

## Elementary School (4-5) Literary Writing Prompts

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# Elementary School (4-5) Literary Writing Prompts

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*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grade 3*

**"A Hard Choice"**

After carefully reading "A Hard Choice," write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain your understanding of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the story to support your response.

**A Hard Choice**

Shaquille and Ty were sitting on the porch when the computer catalog arrived in the mail. They turned the pages until they found the ad for the Baseball Dreams CD.

"Baseball Dreams lets you choose and manage your own Dream Team," read Shaquille.

"Match your team against your opponent's for hours of fun and excitement." Then Shaquille added, "It's \$49.99 plus tax."

Just then Mr. Petra walked by with his dog.

"We could start a pet-sitting business," said Ty.

"Too much responsibility," answered Shaquille.

Ty gazed up at trees with their orange, red, and yellow leaves. "We could rake leaves for the neighbors," he said.

"Too much work," answered Shaquille.

Dad had been listening from the den. He stepped outside with a proposition. "The basement is filled with stuff we don't need. We've got clothes, furniture, rugs, and your old toys," Dad began. "If you'll take on the job of holding a garage sale on Saturday to get rid of it all, you can keep all the money you make."

Shaquille and Ty agreed instantly. With dollar signs in their eyes, they got to work. That afternoon Dad helped them decide what should be sold and what should be kept. The next afternoon, the boys set the sale items on benches in the garage. They also figured out prices and stuck a label on each item. The day after that, Shaquille and Ty rode off on their bicycles to tape posters on trees and telephone poles.

That night, the boys could hardly sleep. "If we sell everything tomorrow, we'll make a lot more money than we need for Baseball Dreams," said Ty.

"And we hardly did any work!" laughed Shaquille.

The next morning, Dad woke the boys. "Get dressed and come down for breakfast," he said. "Your customers will be arriving in an hour."

As the boys sat down at the kitchen table, Dad turned on the radio. An announcer was reporting the morning news. "A late night fire has destroyed the Gatewood Apartments on North Avenue. All 132 residents escaped with their lives but lost everything else in the fire. Donations of clothing, furnishings, and other useful items are needed to help residents recover from this tragedy. Donations will be collected today and tomorrow at Hoover High School."

Dad looked at Shaquille and Ty for a moment, and they looked at him. "Boys," Dad began, "I'm going to ask you to do something hard."

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4*

### **Character Study**

Think about a character from a story you have read. What traits make that character likeable or unlikeable to you?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe the character and discuss the traits that make the character likeable or unlikeable. Be sure to include specific examples of this character's behavior from the story so readers can picture his/her traits.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grade 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grade 3*

### **“Grandpa’s Garden”**

Read the selection “Grandpa’s Garden.” What does Jimmy learn about gardening from Grandpa? Use details from the story to support your answer.

#### **Grandpa's Garden**

From the first time I remember seeing Grandpa, I could picture him in his garden. He loved that place. "Jimmy", he would say, "even though it's difficult, I would rather work all day in the garden than do much of anything else. It doesn't matter if it is summer, winter, or spring. This place is my pride and joy." I cannot tell you how many times I heard him say that. He had quite a feeling for nature.

Well, I had the chance to go visit Grandpa this past weekend, and not much has changed. Grandma and Grandpa still live off of the land. They harvest everything from cucumbers to peaches. It is truly amazing that, even at their age, they do not have to rely on anyone else.

Every time I visit, the first thing we do is walk out to the garden as soon as the sun comes up. Each of us grabs a bucket and a pair of leather gloves. We walk down to the far side of the garden by the peach tree. We pick peaches that are a little pink, but not too soft. Grandpa likes to let them ripen inside the house in brown paper bags. It gives them a chance to get sweet and stops insects from getting to them first.

Our next stop is the tomatoes. We pick every color except green. These, too, can be ripened inside a brown bag. It is important to pick tomatoes for several reasons. First, the raccoons love to eat ripe tomatoes right off the vine. And, since they grow on a vine, they're always on the ground near the home of many insects. Finally, tomatoes can be used at different stages of ripeness. If they are placed inside bags in the house, you can quickly decide what you want to do with them. The ripe ones can be made into a sauce, while the less ripe ones can be made into a relish.

We slowly make our way through the prickly okra (the reason for the gloves), cucumbers, potatoes, peppers, green beans, and corn. All of these can be canned in jars. Then, we select the fruit that is "in season." That includes the watermelon, honeydew melon, and strawberries. Only the strawberries or peaches are good fruits for canning, though.

Grandma is a real pro at canning vegetables. She boils the vegetables, and then she "cans" the warm veggies directly into special jars called Mason jars. Mason jars help everything stay fresh. She includes a teaspoon of salt in each jar (as a preservative) and tightly closes the lid. She then places the filled jars

in a pressure cooker, and boils them as the extra air is sucked out of the jars. The canned vegetables can be kept in a cool location for up to five years.

Another vegetable that I find really interesting is the gourd. They are an odd-shaped vegetable that you cannot eat. At Grandpa's they grow on a metal chain-linked fence. They hang down from the top, and can grow to a length that is almost unbelievable. Grandpa has several gourds that are four feet long. Since you cannot eat these, they are used for other things. Grandpa cuts them off the vine, dries them out, and sands them smooth on the outside. Then, he paints each one and cuts out a small two-inch hole. He attaches a rope to the top and a small stick beneath the hole. He hangs it from a tree as a birdhouse. Mosquito-eating Martin birds quickly move into their new home.

Grandpa's garden is one place I will never forget. It is a place where I wish more people could visit. It is peaceful and full of life. I am glad that Grandpa and I have spent all of this time together. I sure have learned a lot from both Grandma and Grandpa.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***The Big Wave***

In the story *The Big Wave* by Pearl S. Buck, Jiya experiences a terrible tragedy. Demonstrate your understanding of the story by writing an essay that answers the following question:  
What steps must Jiya take to overcome his tragic situation?

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt**

What do you think it would be like to live forever and never grow old? Decide whether you think it would be good to live forever, or not. Write a speech that you could read (or speak aloud) to your classmates. In your speech, tell what you think is good, or not good, about living forever. Give reasons to support your ideas.

## Pilot Prompts

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grade 4*

### **26 Fairmount Avenue by Tomie DePaola (pilot)**

From Tomie's point of view, how was 26 Fairmount Avenue different from the apartment on Columbus Avenue? Pretend that you are Tomie. Write a letter to "Nana" telling how the new house is different from the apartment. Use details from the book in your letter.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 4, 5*

### **Abel's Island by William Steig (pilot)**

During his stay on the island, Abel learned a lot about how to survive, as well as how to prevent boredom while completely alone. Pretend that you are Abel. Write a short how-to article with advice for campers, hikers, or any other mouse who must survive in the wilderness. You might want to include information about finding food, making a shelter, protection from dangerous creatures, creative ways to fill time, and how to get home.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 4, 5*

### **Adventures in Sign of the Beaver (pilot)**

After Matt's family made it back to the cabin in Maine, Matt had many stories of adventure, friendship, and learning to share with them. Imagine Matt's sister Sarah asking him about his adventures, especially those with his "Indian brother" Attean. How would Matt tell of his adventures with Attean, survival and scary times alone in the woods?

Write a well developed essay describing Matt's conversation with his sister about his adventures. Include details of these adventures to support your description.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 4, 5*

### **Akiak's Story of Adventure (pilot)**

In *Akiak: A Tale from the Iditarod*, Akiak is a ten-year-old dog who is sent home from the race because of an injured paw. Since Akiak knows that this is her last chance to win the race, she escapes her handler and sets off to find her owner and team. While searching for them on the trail, Akiak has many adventures.

Write a story as Akiak about one of the adventures you have as you race to find your team and owner. Use facts and details from the book to make your story real.



*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

***A Long Way from Chicago* by Richard Peck (pilot)**

Imagine that you are Joey or Mary Alice during a visit to Grandma's. Everything at her house is just the way it is in the book. Write a letter to a friend back home that tells what life is like at Grandma's. Be sure to tell what you like and what you don't like about being at Grandma's.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**An Afternoon with Literary Characters (pilot)**

Imagine you have invited two of your favorite literary characters to spend the afternoon with you. As you spend time together, you start to notice things that are similar and different about your two friends.

Write a story about your afternoon and highlight the similarities and differences you notice in your characters as the afternoon progresses. Be sure to include description and dialogue to make the story more interesting to your readers.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grade 5*

**“April Rain Song” (pilot)**

In the poem, "April Rain Song," Langston Hughes shares his feelings about the "April showers that bring May flowers." How does Hughes create images of rain in a unique way?

In a well-written essay, describe the author's feelings towards rain. How does this compare to your feelings about the rain? Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

**April Rain Song**

Let the rain kiss you,  
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops.  
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.  
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.  
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at night—  
And I love the rain.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

***A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park (pilot)**

In this story, Tree-ear faced many obstacles on his way to finding a job and making a life for himself. What obstacles or social problems did he face, and how did he overcome them? Write a short essay

telling what obstacles Tree-ear had to overcome and how he succeeded. Include details from the story in your essay.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grade 5*

**Attean's and Matt's Cultures (pilot)**

After reading *The Sign of the Beaver*, compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Attean's and Matt's cultures. Include details from the book to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

**Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo (pilot)**

*Because of Winn-Dixie*, by Kate DiCamillo, tells the story of a young girl, Opal, who befriends a stray dog she finds at the local Winn-Dixie grocery store. Opal convinces her father to keep the dog, which she lovingly names Winn-Dixie. Opal makes new and interesting friends that she may never have met if it were not for her new canine friend.

In a multi-paragraph essay, choose one character Opal meets and discuss the qualities that make this person a good friend for Opal and Winn-Dixie. Be sure to include examples from the story to bring your ideas to life.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Behavior in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (pilot)**

*The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, by Barbara Robinson, tells the story of the poorly behaved children of the Herdman family, who discover the true meaning of Christmas through participation in a church play. Because the Herdman children were usually trouble makers, they took the audience by surprise with their positive performances in the Christmas pageant. Have you ever been surprised by something unexpected that someone did or was able to do?

In a detailed essay, write about a time when someone surprised you with something they did or were able to do that you would normally not expect from them. Use facts and examples for support.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4*

***Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson (pilot)**

A character sketch describes a person and what he or she did in life. Write a character sketch for Leslie Burke. Include important facts about her, and tell about her special qualities.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

***Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis (pilot)**

Imagine that you are Bud sitting at the table in Grand Calloway Station and looking at his mother's picture. Write a letter from Bud to his mother. In the letter, tell what has happened since she died and explain how the clues she left behind helped him find the door to a happier future.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 5 – Grade 5*

**Building Blocks Lead to Overall Structure (pilot)**

Reflect on a story, drama, or poem you have recently explored in class. Think about its overall structure. In a well-developed essay, discuss how the author builds upon each chapter, scene, or stanza to create a piece that fits together in an overall structure. Do you think the author's building blocks lead to a clear and reasonable ending? Be sure to cite specific examples from the piece to demonstrate your ideas.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 6 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Bunnica* by Deborah and James Howe (pilot)**

Imagine that you are Bunnica. Think about the events of the story through Bunnica's eyes. Then write a summary of what happens from Bunnica's point of view. Tell about your life with the Monroes, beginning with the day Toby found you in the movie theater.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

**Campaigning for Class President (pilot)**

In *Off and Running*, by Gary Soto, the characters are running for class president at their school. What would you do if you were campaigning at your school? What friends would be your campaign advisors? What would you want to do as class president?

In a detailed essay, describe your campaign to run for class president at your school, including your ideas to make improvements for your peers. Compare and contrast your campaign with those of the characters in *Off and Running*.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

**Cause and Effect in "User Friendly" (pilot)**

The story "User Friendly," by T. Ernesto Bethancourt, has a cause-and-effect structure. An event in the story causes another event to happen, called an effect. For example, Louis the computer was very fond

of Kevin. When Kevin came home and told Louis that Ginny called him a nerd, Louis was very furious, and he said, "I'll take care of Ginny." The effect was that Louis thought that by accessing mainframe computers, he could obtain security systems and cause a mishap in Ginny's family.

Write an essay about an event that happened in your life that is similar to a cause and effect situation in "User Friendly." Include examples from the story to support your essay.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4*

**Character Analysis in *The Cay* (pilot)**

Based on the novel, *The Cay*, by Theodore Taylor, write a character analysis of Philip. Be sure to describe how Philip changes throughout the novel. Use details and examples from the story to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grade 5*

**Character Comparison in *Holes* by Louis Sachar (pilot)**

In the book *Holes* by Louis Sachar, Stanley Yelnats gets sent to Camp Green Lake after he is accused of stealing a pair of sneakers. While at Camp Green Lake, Stanley meets a number of different characters. Choose one character and compare and contrast this character with Stanley. How are they alike? How are they different?

In a detailed essay, compare and contrast Stanley with another character in the novel. Use examples from the book to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

***Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White (pilot)**

At the end of the story, Charlotte knew she was going to die, but she felt peaceful. After she waved her last good-bye to Wilbur, she had time to think about her life and her accomplishments. Imagine that you are Charlotte after Wilbur has left the fair. Write a journal entry summarizing what you have accomplished in your life and how you feel about what you have done. Include details from the story as needed.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

**Chin's Problems in *The Earth Dragon Awakes* (pilot)**

In *The Earth Dragon Awakes*, by Laurence Yep, Chin has to deal with several problems when he and his father are buried in their tenement during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

Write a multi-paragraph essay that explains some of the problems Chin faces because of the earthquake and what he does to overcome them. Be sure to use details from the story in your essay.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Comedy in Kindergarten (pilot)**

Junie B. Jones gets confused by a lot of things in kindergarten, like the Pledge of Allegiance, which makes her say and do very funny things. What things confused you when you were in Kindergarten? Were you able to laugh about your confusion?

In a well-developed essay, write about something that confused you in kindergarten and how you handled your confusion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

**Compare and Contrast in *The Giving Tree* (pilot)**

The popular children's book, *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, tells the story of the friendship between a young boy and a tree. After reading *The Giving Tree*, think about how the relationship between the boy and the tree changes as the boy grows up.

In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast the friendship between the boy and the tree throughout the story. Remember to provide examples from the text to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Competing Against a Friend (pilot)**

Sometimes you have to compete against a friend or friends, as Mina does in Carolyn Marsden's *Moon Runner*. This competition can affect your friendships, even if you don't want it to.

Think about a time when you or someone you know had to compete against a friend. It could have been in a sports game, for a part in a play, or even a student government election. In a multi-paragraph essay, write about what happened. Be sure to include how competing against each other made you and your friend feel, what ended up happening as a result, and how your friendship was affected.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 4, 5*

**Conflict in *Captain Underpants* by Dav Pilkey (pilot)**

A conflict is often described as a disagreement, fight, or struggle between an individual and another person or group of people. In the *Captain Underpants* series, George and Harold are best friends who frequently find themselves involved in numerous conflicts with the different bad guys they come in contact with in each book.

Think of one particular conflict in any Captain Underpants book. Then, in a detailed essay, explain what the conflict is about, who is involved, why it started, and how it is finally resolved. Remember to include details and examples from the particular story you choose to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Darnell Rock Reporting: A Work of Realistic Fiction (pilot)***

Stories of realistic fiction feature characters that readers can easily relate to and identify with. *Darnell Rock Reporting*, by Walter Dean Myers, is a work of realistic fiction that tells the story of a 13-year-old boy who reluctantly starts writing for his school newspaper and what he learns from the experience. Darnell finds himself in the middle of a debate over the use of a weed-covered basketball court next to his school. Darnell attempts to persuade the City Council to approve the use of the basketball court for a community garden for the homeless. Unfortunately, despite his best efforts, the Council is persuaded by another student to use the basketball court as a parking lot for teachers at the school. Which of the characters in the book can you relate to? Can you relate to Darnell, who did not succeed in persuading the Council to approve the community garden, or Linda, who did succeed in persuading the Council to create a parking lot? Have you been the good friend who supports the efforts of someone trying to make a difference?

In a detailed essay, select and discuss a character in *Darnell Rock Reporting* with whom you can identify and why. Provide examples from the story to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Decisions in The Sign of the Beaver (pilot)***

When Matt's father leaves him to gather the family and bring them to their wilderness cabin, Matt must stay behind to protect the cabin and crops. He soon faces many challenges, like losing his food and gun and then being stung by bees. Matt is soon rescued by the Native Americans he had feared and befriends a Native American boy named Attean. Eventually, he is asked to move into their winter home with them as the cold season approaches. Matt has a difficult decision to make—wait for his parents who may not return, or go with Attean and possibly never see his family again. If you were Matt, how would you decide? Would you choose a warm, safe winter with Attean, or risk being alone all winter waiting for your family?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how you would decide whether to go with Attean and his people, or wait at the cabin for your family. Use information from the book to support your decision.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 6 – Grade 5*

***Descriptive Language in And Then What Happened, Paul Revere? (pilot)***

Jean Fritz, the author of *And Then What Happened, Paul Revere?*, uses specific words and language to describe Paul Revere in an effort to make you, the reader, develop a certain opinion of him. In your opinion, which word best describes Jean Fritz's thoughts of Paul Revere?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss your reasons for selecting the word that you feel best illustrates Jean Fritz's thoughts of Paul Revere. Use textual evidence to support your opinion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4*

**Diary Entry as Leigh Botts (pilot)**

In *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, Leigh Botts is a boy who wishes to become a writer someday. After writing to his favorite author for advice, he begins keeping a diary. As he grows up, he handles moving to a new town and the absence of his father by writing in his diary. If you were Leigh, what would you write in your diary? Would you use it to record something that happened in school? Would you write about your feelings for someone or about something?

Pretend you are Leigh Botts, and write a diary entry in which you write about your feelings or discuss an event. Include details to make the diary entry real to the reader.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4*

**Ella Enchanted by Gail Carson Levine (pilot)**

During her adventures, Ella learned many things through the letters in her magic book. Write a letter to one of the characters in the story, knowing that it will appear in Ella's book before she goes to the ball. You might choose Ella's father, Prince Char, Lucinda, or Areida, for example. Tell the character what you think he or she should know about Ella and what has been happening.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan (pilot)**

Abuelita once told Esperanza, "Look at the zigzag of the blanket. Mountains and valleys. Right now you are in the bottom of the valley and your problems loom big around you. But soon, you will be at the top of a mountain again." Imagine that you are Esperanza. Write two journal entries about two different times in your life. Write one entry about a "valley" and one about a "mountain." Use details from the story to make your journal entries sound real.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Esther Makes Changes in *I Could Do That!* (pilot)**

In the story *I Could Do That!*, by Linda Arms White, Esther accomplishes some important things for women's rights while living with her family in Wyoming. Leading up to those successes, she had made changes in her own and others' lives by her determination and hard work.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss Esther's lifetime of accomplishments. Be sure to include details that explain her success.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
***Finding the Titanic* by Robert D. Ballard (pilot)**

Robert Ballard had dreamt of discovering the Titanic since he was a little boy, and in 1985 he succeeded. In order to be successful, Ballard needed to explore deeper in the ocean than anyone had ever gone. What special equipment did he use? How did he prepare for this amazing trip?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the challenges that Robert Ballard had to overcome to discover the Titanic. Include facts and details to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Fudge: *Tales of an Annoying Brother* (pilot)**

*Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and its sequel, *Superfudge*, focus on a fourth-grader named Peter Warren Hatcher and his annoying younger brother Farley Drexel, otherwise known as Fudge. Fudge's mischievous adventures make Peter feel like a "nothing." Peter's brother is usually getting into trouble and seems to get away with it, even if Peter complains.

In a well-developed essay, discuss one of Fudge's "actions," Peter's reaction to it, and how you would have reacted to it. Use facts and examples from the book to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**"Great-Aunt Judy" (pilot)**

After carefully reading "Great-Aunt Judy," write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain your understanding of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the story to support your response.

### **Great-Aunt Judy**

Rachel plucked another pair of soccer shorts out of the laundry basket. Her twin brothers, Daniel and David, seemed to go through whole hampers of clothes every day. She put the shorts in their pile and folded a small pair of overalls. She smiled a little as she put them in her sister Sally's pile. Once those overalls had been her favorites. Probably Meg would get them next. Three-year-old Henry wanted to wear the same blue t-shirt every day, but at least that made folding his clothes easy.

Frowning, Rachel contemplated the pile of socks in the bottom of the basket. Sometimes being the oldest of six kids was a real pain. She felt like she always had to be the responsible one, especially with her parents working so much. Now Great-Aunt Judy, whom she barely knew, had moved in. She was just another person to crowd up the house, and probably boring, too. At least she did her own laundry.

Rachel sighed as she dumped the socks out of the basket and began to sort them. Ugh, she hated sorting socks. She hurled a pair of pink socks toward Meg's pile.

"Ah, sock sorting," said a voice at the door. Great-Aunt Judy wheeled herself into the room. "The fun part of laundry." She reached into the pile and fished around for a pair to match. "Not your favorite job, huh?" she said dryly as she looked up at Rachel.



"Uh, no, it's fine, I mean—" Rachel stammered, trailing off as she noticed the expression on Aunt Judy's face. Then she giggled. "No," she said, "I HATE it!"

"Me, too," Aunt Judy observed. "You know, I was the oldest of seven, and sometimes I felt like my life was nothing but chores. I never had time to do what I wanted to do. Of course, it wasn't true, I had plenty of time, but it didn't seem that way then."

Rachel looked at the floor. She didn't often complain to anyone but her friends, but maybe she could talk to Aunt Judy. "Sometimes I feel like that, too," she offered shyly.

"Of course you do," replied Aunt Judy. "Anyone would." She threw the last pair of socks toward the boys' piles.

"Wow!" Rachel said. "You did that fast!"

"Practice," said Aunt Judy. "I think David, Daniel, Meg, and Sally are capable of putting their own things away. You grab yours, and I'll get Henry's." She turned her chair around and wheeled it quickly out of the room.

Rachel followed with her mouth hanging open. Before this, Aunt Judy had kept to herself in her room. No one was supposed to "bother" her. But this Aunt Judy was ... different.

"Finished?" Aunt Judy interrupted Rachel's thoughts.

Rachel nodded.

"Good!" said Aunt Judy. "Then we can have some fun. I've spent too long moping around missing my old house. I'll bet you thought I was pretty boring." She laughed out loud at the look on Rachel's face. "It's okay, I have been boring! Get your sketchpad and pastels. We'll go up to the park and I'll read while you draw."

"But, how did you know that I—?" Rachel spluttered.

"Stained fingers!" Aunt Judy pointed at Rachel's hand. "My son, who is your Uncle Bill, is a wonderful artist, and it must run in the family. Now hurry up!"

As Rachel opened the front door and wheeled her aunt down a small ramp, she smiled. "I have a feeling things will be a lot more interesting with you around, Aunt Judy!"

"Oh, you don't know the half of it," Aunt Judy said. "Wait till I start telling my family stories. Did you know that ..."

### *Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

#### ***Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen (pilot)**

Imagine that Brian is being interviewed on television after his rescue. What questions would the interviewer want to ask him? What would Brian answer? Write your version of the television interview. Include at least three questions and answers. Keep in mind that a good interview question cannot be answered with a simple yes or no.

### *Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

#### **Humorous Fiction: "A Package for Mrs. Jewls" (pilot)**

"A Package for Mrs. Jewls," a story in *Wayside School is Falling Down* by Louis Sachar, is classified as humorous fiction. In your opinion, what makes this story funny? How does the author create humor in the story?

In a detailed essay, explain what aspects of the story are humorous and how the author achieves his goal of creating humor. Use details from the story to support your explanation.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Importance of Education in *Matilda* (pilot)**

*Matilda*, a novel by Roald Dahl, is the story of five-year-old Matilda Wormwood. Matilda lives with her careless parents, who show no interest in her, even though she shows strong signs of being a very intelligent child. They pressure her to watch television instead of doing what she enjoys most, reading. In spite of this, Matilda frequently visits the library so that when she starts school, she is smarter than everyone else in the class.

In a well-developed essay, explain why Matilda's parents think that education is not important. Do you think it is important? Why or why not?

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 6 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Importance of Narrator for a Story of Fantasy (pilot)**

*The World According to Humphrey*, by Betty G. Birney, is told from the point of view of a hamster named Humphrey. Because of this, we know how annoyed Humphrey is at the loud noise in A.J.'s house and how much more he likes it after he unplugs the TV. How would the fantasy aspect of the story change if Humphrey was not the narrator? In a fantasy that you have read, how was the selection of the narrator important? Would the selection of a different character as narrator have been more valuable?

In a detailed essay, explain why you think the author chose the character who acted as narrator for the story. Include details from the story to support your explanation.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 6 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
***Interrupted Journey: Saving Endangered Sea Turtles* by Kathryn Lasky (pilot)**

Imagine that you are inside the mind of the turtle that Max found on the beach in *Interrupted Journey*. Assume that this turtle has the thinking mind of a person instead of the tiny brain of a turtle. Write about the experience of landing on the beach and being rescued. Tell the story from the turtle's point of view.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 6 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
***James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl (pilot)**

After the parade in their honor, James and his friends were famous. Everyone wanted to know the story of their adventures. Pretend that you are a TV news reporter, and you are interviewing James or one of the creatures he traveled with. Think of at least three questions you would ask and how James or the creature would answer. Write your questions and answers as a TV interview. Include details from the story to make the interview seem real.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express* by Margaret Wetterer (pilot)**

The "Afterword" in this book says the newspapers across the country told the story of what Kate Shelley did. Suppose you were a reporter at the time. Write a newspaper article telling what happened that night and what Kate Shelley did. Write it like a real news story with a headline. Be sure to include details telling who, what, when, and where.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**"Kevin's Cast" (pilot)**

After carefully reading "Kevin's Cast," write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain your understanding of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the story to support your response.

**Kevin's Cast**

Kevin opened his eyes and tried to roll over. Why was it so hard to move? Why was his arm so heavy? Then he remembered: his right arm was in a cast. It wasn't a dream; it had really happened. On Thursday after school, he had been speeding along on his bike. Without warning, he hit a bump or a rock or a crack in the sidewalk, and he fell -- hard. The next several hours were a blur in his memory: the drive to the emergency room, waiting, getting x-rays, more waiting, getting the cast put on. Finally there was the drive home late at night, his arm strangely heavy in the cast.

Now it was Monday morning. Kevin's arm ached a little, but the pain wasn't really bad. What was bad was the thought of going to school with the cast. It would be hard to do his work, of course. Could he learn to write with his left hand? Maybe he could use a computer. Maybe Ms. Collins would assign another student to write for him. That might be kind of fun, like having a secretary. Kevin was sure that somehow he would get his schoolwork done. That didn't worry him.

No, it was the thought of walking into his classroom with a cast that worried Kevin. What would kids say? Would they laugh and make fun of him? Would they leave him out of games? What in the world would he do at recess -- sit on a bench with the teachers? Kevin groaned and wished fervently that he could just stay home for the next four weeks.

An hour later, Kevin and Mom arrived at school. Mom went to see the nurse, and Kevin headed slowly to his classroom. The first thing he saw was a big, colorful banner across the door that said, "Welcome back, Kevin!" The first thing he heard was "Kevin's back!"

"Tell us what happened!"

"Did it hurt?"

"Can I stay indoors with you during recess?"

"Can I sign your cast?"

"Boys and girls, give Kevin a little space!" said Ms. Collins. "It's up to Kevin to decide if he wants his cast signed and whether he wants to talk about what happened."

"It's okay, Ms. Collins," Kevin said with a grin. "I want everyone to sign my cast, and I'll tell the whole story. It was quite an adventure!"

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**"Like Mother, Like Son" (pilot)**

Read the selection "Like Mother, Like Son." How does the narrator feel at the beginning of the story, and how does he feel at the end of the story? What makes him undergo a change? Use details from the story to support your answer.

**Like Mother, Like Son**

According to my mother, I am the handsomest of her children. My head shines in iridescent shades of blue and purple when the sun glints off it. Every time mother calls out to my brothers and sisters and me, I am the first to respond. I usually cock my head to the right or left as a sign of obedience and respect. I might be smaller than my siblings, but my intelligence and good looks make up for a lack of size.

I have one problem, though, that I cannot resolve. Too many children shoo me away. Adults often ignore me, except for those who have just baked something and left it to cool by an open window. Those adults show me a look that threatens like a gathering storm. I know not to grab their fresh baked bread or meat pies, but that is not because their looks scare me. They don't. You see, I have learned manners from my mother, especially the manners that are best put to use in human company.

My mother used to tell me about a human family that once kept her as a pet. At first the children spread breadcrumbs on the ground for her, but after a while she understood that the sound they made over and over was her name. She would fly to Oscar or Mattie and perch on a shoulder or an outstretched finger, and they would feed her by hand. The children named my mother Night because she was as dark as a prairie sky.

Unfortunately, Mr. and Mrs. Tomball did not appreciate the relationship that developed between Oscar and Mattie with my mother. One day, the family packed all its belongings in a horse-drawn wagon and trotted away. The white cloth that covered the wagon was untied as the horses moved into the distance. My mother's last memory of her human friends was that white cloth waving in the wind like a giant hand.

Yesterday, my mother told me what all mothers of my kind eventually tell their children. She said, "Fly, my child. Fly away and make your own nest." Of course, I obeyed, but my heart beat sadly.

After an hour of travel, I perched in a large oak tree to rest. Loneliness surrounded me. Out of respect for what my mother had taught me, I did not turn back.

Then suddenly from the ground below, I heard a strange sound. A boy snapped his fingers. Then, he said something-the same something over and over. It reminded me of my mother's story about Oscar and Mattie calling "Night! Night! Here, Night!"

I circled the boy two or three times as he snapped his fingers and said, "Feathers! Feathers! Here, Feathers!" I landed on his shoulder and cocked my head to the right and then to the left, showing him that I recognized my human name.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 6 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Literary Animal Heroes (pilot)**

In *Old Yeller*, by Fred Gipson, a family finds itself in danger as a bear is getting ready to attack. Luckily for them, along comes a stray dog, Old Yeller, who saves the family without any fear for his

own safety. Thus begins a special relationship between Old Yeller and the family he saves. Old Yeller is one of many literary animal heroes, like E. B. White's Charlotte in *Charlotte's Web* and Rudyard Kipling's Rikki-tikki-tavi.

In a well-developed essay, describe the heroic act(s) of a literary animal hero. What do you think made the animal choose to put his/her own life in danger? How did the hero's actions impact others and change his/her life? Use specific details from the story to support your ideas.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder (pilot)**

Suppose you are writing an article about Laura for your school newspaper, and you are going to interview her. Think of at least three questions to ask her and decide how she would answer each question. Write your questions and answers as an interview. Use details from the story to make the interview seem real.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Lou Gehrig: Good Citizen (pilot)**

An account of Lou Gehrig's life is given in the story "Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man" (*Traditions, Reading: A Legacy of Literacy*, Houghton Mifflin: California Edition). In addition to his athletic achievements, Gehrig is noted for his citizenship and sportsmanship.

In a well-developed essay, discuss Lou Gehrig as a model of citizenship and sportsmanship. Include examples from the story to support these themes.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Magic in The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (pilot)**

In *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch uses different tricks and spells to help her rule her kingdom. How does she use these tricks and spells? Do they help her keep control over Narnia?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the tricks and spells the White Witch uses to rule her kingdom. Include details and examples from the book to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Making Choices in Zathura* (pilot)**

*Zathura*, by Chris Van Allsburg, is an exciting space adventure story. It is also a sequel to the popular book and film, *Jumanji*. As in *Jumanji*, many strange things happen when the main characters, Danny

and Walter, play the Zathura board game. These odd occurrences force the boys to make major decisions-fast!

In a detailed essay, discuss one or more major decisions made in the story. Be sure to include details leading up to the decision(s) and the consequences that followed.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4*

***Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli (pilot)**

Suppose you are going to give Maniac Magee an outstanding achievement award from your class, group of friends, or neighborhood. How would you describe him and what achievements would you mention? Write a brief speech you could give to present the award. Use details from the book to tell what Maniac Magee did and what kind of person he was.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Marvin of the Great North Woods* by Kathryn Lasky (pilot)**

Pretend that you are Marvin living at the logging camp. Write a letter describing your new home, the logging camp, and the lumberjacks. Explain what your life is like and any challenges you face. Use details from the book in your letter.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Modern View of the Ugly Duckling* (pilot)**

“The Ugly Duckling” is a fairy tale written by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen in the 1800s. After reading the story, think about reactions of people around him before and after he changed. Do you think people’s reactions to beauty have changed since that story was written?

In a well-developed essay, relate the story of “The Ugly Duckling” to how society views beauty today. Use facts and details to support your description.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George (pilot)**

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter (like Matt Spell) and you have spent a week living with Sam Gribbley in the woods. Write a news article about Sam and how he lives, the animals he knows, how he gathers food, what he wears, and other information that you think would be interesting. Make up a headline for your article, and include factual details that you might find in a newspaper.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Number the Stars by Lois Lowry (pilot)**

Imagine that you are Annemarie and the war has just ended. Write a letter to Ellen. Tell Ellen what has happened since the last time you saw her, more than two years ago. Use details from the end of the book as you write your letter, and be sure to include a greeting and a closing.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Obstacles in *Lunch Money* by Andrew Clements (pilot)**

In the novel *Lunch Money*, by Andrew Clements, the main character, Greg, faces some obstacles in his quest to build his business and make money. What obstacles does he face? How does Greg overcome these obstacles?

In a detailed essay, discuss the obstacles Greg faces in creating his own business and how he overcomes them in the story. Remember to provide examples from the story to support your ideas.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Old Yeller by Fred Gipson (pilot)**

Travis, the main character in Fred Gipson's *Old Yeller*, finds himself accepting the presence of a stray dog into his life. As experiences between Travis and Old Yeller unfold, Travis slowly takes his first steps toward adulthood.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the experiences between Travis and Old Yeller that lead him to take steps into adulthood. Be sure to cite specific examples from the novel to support your ideas.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**One Giant Leap: The Story of Neil Armstrong by Don Brown (pilot)**

When Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon, he said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain what Neil Armstrong accomplished and what his quote means. Tell why you agree or disagree with what he said.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Peanut Readings (pilot)**

Carefully read "A Nutty Idea" and "A Special Project." Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain how the information in "A Nutty Idea" would be helpful to Reggie from "A Special Project." What does Reggie need to know in order for him to better help his uncle with the special peanut project? Be sure to include details from both texts to support your answer.

### **Passage One: A Nutty Idea**

You may be surprised to learn that a peanut isn't a nut at all. Instead, peanuts belong to the legume family, along with peas and beans. Unlike true nuts, they do not grow on trees or bushes. In fact, peanuts grow underground!

Peanut plants grow in warm climates and reach a height of about 18 inches. They have pretty green leaves and small yellow flowers. After blooming, the flowers drop off. Then, wherever a flower grew, a stalk called a peg begins to grow. The pegs grow downward, right into the soil. From each peg a pod, or peanut shell, grows. Usually two peanuts grow in each underground pod.

It takes four to five months for peanuts to grow and ripen. When ripe, the plants are dug up and left in the sun to dry. Four to six weeks later, the pods are separated from the plants. In the United States, this job is done by machines. In some parts of the world, people pull the pods off by hand.

Almost all peanuts are roasted to bring out their delicious nutty flavor. Many people all around the world love the taste of peanuts. In the United States alone, 2.4 billion pounds of peanuts are eaten each year!

### **Passage Two: A Special Project**

Reggie Brooks was the second person in his family of farmers to go to college. His Uncle George was the first. Reggie was a student in the biology program at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, which was created by Booker T. Washington. Reggie wanted to be a scientist or a doctor. His Uncle George was going to be one of his teachers.

One day, Uncle George asked Reggie to come to his office. He wanted some help with a project. Reggie was glad to be able to help his uncle, but a little unsure of what his uncle was up to this time. His uncle was always working on some great new idea. Reggie walked into his uncle's office, which was full of jars and boxes that held his experiments.

"Reggie, so glad you stopped by to see me. I want you to try something for me," said Uncle George with excitement. Reggie looked at him with some fear. "It's okay Reggie. This one isn't bad!" Uncle George held out his hand.

Reggie took an object from his uncle's hand. It looked something like a pea pod, but the shell was hard. "It's just a peanut," Uncle George said. Reggie squeezed the peanut's hard shell. It broke into pieces. Reggie examined the nut and shell in his hand, wondering why his uncle wanted him to eat it. He carefully put the nut in his mouth. Then he bit down and started to chew. "Why did you want me to try this? I was worried you were tricking me with something that would taste bad."

Uncle George Washington Carver looked at his nephew and smiled. "I just wanted to have your attention. I have a great idea for these peanuts. Farmers will be able to grow these on the same land used to grow cotton. These peanut plants are going to help the soil." Reggie did not understand what his uncle was trying to say, so he asked for more information.

"I believe that growing a crop such as peanuts will help replace nutrients in the soil that are sometimes lost when growing other crops such as cotton. Nutrients in the soil could be considered similar to vitamins for people. They help the plants grow. I have a feeling that if farmers planted peanuts one year and then cotton the next, they would get much better cotton and their soil will be rich." Reggie thought that this idea was very interesting. His family and other farmers would love to be able to help their cotton grow better.

Uncle George asked Reggie if he would help him in this research project. Reggie agreed and asked to learn more so he could start helping his uncle right away. He was honored to be a part of such an



important project. It meant a lot to Reggie that his uncle wanted to work with him and he was not going to let him down.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Personal Connections to Literature (pilot)**

Some readers make personal connections to the characters or events that take place in a story. Think of a story you have read that you feel especially connected to. Why do you feel this connection? What is it about the characters or events that make you feel close to this piece of literature?

In a well-written essay, discuss the personal connections you feel to a story you have read. Be sure to include specific examples of characters or events from the story so the audience understands how it connects to your life.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Ramona Quimby, Age 8 by Beverly Cleary (pilot)**

After she was sick, Ramona had to do a report for class. Suppose she had to write a report about her family, including herself. What do you think she would say? Pretend that you are Ramona Quimby, age 8, and write a report about the family. Tell something about each member of the family, including yourself.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Russell Sprouts by Johanna Hurwitz (pilot)**

In the last chapter, Russell's classmates plant seeds and watch for them to sprout. Why do you think the author chose the title *Russell Sprouts* for this book? In what ways does Russell "sprout" in this book? Write a multi-paragraph essay to explain what the title of the book means and why you think the author chose it. Be sure to include details from the story.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan (pilot)**

Letters are important in this story. Pretend that you are Sarah and you're living on the farm. Write a letter to your brother William or to your aunts in Maine. Describe your new home and your new family. Tell what your new life is like and how you feel about it. Remember that your letter needs a greeting and a signature.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**Secrets in A Series of Unfortunate Events (pilot)**

A Series of Unfortunate Events is a children's book series of thirteen novels written by Daniel Handler (a.k.a. Lemony Snicket). It is about the adventures of the three Baudelaire orphans after the death of

their parents in a fire. Themes presented throughout the series include courage, loyalty, overcoming challenges, family relationships, and friendship. As the series develops, the theme of the value of secrets becomes more common. After reading the books in the series, when did keeping a secret have a good outcome? When did keeping a secret have a bad outcome? What experiences have you had with secrets?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the good and the bad sides of keeping or telling a secret. Use facts and examples from the book(s) to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Setting in *Bridge to Terabithia* (pilot)**

In *Bridge to Terabithia*, Leslie and Jess are enchanted by Terabithia, a world where they can make their own rules and ultimately escape adulthood. Unfortunately, this place has both positive and negative effects on Jess and Leslie as they learn that eventually, everyone has to grow up.

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe how Terabithia changes both Leslie and Jess. Be sure to include specific details from the text for support.

*Literature Standard 7 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Setting in *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (pilot)**

The fairy tales presented in the *Grimm's Fairy Tales* video series (*Hans in Luck*, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, and *The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs*) have entertained audiences for many years. Descriptive settings in these stories really bring them to life. Some setting features to consider are the landscape, time period, characters' houses, and other scenery.

In a detailed essay, choose one of the fairy tales from the video and describe the setting. How does the particular setting of the video make the story come to life?

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (pilot)**

Suppose you work for a magazine and your next assignment is to interview Marty. Readers of your magazine will want to know what kind of person Marty is, how he got his dog Shiloh, and how he managed to make a deal with Judd Travers. Write an interview as if you had talked with Marty. Write the questions you would ask him and the answers you think he would give. Use details from the story to make the interview realistic.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
***Snowflake Bentley* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin (pilot)**

Imagine that you live in Wilson Bentley's town and you are working to set up the museum in Willie's honor. On the day that the museum is scheduled to open, you plan to read a short speech about Willie Bentley to tell about his lifelong work and his dream of sharing his discoveries with others. Write a short speech that tells about Wilson Bentley and what he did. In your speech, include interesting facts and personal information from the book that you think would interest your listeners.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
***Stone Fox* by John Reynolds Gardiner (pilot)**

Imagine that you are little Willy. A week has passed since the race, and you are at home on the farm with Grandfather, but without Searchlight. Over and over you think about the last minutes of the race, about Searchlight and about Stone Fox, too. Write a letter to Stone Fox. Tell him what you think about the race and what is in your heart.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
***Strength or Weakness in Light in the Forest* (pilot)**

In Conrad Richter's *The Light in the Forest*, eleven-year-old True Son must return to his original European family and change his life and customs from the Native American ways in which he was raised. True Son has difficulty adjusting to his new life and knows that his actions will affect the lives of both families. Richter uses True Son as a symbol for those times when we must learn to adjust our way of life. Some would argue that True Son showed strength by being resistant to his new way of life, while others would argue that he was being weak and stubborn by not giving his European family and new life a chance. Do you feel True Son's actions were those of a weak or a strong person?

In a well developed essay, discuss whether you believe True Son's actions were those of a weak or a strong person. Include references to the story to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
***Summary of "Cendrillon, A Caribbean Cinderella"* (pilot)**

Read "Cendrillon, A Caribbean Cinderella" (*Traditions, Reading: A Legacy of Literacy*, Houghton Mifflin: California Edition). In a well-developed essay, summarize the important events of the story. Include relevant details from the story that support the main ideas.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Surviving Alone in *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (pilot)**

In the book *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, Karana is stranded alone on an island for 18 years. She must learn to do things usually done by the island men in order to provide for herself and to protect herself. Do you think you would be able to live alone on an island for 18 years? What would be the hardest thing about living alone? What would be the easiest thing?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the hardest and easiest things about living on an island alone.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**The Author's Purpose (pilot)**

When authors write stories, novels, and even poems, they always have a purpose in mind. Their reasons may be to entertain, inform, describe, or persuade.

Select a piece of literature you have recently read and write a multi-paragraph essay discussing the author's purpose. Make sure to include examples and details to support your position.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 6 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***The Double Life of Pocahontas* by Jean Fritz (pilot)**

Imagine that Pocahontas kept a diary. Choose a particular event in her life and write about it from her point of view. Tell about the event as if you were Pocahontas writing in her own private diary.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**The Factory in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (pilot)**

The story follows a young boy from a poor family, Charlie Bucket, whose life is suddenly turned around when he wins one of the five rare golden tickets. The winner of each golden ticket gets to go on a tour of the world-famous chocolate factory owned by the strange Willy Wonka. What are some of the coolest things in the factory? Of its many rooms, which is your favorite?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the chocolate factory and its amazing features. Include details and examples to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***The Gift of the Sacred Dog* by Paul Goble (pilot)**

Suppose you were a young girl or boy in the tribe when the Sacred Dogs first came to your camp. What would the Sacred Dogs look like, and how would you feel when you saw them? Write a letter to a friend or relative. Tell what happened that day as if you were there and saw everything.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**The Lewis and Clark Expedition (pilot)**

President Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark to explore the new Western portion of the United States. The explorers hoped to discover many new things on this journey, including a waterway that could take travelers to the Pacific Ocean.

In a detailed essay, discuss some of the discoveries of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Use details and facts from their story to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**The Mouse and the Motorcycle by Beverly Cleary (pilot)**

Keith said that when he got back to school in Ohio, his teacher would ask him to write about summer vacation. He planned to write about meeting a brave little mouse named Ralph! Think about the story from Keith's point of view. Then pretend you are Keith and write your story about Ralph and the motorcycle for his teacher in Ohio.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**The Stories Julian Tells by Ann Cameron (pilot)**

In "Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend," how were Julian and Gloria alike and how were they different? Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you tell about ways they were alike and ways they were different. Be sure to include details from the story.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
**The Stranger in Chris Van Allsburg's *The Stranger* (pilot)**

Farmer Bailey and his family are puzzled by the Stranger, a man with no memory, who was hit by Farmer Bailey in his truck one late summer evening. The pictures and descriptions in the story are clues to the identity of this quiet, hard-working man. Who do you think the Stranger is? What clues lead you to that conclusion?

In a well-developed essay, discuss who you think the Stranger is, including the clues that lead you to that conclusion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*  
*Literature Standard 7 – Grade 4*  
**Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down? (pilot)**

Movie critics give their approval or disapproval of a movie based on how well the characters, plot, and setting are developed, and how closely a movie follows the original story, often based on a popular

book. Think of a movie you have seen that is based on a book you have read, and decide if you would give it a thumbs up or a thumbs down.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze a movie that was based on a book. Address character development, plot, and setting. Be sure to give specific examples from the book and movie so the audience understands the reasons for your thumbs up or thumbs down rating.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Understanding a Poem: "Dreams" by Langston Hughes (pilot)**

In the poem "Dreams" by Langston Hughes, the author provides the reader with an inspirational message about dreams. Why do you think it is important to have dreams for the future?

In a multi-paragraph essay, explain what you think Hughes is trying to tell us about dreams. Be sure to include details about your own dreams and goals for the future to support your essay.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Unique Talents and Powers in the Harry Potter Books (pilot)**

There are many characters in the Harry Potter book series who have special talents or powers. Some of these characters excel in "good" talents or skills, and some excel in "evil" talents or skills. What role do you think these abilities play in the fight for good against evil?

In a well-developed essay, discuss a character from the book series other than Harry Potter who has a great talent or skill. How do their abilities impact the fight for good against evil? Include facts and details from the books you have read for support.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 4 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Using Figurative Language (pilot)**

Authors use figurative language such as metaphors, similes, personification, and alliteration to create interesting ways to express ideas. Select a piece of literature that you have recently read in class that incorporates figurative language. Identify the figurative language used by the author, and write an essay that describes the meanings of words and phrases used and their effectiveness in the story. Be sure to include examples from the text to strengthen your explanations.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**"What Really Happened to the Billy Goats Gruff" (pilot)**

After carefully reading "What Really Happened to the Billy Goats Gruff," write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain your understanding of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the story to support your response.

## What Really Happened to the Billy Goats Gruff

Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Tommy T. Troll, the troll in the story "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." You know the story, or at least you know the goats' version. The thing is, the story didn't happen at all the way the goats told it. Those goats hoodwinked everyone, and I'm here to set the record straight.

One day the Billy Goats Gruff wanted to go eat the fresh, new spring grass in the meadow near the river. They had to cross a stone bridge to get there, and I lived under that bridge. According to them, I was ugly and mean, and I ate everything that tried to cross the bridge. Totally untrue, but that's what they told everyone.

They also said that when each of the first two brothers crossed the bridge, I jumped out like some monster in a horror movie. I roared and wouldn't let them cross. I threatened to eat them for dinner. Each convinced me to wait for the next older brother because he would make a bigger meal. When the third Brother Gruff showed up, he butted me with his head so hard that I flew through the air, fell in the river, and drowned. That's their story, and it has become the official version.

Folks, their story is so absurd it's laughable. I'm not mean; as trolls go, I'm a nice guy. Besides, what self-respecting troll would ever eat goat?! Blech! Goat is as tough as shoe leather and tastes worse. Anyway, I'm a vegetarian, so I don't eat meat.

There's another thing, too. I couldn't have roared if my life depended on it. Trolls hibernate in winter. When we first wake up, it takes us a while to get our voices back. I could barely talk when the first goat on the bridge woke me up. Their story doesn't hold water.

Here's what really happened. When the littlest Billy Goat Gruff came by, I said, "Will you please bring me something to eat, too? I'm really hungry after sleeping all winter."

"I'm not your servant," he said. "Ask my next brother. Maybe he'll feel sorry for you and bring you a mouthful of grass." Then he skipped over the bridge.

I was annoyed, but I figured he was just a kid and hadn't learned his manners yet. So I waited for the medium-sized brother, who said exactly the same thing. I said he was rude and that I would talk to their oldest brother about their manners.

When the third brother Gruff clomped onto the bridge, I politely began to explain his brothers' rudeness. He looked at me disgustedly, then said, "You big, ugly troll. Why would we help you? I'll butt you so hard you'll fly!"

If I'd been more than half awake, I would have bonked him on his thick head. I'm ashamed to say, however, that he hit me like a freight train, and I flew through the air and landed in the river a mile away. I swallowed about half the river, but I certainly didn't drown.

Those goats got theirs, though. They ate so much grass they had stomachaches for a week, and the biggest brother had a bad headache besides. I laughed myself sick when I heard that, holed up in my new cave downstream from the bridge.

Anyhow, now you know the REAL story. Maybe it'll teach you not to tell tales if you're not sure they're true. Oh, and never trust a goat—they're born liars.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 2 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

### **What's the Big Idea? (pilot)**

When authors create stories, they like to weave big ideas, or a theme, into the plot to give readers something to think about. Consider a meaningful story you have read. What were some of the big ideas

the author was trying to express? Do you think the author successfully illustrated the theme of the story?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe a story and identify the author's big ideas or theme. Be sure to include specific examples from the text for support.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?* by Jean Fritz (pilot)**

Imagine that you are Benjamin Franklin at age 17 and you are living in Philadelphia. You have just run away from your job as an apprentice in your brother James's printing shop. Write a letter of apology to your brother James. Explain why you had to leave his shop and what your life is like for you now that you are living in Philadelphia. Use details from the book in your letter.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***When Marian Sang* by Pam Munoz Ryan (pilot)**

Suppose you are a reporter for a Washington, D.C., newspaper in 1939. You have been chosen to cover Marian Anderson's concert at the Lincoln Memorial, one of the biggest stories of the year. Write a newspaper article about the event. Be sure to report on Marian and her singing, as well as the crowd and their reactions. Remember that a news article should have a catchy headline and tell who, what, when, and where.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Wilma Unlimited* by Kathleen Krull (pilot)**

In her later life, Wilma Rudolph started a company called Wilma Unlimited, and she traveled and gave speeches that inspired many people. Write a short speech that Wilma might have given to students. What advice would Wilma give? What experiences and lessons from her own life would she share? What would she say to students about their dreams and goals?

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Wonders of Animation* (pilot)**

Imagine you could be animated and placed in your favorite film as a new character. What film would it be? What would you look like in animated form? How would your presence in the story advance the plot? What things would you do or say to help solve any conflicts? Would the ending change because of your actions?

Write a story describing what happens when you include yourself as a new character in your favorite animated film. Be sure to give vivid details so readers feel connected to what is happening to you in the story.



*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

**Write a Book Review (pilot)**

Unlike a book report, a book review is not a retelling of the story. Instead, it is a critique of the author's success at achieving a purpose. If the purpose is to inform, does the author present the information in a style that makes it easy to understand? If the purpose is to tell a story, does the author tell an engaging story appropriate for the intended audience? In a book review, you can reveal the end of the story, or you can choose to make the reader wonder what happens and encourage them to read it.

Write a multi-paragraph review of a book you have read this year in class or that you have chosen to read on your own. Be sure to include details from the book in your review.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

*Literature Standard 3 – Grades 3, 4, 5*

***Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear* by Lensey Namioka (pilot)**

Pretend that you are Yingtao or Third Sister (Mary), and your grandparents live in China. You want to tell them about your experiences in America. Write a letter to your grandparents. Tell them what you have been doing in America, the differences between America and China that you have noticed, and what you like best about America. Use details from the story to make your letter seem real.