

# **Miracle on the Hudson**

**Using Evidence from Text**

**To Improve Written Responses  
Grades 3-8**

**DRAFT**

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## Improving Open Responses in Evidence-Based Questions

The first step in improving written responses on reading tests is to look at student work and find out what types of errors students are making. Once you've determined the types of errors, focused lessons to target the student weaknesses. It is not necessary to do all the mini-lessons in this packet, rather use the lessons that address the mistakes you see most often in the work of your students.

Ten of the most common problems and the lessons that address them:

1. Students do not read the passage or question carefully (lesson 1, 7, 8, 9, 11)
2. Students do not write enough or plan carefully (lesson 2, 5)
3. Students write a lot but choose all the wrong details (lesson 2, 3, 4, 5, 12)
4. Students put in details but are not specific enough (lesson 2, 3, 4, 5)
5. Students put in details but do not explain them at all (lesson 2, 3, 4, 5)
6. Students give wrong information because they don't look back (1, 2, 12)
7. Students do not answer all parts of the question (2)
8. Students simply retell the story but do not answer the question (4, 5, 7)
9. Students choose details from only one part of the selection (5, 6, 12)
10. Students do not know how to get started (1, 2, 6, 8, 11, 12)

There are, of course, other kinds of mistakes students make on open response questions: there is no attention to organization, handwriting, grammar or spelling. And, on some state tests, students might lose points because they do not keep their answer inside the box provided. You may be able to use the format and design of these lessons to address some of those problems. The most important thing is: Don't get overwhelmed--start small, look for measurable successes, and keep at it. With the right lessons, you should be able to make steady progress over time.

## Getting Started

The order of the lessons is not critical. Some teachers might have students try to answer the first assessment (lesson 1), and then after correcting papers, find the right review lessons that fit the kinds of mistakes students are making. Other teachers might start with lesson 6 because the topic sentence comes at the beginning of an answer. However, in the *Miracle on the Hudson* series, I would start with Lesson One, *Modeling What Good Readers Do*, because this introductory passage may be difficult for some students to read on their own. (I picked it because it is high interest, in the news, and happened recently.)

The mini-lessons are as follows:

1. Modeling what good readers do when they read..... P. 4
2. Planning an answer on a T-chart  
(matching main ideas to supporting details)..... P. 8
3. Sorting important details from not important details  
(relevant and not relevant) .....P. 12
  - a. Students create their own sort using another passage (your choice)
  - b. Students work to sort a set created by another pair of students
4. Understanding how to organize a good answer fits by putting  
an answer back together .....P. 14
5. Critiquing answers by ranking them from strong to weak ..... P 17
  - a. Fixing weak answers
  - b. Students write a weak answer for another group to critique
6. Practice writing topic sentences by circling key words .....P. 20
  - a. Critiquing topic sentences by ranking them from strong to weak
  - b. Students write weak and strong topic sentences for others to sort
7. Understanding open response questions and then writing one..... P. 23
8. Sorting and memorizing the criteria for a good answer .....P. 26
9. Sorting vocabulary on reading tests ..... P. 28
10. Making inferences .....P. 39
11. The Preview Game .....P. 40
12. The Look Back Game .....P. 43
13. Short Response Questions (Grade 3) .....P. 44
14. More ideas .....P. 53

## Lesson 1: Modeling What Good Readers Do

**Prepare:** Copy Sheet 1 onto a transparency and enough for each student.

**Explain** to students that are going to model what should be going on in your brain when you are reading. Tell them you are going to read a reading selection the way you might have read it when you were in their grade. Explain that they will hear the thoughts in your brain but they cannot call out and try and help you. Rather, they should listen and jot down notes when they see you use a good reading strategy.

Put the piece, *Miracle on the Hudson* (or a similar passage) on the overhead. Get into character (imagine yourself a struggling third grade reader). Then say things like:

*Oh gosh, this looks really hard to read. Oh, I hate reading these passages. Wait, look a picture, oh wow! It's that plane that landed on the river. Yeah, I know about this, the pilot was at the Super Bowl being honored. Hmm, what is the article called, what's the title? Oh, Mir-a-cul? Mir-a-cle or miracle on the Hudson. I don't know what Hudson is but I know that plane landing was a miracle! I bet this article is about what happened to that plane. Wait, let me see is there a question that goes with this passage? Oh, look an open response (go to sheet 2). "Explain why it was a miracle."*

*Hmm, okay, I'll look for those kind of details when I'm reading. I'll probably need to put in a lot of details to prove it. Okay, let me start reading. January 15<sup>th</sup> was a.... oh, wait, I'm forgetting to read the little introduction part up here in those slanty letters (italics). Wow, I'm glad I remember to read that part.*

Continue modeling at least the first paragraph. (sometimes I let the students read paragraph two, or I read it in my normal voice. I try not to go longer than 6-8 minutes.) I try to model lots of strategies:

1. Survey the passage and the question (look at captions, heading, list of characters)
2. Make predictions: "Oh I think this will be about a plane crash"
3. Underline key parts: "This looks important, water landings are extremely rare"
4. React as you go and write notes in the margins "Wow!" "I don't get this?"
5. Make connections: "Geez, I would have been scared, this reminds me of..."
6. Refer back to the picture: "Oh, here they are standing on the wings"
7. Sound out words but don't get hung up on a tough one, "Lagua...Lag...oh, I'll just call it LAG airport"
8. Use context clues: A-ten-dents? What? What is that?...well they must be helpers
9. Summarize as you go, "Okay, hit birds, I get that, that must be bad, engines out.."

10. Use the margins to mark up the text: “oh look here passengers on the wings, I’ll write, Icy cold” “rare? What is that? I’ll put a question mark here.”
11. Substitute letters for tricky names: “I’ll call him S, because I can’t say that name.”

When you are finished, do a Type One writing: Ask the students what reading strategies they noticed. Have them list 3 or more. After one or two minutes (depending on whether they took notes during your modeling or not). Then have them turn to a neighbor and share, checking anything they had in common and adding one more strategy. Then have a quick class discussion and draw out what they noticed, and build a list of good reading strategies on a chart. Tell them to copy down these strategies (or give a handout) and practice them tonight when they read. Tomorrow, they may be called on to model some of the strategies they saw today.

If I did not finish the passage during the modeling, I ask students to finish reading (alone or with a partner) and use some of the strategies. When they are done, maybe go back and underline some of the key details that prove it was really miraculous.

I would end with a quick quiz (Type 2). I might ask,

- A. List three important reading strategies I modeled
- B. Pick one strategy and briefly explain how it helps a reader understand better

Collect the Type Twos and score them on a 4 point scale.

**For a follow up** on this lesson visit the Youtube reanimation of this amazing landing: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imDFSnk1B0k&eurl=http://venturebeat.com/2009/02/09/scene-systems-uses-animations-to-reconstruct-scenes-such-as-sullys-crash-landing/>

*Imagine being on a plane high over New York City and finding out the engines have stopped working! You are too far away from the airport to go back and land. Read the article below to find out what happened to a jet airplane that had to make an emergency landing on the Hudson River.*

## **Miracle on the Hudson**

Based on an article from the newspaper, *USA Today*

January 15<sup>th</sup> was a clear, calm day in New York City-- a perfect day for flying. At 3:26 PM, a jet carrying 150 passengers left from LaGuardia Airport in New York on its way to South Carolina. Less than one minute into the flight, the plane ran into a flock of birds that caused the engines to stop working. With no time to go back to the airport, the quick thinking pilot, Chelsey “Sully” Sullenberger, made the decision to land the plane on the Hudson River. He glided it down carefully and landed on the water. The landing was so smooth that all of the 150 passengers and all five crew members were saved. Some didn’t even get wet!

Safe water landings are extremely rare. Todd Curtis, a jet expert, said, “This is only the fourth time in history a pilot has purposely landed a jet plane on water.” The jets usually flip over, crash, and then sink. In this case, even though the plane was going 125 miles per hour, the pilot landed it smoothly. Then, flight attendants helped passengers to remain calm and got them out onto the wings of the plane as it floated in the river. Rescuers arrived in boats and pulled the passengers to safety. The water was icy cold, but people stayed calm and worked together. It’s amazing that no one drowned. New York’s governor called it “a miracle on the Hudson.”



Some of the 150 passengers and crew on the wings of the jet as they wait to be rescued.



## Lesson 2: Planning Answers on a T-chart

(matching main ideas to supporting details)

**Prepare:** Put a T-chart on the board. Copy the T-chart (sheet 3) onto 12 sheets of card stock then cut them up and put a set of each in 12 plastic bags. (enough for pairs of students)

**Explain** to students that when you to prove something, explain something, or describe something the most important things is to use evidence, details, and examples that support your ideas. The T-chart is a good way to quickly organize your thinking. For example, if someone asked you to explain why winter can be difficult you might write something like this.

Ideas	Details
Snowy	Cars slip and slide
	Heavy to shovel
	Causes trees to fall...power goes out
Cold	Can cause frostbite
	Cars won't start
	Can't stay outside long

Explain to students that they will be getting a T-Chart for the *Miracle on the Hudson* article. Someone else has organized the ideas and details but it got all cut up. Their job is to put it back together by finding the main ideas and putting under the Ideas, column and finding the details and putting them under the ideas column. Ask students how they can know the difference between details and ideas (details are specific, they are examples, they are exact or precise...) You might need to model a piece of the T-chart by putting up one of the main ideas and then holding up one of the pieces and asking students, "Is this a main idea or a detail? Good, it's a detail. Now which main ideas does it support?")

Tell students if they finish early, they should make their own t-chart that answers this question, "What's good about summer? Tell them main ideas might be fun, relaxing, warm..."

If you don't have time to cut up the T-Chart, simply write one on the board and put down *Quick Thinking Pilot* on the left. Ask students to **Look Back** in the passage to find a detail for *Quick Thinking Pilot*. Then have them turn to a neighbor and share. This can be done as a series of mini-Type One assignments. Put a couple of ideas on the T-Chart in super abbreviated form. There is more than one way to do this. (see below)

Miracle	150 people, 5 crew saved
	planes don't usually land water
	"crash, flip, sink"
	4 <sup>th</sup> time
	No one drown--icy water
	All were calm

**Follow up with the Pilgrim manners sheet**



This is what you should be thinking before you start writing. What are your ideas and how are you going to **PROVE IT!** Cut this up and sort it into the right piles.

### Why is it a Miracle?

IDEAS	SPECIFIC DETAILS	EXPLAIN
Pilot quick thinking	Lands on Hudson	decides instantly good choice no crash into crowded city
Amazing-- plane landed safely	Hard to land on river only 4 <sup>th</sup> time going 125 miles per hour	?
Amazing-- that no one drowned.	Water icy cold Passengers had to wait on wings	All worked together, most people would panic, be selfish
Everyone was saved.	150 people and 5 crew all lived Some didn't get wet	Usually some die

**Make your own!**

<b>IDEAS</b>	<b>SPECIFIC DETAILS</b>	<b>EXPLAIN</b>

*Pilgrims lived in Massachusetts in colonial times. Read this selection about the eating habits and table manners of the Pilgrims. Then answer the questions that follow.*

## **Don't Throw Your Bones on the Floor**

by Lucille Recht Penner

Pilgrims parents were strict with their children. Some of the rules sound familiar, like this one (from a book called *The School of Manners*) about speaking with your mouth full:

When your meat is in your mouth,  
do not drink or speak or laugh—  
Dame Courtesy forbids.

But Pilgrim manners weren't always the same as ours. In their first years in America, they were often too busy for regular meals. People just helped themselves right out of the cooking pot. They ate standing—in front of the fire, if the day was cold—and then hurried off to work again.

When the family did eat together, the dinner table was often just some old boards laid on top of barrels. The cooking pot was placed in the middle, and the family gathered around.

According to the passage, Pilgrim manners weren't always the same as our manners. Describe how Pilgrim manners were different from ours. Support your answer with important details from the passage and then explain. (plan your answer below)

Idea	detail/reason/evidence	explain/elaborate

### Lesson 3: Sorting Important Details From Not Important Details

**Prepare:** Copy sheet 3 onto heavy weight paper. Then cut up each into small cards and put in a plastic bag. Prepare enough for each pair of students to have one set.

**Explain** to students that when answering questions it is important to be clear, complete, and accurate. Tell students that in your experience, many children have trouble in four areas.

1. They don't write enough and don't include enough details
2. They go off topic, putting in details from other sources but not the reading selection
3. They put in details from the passage but ones that don't really matter
4. They put in details but don't explain them

Tell students that in this activity they will have the chance to practice sorting the important, explained details from the unimportant, unexplained details. Tell them they will get a plastic bag filled with details from the article *Miracle on the Hudson*. Model for them what to do by picking out the headings **IMPORTANT EXPLAINED DETAILS** and the headings **UNIMPORTANT, NOT EXPLAINED DETAILS**. Then, remind students of the question, "Explain why the jet landing was called a miracle." Hold up a detail and ask them if this helps prove it was a miracle.

Tell students when they are finished they should try to put the important details into some kind of order (most important together, related ones together). Also, if they sorted it correctly they should probably have the same number of details in each column.

Go over the sorts when students finish (I usually hand out an answer key so students can check) but tell students that if they finish early they should be prepared to defend their ideas! Have them prepare a good explanation of how they were able to justify their choices (or ask them which one was the most difficult to sort.)

In your discussion, focus on 125 miles per hour as a detail. It is important, but only if it is explained! Going 125 miles per hour is not a miracle! What is miraculous is that this plane landed safely even though it was going so fast. Explain that calm days are not miraculous either, there are lots of calm days. Maybe the mayor saying it was a miracle could be proof that it's a miracle, but it's not your best evidence, he's only one person, after all.

**A follow up activity would** be making students create an Important/Unimportant sort for a different passage. See sheet #4.

Sort **unimportant/ unexplained details** into one column and **important/explained** into another

January 15 <sup>th</sup> was a clear, calm day. It was a perfect day for flying.	The jet landed safely on the water which is very rare.
The jet was carrying 150 passengers. The plane was going to South Carolina.	Even though the water was icy, people remained calm and no one drowned.
Todd Curtis is a jet expert.	The plane was going 125 miles per hour but still it landed smoothly on the water.
This happened in January of 2009.	All 150 people were saved. Some people didn't even get wet!
The plane hit a flock of birds.	Jets usually flip over when they hit the water, but this one didn't.
The plane was going 125 miles per hour.	The pilot was quick thinking and he didn't try to land in the crowded city. He decided to go for the river.
The water was icy.	This is only the fourth time a jet has landed on the water on purpose. They usually flip, crash, and sink.
The governor called it a miracle on the Hudson.	Everyone helped. The rescuers, the pilots, flight attendants, and passengers all did a good job.

## Lesson 4: Understanding How to Organize an Answer

**Prepare:** Cut sheet #5 onto heavy stock paper (enough for pairs of students to have a set.) Then cut them up into strips and put them in quart-sized plastic bags or paper clip them together so that each pair of students has one set.

**Explain** to students that it is not enough to have details when you are answering a question. It is important to organize your ideas so that they are clear and easy to understand. You often have to explain your details. In this activity, you will receive a really good answer in the form of a paragraph but it has been cut apart. (You can say that you don't know who keeps cutting up these perfectly good papers.) Your job is to read each strip and figure out who to put it back together. Remind them to pay close attention to the transition words (words that link ideas together).

Say to students, "When you are finished, plan with your partner how you will present your answer. You can switch back and forth, each of you reading a strip or some other method. Practice reading and then be prepared to explain how you placed one of your strips. I will be calling on each group to read one strip.

Give groups time to prepare and then call on different groups to read the piece. Since there are only 6 strips, I would call on two groups to read each strip and tell why they decided it should be in that order.

Example of a group presentation:

"I know this part, "Some people didn't even get wet" goes after "all 150 passengers and 5 crew were saved because it is just another detail about how they saved everyone.

Another group might say,

"We think 'some people didn't even get wet should go at the end because it sounds like a snappy ending."

You can listen to the different ideas on sorting and let students know that there are different ways to organize but they should make sure they method is clear!

**A follow-up activity** might be to have students write their own sentences for a sorting activity that another group could put back together. They could use a different reading passage. See samples at the end of packet.

Sample paragraph to cut up and students put back together.

This landing was called a miracle for several reasons.

First, the pilot was “quick thinking” and very skillful. He chose to land on the water instead of the crowded city. Then he smoothly landed the plane on the Hudson River and all 150 people and 5 crew were saved.

Not only was everyone saved, some people didn't even get wet.

Another reason it was a miracle is jets don't usually land on the water.

The article says this is only the 4<sup>th</sup> time a jet has landed on purpose in the water because the jets usually “flip over, crash and sink.”

Finally, everyone did their job by “remaining calm” and no one drowned in the icy water.

Make your own sentence sort for other students to put back together.



## **Lesson 5: Understanding the Difference Between a Good, Medium, and Weak Answer**

**Prepare:** Copy sheet #6 onto heavy weight paper, so that you have enough for each pair of students to have a set of the three responses. Or, if you don't have time, copy the sheet so each student has one.

**Explain** to students that in order to get good at something, it is important to know what good looks like. Whenever you are learning an instrument or a sport, you need to have a model of what good playing sounds like and looks like. In this activity, you will see 3 student responses. None of them are perfect. You and your partner will have to rank them from best to worst and be prepared to argue your case using specific details from each passage.

I usually have students do a Type One before the lesson to make sure they know the important characteristics of a good response. (“On a sheet of paper, please list at least three things a good answer should include. You have 2 minutes.) I’m looking for topic sentence, specific, relevant, details and explaining the details.

Notice that the responses are all about the same length. Also, notice that the first one sounds pretty good because of the topic sentence and the closer but really it does not contain very much specific information. “Going really fast,” “usually crash” “everyone saved.” Also it has too many pronouns. Also, “water was icy” isn’t explained. What does that have to do with the miracle? On this reading test, students should always put in exact details! There are no points awarded for a topic sentence or a closer. All the points are for details—it is a reading test! The third response, while it does not have a topic sentence, has many more specific details. “quick thinking” “glided it down” “landed smoothly” “150 people, 5 crew” “everyone was calm” “worked together” “no one drowned in icy water.” I would give this response a high 3, maybe a 4, because while a topic sentence is important it is, according to the DOE, not necessary for a 4. The students must answer in a clear, complete, accurate way.

After letting students study the responses (sorting them and maybe taking some notes on a T-chart), I would have discussion and I would emphasize asking students to support their scores with specific details. I might put them in groups and have them prepare a quick argument why they think a response is best (or worst). One person would read the passage, one person would offer strengths, another offer weaknesses and the last person would give suggestions to improve the piece. I would model the beginning of a presentation and tell the students the FCAs for this activity.

FCAs for presentation

All people in the group have a job and give evidence to support (except the reader)  
Smooth transitions between speakers and have a clear ending (end with thank you)

**Cut these out or ask students to sort these 3 responses into good, fair and weak.**

A. It was a miracle for several reasons. First, the pilot landed the plane and saved everyone. It was going really fast and planes usually crash. Everyone was saved. They got saved from the water. The water was icy. They were standing waiting for them. Also, he said it was a miracle. Those are the reasons this was a miracle. I'm glad I wasn't on the plane.

B. On January 15<sup>th</sup> it was clear and calm. It was a perfect day for flying. The jet was going to South Carolina. It left the airport and hit some birds. All the engines stopped. It landed on the water safely. Some didn't get wet. The pilot was named "sully." There were 150 people on the plane.

C. The pilot was quick thinking because he knew he couldn't go back to the airport so he "glided the jet down" and "landed it smoothly" on the Hudson River. Jets don't usually land on the water. They usually "flip over, crash and sink." Also, no one died, all 150 people and 5 crew were saved. Another thing is that everyone was calm and worked together. No one drowned in the icy water.

## Writing a Weak and Strong Response

Write a response that would get a low score and a response that would get a high score. You can use the FCAs above as a guide. For the low score, try to make one or two of the common mistakes:

- Don't use a topic sentence
- Don't use details from the passage
- Don't use enough details
- Pick details that don't answer the question
- Don't answer all parts of the question
- Don't organize your answer; don't put in transition words

FCAs for a weak answer

Make 1-2 mistakes from above list

Neat handwriting

Mostly correct conventions (spelling, end marks...)

FCAs for a strong answer

Topic sentence restates and answers

5-7 specific supporting details and explain

Transition words make it clear

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## Lesson 6: Writing Better Topic Sentences

**Prepare:** Prepare worksheets 11-12. On chart paper copy one of the questions from the worksheet.

**Explain** to students that writing a topic sentence that re-states the question (turn the question around) is helpful because it gives you a place to start. It also helps focus you on the question being asked. In this activity we will practice this skill by circling the key parts of the question to use in your answer and then make some notes how to answer (adding in verbs, switching the order of words etc.)

Model turning around the question from one on the sheet. Show how to circle the words you will use as well as changing the verb to the correct tense etc. Then have a student do the circling and another rewrite the topic sentence.

While this skill is not assessed on many state tests, it does get the students pointed in the right direction. Show students that some questions call for more a general topic sentence:

**Explain why the Red Sox will win the World Series.**

The Red Sox will win the World Series for many reasons.

Others call for a more flavorful response (with the gist of the answer)

**Describe the character of Donkey in the movie *Shrek*.**

In the movie *Shrek*, Donkey is a loyal friend.

**Topic Sentence that Restate!**

Circle the key parts of the answer that you will use in your topic sentence. Then create a topic sentence that restates the question. Remember avoid giving specific details in your topic sentence.

1. According your knowledge of the baseball, explain why the Red Sox are successful. Support your answer with important details from the Red Sox.

The Red Sox are successful for several reasons. (Open)

The Red Sox are successful because of their excellent players. (Gives gist/flavor)

2. Based on your knowledge of sharks, explain why is it not a good idea to swim with sharks. Support your answer with details from your knowledge of sharks.

3. Based on today's lunch, describe how your classmates eat. Use specific details from the meal to support your answers.

4. Based on the Movie *Shrek*, describe how Shrek's feelings toward Donkey change from the beginning of the movie until the end.

5. Based on your knowledge of your teacher, explain something your teacher has helped you with this year. Support your answer with important details from the classroom.

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6. Imagine the forecast is calling for 3 inches of snow. Explain if school should be cancelled. Support your ideas with specific details.

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7. Explain why Mr. Crabs likes Sponge Bob. Use specific and important details from the show to support your answer.

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8. Based on your understanding of school, describe 4 reasons why you should raise your hand in class. Use details from your classroom experience to support your answer.

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## Lesson 7: Making Up Your Own Open Response Question

**Prepare:** Copy sheet #13 and #14. Make an overhead of both.

**Explain:** Explain to students that being able to write a good question is a critical skill. You might have to write one if you are a doctor training other doctors, or if you are a good lawyer cross-examining a witness. In this activity you will get the chance to look at some old test questions and then write your own.

Tell student you are going to quickly read some of the old test questions from the MCAS test in Massachusetts. When you are finished, ask them to do a Type One: “What do these old questions have in common?” After some sharing with a partner, tell them you have the top 4 answers on the overhead. Cover these with post-it notes and play a version of the *Family Feud*.

Some things they have in common:

- BASED ON THE TEXT
- DESCRIBE OR EXPLAIN
- SUPPORT YOUR ANSWER
- USE IMPORTANT/SPECIFIC DETAILS
- LOT OF NON-FICTION
- SOME HAVE 2-3 PARTS

I lead them in a quick discussion of each, pointing out what they mean.

Based on the text: they don't want your Grandfather's ideas or the Discovery Channel's ideas

DESCRIBE/EXPLAIN: These are the two big verbs! Describe generally means tell more about, use adjectives and details. Explain usually means you have give steps, lots of details and tell why or how.

SUPPORT: This is not a memory test! You need to look back and find examples, reasons and details that are important and support your ideas!

IMPORTANT DETAILS: Include lots of quotes!

NON-FICTION: Remember to preview the article!

2-3 PARTS: Make sure you answer all the parts. And, try to use information from all over the article to prove you read the whole thing. But stay on topic! For example, if it asks you to describe problem from before the flight and after the flight—answer both parts!

Next, We practice making up question about the weather, sports, cafeteria food etc. Then I model reading the passage on worms. In pairs, they must make up a good question. We'll score them using the FCAs. Follow up would include reading assignments where students must come in with an Open Response Question!

## Looking at Sample Open Response Test Questions

<i>Annie Smith Peck</i>	Based on the article, describe the challenges Annie Smith Peck faced throughout her life. Support your answer with important details from the article.	Biography
<i>Fenway Park</i> by Elizabeth Carpentiere	Based on the article, what do Fenway Park workers do to help fans have an enjoyable experience at the ballpark? Support your answer with important details from the article.	Nonfiction
<i>Voyager's Amazing Journey</i> by Steve Osborn	Based on the article, describe the problems that <i>Voyager's</i> team faced, both before and during the flight. Support your answer with important details from the article.	Nonfiction – historical & Biographical
<i>Buying a Puppy</i>	Describe the different feelings that the speaker has throughout the poem. Support your answer with important details from the poem.	Poem
<i>Jane on Her Own</i> by Ursula Guin	Based on the chapter, explain why Jane decides to go on an adventure. Support your answer with important details from the chapter.	Fiction
<i>Diggin' Dirt</i> by Ellen Braaf	The article states that “dirt is amazing stuff!” Based on the article, explain why dirt is so important. Support your answer with important information from the article.	Nonfiction – science
<i>Bringing Back Salmon</i> by Jeffrey Rich	In the article “Bringing Back Salmon,” the students raise salmon eggs. a. Describe how the students cared for the eggs. b. Describe how the eggs hatched. c. Describe how the students knew when to release the eggs into the creek. Support your answers with important details from the article.	Nonfiction – science



FCAs

Question fits passage and could be answered with the details in the passage 4

Use at least 3 test words 3

Capital and end marks, test words spelled correctly. 3

# Watching Worms

By Cassie Brenn

**W**orms help our gardens grow. They wriggle through the soil, breaking up chunks of dirt and making it loose. It's easier for plant roots to push through the loose soil and grow deeper into the ground. The worm tunnels also leave space in the soil for the water to reach the plant roots.

That's not all. Worms help feed the plants, too. They add important nutrients to the soil by eating dead plants and leaves that fall on the ground. The plants use the nutrients to make the food they need to grow big and strong.

## Test words to use:

According to the....

Based on the...

passage

excerpt

article

story

explain

describe

compare

support

important

specific

details

**Make up an open response question for the passage above. Use 3 or more of test words in your question.**

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## **Lesson 8: Giving Visual Symbols for Key Skills**

1. Support (Show holding a baby or something like that)
2. Ideas: (point to temples)
3. Specific: (point to something very specific on your clothing, stripes, collar, the material or pinch your fingers together very specific, narrow...)
4. Details, examples, reasons (show an x with fingers for examples, a tail for details, reasons make a lower case “r” with your right hand) (develop ideas show a turning motion with finger near head)
5. Find: Point to text (your open hands)
6. Text/story: cup hands in shape of a book
7. Look back: pantomime flipping pages as you look back in an imaginary book
8. Short quotes not long quotes: use the quotation marks symbols with your hands in the air. Expand them in the air and shake no.
9. Elaborate/tell more/ explain ideas, explain quotes: use hands curling back to self, urging student forward, give me more information
10. Check it over! Make a giant check in the air.
11. Restate question or topic sentence. (Show an arc with your hands over your head indicating it must be broad enough to cover the ideas. Pantomime one hand going toward the other hand and grabbing part of question stem.)
12. Use transition words (cup hands while interlocking fingers and say “first, next, also, most importantly, furthermore...)
13. Focus! Stay on topic! (bring hands down in a V motion, focusing them)
14. Close it up, you are done: (finger swirling in circular motion and ending in a fist)
15. No pronouns! (Wag finger then point to self...)
16. Fill the box with lots of information (clap hands together and expand into a box.)
17. Use information from several places in the text (point to several places around you)
18. Answer all parts! (pantomime writing in air in several places)
19. Change question? (gesture beginning middle end, palm face up)
20. Capital letters and end marks (make a triangle over your head like a capital A and stomp for an end mark)

Topic sentence restates question (TTQA with flavor)

5-7 specific, supporting details from story (Lots of short quotes, paraphrases from different, relevant places and cite them!)

Explain your details (elaborate but stay on topic!)

Use transition words (In the beginning, after...)

Check it over!  
(Did you answer all parts?)

**Lesson 9**  
**MCAS PHRASE SORT GRADES 5-10**

<b>Phrases which mean <i>the text</i>: “based on the...”</b>	<b>Figurative Language*</b>	<b>MCAS Adjectives adverbs</b>	<b>MCAS Verbs</b>	<b>MCAS Nouns</b>
excerpt passage information article selection	alliteration	relevant specific detailed	summarize compare analyze persuade	argument relationship
drama play hero’s tale fable	personifi- cation	best	describe identify explain	characteristics traits characterization
line paragraph	similes metaphors	primarily	Italicized indicated contribute to...	effect mood
tall tale narrative myth	hyperbole	most nearly most likely	indicate express suggest	synonym antonym
poem stanza	onomat- opoeia	most effectively	support conclude benefit	irony imagery

Here is a universal list of the Grade 3 MCAS vocabulary words/terms that teachers at the elementary levels will begin to incorporate into their daily classroom language:

- mark your choice
- filling in the circle
- best vs. good answer
- best choice
- event
- multiple choice
- mostly (poem is mostly about) or most likely about
- antonym
- stanza/verse
- article
- drama (play)
- inquire
- how she reached each goal (pg.15)
- why is this not a good
- adjective, contraction, noun, synonym, verb, adverb, pronouns
- differently
- according to the story
- based on the story/passage/paragraph
- according to the selection/article/passage
- what kind of selection/story
- summarize/summary
- in paragraph “x”
- making an inference
- Italics
- drawing your own conclusion
- parts of speech
- greatest problem
- best describes
- genres
- is not (the not questions) (or opposite of)
- selection
- passage
- paragraph
- open response
- in the space provided
- narrator/speaker
- compare
- describe feelings
- greatest
- goals
- context clues
- opinion
- predict
- list
- sequence
- details
- text
- label/number
- cause/effect
- main idea
- supporting details
- theme
- characteristics
- personality traits
- excerpt

Practicing inferencing with a poem.

In autumn the falling leaves  
Run races on the paths,  
Tumble head over heels  
And catch against the tufts of grass.

I gather them in a heap  
With a stiff brush and a rake,  
Though they are light as feathers  
And do their best to escape.

Then I splash right into the heap  
And the leaves wash over me  
With a long swishing sound  
Like a wave of the sea.



*Is there something special about being up in the branches of a tree? What happens up there? Is a tree a perfect place to be? The speaker in this poem has some answers. Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.*

## EVERY TIME I CLIMB A TREE

Every time I climb a tree  
 Every time I climb a tree  
 Every time I climb a tree  
 I scrape a leg  
 Or skin knee  
 And every time I climb a tree  
 I find some ants  
 Or dodge a bee  
 And get the ants  
 all over me

And every time I climb a tree  
 Where have you been?  
 They say to me  
 But don't they know that I am free  
 Every time I climb a tree?  
 I like it best  
 To spot a nest  
 That has an egg  
 Or maybe three

And then I skin  
 The other leg  
 But every time I climb a tree  
 I see a lot of things to see  
 Swallows, rooftops and TV  
 And all the fields and farms there be  
 Every time I climb a tree  
 Though climbing may be good for ants  
 It isn't awfully good for pants  
 But still it's pretty good for me  
 Every time I climb a tree

--David McCord



**Specific, important, relevant, explained details not**

**Unimportant, not relevant, not specific or explained details**

<p>The poet says he is free when he climbs a tree. All kids like being free.</p>	<p>He skins his knees. He gets his clothes ripped. He dodges bees.</p>
<p>Everyone asks the poet, “where have you been?” This means the kid has been hiding out in the tree and is enjoying his secret place.</p>	<p>“Where have you been?” they say to me.</p>
<p>He likes to “spot a nest that has an egg or maybe three”. The poet likes being out with nature and the tree puts him closer to birds and bees and ants.</p>	<p>It says, there are ants and bees. He dodges. He gets ants all over me. And then I skin the other leg.</p>
<p>The poet likes the view from the tree with the rooftops and fields and farms.</p>	<p>This is a poem about a boy who climbs a tree. He looks around up there. He gets bugs on him. He sees things.</p>
<p>Even though he skins his legs and gets ants on him, you can tell the poet likes climbing trees because he says, “it’s pretty good for me.”</p>	<p>Climbing is not good for pants. It’s good for me. Every time I climb a tree.</p>
<p>The poet likes dodging bees and getting ants on him. I know this because it says, “every time” this means he must climb all the time. This means he actually likes it.</p>	<p>One time my mom told me not to climb a tree but I climbed it anyway.</p>
<p>The poet says he “skins his kness” and it is “isn’t awfully good for his pants”, but he says is pretty good for him. He doesn’t care that much about his clothes, he wants adventure.</p>	<p>I really like this poem because I like to climb trees.</p>
<p>One reason climbing trees is good is because he feels free and he can escape his parents or whoever is looking for him. It says, “don’t they know that I am free” when I’m climbing trees.</p>	<p>This poems rhymes and I like that.</p>



I'm a little mixed up  
By Eric Ode  
(Sing to the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

I'm a little mixed-up. That's a fact.  
Coat hooks are empty. Chairs have been stacked.  
No one's in the classroom. Something's wrong.  
I guess I hid in the john too long.

I'm a little mixed-up. This I know.  
Where is my teacher? Where did she go?  
When she gave a math test to the class,  
I snuck away with a bathroom pass.

I'm a little mixed-up. That's my fate.  
Here is my classroom. Here's where I'll wait.  
Maybe I was late, but I'm no fool:  
On Monday, I'll be the first at school.



<http://www.gigglepoetry.com/poem.aspx?PoemID=725&CategoryID=35>

From the book: Text © Eric Ode reprinted from [I've Been Burping in the Classroom](#), published by Meadowbrook Press.  
Illustration © Stephen Carpenter.



Sort these topic sentences from good to bad.

Explain how the boy in the poem knows something is wrong.

The boy knows something is wrong because everything seems different.

He's a little mixed up that I know.

I once went the bathroom and forgot to come out too!

The coat hooks, he's standing on the toilet, the busses, coat hooks, chairs, teacher and he'll be on time Monday and when he took the bathroom pas and all of that.

Knows it because of stuff.

Sheet 18

Make up four topic sentences and write them in the boxes below. Make one great, one good, one fair, and one terrible. Then other students will try to sort them from best to worst.

## Lesson 10: Inferencing

**Prepare:** Create a backpack or suitcase filled with objects you might take on a tropical vacation or mountain climbing vacation or other vacation.

Tropical: beach-type place  
 Frisbee  
 Hat  
 sandals  
 Sunglasses  
 Suntan lotion  
 Headphones for plane (passport?)  
 Camera  
 Swimsuit  
 Book (teaching and/or guide to Honduras)

### Explain:

Explain to students that today they are going to learn about inferencing. (write on board) Tell students that inferencing means “using clues to help you understand.” Tell them inferencing is like what detectives must do to help them solve mysteries.

Tell students that today, they are going to practice inferencing. Explain that you found this suitcase (bag, backpack) on the street and you know the person was going somewhere. Their job is to use the clues to help understand where the person was going.

Gradually, take items out of the bag and have students record their guesses on a 2 or 3 column t-chart and then share with neighbors. After a few items, check in with students by asking them to support their ideas with evidence. As you pull more items out their ideas may change. At the end, reveal all the items and explain how you must use all the clues to make a good guess. Next, do another suitcase or practice on a poem.

<b>Ideas</b>	<b>evidence</b>	<b>explain</b>
Beach	sunglasses, hat	sunny, need protection

### The Preview Game

**Prepare:** Find any reading selection that has text features or content that students need to know. Make copies for each student and, if possible, make a copy for the overhead or Smart-board®.

**Objective:** Students will be able to preview a passage and then based on the preview, answer questions with 75% accuracy.

**Explain:** Tell students, “Today we are going to work on a critical reading skill called previewing. Previewing is important because the more you know about something, the easier it is to learn more. Before you read or watch something you need to activate your prior knowledge, wake up your brain, and get a good look at the material. Athletes look carefully over the course or field before they play, musicians look over their music, and doctors look over their patients.

We are going to play a game called The Preview Game to strengthen your previewing skills. I will give you one to two minutes (depending on the length) to look over a short passage or problem. Since you won’t have a long time to preview, what kind of things will you look at (the title, topic sentences, captions)? Turn to your neighbor and discuss.”

Call on pairs and then process and post their ideas. Remind students to look at some of the following:

1. The Title (and the “blurb” — any introductory words written before, above, or just after the title)
2. Pictures, photographs, captions, tables, diagrams, maps, graphs, time-lines, subtitles, footnotes, bi-lines, geographical information, sidebars, pronunciation guides...)
3. Section **headings**
4. **Bold words**
5. The first sentence of each paragraph and/or the last sentence of each paragraph
6. Questions at the end of the selection

Additionally, tell students to note the genre and pay attention to features related to the genre.

- Non-fiction: main ideas/details, text structure—problem solution/compare/chronological/cause-effect
- Biography: early life, struggles, significant others, achievements
- Fiction: characters, setting, plot
- Poetry: mood, language
- Tall tales, fables, myths: impressive feats, morals, phenomena explained
- Plays: characters, setting, staging or stage directions, costumes
- Open Response questions in math, science, social studies: titles, keys, graphs, scales, questions, key vocabulary

After reminding students what to look for, tell them, “You have one minute, GO.”

#### Follow up:

Tell students to number their paper 1-5. Then, ask some of the following questions in quiz format.

- #1. Is this fiction or non-fiction? (Or what genre is it? What kind of non-fiction? What kind of poem?)
- #2. In 5-10 words, what is this passage/problem about? (Or what did the blurb say?)
- #3. Describe any pictures/charts/graph/maps. (What was the picture showing?)
- #4. What was the title? And/or remember any section titles or bold words? (If important, author, date?)
- #5. What was or what would be a question that might be answered in (or related to) the selection?
- #6. (Optional) Anything else you noticed? (How long was the passage? How many stanzas? Lines? Paragraphs? Sections? What key vocabulary? How many questions? Setting? Characters?)



After the quiz, have them check with a neighbor, go over the answers and/or collect them. Have them report their scores, “How many got all four right? How many got three right? Two? If you were going preview again, what would you do differently?” Repeat and look for improvement.

The *Nautilus* was the first submarine that used nuclear power. Read about its most famous trip and then answer the questions that follow.

## The *Nautilus*

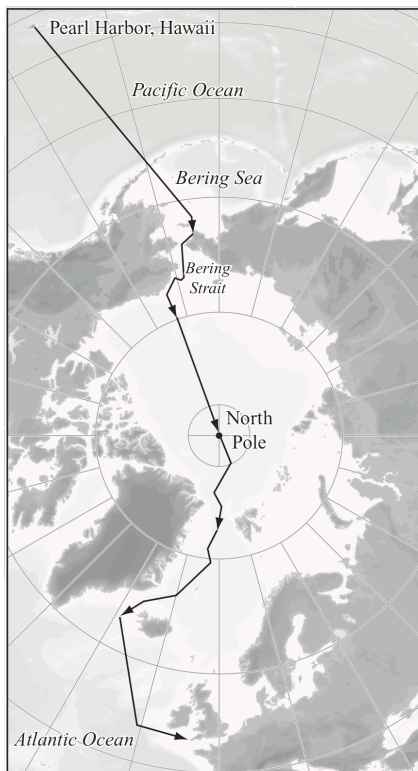
by Patrick O'Brien

1 The *Nautilus* was the first nuclear-powered submarine. Before the *Nautilus* was launched in 1954, submarines ran on electric power when cruising underwater and used diesel fuel when on the surface. They were slow, and they could only stay underwater for a few hours at a time. Because the *Nautilus* used nuclear power it was twice as fast as any other submarine and could stay underwater for weeks.

2 In June of 1958 the *Nautilus* set out from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on a top-secret mission to reach the North Pole. There is no land at the North Pole. It is in the middle of the Arctic Ocean, and the water is covered with a huge sheet of ice hundreds of miles across. The captain of the *Nautilus*, William Anderson, steered his sub north toward the Pole, and in the Bering Sea between Russia and Alaska, dove under the Arctic ice sheet. But the bottom of the ice sheet went down so deep that the *Nautilus* was forced to a depth of only a few feet off the seafloor. It was too dangerous, and Captain Anderson had to turn the *Nautilus* back.

3 The ice sheet melted a little as summer arrived, and the *Nautilus* tried again in July. Captain Anderson was able to find an area where the ice sheet was not too thick. He had plenty of room between the bottom of the ice and the seafloor, but he still had to steer carefully around the

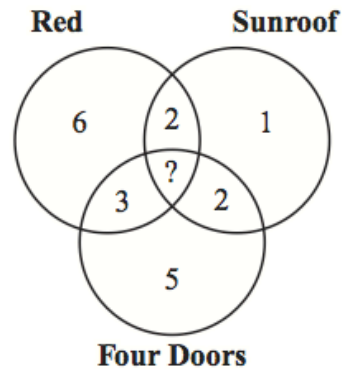
**The *Nautilus*'s Route  
beneath the North Pole**



**Grade 8 MCAS  
2007**

- 39** Brad made the Venn diagram below to show the number of cars in a parking lot that were red, had four doors, had a sunroof, or had any combination of those features. He left one number off his Venn diagram.

**Features of Cars  
in Parking Lot**



- Describe what the 6 represents in the Venn diagram.
- A total of 20 cars in the parking lot were red, had four doors, had a sunroof, or had any combination of those features. What number should Brad put in place of the “?” in the center section of his Venn diagram? Show or explain how you got your answer.
- What was the total number of cars in the parking lot that were red? Show or explain how you got your answer.

## The Crazy Artist or Mark it Up Game!

**Prepare:** Scan, copy the article for use with a document camera, or prepare an overhead.

**Objective:** Students will be able to mark-up a passage that shows they understand what they read.

**Explain:** Tell students that with complicated articles, many readers read with a “pen in hand.” They do this to actively attend to the text, make connections, summarize passages, and mark up parts to return to later. Explain that readers have different methods of “marking” or “annotating” the text. Often it is a combination of underlining, drawing lines down the side of a text, writing words or symbols in the margin, or highlighting. It is important not to over-underline or over-highlight a passage, because then it’s hard to see what is truly important.

Tell students, “I will read this passage and mark it up in a way that’s helpful to me. I want you to “do what I do” (later, we will discuss other options for marking it up). Next, you will read a bit and mark it up in your way. We’ll put some student samples up on the overhead and discuss how effectively each person has marked up his/her passage.

**Follow up:** After modeling, have students read some of the passage on their own and then put student samples up on the projector or overhead to critique. Have students explain what they did and why they did it. If they’ve done a good job, they should be able to retell the article part by part. Also, play the “Look Back” game and see if the annotations helped them.

In A Dog Year, Jon Katz writes about the strong bond that develops between him and his two yellow Labrador retrievers, Julius and Stanley. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

# from A DOG YEAR

by Jon Katz

It was like a puzzle that fits

Adj ->

Cute



1 We hardly had a bad moment, the three of us, so neatly did we fit together, interlocking pieces of the puzzle that is the varied partnership between humans and dogs.

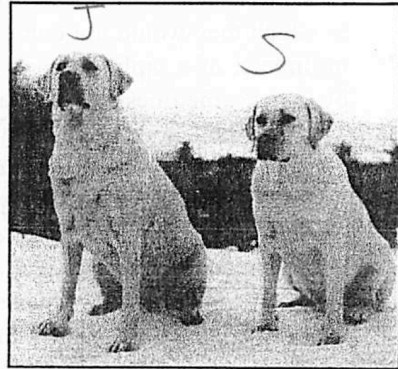
2 Julius and Stanley embodied the noblest characteristics of their proud breed. They were handsome, loyal, utterly dependable, and affectionate. Julius came first. My daughter was young, and while there are different viewpoints about this, I personally don't believe there's a more rewarding moment for a parent than handing a happy, squirming, doe-eyed Lab puppy over to a small kid. I carry the look on her face in my memory, and while there are times when I can't remember what day of the week it is, I can always recall the wonder and joy in her eyes as if it had just happened.

3 Although I bought the dog with my daughter in mind, she was soon playing computer games and collecting garish-looking dolls, and I was out in the chill winter mornings cheering and exulting when a puzzled but earnest puppy took a dump outside. ← Funny

4 Julius became mine, of course, the two of us bonding as if by Crazy Glue.

5 A year later, the breeder called and invited me to take a ride with my daughter to see the new litter. I was just looking, I assured my muttering and incredulous wife, Paula, who'd dragged Julius's old plastic dog crate out of the basement, ready to house its new resident, before I'd left the driveway.

6 My daughter and I returned with tiny, heart-melting Stanley. Julius was initially dubious about this new pest he had to contend with, but within a couple of days the two Labs loved each other as much as I loved them both, and they loved me and my family and, well, everybody who passed by.



LOVING

### The Look Back Game

**Prepare:** Find any reading selection that has text features or content that students need to know. Make copies for each student and if possible, make a transparency for the overhead or scan for Smart-board®. Read the passage with the children.

**Objective:** Students will be to quickly find sections of the text by “looking back” and using annotations.

**Explain:** Tell students, “Today we are going to work on a critical reading skill: Looking back and skimming through a text for key information. We are going to play a game called the **Look Back** game. In a minute, I will ask to you look back in the article we read together and find a specific spot. It will probably be an important detail or some key idea. You should think to yourself, “Where is that part? Beginning? Middle? End?” Then go back and find it. When you find it, circle it (or point to it), and raise you hand. If the whole class their hand up in 20 seconds we will get a point. (If 75% has hand up then award ½ point. Or if less than 75% have hands up, I get a point. First one to five wins.) Well practice first. Find the place where it shows the title! Go.” After all hands are up, I’ll say, “Wow! Now, let’s play for real. Ready? Find the part where...”

Play for a while by asking students to find different spots: Where does the article tell about... ? Where does the article explain the meaning of... ? Find the place where the chart the shows the population of... ? Where it describes... ? Where in the poem does it compare.... ? Find the place where the character... ? Find the place where it tells how many... You can ask inferential type questions also, and have students find the general place to go for support.” As you play, you might record the times on the board. Wow, 4.75 seconds!

After playing for a while, ask students how certain students how they found things so quickly. Remind them that good readers skim, they use key words, and headings. They run their finger along the text, they look for numbers, and use the pictures. (I’ve seen teachers play a similar game when trying to get students to use the Guide Words in a dictionary.)

Tell students that when you read the article for the first time, you should mark it up in the margins, react to what you are reading by putting question marks, exclamation points, or little drawings. You might show them a passage that you marked up and talk about how you could find parts easily because of how you marked it up. For example, “I found the shocking part about the icebergs quickly because I had written WOW in the margin.”

Consider having a prize if the class gets to five points after playing just 7 rounds. See if they can break their record the next time.

### Follow up

Whenever students argue, study, or answer questions in class about what they have read, tell them to look back and find the place. When they answer orally, make them say, “IN PARAGRAPH 4, it says...” “THE VENN DIAGRAM SHOWS THAT...” Make them always refer to the part where they found the key information.

For the selection called *Nautilus*, I would say:

1. Find the part where it shows the title.
2. Find the part where it tells how the crew reacted when they got to the North Pole.
3. Find the part where it shows the route.
4. Find the part where it describes how nuclear submarines are different from the older kind
5. Find the part where it describes exactly why the captain turned back.
6. Find the part it describes how he “steered around the icebergs.”

For the Math problem, I might say.

1. Find the part where it tells who made the Venn Diagram.
2. Find the part where it tells how many cars were in the parking lot that were red.
3. Find the title of the Venn Diagram. Find the two questions.

You can also, push students to elaborate on their answers, explain them more. For example, in the Nautilus piece, you might say, “Look back and find part where it explains *specifically* why Captain Anderson turned back on the first mission.” Then, when a student answers, “It says that they were only a few feet off the sea floor...” ask, “Where is that part? Which paragraph or line?” The student should get in the habit of saying something like, “In paragraph one it says...” Or “In line 4, the author writes...” After they offer this citation, push the students to elaborate. Ask, “Why is that dangerous? What does this say about Captain Anderson? Can you explain more?” For immature students you might have them use a stock phrase like “This shows that...” to begin their elaboration. If students can verbally rehearse their answers, *all the time*, they will get better at writing this way.

## Lesson 13 Short Response Questions

Often you must answer a question after reading a story. Sometimes a question requires a really long answer with lots of details from the story. For example:

*In the Three Little Pigs, describe a characteristic of the third little pig. Use details from the story to support your answer.*

In this situation, called Open Response, you should give lots of details to support your ideas and explain all your ideas. You should write something like this:

*The third pig was smart, patient, and kind to his brothers. He made his house out of bricks, which is a good idea because they are strong. Also, it took him a long time to build his house. This shows that the third pig was patient and determined. Finally, he was kind to let his brothers come in the house when the wolf came. He didn't have to let them in, but it was really nice that he did.*

However, there is another kind of question called short response. A short response question needs a shorter answer. You should give a clear, complete answer with a main idea and a few details. For example, if the question is: *Explain how the third pig outsmarted the wolf.* You might write:

**The third pig built a strong house of bricks. He also built a fire so the wolf wouldn't get in.**

Try to get right to the main idea of the question and answer it as completely you can in one or two sentences.

### Sample Short Response Question:

*What is a short response question? Write your answer in the box below.*

A short response is a short answer to a question. It has the main ideas and is complete but with only a few details.



## Common Mistakes on Short Response

By Bill Atwood

Students make four kinds of mistakes on short response questions. First, they give an answer that is too short! Make sure you write enough to answer all parts of the question completely! The second mistake is that students write too big, and they don't fit their answer in the box. You must get all your ideas in the box! The third mistake is students write a long, long topic sentence and run out of room. In short response, get right to work and don't be afraid to start answering in your first sentence! You can quickly turn the question around and then use the word "because" in your sentence. Finally, don't forget to stay on topic and answer the question with information from the text! Focus on big ideas!

### Short Response Question:

*Explain the mistakes students make on short response.*

Student write answers that are too short or they write too big. Also, they write long topic sentences and run out of room. They go off topic.

## What Good Readers Do

By Bill Atwood

Good readers use several strategies before they start reading. First, good readers preview the article. They will read the title, look at any pictures in the article, and study the Headings or Key Words. Some readers will even look at any questions at the end of the story. Finally, good readers always make predictions about what they will read. For this article, a reader might say “I think this paragraph will be about what good readers will do!” Making predictions helps a reader look for answers while he or she reads. Good readers do all these things before they even start reading!

### Short Response Question:

What would be a better title for this passage? Explain why.

A better title would be “What Good Readers do Before They Read” because the whole paragraph is about things to do before you read like previewing.

# Why I Hate Winter

By Bill Atwood

I hate winter for so many reasons. The main reason is that it's so dark all the time. I wake up in the dark, drive to work in the dark, and then go home in the dark. The dark is so depressing! Also, it's so cold! I feel like I am always freezing. I wear three pairs of pajamas, two pairs of socks, and a hat to bed. Worst of all, there is nothing to do in winter. Winter is about staying inside and trying to get warm. I want to move to a place where it is warm all the time!

## Short Response Question:

Explain why the author hates winter.

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## Why I Hate Winter

By Bill Atwood

I hate winter for so many reasons. The main thing is because it's so dark all the time. I wake up in the dark, drive to work in the dark, and then go home in the dark. The dark is so depressing! Also, it's so cold! I feel like I am always freezing. I wear three pairs of pajamas, two pairs of socks, and a hat to bed. Worst of all, is there is nothing to do in winter. Winter is about staying inside and trying to get warm. I want to move to a place where it is warm all the time!

**Short Response:** Explain why the author hates winter.

The author, Bill Atwood, hates winter for several reasons.

First, he says that it is too

dark and that is depressing. Also he says it's too cold. He says he is freezing all the time. He also thinks there is nothing to do.

**Short Response Question:**

Explain the mistake that the student made

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# Why I Love Winter

By Bill Atwood

Winter is the best season! What I love most is that you can do things totally different from all the other seasons. You can sled ride, build snow forts, have snow battles, and skate. Also, when you get cold, you can snuggle in front of a fireplace or get under a million blankets with a great book! Another great thing is that winter has the best holidays. There is Christmas, Hanukkah, Valentines Day, and New Years Eve! You can see family members and eat all kinds of good stuff on these days. Best of all, winter makes you *appreciate*\* all the other seasons. If it were summer all the time, it would get so BORING! Winter is like a spice that makes everything else better.

\* *appreciate* means to be glad for

## Short Response Question:

Explain why the author loves winter.

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## By Bill Atwood

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### Short Response Question:

Explain why the author loves winter.

*Write a short response that would get a low score because it makes one of the four big mistakes.*

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# The Man Who Went to Work

## By Bill Atwood

Last week, there was a man who went to work really early. When he got up the birds were singing. Even though it was a little cold, he knew it would warm up as the day went on. As he drove, he passed lots of pink bushes with little flowers on them. He could also see people planting tomatoes and vegetables in their gardens. When he got to the park, he worked hard all day. When he was working the sun got stronger and brighter but things were still cool and damp from a recent rain. Later he wanted to go home, but he saw a man with a mask. He was afraid to go home. Later on he raced home safely.

### Short Response:

Explain what season it is in the story.

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Bonus Riddle: Why is the man afraid to go home? What is his job?

**Sample good answers to selections:**

The author hates winter because of the cold, the dark, and there is nothing to do. He has to stay inside all the time, wear a hat to bed and drive to work in the dark.

The author loves winter because of the things you can do like sledding and skating. Also he likes the winter holidays like Christmas and Valentines day. Winter makes you be glad when the other seasons come.

It is spring because people are planting tomatoes. There are pink bushes with little flowers, birds, and it's warming up. The sun is stronger and brighter but it's still cool not hot like summer.

**Sample bad answers why author loves winter:**

Christmas

The author loves winter for several reasons.

Winter is my favorite season because there is no school.

Winter is like a spice.



**Riddle answer:**

The man is a baseball player going to a baseball park to work. He is on third base and sees the catcher with the catcher's mask. He is afraid to go home because he doesn't want to make an out. Later he scores a run because of a wild pitch.

## More Ideas to Improve English Language Arts Open Responses

- a. Play TTQA(A)** (turn the question or command around and answer it) or **TSRA** (topic sentence restates and answers) Students must quickly turn a question/command into an answer by restating part of the question (turning the question around). Play orally then on paper.
1. Some questions to turn around: Who is Sponge Bob’s best friend? How is breakfast different than dinner? What did the Patriots learn in the Super Bowl? How was your weekend? Explain why you have to raise your hand in class. Describe the weather today. Describe Shrek and Donkey’s relationship at the beginning of the movie. (Try who, what when, where, why, how, describe, explain, support, indicate...) Work on getting the “gist” answer without details.
  2. Discuss and model the difference between an “empty topic sentence” and one that gives the “gist” or “flavor” of the answer.
- b. TTQA backwards.** Create a question to match these topic sentences. “My weekend was fantastic!” “The old woman learns how to be a friend.” “The weather today is very cold.” “In the beginning of the story, John was shy and didn’t have friends, but in the end he was more friendly.”
- c. Model got it, almost got it, didn’t get it examples for different questions**
1. Just write up 3 possible responses to a question (could be drawings) copy onto card stock for groups to sort into “got it” “almost got it” and “didn’t really get it.” Or, use old responses from the DOE website.
  2. Have students make up 3 examples for others to sort. Put on overhead and score them and fix them
- d. Model how to read the selections and the questions**
1. Model: previewing, using the pictures, looking over the questions, reading slowly and carefully, re-reading, making connections to the text, writing in the margins, using context clues, putting it in own words, sounding out words, underlining as you go, putting a Q around the question.
    1. Have students write down what they saw you do, or give them the strategies to put in order: “What did you see me do?” (cut up the strategies and pass them out to pairs, to put in order)
    2. Use poor multiple choice strategies and see if they can give you suggestions: try not reading all the choices, skipping parts of the questions like the **not or best**, trying to answer the questions without reading the passages, just randomly fill in anything... Then go over good strategies! Read all choices, eliminate ones that you know are wrong, go back to the text, discern which are factual and which are inferential, and which are tempting (distracters) etc.
    3. Use the transparency sheets to have 3 students put up their answers
      - a. Have students practice fixing them
      - b. Do peer editing with the FCAs (restate question, 3 examples from story, tell about each example)

4. Do mini-lessons on mistakes you see in their answers: sort general details from specific ones

**e. Model the mistakes students make when they pick details**

1. Do a sort with details from the story and details not from the story (Pass out a collection of examples from the story, not from the story, and details from the story but wouldn't help answer the question. Then tell students to without talking, find others who have the same kind of detail they have. In the end you will have three groups of students and you can hear their details. Discuss how it is important not to add details from your own life, and to pick details from the story and then explain them.)

**f. Practice these skills all the time!** Use picture books! Use poems! Use P.E. class! Use American Idol! Use the musical selection they just heard! (Which do you like the best? Support your answer with specific details from the CD.) Use their art work! (Which of these do you think took more time to draw? Why? Use details from the drawing to support your answer.) Use the weather! Use their weekends, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how was your weekend? Use specific, important details to support your score. Use classroom examples and math and science: ("On our board I have a chart of how many siblings everyone has. What is the most common number of siblings to have? Support your answer with evidence from our graph.)

**g. Have students get up and sort different ideas, chronologically, by importance, by category, or go around and write key ideas on chart paper by the wall and do a carousel.** One chart has specific details, general details, details not from the story, possible topic sentences) Kids, in groups, add to the list then switch.