

Writing Across the Curriculum (Grades 5-9) Handouts

In the process of learning content materials, there are several approaches to observing students' thinking and levels of understanding. One approach is through their writing. A student's writing helps define for teachers any gaps in learning and provides information teachers should rely on to plan instruction or to do required reteaching.

The handouts included herewith may be used in conjunction with the *Writing Across the Curriculum* document, located at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/languagearts/middlegrades/> and <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/languagearts/elementary/>, or may be used independently by any teacher and other educators to assist in including additional writing in the content areas.

The Journal Book

The main goal of the Journal Book is to help students become better readers and writers. The Journal Book helps students keep a record of their writing in a place that students can keep as their own and can use as a reference for their work.

The Journal Book must be organized so that teachers and students can keep their materials together. The beauty of the Journal Book is that it allows students and teachers the flexibility of developing a structure that works for them.

- Kitchen Drawer Handout; explains all the items that can be placed in the Journal Book.
- Numbered pages; top right hand corner, number all the pages.
- Table of Contents; allow several pages at the beginning.
- Author Identification page; on the first page who the Journal Book belongs to and how to contact them at school.
- Topic page; on the last page of the book, ideas from students on topics to write or think about.
- Vocabulary page; count back fifteen pages from the back of the book, this section is for collecting interesting words from their readings.
- Golden lines; count back another five pages from the vocabulary section, golden lines are referred to as those phrases or sentences in stories that we just must collect.
- Free writing; students write down everything they can think of for three to five minutes.
- Lists: make lists of things that “bug” them, they love, books they’ve read, people they know and the list continues.
- Using others’ writing as models: mentor texts, students look at ideas of others in hopes of using their style or structure of writing.

From: Urbanski, Cynthia. *Using the Workshop Approach in the High School English Classroom, Modeling Effective Writing, Reading and Thinking Strategies for Student Success*. Thousand Oaks, California. Corwin, 2006.

Kitchen Drawer

"The point of a notebook is to jump-start the mind"-John Donne

What is a Journal Book?

- A notebook
- A "kitchen junk drawer"
- A record of your writing and thinking

What is in a Journal Book?

- Questions that YOU have that need to be answered
- Fragments of writing
- Leads
- Titles
- Ideas
- Notes
- Thoughts
- Quotations
- Song Lyrics
- Lists
- Diagrams
- Pictures
- Observations
- Handouts
- Newspaper Clippings

"Breathing In refers to the way the notebook serves as a container for selected insights, lines, images, ideas, dream, and fragments of talk gathered from the world around you. Breathing Out suggests that the notebook is a fine place from which to take what you have collected and use it to spark your own original writing."

Fletcher, R. 1996. *Breathing In, Breathing Out, Keeping a Writer's Notebook*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.

Journal Book Reflection

Name _____ Date _____

Look through the writings you did this semester (this could include your Journal Book). Answer the following two questions:

1. How many days have you written for at least ten minutes on your own?
2. Record the number of times you have written a piece that could be classified as:

- _____ a progress report
- _____ a journal entry
- _____ a letter to parents
- _____ a status report (project)
- _____ a "to do" list
- _____ an evaluation (program)
- _____ a professional work plan
- _____ a classroom evaluation (student)
- _____ a contest entry
- _____ instructions
- _____ directions
- _____ grant proposals
- _____ student discipline reports
- _____ e-mails
- _____ blogs
- _____ reflections on teaching strategies
- _____ other? Explain _____

Answer these two questions:

1. Have you discovered anything new about yourself as a writer?
2. What goals can you set so that you will improve as a writer?

Dialectic Response Journal

1. Create four columns in your Journal Book.
2. Reserve column one for "note-taking"
 - a. Quote
 - b. Summary
 - c. Question about the text
3. Reserve column two for your response to column one
 - a. Think about the significance
 - b. Think about the author's purpose
 - c. What is causing you to have this question about the text.
4. Reserve column three for a response from another person
 - a. Agree/Disagree
 - b. Extend
 - c. Question
5. Reserve column four for "What I'm Thinking Now"
 - a. Ideas solidified
 - b. New Questions raised
 - c. Questions answered
 - d. New ideas

From: Urbanski, Cynthia. *Using the Workshop Approach in the High School English Classroom, Modeling Effective Writing, Reading and Thinking Strategies for Student Success*. Thousand Oaks, California. Corwin, 2006.

Mapping an Essay

You are to create a “visual map” of the essay. Your map should:

- 1 designate symbolically the key parts of the essay being sure that you cover the argument from beginning to end.
- 2 introduce the “road” signs of the essay—that is mark portions of the essay where you would want your traveler to dwell—places where the reader should stop and spend time.
- 3 place scenic emblems from the essay; items from the article that the reader should consider as important to her understanding of the story.
- 4 interweave significant language from the essay within the map
- 5 have at least one piece of original text from the essay.

Your map should leave the viewer with a clear sense of the article and the desire to read it. You should also leave your reader with

- 1 A sense of direction
- 2 A question to consider

From: Urbanski, Cynthia. *Using the Workshop Approach in the High School English Classroom, Modeling Effective Writing, Reading and Thinking Strategies for Student Success*. Thousand Oaks, California. Corwin, 2006.

Types of Writing

In the process of planning an assignment for students, the content and topic should be considered when selecting the most appropriate type of writing to be completed. For each writing assignment, whether brief (exit ticket) or extended (essay or research), the topic (subject/concept), the purpose (why write), the style (how to write), and the audience (to whom) for each writing assignment must be determined before students start to write. The list below represents some of the most common types/styles of writing that content area teachers may choose (or have students choose) for completing writing assignments.

- **Critical**—is writing that involves interpreting, proposing, and judging.
 - Book reviews
 - Media reviews
 - Film reviews
 - Essays
- **Exploratory**—is writing that discovers or defines a topic through the process of writing.
 - Travel Guides
 - Opinion surveys
 - Problem solution
- **Expressive**—is writing that involves exploring and sharing personal insights and experiences.
 - Notes
 - Memoirs
 - Observations
- **Informational**—is writing that involves providing details to explain realities or ideas.
 - News articles
 - Magazine articles
 - Various Reports
- **Scientific**—is writing with data that allows the reader to evaluate validity of results and conclusions.
 - Concepts
 - Theories
 - Argumentative generalizations
- **Persuasive**—states an opinion with support to convince of a point of view or of a specific action.
 - Advertising
 - Thesis
 - Political speeches
- **Literary**
 - Historical fiction
 - Plays
- **Some other types of writings include:**
 - Cause/Effect Essay—discusses or explains similarities and differences between two things.
 - Process Analysis Essay—describes in specific details how something is done.
 - Technical Writing—explains, describes or breaks down complex ideas into straightforward terms.

As your repertoire of types and styles of writing grows, add them to your list.

Formative Assessment Strategies and Techniques

Please note that this is a suggestive list.

Formative Assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to help students improve their achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

This sheet is for information purposes only.

Clarifying & Sharing Target(s)

Student Developed Rubric(s)	Class Discussion of Target(s)
End-of-Lesson Review	
Examples of Target(s)	

Achieving Effective Classroom Instruction that Elicits Evidence of Learning

Red, Green, Yellow Cards	Jig Saw
Higher-order Questioning	Learning Log
Exit Slips	Think/Pair/Share

Providing Feedback that Moves Learners Forward

Comment-ONLY	I Tell You – You Tell Me
3 Successes & 1 Improvement	

Activating Students as the Owner of their Own Learning

Identify Target(s)	Discuss examples of student work
Appropriate use of Post-It Notes	Write Reflections
Include Evaluation with Rubrics	

The blank spaces are for you to add your own formative assessment strategies and techniques as you implement formative assessment during classroom instruction.

What Writers Tell Us

Teachers must first view themselves as writers, so they can then help their students make sense of their lives through reading and writing. One way to strengthen the confidence needed is to begin thinking about various aspects of writing.

Respond to the following questions and be prepared to share responses with the whole class.

- Do you consider yourself as a writer? Why/why not?
- What do you write?
- How is the best way you write?
- What's the best thing that you've written? Why do you think of it as your best?
- What's the worst thing that you've written? Why do you think of it as your worst?
- Who has helped you with your writing? How have they helped you?
- Why do you write?

National Writing Project. National Conversation on Writing for Media Action. 2007. <http://www.nwp.org/>

The *Excerpt from a Letter to James Madison* is an example of a primary source document. This can be used with the Journal Book as an example of how to complete a “Dialectic Response.”

“If you would not be forgotten, as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading, or do things worth the writing.” –B. Franklin

Excerpt from a
Letter to James Madison

Thomas Jefferson (Oct. 28, 1785)

[NOTE: This letter was written while Jefferson was in France. In it, he talks about a trip he’s made to a village where the king goes in the fall.]

...I set out yesterday morning to take a view of the place...As soon as I had got clear of the town I fell in with a poor woman walking at the same rate as myself and going the same course. Wishing to know the condition of the laboring poor I entered into conversation with her...She told me she was a day labourer, at 8 sous or 4 d. sterling the day; that she had two children to maintain, and to pay a rent of 30 livres for her house (which would consume the hire of 75 days), that often she could get no employment, and of course was without bread. As we had walked together near a mile and she had so far served me as a guide, I gave her, on parting, 24 sous. She burst into tears of gratitude which I could perceive was unfeigned, because she was unable to utter a word. She had probably never before received so great an aid. This little attentissement, with the solitude of my walk led me into a train of reflections on that unequal division of property which occasions the numberless instances of wretchedness which I have observed in this country and is to be observed all over Europe.

The property of this country is absolutely concentrated in a very few hands, having revenues of from half a million guineas a year downwards. These employ the flower of the country as servants, some of them having as many as 200 domestics, not laboring. They employ also a great number of manufacturers, and tradesmen, and lastly the class of laboring husbandmen. But after these comes them most numerous of all the classes, that is, the poor who cannot find work. I asked myself what could be the reason that so many should be permitted to beg who are willing to work, in a country where there is very considerable proportion of uncultivated lands? These lands are kept idle mostly for the sake of game. It should seem then that it must be because of the enormous wealth of the proprietors which places them above attention to the increase of their revenues by permitting these lands to be labored. I am conscious that an equal division of property is impracticable. But the consequences of this enormous inequality producing so much misery to the bulk of mankind, legislators cannot invent too many devices for subdividing property, only taking care to let their subdivisions go hand in hand with the natural affections of the human mind. The descent of property of every kind therefore to all the children, or to all the brothers and sisters, or other relations in equal degree

is a political measure, and a practicable one. Another means of silently lessening the inequality of property is to exempt all from taxation below a certain point, and to tax the higher portions of property in geometrical progression as they rise. Whenever there is in any country, uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labour and land to live on. If, for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be furnished to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not the fundamental right to labour the earth returns to the unemployed. It is too soon yet in our country to say that every man who cannot find employment but who can find uncultivated land, shall be at liberty to cultivate it, paying a moderate rent. But it is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small landholders are the most precious part of a state.

Jefferson, Thomas (1785, October). Jefferson to Madison. Retrieved April 8, 2009, from Teaching American History web site: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=967>

Lipton, Ed.D, L, & Wellman, M. Ed, B. (2000). *Pathways to understanding*. Guilford: Pathways Publishing.

GIST

(Generating Ideas Systematically from Text)

Purpose: The purpose of GIST is to convey information in an efficient manner so that the reader can learn the main idea or essential details of a written document. This activity helps to improve students' ability to write accurately and efficiently, and to summarize succinctly.

Steps:

1. Explain GIST and then select a text or short passage in a chapter or an article that has a main idea. A passage of 3-5 paragraphs is ideal. Put the passage on an overhead transparency in a large font size (18-24 point).

An alternative to using the overhead is to make copies of the text and distribute to each student.

2. Place the text on the overhead projector and display only the first paragraph by covering the remaining paragraphs. Have students read the paragraph silently. Instruct them to write a 20 word summary of the paragraph in their own words.

An alternative to having the students read the first paragraph silently is to have the text read aloud by the teacher or a student while the other students read along silently.

3. As a class, have students generate a composite summary on the board in 20 words.

As an alternative, have each student write a sentence that summarizes the "GIST" of the passage using 20 words or less and then share the sentence/summary with assigned group members. Next, have the students develop a concise group summary reflecting each student's individual summary.

4. Reveal the next paragraph of the text and have students generate a summary statement of 20 or fewer words that encompasses **both** of the first two paragraphs. Lead the students in a class discussion about important facts from the text or selected passage and then write students' ideas on the board.

5. Continue this procedure paragraph by paragraph, until students have produced the "GIST" statement for the entire passage or text. In time, students will be able to generate 'gist' statements across paragraphs without the intermediate steps. Lead class discussions on how to formulate ideas into a sentence, allowing students to share ideas and negotiate these ideas to craft accurate and precise sentences.

By restricting the length of the 'gist' summaries, the teacher compels students to use the three major strategies necessary for comprehension and retention of key ideas in any text. They must (1) delete trivial information, (2) select key ideas, and (3) generalize in their own words. As such, 'gist' produces dual benefits by advancing students' reading comprehension and writing fluency.

Cunningham, J. (1982). Generating interactions between schemata and text. *New Inquiries in reading research and instruction*. (pp.42-47). Thirty-first Yearbook of the National Reading Conference. Rochester, NY.

GIST: A Reading/Writing Strategy

The *“Generating Ideas Systematically from Text”* strategy (GIST) is a summarizing activity for use in any content area.



Write a summary by placing a word in each of the twenty blanks.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

EXIT TICKET

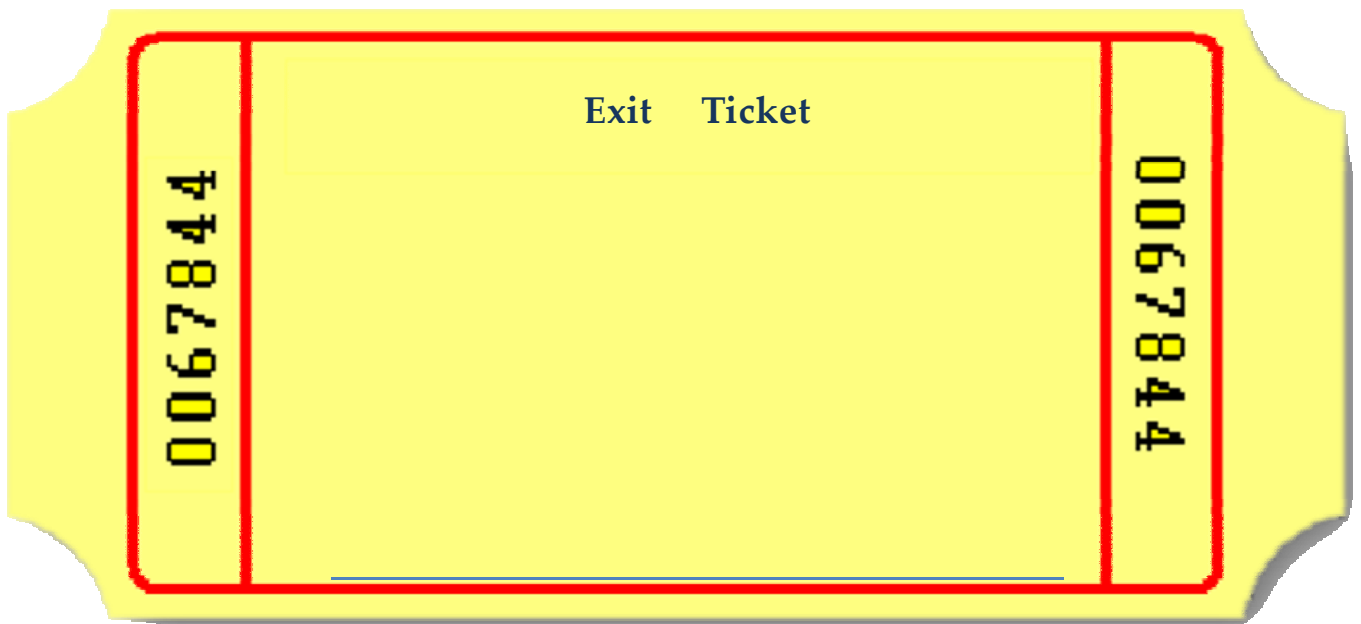
Purpose: The *Exit Ticket*, sometimes referred to as the *Exit Slip* or *Exit Note*, is a simple way to engage students in different types of writing in any content area. Students written responses can serve as formative assessment of their understanding of information and discussions covered during class.

Exit tickets assist students to think critically, reflect and consider what they have or have not learned. The Exit Ticket activity is an excellent approach for helping students remain focused on learning or to make connections with one day's learning to the next.

- Steps:**
1. Generally, students are required to write only a sentence or two on the Exit Ticket in response to a question, problem, or comment posed by the teacher.
 2. The assignment is normally given during the last three to five minutes of class and students respond to questions or requests such as:
 - What did you learn in class today?
 - What is still unclear to you about today's lesson?
 - What do you need additional assistance with?
 - Summarize our discussion of the _____.
 - Write a question about today's discussion.
 - Draw a diagram to show _____.
 - Work this problem.
 - What did the experiment teach you about _____ and _____?

When students respond in writing about what they have learned, teachers understand clearly what students understand or if they will need additional instruction. It is normally recommended that teachers do not grade students' responses on the exit ticket. By omitting or limiting grading, students will tend to be more truthful and feel freer in writing their responses. The Exit Ticket, when completed, may or may not be signed by the student (teacher option).

Exit Ticket



List below or on the ticket above two things you learned during today's class.

1.

2.