



# MY Access! Writer's Workshop

## Middle School Informative/Expository

### Prompt: **Family Traditions**

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## **Notes:**

## **Family Traditions**

Many families practice important traditions that are passed down from one generation to the next. Other families start new traditions. Think about your family's traditions. What tradition does your family follow that you would like to see passed to the next generation? How is it important to you and your family?

Write an essay in which you describe this tradition to the reader. Be sure to include specific details to illuminate this tradition for the reader.

As you write, remember your essay will be scored based on how well you:

- develop a multi-paragraph response to the assigned topic that clearly communicates your controlling idea to the audience.
- support your controlling idea with meaningful examples, reasons, and information based upon your research or readings.
- organize your essay in a clear and logical manner, including an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- use well-structured sentences and language that are appropriate for your audience.
- edit your work to conform to the conventions of standard American English.

### **Attack the Prompt:**

- Underline what the prompt asks you to **DO** (look for the verbs).
- Circle what, specifically, the prompt asks you to write about.

# MY Access! “Family Traditions” Teaching Ideas

## Prewriting

*Preparation: Draw the following T-Chart on the board or in Word:*

<b>My Family Traditions</b>	<b>Why is This Tradition Important?</b>
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- Begin by reading the prompt as a whole class. Have students underline what the prompt is asking them to DO and circle WHAT they should write about. Be sure to point out that they are supposed to write about ONE tradition (not give an overview of all their traditions).
- Discuss the word “tradition.” Have students define it for you. What comes to mind when they hear the word? Then, pass out the T-Chart on page 4 and review the dictionary definition.
- Give students several minutes to list their family traditions (things they do year after year with their family) on the left side of the T-chart. As students write, complete your own list of family traditions on an overhead or on the board.
- Share your list with your students. Instruct students to add any new ideas to their personal list if something you shared triggers a memory.
- Have students share with a small group of 3-4 and continue to add to their lists. Remind them that the purpose of this activity is to get as many ideas down as possible.
- Share as a whole class:
  - As students share, teacher fills out the left side of the T-chart. After a tradition is shared, ask the student to tell you WHY—what made these days so special? Fill out the right side.
- Give students several minutes to fill out the right side of their personal T-Chart.
- Have them look at their T-Chart and put a star next to their top THREE traditions.

## Beginning to Draft

- Initially, simply have students do a “quickwrite” for 8-10 minutes about one of their starred ideas on the T-chart. Have them write as quickly as possible without stopping to think—they just need to get their ideas down. Tell them not to worry about grammar or spelling. If they run out of ideas on one topic, they should choose another starred idea and begin writing about that.
- Students may also want to gather information by interviewing a family member about the tradition. A handout is provided on page 10 to get them started with this process.

## Revising and Narrowing Focus

- After students get something down on paper, have them try “looping” as described on page 6 as a way to narrow their focus. Then, use the handouts on pages 7 and 8 to plan and organize their essays.
- As students are writing, begin teaching them about the features of informative writing using the handout on page 5. You can also use the “Elements of a Strong Informative Essay” on page 11 to help students apply these features.
- During this time, students need to study the MY Access! rubric on page 12 so they understand how they will be scored. A handout on page 12 is provided to help students break this rubric down into language they understand. They can work in groups to complete this assignment, or you can do it as a whole class.
- As a whole class, evaluate the student samples on pages 12-14. Make sure they are using the rubric to guide them.
- After students have written a first draft, complete the group assignment that begins on page 15. This will help students to breakdown and understand the MY Tutor feedback.
- Another revision exercise is on pages 29. This can also be used to guide peer response.
- Page 30 has a sample Revision Plan (a tab located in “My Writing Space”). Students should complete a Revision Plan after each draft.
- Page 31 has guidelines for peer response. After every peer response session, be sure students fill out another “Revision Plan.” Page 32 provides students with questions to guide them in their reflection about how the peer response session went.

# **TRADITION: A belief, custom or way of doing something that has existed for a long time.**

<b>My Family's Traditions</b>	<b>Why is This Tradition Important?</b>

# Informative Writing

## **Purpose:**

To explain, inform, or present factual information.

## **Characteristics:**

- Presents clear and purposeful information
- Supports a thesis or controlling idea/topic with concrete facts, details and examples
- Synthesizes relevant information from a variety of sources
- Has logical organization
- Can reflect research
- 3rd person point-of-view
- Academic/formal language (no slang)

## **Examples:**

- Research report
- Analytical essay
- Newspaper article
- Encyclopedia article
- Textbook chapter
- Research/lecture notes

# Looping

*Looping is an exercise many writers use to narrow the focus of a piece. Often, in early drafts we write anything and everything that comes to mind about our topic (and this is okay!). As we revise, we want to “zoom in” on only the most important and interesting parts of our narrative. We need to discover our PURPOSE for writing.*

***Tell students:***

**Step 1:** Re-read your entire piece.

**Step 2:** Choose one line that stands out to you. Maybe it is an extremely important moment in your story, maybe it is the most exciting point, or maybe you just like the idea you are trying to express.

**Step 3:** Underline or highlight that line.

**Step 4:** On a blank piece of paper, write ONLY that line at the top of the paper.

**Step 5:** Now, for next ten minutes, write as QUICKLY as you can about only that line.

**Step 6:** Think about what happened. Do you like what you just wrote more than your first draft? If so, you now have a NEW and more specific focus for your story. At the very least, one part of your story has been “exploded.”

# Planning Your Essay

## I. Thesis/Controlling Idea:

A tradition that is special to my family is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_.

## II. Introduction: Your introduction needs to do two things:

- Give the reader some background information about either traditions in general or traditions in your family.
- Present (usually at the end) your thesis statement.

*Example:*

*At first glance, it doesn't seem like my family has many traditions. I am a third generation Irish American, and I wasn't raised knowing much about the customs of Ireland. I used to ask my great grandmother to tell me about life in her country, but she would just laugh and say something like "it was hard" or "let's talk about happier times." Now I know, however, that tradition doesn't necessarily have to be something from another country or long ago, but my family has made its own traditions here in America. Without a doubt, the tradition I love the most and will pass down to my children is our Sunday morning ritual: Big Thin Pancakes. This tradition is special because it is often the only meal we have together each week, and we always have a great time just being together and eating good food.*

## III. Body: The body of your essay contains at least three paragraphs that illustrate and support your thesis statement. For this essay, try these body paragraphs (but you can think up your own):

- A description of the tradition you chose. What do you do? How do you do it? When? Where? Be sure to include specific examples.
- A history of this tradition. Where did it come from? How did it get started? How has your family adapted/changed this tradition? You may need to do research for this part.
- Why is this tradition important to your family? What makes it so special? Why would you want to pass this tradition down? How do you think this tradition will change for future generations?

## IV. Conclusion: The conclusion often restates the thesis and offers the reader some final thoughts about your essay.



# Organizing Your Essay

## Thesis Statement

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## Supporting for Thesis/Topic Sentence

## Example(s) and Evidence

1.	
2.	
3.	

## Interviewing a Family Member About a Family Tradition

Family Member's Name:

Date of Interview:

Family Tradition:

Write down at least 3 questions to ask a family member about the tradition you will be writing about. Be sure to take notes during the interview.

1.

2.

3.

## Elements of a Strong Informative Piece

**Directions:** Read Sara's piece. Based on our discussions that centered on the elements necessary for writing an effective informative essay, is this a strong essay?

### **Sara's story:**

Every year on Christmas eve we have our traditional family party. What seems to be a vast ocean of presents cover our entire living room floor. The delightful aroma of our Christmas ham drifts from the kitchen to the rest of the house. The greatest thing is having the whole family together.

The living room covered with tower of multicolored presents with bows that glisten in the light. Everyone brings a gift to put in the middle of the room. Then you draw a number and pick which gift you want. Only thing about it is that once you open the gift you have to keep it.

The other thing that's great about the party is the great food we have. The best food is the ham. We have it every year.

By far the greatest thing is having the whole family together. After a long year we get to reunite with the ones we care about the most.

My favorite tradition is definitely our Christmas eve party. There are tons of presents wonderful food and our family gets to be together for this great time of year.

Discuss the following questions with your group. Have one person write down your answers and be prepared to share with the entire class.

- **If she has one, underline her thesis. Is her thesis clear?**
- **What are the strengths of this essay?**
- **Do her three body paragraphs support this thesis?**
- **Read her conclusion. This is actually her thesis!**
- **What score would you give this essay?**

## MY Access! 6-Point Informative Writing Rubric

	Focus & Meaning	Content & Development	Organization	Language Use & Style	Mechanics & Conventions
	<b>The extent to which the response establishes and maintains a controlling idea (or central idea), an understanding of purpose and audience, and completion of the task.</b>	<b>The extent to which the response develops ideas fully and creatively using extensive, specific, accurate, and relevant details (<i>plot, setting, characters, conflict, dialogue</i>).</b>	<b>The extent to which the response demonstrates a unified structure, direction, and unity, paragraphing and transitional devices.</b>	<b>The extent to which response demonstrates an awareness of audience and purpose through effective sentence structure, sentence variety, word choice and usage.</b>	<b>The extent the response demonstrates control of conventions, including paragraphing, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.</b>
6	<b>Very effective Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>thorough</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are all relevant to the story.	<b>Very Effective Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>thoroughly</i> detailed and developed plot and setting. Creates complex characters. Clearly establishes tension/conflict/problem that heightens the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used very effectively to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Very Effective Organization.</b> Captures the reader's attention by cleverly opening the story. Story flows very smoothly because of excellent transitions that support sequential development. Has a conclusion that pulls the entire story together.	<b>Very Effective Language Use and Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>precise</i> language and word choice, a <i>defined</i> voice, and a <i>clear</i> sense of audience; uses <i>well-structured and varied</i> sentences.	<b>Very Effective control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Few or no</i> errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling.
5	<b>Good Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are all relevant to the story.	<b>Good Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>well-developed</i> plot and setting. Creates believable characters. Establishes tension/ conflict/problem that heightens the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used effectively to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Good Organization.</b> Opening of story excites readers' to continue reading. Story flows smoothly from one event to another with effective transitions that support sequential development. Conclusion provides reader with a sense of completeness.	<b>Good Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>appropriate</i> language and word choice, with <i>some evidence</i> of voice and a <i>clear</i> sense of audience; uses <i>well-structured</i> sentences with <i>some variety</i> .	<b>Good control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Few errors</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>do not interfere with the message</i> .
4	<b>Adequate Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>basic</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are relevant to the story.	<b>Adequate Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>reasonably</i> developed plot and setting. Creates believable characters. Establishes tension/ conflict/problem that holds the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Adequate Organization.</b> Provides an interesting opening to the story that keeps the reader reading. Story generally flows smoothly from one event to another with transitions to support sequential development.	<b>Adequate Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>appropriate</i> language and word choice, with an <i>awareness</i> of audience and control of voice; generally uses correct sentence structure with <i>some variety</i> .	<b>Adequate control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> Some errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>do not significantly interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
3	<b>Limited Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>limited</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that may not be relevant to the story.	<b>Limited Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides an <i>adequately</i> developed plot, setting and characters, but lacks sufficient detail to make this more than a summary of what happens in the story. Tension/ conflict or a problem may be stated, but not developed. Some dialogue may be used to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Limited Organization.</b> Provides an adequate opening that may not hold the reader's attention. The flow of the story may be broken by haps in time and sequence. Transitions may be weak. Provides the reader with some sense of closure.	<b>Limited Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>simple</i> language and word choice, <i>some awareness</i> of audience and control of voice; relies on <i>simple</i> sentences with <i>insufficient</i> sentence variety and word choice.	<b>Limited control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Several noticeable</i> errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>may interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
2	<b>Minimal Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>minimal</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that may stray from the point of the story.	<b>Minimal Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>minimally</i> developed plot and setting. Characters are only described rather than developed. Narrative may include details or information that detracts from the story. Lacks tension or conflict to make the story interesting. Little dialogue is used to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Minimal Organization.</b> Provides an opening that may repeat the title of the prompt. Flow of story may be difficult to follow because of gaps in time and sequence. Demonstrates little evidence of a conclusion.	<b>Minimal Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>poor</i> language and word choice, with <i>little awareness</i> of audience; makes <i>basic errors in</i> sentence structure and usage.	<b>Minimal control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Patterns of errors</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>substantially interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
1	<b>Inadequate or no Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates <i>almost no</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides very little detail, some of which may not be relevant to the story.	<b>Inadequate or no Content &amp; Development.</b> <i>Lacks</i> an identifiable plot and setting. Characters are introduced but not developed. Lack of tension or conflict makes the story uninteresting to follow. Not much happens.	<b>Inadequate or no Organization.</b> May have an opening that does no more than repeats the title of the prompt. Story lacks basic organization (beginning, middle and end) with serious gaps in sequencing of brief ideas.	<b>Inadequate Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>unclear or incoherent</i> language and word choice, <i>no</i> awareness of audience, and <i>major errors</i> in sentence structure and usage.	<b>Inadequate or no control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Errors so severe</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that they <i>significantly interfere</i> with the communication of the message.

## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

### MY Access! Writing Domains

Type of Writing: \_\_\_\_\_

Your writing will be evaluated on the basis of five domains or trains of writing. Study each domain on the rubric and USE BULLET POINTS to take notes so that you can define each one. The feedback you receive will use the language on this chart.

Focus & Meaning	Content & Development	Organization	Language Use & Style	Mechanics & Conventions
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Piece is paragraphed</li><li>• Grammar errors do not interfere with the message</li><li>• Uses proper punctuation</li><li>• Excellent spelling</li></ul>

## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

### Evaluating Student Essays

**Directions:** Read the following pieces. Based on our discussions that centered on the elements necessary for writing a strong informative piece, are these strong essays? Use the rubric to assign a score to each writer, and then provide feedback.

About one out of every four people pass traditions down from generation to generation. One tradition I will pass on to generations after me is decorating the Christmas tree. The whole family always picks out the Christmas tree, strings the lights and hang ornaments on it together.

The drive to get our tree is always chaos. Mom sings Christmas tunes in the passengers seat, Dad exaggerates stories of his Christmas childhood, although no one listens except me. My two brothers argue about who will open the first present on Christmas morning. Last year my sister got a black eye from being in the middle of the two. WE made sure that she was far and away from those two. When we arrive and the tree farm everyone dives out of the car dashing to find their favorite tree. Everyone then illuminates the worst tree until we are down to the best of the best. My daddy purchases it with the Visa credit card. Zoom. We are off on the road as fast as a cheetah on a hot day! The boys stand the tree up in our living room while the ladies in the house find the lights.

I know this might be funny but when our family strings lights we do it a bit different. The whole family stands around the tree passing on the lights until we are at the tippy top. When it comes to my dad's exaggerated stories again we always always tell the family of the time he hid in The Christmas tree and his family accidentally wrapped him up. The family laughs even though we have heard it a billion trillion times. When i start popping popcorn to string on the tree my family hangs tinsel. My brothers duty last year was popping the corn but by the time we wanted to string it the boys had ate the whole bag which was the last bag! I always get to know my family a little better decorating the tree.

When it is time for the ornaments I always grab the secured box on my treasured ornaments inside. When my mommy was a little girl my grandmother made special ornaments resembling old stories such as Raggedy Anne and Andy, The Old Lady Lived in a Shoe, The Wizard of Oz, and many others. With out the important ornaments on the tree i believe it really feels incomplete. Decorating the tree gives me a chance to bond and ask opinions of the tree with my family.

As i said only one out of every four people pass traditions from one generation to the next. The excitement of the tree will always be apart of my family.

**Your Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback to the Writer:**

## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

### Paul's story:

Every year Christmas is full of family traditions. Traditions vary from decorating cookies, to going to the candle light service. Every family has a tradition, either old or new. My family has lots of traditions, but the one I remember most is that on Christmas eve my brother and I open one present each, and every year it is pajamas.

This tradition might seem a little odd to you but I love it. Every year it is the same, we sit down around the tree and open our present. Unfortunately, last year was the first year that my brother realized that every year it is pajamas. After, we open them we race up stairs to change into our new soft and fuzzy pajamas. Once we are changed and comfortable around the tree again my dad begins the story of the birth of Jesus. When the story is finished we have to put cookies out for santa (brother still believes) and carrots out for the reindeer. This tradition is fun for all of us and I hope I can pass it on to the next generation of my family.

Why do we have such an odd tradition you ask. I have no idea why my grandparents started it but they did. My mom and my dad had this same tradition in their house growing up. My parents both loved getting to open up one slice of there Christmas on Christmas Eve, so they decided to pass it on to my brother and I. I think it is fun and interesting to do something my parents did when they were young. I love hearing the stories of how there Christmas's were when they were young. Some families have a story about how or why they started they tradition but mine does not, it was just something we have done forever.

Families have traditions that where started by great great great grandparents and other where just stared this year. My family was somewhere in the middle, my grandparents started it. Every Christmas my grandma talks about how she wants me to pass our family tradition on to the next generation. I plan on doing this and keeping it a family tradition for as long as I can. It is something that I have enjoyed so I think my that kids might enjoy it to. My grandparents started, then my parents, then hopefully me and my kids and so on.

Every family has there own traditions, most of them are unique and have been passed down through the generations. My family tradition is something I love and can't wait to pass it on to the future generations. If your family doesn't have a tradition start your own it can be anything, make it something special. So what's your tradition?

**Your Score:**

**Feedback to the Writer:**

## Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

### Group Members:

### Writing Domain: Focus and Meaning

### Instructions:

**Step 1:** Read Sara's essay and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the ***Focus and Meaning*** portion of her essay. Then, on a separate piece of paper, each group member needs to INDIVIDUALLY revise a portion of this essay. You only need to make changes related to Sara's ***Focus and Meaning***. Be prepared to share your revision!

### Sara's story:

Every year on christmas eve we have our traditional family party. What seems to be a vast ocean of presents cover our entire living room floor. The delightful orama of our Christmas ham drifts from the kitchen to the rest of the house. The greatest thing is having the whole family together.

The living room covered with tower of multicolored presents with bows that glisten in the light . Everyone brings a gift to put in the middle of the room. Then you draw a number and pickwhich gift you want.Only thing about it is that once you open the gift you have to keep it.

The other thing thats great about the party is the great food we have. The best food is the ham. We have it every year.

By far the greatest thing is having the whole family together.After a long year we get to reunite with the ones we care about the most.

My favorite tradition is definatly out Christmas eve party. There are tons of presents wonderful food and are family gets to be together for this great time of year.



## Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

### Group Members:

### Writing Domain: Content and Development

#### Instructions:

**Step 1:** Read Sara's essay and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the **Content and Development** portion of her essay. Then, on a separate piece of paper, each group member needs to INDIVIDUALLY revise a portion of this essay. You only need to make changes related to Sara's **Content and Development**. Be prepared to share your revision!

#### Sara's story:

Every year on christmas eve we have our traditional family party. What seems to be a vast ocean of presents cover our entire living room floor. The delightful orama of our Christmas ham drifts from the kitchen to the rest of the house. The greatest thing is having the whole family together.

The living room covered with tower of multicolored presents with bows that glisten in the light . Everyone brings a gift to put in the middle of the room. Then you draw a number and pickwhich gift you want.Only thing about it is that once you open the gift you have to keep it.

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## Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

### Group Members:

### Writing Domain: Organization

### Instructions:

**Step 1:** Read Sara's essay and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the **Organization** portion of her essay. Then, on a separate piece of paper, each group member needs to INDIVIDUALLY revise a portion of this essay. You only need to make changes related to Sara's **Organization**. Be prepared to share your revision!

### Sara's story:

Every year on christmas eve we have our traditional family party. What seems to be a vast ocean of presents cover our entire living room floor. The delightful orama of our Christmas ham drifts from the kitchen to the rest of the house. The greatest thing is having the whole family together.

The living room covered with tower of multicolored presents with bows that glisten in the light . Everyone brings a gift to put in the middle of the room. Then you draw a number and pickwhich gift you want.Only thing about it is that once you open the gift you have to keep it.

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My favorite tradition is definatly out Christmas eve party. There are tons of presents wonderful food and are family gets to be together for this great time of year.

## Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

### Group Members:

### Writing Domain: Language Use & Style AND Mechanics and Conventions

#### Instructions:

**Step 1:** Read Sara's essay and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the **Language Use & Style AND Mechanics and Conventions** portion of her essay. Then, on a separate piece of paper, each group member needs to INDIVIDUALLY revise a portion of this essay. You only need to make changes related to Sara's **Language Use & Style AND Mechanics and Conventions**. Be prepared to share your revision!

#### Sara's story:

Every year on christmas eve we have our traditional family party. What seems to be a vast ocean of presents cover our entire living room floor. The delightful orama of our Christmas ham drifts from the kitchen to the rest of the house. The greatest thing is having the whole family together.

The living room covered with tower of multicolored presents with bows that glisten in the light . Everyone brings a gift to put in the middle of the room. Then you draw a number and pickwhich gift you want.Only thing about it is that once you open the gift you have to keep it.

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## MY Tutor Feedback – Focus and Meaning

### Revision Goal 1: State the central/controlling idea of your essay.

1. In your introduction, you should include one sentence that tells your reader what your essay will be about. This is called your thesis statement. Highlight it in yellow.
2. If you did not write one sentence to explain what your essay will be about, ask yourself, "What do I want my reader to learn from my essay?" Now, write the answer in one sentence at the beginning of your essay.

#### Example:

**Before Revision:** The Redwood National Forest in California has many hiking and biking trails.

**Frank's Strategy:** *I wrote details about California, but I did not write a sentence that explains what my essay will be about.*

**After Revision:** The Redwood National Forest in California is a spectacular place to visit.

**Frank's Reflection:** *I wrote one sentence that clearly states what my essay will be about.*

### Revision Goal 2: Understand and write for your audience.

1. Read the prompt and find the audience. Are you writing for friends and students, for parents or other adults, or for newspaper readers?
2. Make sure the words you wrote in your essay are appropriate for your audience. For example, if you are writing to adults, you should NOT use slang or contractions.

#### Example:

**Before Revision:** I wanna go hiking in the Redwood National Forest. And after that I dunno. Maybe I will chill on a park bench.

**Frank's Strategy:** *I used slang words, "wanna," "dunno," and "chill." I need to replace these with more formal language because I am writing to adults.*

## MY Tutor Feedback – Content and Development

### Revision Goal 1: State your central/controlling idea and main ideas.

1. First, highlight, in yellow, the sentence that states what your essay is about. This is called your thesis statement.
2. Now, highlight your main ideas in blue. If you did not include at least three main ideas, add them now. (Remember, main ideas give important information about the central/controlling idea of your essay. For example, if you are writing an essay about an ideal field trip, offer three reasons why you want to visit a specific place).
3. Make each main idea a topic sentence in a new paragraph.

#### Example:

**Before Revision:** I want to visit the Redwood National Forest in California on a school trip because there are many fun and educational activities to do there. I think my whole class would enjoy a trip to this park.

**Annie's Strategy:** *I have one sentence that states the central/controlling idea of my essay, but I need to add main ideas to support and explain my central/controlling idea.*

**After Revision:** I want to visit the National Redwood Forest in California on a school trip because there are many fun and educational activities to do there. I think my whole class would enjoy a trip to this park.

We could go on a hike through the scenic Redwood National Forest.

In addition, we could participate in the Junior Ranger programs.

Finally, we could learn about the history of the park during an evening campfire program.

**Annie's Reflection:** *I strengthened my central/controlling idea by adding three main ideas to explain it. I wrote each main idea in its own paragraph.*



## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

### Revision Goal 2: Use details to illustrate your main ideas.

1. Highlight your main ideas in blue. If you did not include at least three main ideas, add more now. (Remember your main ideas support or explain the central/controlling idea of your essay.)

2. Highlight details about your main ideas in green. Details are examples, facts, explanations, or stories. Include at least three details about each main idea.

#### Example:

**Before Revision:** I want to visit the Redwood National Forest in California on a school trip because there are many fun and educational activities to do there. I think my whole class would enjoy a trip to this park.

We could go on a hike through the scenic Redwood National Forest.

In addition, we could participate in the Junior Ranger programs.

Finally, we could learn about the history of the park during an evening campfire program.

**Annie's Strategy:** *I included three main ideas to support my central/controlling idea, but I did not include any details to illustrate my main ideas. I need to add details now.*

**After Revision:** I want to visit the Redwood National Forest in California on a school trip because there are many fun and educational activities to do there. I think my whole class would enjoy a trip to the park.

We could go on a hike through the scenic Redwood National Forest. Redwood trees that can reach 300 feet tall and live to be 2,000 years old grow abundantly in the forest. Visitors can hike on trails that wind through the forest, over streams, and along the coast of the Pacific Ocean.

In addition, we could participate in the Junior Ranger programs. The kids in our group can earn junior ranger patches or stickers for completing three activities in the park. Some of the activities include collecting one bag of litter, writing down and understanding rules and signs in the park, and completing a hike in the park. Not only are these activities fun, but they will help us learn to take better care of the park.

Finally, we could learn about the history of the park during an evening campfire program. Park rangers discuss many different topics, such as animals, history, and plant life at the park, and completing a hike in the park. I think our class would like the program about the history of the park because we learned a little about it in our social studies and science classes.

## MY Tutor Feedback – Organization

### Revision Goal 1: Give your essay a good introduction.

1. At the end of your introduction, you should include one sentence that tells your reader what your essay will be about. Highlight, in yellow, the one sentence that explains what your essay is about. This is called your thesis statement. If you do not have one, write one now.
2. You also need to grab your reader's attention in the introduction. Make the first sentence of your introduction a question, a quotation, or an interesting fact or statistic.
3. Underline the background information you include. Now, add important information to give your reader an idea of what your essay will be about.

#### Example:

**Before Revision:** I would like to go to the Redwood National Forest in California on a field trip because there are many fun and educational activities to do there. I think my whole class would enjoy a trip to this park.

**Oscar's Strategy:** *I included one sentence that states what my essay is about, but I did not grab my reader's attention, and I need to add more background information to complete the paragraph.*

**After Revision:** Imagine standing next to a tree that is 300 feet tall! Students and teachers in our school could experience this for themselves if we took a field trip to the Redwood National Forest in California. Not only could we see the tall trees at the forest, but we could also participate in educational activities. I think my whole class would enjoy a trip to this park.

**Oscar's Goal:** *I grabbed my reader's attention with a startling fact about the Redwood National Forest and I added more background information about what my essay will be about.*

### Revision Goal 2: Give your essay a strong conclusion.

1. Underline your conclusion. If you do not have a conclusion, add one now. Your conclusion may summarize your essay or it may leave the reader thinking about something.

## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

### Example:

**Before Revision:** Going to California will be an amazing experience because of all that I am going to do and learn. I will have the opportunity to go hiking, become a junior ranger, and learn about the history of the park.

**Oscar's Strategy:** *My conclusion is too short and does not leave reader thinking about anything.*

**After Revision:** For centuries, the Redwood Forest has been a place where people have gone to seek adventure, wildlife, fresh air, and plant life. Our class is bound to have fun and learn a lot on this trip. I hope that the experience matches my expectations!

**Oscar's Reflection:** *I summarized my essay and I left my reader with something to think about.*

### Revision Goal 3: Use transitional words to help connect your ideas.

1. Using transitional words (for example, first, second, third, next, in addition, however, on the other hand, as a result) can help you move from one main idea to the next. Highlight, in orange, the transitional words and phrases in your essay.

2. If there are few or no words highlighted in orange, add transitions now. For example, you can add transitions between paragraphs or between sentences. Use the word bank to help you!

### Example:

**Before Revision:** **First**, we could go on a hike through the scenic Redwood National Forest. Redwood trees, which can reach 300 feet tall and live to be 2000 years old, grow abundantly in the forest. Visitors can hike on trails that wind through the forest, over streams, and along the coast to the Pacific Ocean.

We could participate in the Junior Ranger programs. The kids in our class can earn junior ranger patches or stickers for completing three activities in the park. Some of the activities include collecting one bag of litter, writing down and understanding rules and signs in the park, and completing a hike in the park. These activities are fun and they will help us learn to take better care of the park.

**Oscar's Strategy:** *I need to add more transitional words to connect ideas in my paragraphs and my sentences.*



## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

**After Revision:** First, we could go on a hike through the scenic Redwood National Forest. Here, redwood trees can grow to be 300 feet tall and live to be 2000 years. Once visitors pay the park entrance fee, they can hike on trails that wind through the forest, over streams, and along the coast to the Pacific Ocean. On a hike, visitors can see different types of birds, mammals, and insects.

Secondly, we could participate in the Junior Ranger Programs. In this program, kids in our class can earn junior ranger patches or stickers for completing three activities in the park. Some of the activities include collecting one bag of litter, writing down and understanding rules and signs in the park, and completing a hike in the park. Not only are these activities fun, but they will help us learn to take better care of the park.

**Oscar's Reflection:** *I added transitional words between paragraphs and between sentences to show how my ideas are connected.*

## MY Tutor Feedback – Language Use and Style

### Revision Goal 1: Choose words carefully.

1.Highlight, in green, the details in your essay. Details are those words that answer the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how.

2.Underline the words or phrases you used too many times and replace them with synonyms (words that mean the same) or more specific words. Use the word bank or thesaurus to help you!

3.Use your five senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) to describe your details and ideas. Use the word bank to help you think of more words.

#### Example:

**Before Revision:** We could go on a hike through the Redwood National Forest. Tall redwood trees grow abundantly in the Redwood National Forest. Visitors can hike on trails through the Redwood National Forest. On a hike, visitors can see different types of animals.

**Larry's Strategy:** *I need to replace the words I used too many times with synonyms or more specific words. I also need to use my five senses to add details to my essay.*

**After Revision:** We could go on a hike through the scenic Redwood National Forest. Redwood trees that can grow to be 300 feet tall and live to be 2000 years old grow abundantly in the forest. Visitors can hike on trails that wind through the forest, over streams, and along the coast of the Pacific Ocean. On a hike, visitors can see different types of birds, mammals, and insects.

**Larry's Reflection:** *I replaced Redwood National Forest with "forest" and I used my five senses to add details about the trees, the hiking trails, and the animals.*

### Revision Goal 2: Use a variety of sentences to make your writing more interesting.

1.Highlight short sentences in pink. Highlight long sentences in purple. Did you use both long and short sentences? Combine short sentences using conjunctions (and, or, but). Split long sentences into two separate sentences.

## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

2. Underline the first three words in each sentence. Do all of your sentences start the same way? Change the way you begin each sentence by combining sentences or adding details.

### Example:

**Before Revision:** The trees in the Redwood National Forest can live to be 2,000 years old. The trees in the Redwood National Forest can grow to be 300 feet tall. The trees may have a width of 22 feet.

**Larry's Strategy:** *I wrote three short sentences that all begin the same way. I need to combine these sentences into one longer sentence.*

**After Revision:** The trees in the Redwood National Forest can live to be 2,000 years old and grow to over 300 feet tall with widths of 22 feet.

**Larry's Reflection:** *I combined three short sentences into one sentence. When I combined my sentences, I fixed two problems: I eliminated short sentences and I eliminated sentences that began in the same way.*

## MY Tutor Feedback – Mechanics and Conventions

### Revision Goal 1: Eliminate errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics.

1. Read your writing more than once. You may want to read out loud (to yourself) so you can hear your mistakes and correct them.
2. Correct any spelling errors using the spell checker. Then, make your readers SMILE by doing the following:

**S**entences: Make sure each sentence has a subject and an action.

- **Before Revision:** And Oliver travels to London to learn how to pick rich men's pockets.
- **Marcy's Strategy:** *Since I began this sentence with "and," it's a fragment. I need to make this a complete sentence.*
- **After Revision:** \_\_\_\_\_ Oliver travels to London to learn how to pick rich men's pockets.
- **Marcy's Reflection:** *I deleted the word "and" to make the sentence fragment a complete sentence.*

**M**arks: End each sentence with a punctuation mark.

- **Before Revision:** Oliver is a young boy who lives in an orphanage he gets kicked out just for asking for more food then he meets Fagin who gives him food and a place to stay
- **Marcy's Strategy:** *I need to put punctuation marks at the end of each sentence to help my readers understand my ideas.*
- **After Revision:** Oliver is a young boy who lives in an orphanage. He gets kicked out just for asking for more food! Then he meets Fagin who gives him food and a place to stay.
- **Marcy's Reflection:** *I put punctuation marks at the end of each sentence. If the sentence was a statement, I added a period; if it was an exclamation, I added an exclamation point.*

**I**ndents: Indent each new paragraph.

- **Before Revision:**

Nancy is an important character in *Oliver Twist*. She is different from the other characters because it is not always easy to tell who she is. At first, she seems like just another villain. She is poor, and all of her friends are criminals. She drinks too much and does not live a good life.

- **Marcy's Strategy:** *I noticed that I did not indent the beginning of this paragraph. I need to indent each paragraph.*
- **After Revision:**

Nancy is an important character in *Oliver Twist*. She is different from the other characters because it is not always easy to tell who she is. At first, she seems like just another villain.

## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

She is poor, and all of her friends are criminals. She drinks too much and does not live a good life.

- **Marcy's Reflection:** *I indented the beginning of the paragraph.*

**L**etters: Start each sentence with a capital letter.

- **Before Revision:** "i am chained to my old life. i loath it and hate it now, but i can't leave it." these are Nancy's words when given the chance to get away from her criminal friends.
- **Marcy's Strategy:** *These sentences do not begin with capital letters. I need to capitalize the words at the beginning of sentences.*
- **After Revision:** "I am chained to my old life. I loath it and hate it now, but I can't leave it." These are Nancy's words when given the chance to get away from her criminal friends.
- **Marcy's Reflection:** *I changed all of the lower case letters in the beginning of sentences to capital letters. I also capitalized the pronoun, "I."*

**E**ditor: Click on MY Editor for more ways to improve your writing.

## Revising Your Essay

Revision means to “re-see” your writing. Before you “re-see” it, however, you need to re-read it! Use the following suggestions to help you determine what you need to do to improve your essay.

### **Introduction (must include first three bullet points):**

- Highlight background information about the topic in YELLOW.
- Underline your thesis statement in BLUE.
- Circle the title and author of the story.
- Is your introduction interesting? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

### **Body (for each paragraph):**

- Highlight your topic sentence (the sentence that tells your reader what the paragraph is about) in BLUE.
  - If you don't have a topic sentence check here—you need to write one!
  - Does your topic sentence support your thesis statement?

Paragraph 1	___yes	___no
Paragraph 2	___yes	___no
Paragraph 3	___yes	___no
- Highlight the examples *from the story* you use to support your topic sentence in GREEN.
  - If you don't have any examples check here—you need to add at least one example per paragraph.
- Highlight your own thoughts and commentary in RED. This is the part of your paragraph that explains why your examples are important.
  - If you don't have any commentary check here—you need to add your own thoughts in!

### **I. Conclusion**

Does it restate the thesis or your main argument in a new way? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Does it push your reader's thinking deeper? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

## Sample Revision Plan

**Name:** Sara Mills

**Class:** Informative Writing

**Prompt:** Family Traditions

### **My Goals:**

#### Focus and Meaning:

I need to write a clearer thesis statement, and then I need to support my thesis.

#### Content and Development:

I have some good examples right now, but I need to make sure that each paragraph has a specific point that supports the thesis.

### **Writing Strategy:**

#### Focus and Meaning:

I will use my conclusion as a new thesis statement. I need to write a clear introduction that leads up to the thesis. I will make sure that each paragraph isn't just a description, but that it supports my thesis.

#### Content and Development:

I need to come up with more to write about. Right now I describe the tradition, but I can add in some history about how we started this tradition. I can also spend a paragraph explaining why this tradition is important to me.

### **Reflection:**

I started writing without planning. Next time I will outline my ideas and select the details before I start writing my story. I didn't really understand that an essay needs to be organized thinking, but now that I do I think I'll be able to write better essays.

## **Writers' Workshop: Testing Your Writing on an Audience**

1. Assemble in groups of three (3)---a writer and two peer responders
2. Print 3 copies of your paper: one for you and one for each of your two editors

**Goal: To strengthen your introduction, body and conclusion of your story**

### **The Process**

- Read your writing out loud...slowly. Your peer responders should not comment on your writing while you are reading aloud.
- Your peer responders should read your paper at least once more to themselves. During the second reading, they may mark up your paper with questions/comments that they will share with you verbally.
- During the time your responders are commenting on your paper, you are to take notes, NOT SPEAK.
- Once they are completely finished, you may ask your responders questions to further clarify their comments, as needed.

### **Suggested comments:**

- o You have an engaging introduction. I like the way...
- o Your introduction tells or informs rather than excites. Perhaps you can...
- o You have not stated your opinion/thesis statement. You need to add a statement that...
- o You have not positioned your thesis at the end of your introduction.
- o Your thesis statement is too vague. Tell me more specifically what your position is...
- o You have only a few details to support your thesis. You can improve this by adding...
- o This detail does not relate to your main idea...
- o It is unclear how these examples support your main idea
- o Tell me what you mean by "....."
- o I would suggest that you .....(add, remove, rearrange, reword, rephrase, etc)
- o Consider concluding by leaving your reader with a strong impression of the main point or message you are expressing.

### **The Revision Plan, the Revision and the Reflection (3Rs)**

- In MY Access!, write a revision plan that reflects the goals and strategies suggested by your peers.
- Revise your essay
- Highlight the changes and describe the reasons for those changes
- Write a reflection that describes your thinking throughout the writing process
- Reassemble with your group to share your revised draft and your reflection
- Submit the revised draft, revision plan with a reflection to your teacher for credit



## Questions to Prompt Reflection After Peer Response

1. What thoughts did you have about your paper before the writers' workshop?
2. What did you become aware of during the session?
3. What did you change? Why?
4. What did you keep the same? Why?
5. Which suggestions were most helpful? Least helpful?
6. What thoughts do you have about your revised draft?
7. What have you learned about yourself as a writer that you will take into consideration for your next focused writing?

Revision Plan (you can complete this in MY Access!)

My goals:

My strategy:

Reflection (complete after you revise your story)

## MY Access! Writer's Workshop:

### Answer Key:

**Sara: 3**

**Cara: 5**

**Paul: 6**