-character limit (approx. 250 words maximum)

- With the “Read Comments” box open, submit your response to the *New York Times* Learning Network. Before hitting “Submit,” be sure to copy and paste into your assignment document (Word or Google Doc) so that your teacher can read it and give you credit.

#### ACTIVITY #4

##### ➡ READ AND ANALYZE PROFESSIONAL REVIEWS

In order to better understand the form and language of reviews, you will select two model reviews to read from *The Times*. For a list of reviews to choose from, go to: [“Thinking Critically: Reading and Writing Culture Reviews.”](#) Scroll about one-third of the way down the article until you see this picture:



Then drop down three more paragraphs. Now you will see a list of reviews to choose from in the categories of: *Book Reviews, Restaurant Reviews, Music Reviews, Movie Reviews, TV Reviews, Video Game Reviews, Theater Reviews, & Art, Architecture, Fashion and Dance Reviews.* Find reviews based on your interest or curiosity. Write the titles and authors of your choices below.

Review #1:

Review #2:

Read each review with a critical eye and complete the questions on the pages that follow.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Reading Reviews with a Critical Eye

1. What is being reviewed?
2. What factual or explanatory information does the reviewer provide to inform the reader about the subject? How does he or she avoid “spoilers,” if that is relevant to the review?
3. What is the reviewer’s opinion of the subject? How do you know?
4. What supporting evidence or details does the reviewer provide to support her or his opinion?
5. What do you notice about how the reviewer structured the review and organized her or his ideas?
6. Do you think the review is informative? Is it entertaining to read? Does it make you want (or not want) to experience the subject? Explain.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Reading Reviews with a Critical Eye

1. What is being reviewed?
2. What factual or explanatory information does the reviewer provide to inform the reader about the subject? How does he or she avoid “spoilers,” if that is relevant to the review?
3. What is the reviewer’s opinion of the subject? How do you know?
4. What supporting evidence or details does the reviewer provide to support her or his opinion?
5. What do you notice about how the reviewer structured the review and organized her or his ideas?
6. Do you think the review is informative? Is it entertaining to read? Does it make you want (or not want) to experience the subject? Explain.



## ACTIVITY #5

### ➡ PLAN YOUR OWN REVIEW: Requirements, Tips and Planning Template

Review something that fits into one of the categories of creative expression:

- books (fiction, nonfiction and children's books)
- video games
- music (albums and events, popular and classical)
- movies
- theater
- TV shows
- fashion
- dance
- art
- restaurants
- hotels
- technology



## HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW

///TIPS///

- A review is a description or an evaluation of a movie or TV show you have watched, a book you have read, a computer game you've played, a restaurant you've eaten at, etc.
- Reviews are helpful because they inform the reader about new products or entertainment they may be interested in.
- Often a review will influence people by telling them a little bit about the subject WITHOUT telling them everything. (You must NEVER give away the ending of a book, movie, or play!)
- While it is important to tell the storyline (if there is one), do so briefly!
- Choose a few main details to share – NOT every detail.
- Use DESCRIPTIVE words to describe the movie, book, restaurant, video game, etc. (interesting, dull, adventurous, exhilarating, confusing, thrilling, creative, decadent, etc).
- Your opinion – Why did you like/dislike it?
- What was your favorite part? And why?
- If you could change something what would it be and why?
- Did you like the character/s? (fill in the blank with appropriate word)
- Your recommendation: Would you recommend seeing, reading, playing, buying, eating (etc.) this? Who would you recommend it for?
- Would it be of particular interest to a specific group of people? Explain.
- What type of language does it use? Technical, complex, colloquial (everyday), etc.? Does it require special background knowledge? Is it dependent on certain technology or skills? Discussing these special features will help the viewers or readers decide whether they will be able to understand and enjoy your selection.
- Most importantly, remember your review must be informative and entertaining!



## REVIEW PLANNING TEMPLATE

*Fill in all of the sections that are applicable*

Title/Name:	
Author/Creator:	
Illustrator:	
Lead Characters, Actors?	
What is the storyline, plot, theme, object, etc.?	
Did you like this overall?	Yes /No
Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your opinion – Why did you like/dislike it?</li><li>• What was your favorite aspect? And why?</li><li>• If you could change something what would it be and why?</li><li>• What similar _____ could you compare this to? Say more.</li><li>• What is your recommendation (and for whom)?</li><li>•</li></ul>	
List at least 5 adjectives you would use to describe your subject:	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What type of language/style/graphics, etc. does it use?</li><li>• Does the above make it easy or difficult for the consumer to follow/use/enjoy?</li></ul>	
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## ACTIVITY #6

### ➡ DRAFT YOUR REVIEW

Create a document (Word or Google Doc) and write your first draft of your review. Give it a title (even if you plan to change it later)

1. Be concise. 450 words or less, not including the title. Reviews don't have to be long to be compelling.
2. Assert an opinion and back it up. A review is not simply a plot summary or description. State an opinion and support it with details that make your case.
3. Know your audience. Write as though you are submitting a review to *The New York Times* and your potential audience therefore includes a broad cross-section of people. But be sure to take into account who the target audience for the creative work is as well. For example, if you are reviewing a video game intended for 10-year-old girls, aim to write a review that will be useful for 10-year-old girls (and their parents).
4. Use appropriate and engaging language, and give context. For more on what criticism should do and how, you may read (optional) the supplemental piece at the end of this packet called "Advice on How to Write a Review from Three New York Times Critics."
5. Review the rubric that will be used to score your review (also end of packet).

## OPTIONAL READING MATERIAL

### Advice on How to Write a Review by Three New York Times Critics

#### Neil Genzlinger, Television Critic

A lot of people think a review is simply watching a movie, playing a video game, reading a book or whatever and then saying whether you liked it. And that is all that a lot of reviewers do.

But to me, a review like that is useful only to readers who have the exact same tastes and interests as the person writing it. That's why I always try to keep two things in mind when I'm reviewing: One, who am I writing this for? And two, who is the movie, video game, etc. that I'm reviewing made for?

Let's start with the first point, because it really shapes the way you try to experience the thing you're reviewing and the way you write about it. Say you're reviewing a movie. Are you writing your review for a newspaper like The Times, which circulates to a vast, general audience — that is, it's read by a broad cross-section of people? Or are you writing your review for a film journal or magazine, which is read primarily by people who see lots and lots of movies and know a lot about how films are made, the history of movies and so on?

If you're writing for a general audience, keep in mind that most people see maybe six movies a year in a theater and that they aren't experts on the terminology of filmmaking. They won't know what movie terms like “anamorphic” and “locked-down shot” mean. And there's a low probability that they will have seen all of the movies that you (since you're a film reviewer) have seen, so if you compare the film you're reviewing with six others you're familiar with, they'll be lost. But if you're writing for a film magazine, the opposite of all those things is true. Readers of those magazines know all the filmmaking jargon, and they might see 100 movies a year. The same principles hold true for a review of something like a video game. Are you writing the review for a general audience, or for hard-core gamers?

Just as important, a good review takes into account who the target audience for the product is. If you're a 15-year-old guy and a hard-core gamer but you're reviewing a video game made for 9-year-old girls, well, of course you're not going to like the game. In fact, you'll probably be tempted to make fun of it. But that's not your job. Your job is to figure out whether a 9-year-old girl would like the game, and if so to say why, and if not to say why not.

This is where reviewing gets difficult, because you may have to do some homework in order to approach the game as a 9-year-old girl would. Is the game play easy enough for a kid that age, but hard enough that it will be challenging for her? Is the story likely to be

interesting to a 9-year-old girl? What other games are popular with 9-year-old girls, and is the one you're reviewing different from and better than those games, or is it just ripping them off?

I take the same approach when I review a movie, a TV show, a play or a book. The review isn't really about whether I liked the thing at all. It's about whether the people it's intended for would like it.

### **Jon Pareles, Popular Music Critic**

Reviews are where an experience meets ideas. You go to a concert, a movie, an art exhibition, a restaurant, and it makes you think. Maybe the experience is a catalyst for a brand-new idea; maybe it crystallizes something you've been thinking about for a while. It becomes something worth writing about.

The job of the reviewer is to get both the experience and the ideas into words — and into proportion. In some ways, a review is the same as reporting: The facts have to be correct and presented in a coherent way. And in some ways, a review is very different from reporting: Your subjective experience and your reactions — intellectual, emotional, visceral — are a big part of it.

The best criticism merges the details of the individual experience — the close-up — with a much broader picture of what the experience means. It's not just about that concert or art exhibit. It's about how to listen or how to look. It's about changing the perception your readers will bring to the next experience because your ideas awakened theirs.

Yes, that's a tall order. You need to select your details. You need to make sure your ideas are clearly expressed. You need the writing itself to be engaging, to be worth that reader's attention. It can be serious, a little poetic, even funny — whatever communicates the ideas.

You'll probably do best if you write about something that leaves you with a strong opinion, positive or negative. (It's always illuminating, and part of a critic's education, to experience something you hate but a lot of people love. Figure out how it works and what it does for its fans, and feel free to explain why you still hate it.)

A review is not about the reviewer. As a reader, I don't care about when you got there or your mood or the weather that day. It's about what you experienced when you met the work head-on with full attention: what your knowledge tells you about the work, what



your immediate experience added to that and where the work can lead next. You might be writing about something your readers don't know about but you've discovered; help them share that sense of discovery. Or you might be bringing a new perspective to something familiar. Make it convincing. It's about feeling, learning, thinking, judging. And making all that vivid to your reader.

### **Maria Russo, Children's Book Editor**

When I review a book, I think of it as something that has been entrusted to me. I am taking on a responsibility. But the responsibility goes in two directions. First, you have to be sure to do right by the author — that is, to show that you understand the book on the terms the author intended it. You have to get the facts right, as in all journalism. I always keep in mind how hard an author works to finish a book, and I try to respect that work. But the second — and probably the paramount — responsibility is to my own readers, the people reading my review to figure out whether they should spend their money and valuable time on a book. I would never want to recommend something that I think would be a waste of someone's time, or even just an “eh” way to spend time, when there are tons of great books out there for every taste.

When I read a book that I'm going to be reviewing, I pay close attention to my own instincts. How does it make me feel? Am I finding myself reluctant to put it down? Or is it giving me nagging, bad feelings in my stomach? When I sit down to write the review, what I'm ultimately trying to do is document my reaction. That's I guess what makes a review feel “honest.”

The first job when writing a review is to make it clear, probably in the first few paragraphs, that you know what the book is about and what the author is trying to do. That means making clear whether this book is, say, fantasy or taking place in the real world, who the characters are, what the basic plot is.

Still, you don't want to give away the entire plot. This is a big rule of reviewing. It's true for movies and TV, but especially for books. People get really angry about spoilers. What you have to do is describe the basic plot structure, the challenge or predicament the characters are in. Then you want to talk about how they are going to solve their problem without being too specific, because that would be a spoiler. You can say what they learn and how they changed; you just can't say exactly what happens to them.

The second task — and privilege — you have, is to convey your opinion. It used to be that you never ever, or very rarely, used “I” in a review. I didn't like this, or this isn't my favorite



part of the book. But that has changed, and so the challenge for a reviewer is not to use too many I's, because that can weaken the review. Make sure you have some statements in there that, even if they're your opinion, you can state them in a direct way, without saying "I think." You can say, for instance, "This book succeeds in painting a believable picture of middle school life in contemporary America" without saying "I think." You have, after all, been to middle school in America! So you've earned the right to assert that.

The most important difference between a book report and a book review is that when you write a book report for school, it's a book that is already out there. It has an audience and reputation built already — that's why teachers assigned it. But when you're writing a book review, it is always going to be something new — even something that hasn't been published yet. But that also makes it even more of a responsibility. You can't do any damage to a book when you're writing a school report, but a new book is still building an audience. People are still figuring out: Is this a good book? Is this an important book? You have to be fair to this book, but it's also a privilege to influence the reputation of a book and its life in the world.

The final thing I would say is that in a book review, as far as I can tell, teachers often give a lot of rules about stuff like transition sentences and topic sentences. The writing can be really cut and dried that way. When you're writing a review, you should think of it as a literary form. Literary criticism is an old and storied literary genre in itself. You should feel that you can be creative. You can make your sentences start with unexpected words. You can make short paragraphs. You can create lists in there if you want. You can really play around with the form, in a way that your teachers sometimes don't let you, but you should feel free to do because writing a book review is purely about the pleasure and excitement of reading. You don't have to prove anything to your teacher, you just have to express your own passions, opinions and perceptions.



## Feedback for Revising (to be completed by a trusted adult reader)

Name of Reader:

Relation to Student:

<b>Organization</b>			
	<b>Hook/Lead:</b> <i>Is the opening catchy? Interesting? Relevant?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Transitions:</b> <i>Does the writer move smoothly from one idea to the next? From one sentence to the next?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Paragraphing:</b> <i>Is the review clearly divided into topics? Do the writer's paragraphing choices make sense?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Conclusion:</b> <i>Is the ending clear and memorable? Does the review feel finished?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		

<b>Ideas</b>			
	<b>Focused Main Claim(s):</b> <i>Does the writer make one or more clear main claims about the subject in review and follow them through? Or does the writer bounce from one idea to the next without much development?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Supporting Details:</b> <i>Are there enough details in the review that you can really understand and appreciate the subject?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Sensory Details:</b> <i>Does the writer include language to engage the 5 senses? Explanations that help you (the reader) see, hear, smell, feel, and taste (as applicable) the subject?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement



	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Research:</b> <i>Is there enough solid information about the subject or could the writer be more informed?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		

Voice			
	<b>Purpose:</b> <i>Is the writer's purpose clear throughout the review? Are there places where it needs to be better established?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Audience:</b> <i>Does the reader have a clear sense of who this review is aimed at throughout the piece? Is it appropriate?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		

Sentence Fluency			
	<b>Sentence Variety:</b> <i>Are the writer's sentences varied in terms of the way they begin? Does the writer use enough different kinds of sentences to keep the review interesting?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Flow:</b> <i>Does the writing move at a smooth pace? Or an odd pace? If it feels odd, is it choppy and robotic-sounding (repetitive sentence structure and simple sentences) or is it wordy (long grandiose sentences that clutter the meaning)?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		

Word Choice			
	<b>Precise, Vivid Words:</b> <i>Could the writer switch out generic, non-specific words and expressions for words that are more exciting and specific?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Figurative Language:</b> <i>Does the writer use non-literal language to make comparisons, add emphasis, and/or make the writing more interesting (metaphors and similes are the two most common)?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		

## EDITING

Conventions			
	<b>Capitalization:</b> <i>Has the writer consistently capitalized the first words of every sentence? Specific names? Titles? Specific places?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Usage:</b> <i>Is there consistent subject verb agreement? Does the writer use plurals correctly? Has the writer avoided slang and abbreviations?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Punctuation:</b> <i>Does each sentence end with the correct punctuation mark? Are commas used to indicate pauses? Are quotation marks used to quote the words of others or around short titles? Are longer titles italicized?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		
	<b>Spelling:</b> <i>Has the spelling been carefully checked? What about homophones such as there/their/they're, its/it's, etc.?</i>		
check one	Strong/Solid	Fair	Needs Improvement
	EXPLAIN RATING:		

# Student Review Contest Rubric 2020

	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
<b>Opinion:</b> Review expresses an opinion and supports it with evidence. It communicates your subjective experience and your reactions (intellectual, emotional and visceral) in a clear and engaging way.				
<b>Attention to Detail:</b> Review presents relevant and accurate details from the creative work coherently.				
<b>Audience:</b> Review is written for a broad cross-section of people and takes into account for whom the creative work is intended.				
<b>Language:</b> Review has a strong voice and engages the reader. It uses language, style and tone appropriate to its purpose and features correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.				
<b>Guidelines:</b> Review follows all contest guidelines, including a maximum word count of 450 words and addresses a category of creative work reviewed by Times critics.				