

Module 3
Participant Guide

Supporting All Students in
Writing and Research

Activity 3

Connecticut Core Standards for
English Language Arts and
Literacy



Grades 6–12

Systems of Professional Learning

Connecticut Core Standards Systems of Professional Learning

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The Systems of Professional Learning project includes a series of professional learning experiences for Connecticut Core Standards District Coaches in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Humanities, Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), and Student/Educator Support Staff (SESS).

Participants will have continued support for the implementation of the new standards through virtual networking opportunities and online resources to support the training of educators throughout the state of Connecticut.

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Activity 3: Examining the Grade Level Expectations of the Writing Types and Texts

DESCRIPTION

Participants examine differences in grade level expectations of the CCS Writing Standards for Opinion/Argument, Informative/Explanatory, or Narrative Writing by looking at a progression of students' writing from the *In Common: Effective Writing for All Students* collection. Participants will annotate student writing using the language of the standards.

DIRECTIONS

1. Using *In Common: Effective Writing for All Students* (separate handouts), choose one set of unannotated middle school or high school sample student writing.
2. Briefly review all three types of writing in your unannotated version (Opinion/Argument, Informative/Explanatory, and Narrative) for your grade level or band found in each set (6–8 and 9–12).
3. With a subject area or grade band partner, choose one type of writing in the set to annotate using the language of the applicable grade level standard: W.1, W.2, or W.3 found on pages 14–19 of this guide.
4. Compare your annotations with those of the annotated version of the same sample.
5. Discuss first with a partner who reviewed the same type of writing as you, and then with your table, using the guiding questions on the following page.

Guiding Questions for *In Common***With your partner:**

What do you notice about the demands of student writing for your grade level?

Are these good examples of student writing for the grade level and type of writing? Why or why not?

With your table:

What are the similarities in student writing at the same grade level across types of writing?

What are some skills that students must have to produce exemplary writing?

With the whole group:

How might you use the *In Common: Effective Writing for All Students* collection with teachers? With students?

NOTEPAD

After the closing discussion about this activity, use the *Notepad* section titled *Activity 3: Examining the Grade Level Expectations of the Writing Types and Texts* on page 49 to jot down notes about anything you think was significant from this activity that can be applied to CT Core Standards work in your school or district.

RESOURCES

- Learning by Example – PD Activity from Achieve the Core. Retrieved from <http://achievethecore.org/page/507/in-common-effective-writing-for-all-students>
- Vertical Progression of the Writing Standards (located on the following pages)
- Student writing samples from *In Common* from Achieve the Core (separate handouts). Retrieved from <http://achievethecore.org/page/507/in-common-ee-writing-for-all-students>

Vertical Progression of the Writing Standards

Strand: 6-12 Writing Standards (W)	
Cluster 1: Text Types and Purposes	
CCR Anchor Standard for Writing 1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W.11-12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W.11-12.1a	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
W.11-12.1b	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
W.11-12.1c	Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
W.11-12.1d	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
W.11-12.1e	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
W.9-10.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W.9-10.1a	Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
W.9-10.1b	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.
W.9-10.1c	Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
W.9-10.1d	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
W.9-10.1e	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
W.8.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
W.8.1a	Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

W.8.1b	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
W.8.1c	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
W.8.1d	Establish and maintain a formal style.
W.8.1e	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
W.7.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
W.7.1a	Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
W.7.1b	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
W.7.1c	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.
W.7.1d	Establish and maintain a formal style.
W.7.1e	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
W.6.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
W.6.1a	Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
W.6.1b	Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
W.6.1c	Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
W.6.1d	Establish and maintain a formal style.
W.6.1e	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.
Strand: Writing Standards (W)	
Cluster 1: Text Types and Purposes	
CCR Anchor Standard for Writing 2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W.11-12.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W.11-12.2a	Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

W.11-12.2b	Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.
W.11-12.2c	Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
W.11-12.2d	Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
W.11-12.2e	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
W.11-12.2f	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
W.9-10.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W.9-10.2a	Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
W.9-10.2b	Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.
W.9-10.2c	Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
W.9-10.2d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
W.9-10.2e	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
W.9-10.2f	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
W.8.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
W.8.2a	Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
W.8.2b	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
W.8.2c	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

W.8.2d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
W.8.2e	Establish and maintain a formal style.
W.8.2f	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
W.7.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
W.7.2a	Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
W.7.2b	Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
W.7.2c	Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
W.7.2d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
W.7.2e	Establish and maintain a formal style.
W.7.2f	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
W.6.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
W.6.2a	Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
W.6.2b	Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
W.6.2c	Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
W.6.2d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
W.6.2e	Establish and maintain a formal style.
W.6.2f	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

Strand: Writing Standards (W)	
Cluster 1: Text Types and Purposes	
CCR Anchor Standard for Writing 3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
W.11-12.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
W.11-12.3a	Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
W.11-12.3b	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
W.11-12.3c	Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
W.11-12.3d	Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
W.11-12.3e	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
W.9-10.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
W.9-10.3a	Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
W.9-10.3b	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
W.9-10.3c	Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
W.9-10.3d	Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
W.9-10.3e	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
W.8.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
W.8.3a	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
W.8.3b	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

W.8.3c	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.
W.8.3d	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
W.8.3e	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.
W.7.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
W.7.3a	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
W.7.3b	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
W.7.3c	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
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W.6.3b	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
W.6.3c	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
W.6.3d	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
W.6.3e	Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

In Common: Effective Writing for All Students Collection of All Student Work Samples, K-12

By The Vermont Writing Collaborative, with Student Achievement Partners and CCSSO

6–8 Unannotated for Argument, Informative, and Narrative Work Samples

On-Demand Samples

These pieces were written in response to a uniform text-based prompt.

The text changes at different grades, but the task and prompt remains essentially the same.

Grades 6-8, Prompt for Argument Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

A group of parents and teachers in your school have made a proposal to the school board. In their proposal, they are suggesting that the school join in a national movement called “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The parents and teachers in the group believe that not using any electronic media for an entire week would be good for students for many reasons.

They have taken the proposal to a teachers’ meeting, so that teachers can discuss the issue of whether or not to ask their students to participate in the “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The teachers have decided they would like to hear from the students before they decide.

This is not a simple issue, so you need to think very carefully about it. You have three texts to read relating to the issue: “Social Media as Community,” “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” and “Attached to Technology and Paying a Price.” As you read and re-read these texts, think about what they show you about the issue. Think about what position you will take and what evidence you will use to support your thinking.

Finally, write an essay, in the form of a letter to the teachers, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

Should your school participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week?” Be sure to use evidence from the texts, as well as your own knowledge, to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a strong and effective piece of argument writing:

- *Takes the audience into account*
- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/position statement clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the position, and explains that evidence logically*
- *Takes into account what people who disagree with you might think and tries to respond to that*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

Argument Writing

Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

Teacher Directions

- The texts provide the information needed to address the prompt, and students should independently read the texts carefully before writing. Encourage students to refer back to the text while writing and to take notes, and to mark up the text as much as is helpful to them.

- Students should be given three sessions for the prompt. Allow approximately 45 minutes for each, but the prompt should not be strictly timed. Students should be given as much time as needed to plan, write, and proofread.

- The writing must be done without help, but students may have access to personal dictionaries, or any other resources to support spelling and mechanics that they are accustomed to using while writing.
 - Be sure students have paper to take notes or do whatever pre-planning they might choose to do.
 - If students are writing by hand, provide lined paper from your classroom for writing. If they are using a word processor, make sure they save their work so it can be accessed the next day.

- This will be first draft writing, but encourage students to proofread and correct any errors they find.

File Name: A6P Dear Teachers, Parents, and School Board**Opinion/Argument****Grade 6****On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt**

Dear Teachers, Parents, and School Board,

The children in my class have been talking about the proposal that some of you have made which is whether or not our school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen” week. I don’t think that if we did that, it would have a positive effect on the children in our school. There are a few reasons that we might want to participate but I weighed it out and I don’t think that we should participate. These are the reasons.

One reason that I don’t think that our school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen” week is that when we can use computers, we can get assignments done faster during the school day so that we can move on to other things. For example, when you are given a task to type, if you write it by hand, it will take a much longer time than if we just decided to type it. If we are given an assignment that we have to do research on, we can usually get a lot more useful information from the internet than even from a book sometimes. Also, we will be able to move on to our next subject much faster because our research or typing will be finished.

Another reason that I don’t think we should shut down our screens for a week is because the Internet is the most reliable source for information. In the article “Is Google Making Us Stupid” it said the internet has the world’s best images, writing and ideas. That means that it will have better, more honest and reliable information than even a book. The internet lets us expand our range of thinking and see things in a different way from possibly someone else’s perspective. The internet’s information lets us think better and faster. Some people say that the internet is not helping us learn and not making us brilliant but I don’t believe that is the case. I’m only eleven years old and I have already learned things off the internet like how solar power works and how animals like dolphins survive so that is obviously a myth. Google and the internet gives us ready and free access to information on just about anything.

The last reason that I think that we shouldn't participate is because overall, calling, emailing, texting, or video chatting is more efficient. It takes less time and we are in the twenty-first century. We live in a time when it is a very normal thing to call or text someone instead of writing to them or just going to visit them. It might seem overwhelming and people might say that it is making us stupid but I find it fun and interesting to explore. I don't think that I could go a week without music or TV! I couldn't do it! I know for certain people this might not be the route that they want to take and that is fine but this world is only going to get more tech-like, it really is.

As you can see, these are the reasons that I believe that we shouldn't participate in the "Shut Down Your Screen" week.

Your friend,

File Name: A7P Dear Teachers

Opinion/Argument

Grade 7

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

Dear Teachers,

I have recently begun learning about the “Shut Down Your Screen” week. This is a program where kids in school and out of school don't use any electronics for one week. Everyone in your school would participate. This is a way to save the way we think and try something new. My question is, should we participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week?” I think it would be a good idea for many reasons.

First, I think we should participate because using too much technology affects the way we think and behave. In the article Attached to Technology and Paying a Price by Matt Richtel it gives many scientifically proven facts that using technology too much affects the way we think. If you are juggling e-mail, phone calls and other incoming information it can lose people's focus. Also as the text states, “The stimulation provokes excitement that researchers say can be addictive. In its absence, people feel bored.” This means that people can become addicted and when not using technology become bored with things they used to love to do.

Another reason I think we should participate in this program is because using technology while doing something else (multitasking) really just creates more trouble focusing. Scientists did an experiment where they took someone that multitasks and someone that doesn't. It was proven that even though the multitasker multitasks more, they did a worse job than the other person. Therefore technology and multi-tasking does nothing for you.

Another reason I think we should participate is it puts a bad toll on children. Some people may say that playing a video game or watching a movie with your family helps to bond with family. That may be true, but you can get addicted and not want to do anything else. “Lily, a second grader, is allowed only an hour a day of unstructured time, which she often spends with her devices.” This

shows that kids are playing on devices and not outside or with friends. If we participate, we, the kids, can do other things and be more social.

Therefore, I think we should participate in the “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

File Name: A8P Shut Down Your Screen**Opinion/Argument****Grade 8****On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt**

Dear Teachers,

I believe that we should participate in shutdown your screen week. I think that everyone in the school should not use any electronics for one week. Since the invention of the computer, cellphone and other electronics, people have been using them more and more and more. These electronics have big upsides, you're never alone if you have cell service and Facebook allows people to talk to multiple friends at once when they're not in the same room, town, state, or country. But they also have their downsides. What makes us truly great is our ability to think deeply and focus, but when we use electronics or the internet we aren't doing either of these things. In fact, using these things makes us think more shallow and focus less. I think that we should participate in shut down your screen week.

One reason is that using electronics and multi-tasking causes focus problems, on and off computers. In *Attached to Technology and Paying a Price* by Matt Richtel, it says, "Scientists say juggling email, phone calls, and other incoming information can change how people think and behave. They say our ability to focus is being undermined by bursts of information." This ability to focus is enormously important, it's one of the things that we depend on almost every day. Like when you're driving a car to work or flying a plane. If you're distracted while doing one of these things it can have dire consequences for yourself and for others. Multi-tasking can also affect creativity, deep thought, causing problems for work and family life. By participating we could give people a chance to develop new habits of not using their phone or computer all the time.

A second reason that we should participate is that heavy multitaskers have trouble filtering out irrelevant information on and off the computer. In *Attached to Technology and Paying the Price* by Matt Richtel it says the multitaskers "had trouble filtering out the blue ones – the irrelevant

information.” If we participated, we could give these people a chance to develop new habits that would help them filter out irrelevant information and only pay attention to the things that are important. For example, if someone’s playing with their daughter, they would check their email every time they received an email instead of focusing on playing with their daughter.

Now, some people say that we shouldn’t participate because technology makes you smarter, why stop doing something that’s helping yourself. In an imaging study by Dr. Small, he found that “Internet users showed greater brain activity than nonusers, suggesting they were growing their neural circuitry.” While they may be growing their neural circuitry, they were also changing a characteristic of the brain that was thought to be unchangeable, the ability to only process one stream of information at a time. This ability allows humans to think deeply, an important characteristic in today’s society. By changing it, they were preventing themselves from having the ability to think deeply.

Technology is a new thing, and it has many advantages and conveniences. But for many it becomes more than a convenience, it becomes an obsession. For this reason I believe that we should participate in shut down your screen week, to give people a chance to make new habits and make technology a convenience again, not a necessity.

Grades 6-8, Prompt for Informative / Explanatory Writing

Common Core Standard W.CCR.2

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different – or not.

The Great Depression of the 1930s, in the United States, was one of these events. Lasting for nearly ten years, the Great Depression closed thousands of banks, put millions of people out of work, and seared itself into the memory of those who lived through it.

The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, responded by creating new government programs to help Americans, known as the New Deal.

You are going to read three texts about the Great Depression: a memoir called *Digging In* by Robert Hastings, a poem, “Debts” by Karen Hesse, and a short text about the programs of the New Deal of President Roosevelt. As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the Great Depression seems to have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, using these texts, you will write an essay, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

According to these texts, what effect did the Great Depression have on people who lived through it? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a good informative essay:

- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence*
- *Concludes effectively*

- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: I6P Effects of The Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 6

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Effects of The Great Depression

The Great Depression affected the people that lived through it in many ways. The things that I am going to explain are some of the things that affected the people who lived through the Great Depression. Having barely any money was one of the things that affected them. Also having less supplies affected them too. Having to take care of kids too also might have affected the people during the Great Depression.

First, I am going to talk about how having almost no money affected the people. It affected them because they were getting their money by working. Then their jobs were shutting down so their amount of money was shrinking and shrinking. They would do neighborhood favors and jobs but the amount of money they would get was five dollars. They also had to pay a bill for electricity every month. They had to pay for gas if you had a car and their house. That is why having almost no money affected them a lot.

Another reason the Great Depression affected the people was they were having less of the supplies they had. Like some of the people stopped delivery for several things such as milk and ice. They were also using less electricity and selling their cars. Those are some of supplies they had a shortage or had to not use as much.

Also if they had kids they would need to do extra work and be able to care for them. They also had to pay more money if they had kids because they have to feed them too. They also had to take care of them. The parents have to care for them. If they are sick they can not just leave them at home they have to take care of them. They also might worry about them. If you had kids during the Great Depression not only would you worry about your kids and family. That is why if you had kids during the Great Depression it might be more difficult.

Now you can see how living through the Great Depression was very difficult and affected many people who lived through it. It affected people in many ways like having no money or having a very little amount of it. Also if you had kids it might have been a little more difficult. They also had to live with less supplies. That is why I think the Great Depression affected the people who lived through it.

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer gives no background about the Great Depression in the introduction (a weakness), but does state her topic / focus that the Great Depression affected people who lived through it in many ways and lays out what she will discuss in the writing to follow.

The writer organizes the evidence clearly by category (various effects of the Great Depression) to support the topic, and uses basic but appropriate transitions to clarify relationships between ideas and concepts. Within each chunk of text, the writer uses some domain-specific vocabulary ("*neighborhood favors and jobs*", "*stopped delivery for...milk and ice*") to name and explain / analyze the evidence about the effects, which she has taken from the texts she has read. This makes the writer's thinking and understanding easy to follow.

While the language is sometimes basic and informal ("*I am going to tell you*"), the bulk of the essay has an appropriately formal style for this grade level. The conclusion, while a bit repetitious, follows from the information presented.

File Name: I7P Living Through The Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 7

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Living Through The Great Depression

The Great Depression affected many people especially those who lived through it. With that said the main point of this essay is how people who lived through the Depression were affected during it.

During The Great Depression people had things to deal with that made them struggle. Some people didn't have an abundant amount of money not a decent amount. Instead they had little or none at all. It was a struggle to earn money with the lack of jobs, people ended up doing side jobs to earn money. In "Digging In" the family of four had to find ways to obtain money. They ended up cutting back on a lot of things like the water system and starting using their well. The father did his best to get some type of income by doing side jobs, like cutting the boys hair for _____. People also looked to Roosevelt for help or farming for a decent or better income. For instance in the poem "Debts The family owned land that they used for farming. The father grew wheat three years ago and hasn't been able to since. With scarce rain no wheat grew, without wheat to harvest no money would flow in. Bay, the father, even thought about getting a loan from Mr. Roosevelt, and he promised he didn't have to pay a dime 'till the crop came in. All he could do was hope things got better. Not only did people have

things to worry about the President did too. In the article "The New Deal" Roosevelt wanted to find a way to help the people suffering from the Great Depression. He created several ways to help with some of the issues. He made the NIRA and NRA, these systems banned child labor and address unemployment by regulating the number of hours worked per week. The FERA gave \$3 billion to states for work relief programs. In the end these systems only helped people take care of their basic needs.

The people who lived through the Great Depression had to find ways to obtain income, work and help. The Government did their best to support the people through this time but have you ever thought that this might happen again.

some citizens without any hope. With the help of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, America was able to get through The Great Depression with dignity and hope.

File Name: I8P Dignity and Hope

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 8

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Dignity and Hope

The Great Depression. This notorious event put Americas hope to the test. Leaving Americans economically and metally drained. The Great Depression devistated America and will never be forgotten. If not for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his beneficial "New Deal" who knows what horride ruins would remain as a result of The Great Depression.

"With no dependable income, we cut back on everything possible." This excerpt from the story "Digging in" by Robert J. Hastings shows the situation that each and every American faced. In the story, it is said that the family substituted toothpaste and toilet paper, for soda and catalog pages. Even common nessecities had to be sacrificed during The Great Depression.

Along with their wallets, Americans spirits were also crushed. In the poem "Debts" by Karen Hesse, the father of the family is facing a serious drought but still believes in rain. When reality sets in that rain is not likely to come, he is filled with rage and leaves to *** to the farm to avoid feuding with his pregnant wife. This man was a farmer, and had to rely on the most unreliable thing for a source of income,

mother nature. This man, and every other Americans spirits were tested during The Great Depression, and the number of those who still had hope was diminishing. With America facing an economic doom, Americans turned to one man, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. With the promise of a New Deal to help end The Great Depression Roosevelt won the election by a landslide. He created jobs for three-million single men between seventeen and twenty-three years of age. Roosevelts work relief program put 8.5 million Americans to work building roads, bridges, airports and more. Although Roosevelt did not end The Great Depression, he provided Americans with work and hope.

The Great Depression left Americans mentally as well as economically depleted. This event tested the will of the American people, and left some citizens without any hope. With the help of Franklin Delano Roosevelts, America was able to get through The Great Depression with dignity and hope.

Grades 6-8, Prompt for Narrative Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.3

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different.

You are going to read a short article about the Dust Bowl days in American history titled “Black Blizzard.” You will also look at some photographs taken during that time period. As you read and study the photographs, think about how this experience may have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, you will write a narrative, showing how a particular small moment during this experience affected one person.

Remember, a good narrative:

- *Establishes a clear point of view*
- *Focuses closely on one character or characters*
- *Uses strong sensory details to make the character(s) and event come alive*
- *Uses precise language*
May use dialogue and description to capture the character(s) and event
- *Concludes effectively*

Here are your choices for your narrative:

- A young child watching the “black blizzard” rolling in over the plains
- A young child, watching a tractor knock down his family home in Oklahoma, several years into the Dust Bowl drought
- A mother sitting on her front steps in a migrant camp in California
- An unemployed father, arriving at a squatter camp in California from Oklahoma

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The narrative will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: N6P Black Mountains of Dust

Narrative

Grade 6

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

Black Mountains of Dust

I was sitting at a park bench when I saw the endless black heading towards me. "Mom look!" I screamed. My mom turned around and faced me. A look of pure horror was painted across her face.

"Margaret come on we need to go now!"

She shouted. We ran across roads and dried up cropt fields. We did not dare look back.

Suddenly I wasn't running away from the black cloud. Instead I was face down in the dirt. Oh no I had tripped over my shoelace! I slowly looked up where was my mom? The cloud loomed closer and closer. I choked feeling the gritty dust in my throat. I tried to crawl forward but needles shot through my legs. Oh great in a time like this my legs fall asleep! A whiff of dust blew toward me, burning my eyes and making everything blurry.

"Mom!" I screamed. "Mom!"

I tried to yell again but was choked by more dust. "Mom" I whined. Where was she. I started coughing from all of the dust in my lungs and throat.

"Margaret! Darling come on!" My mom motioned me to get up but I shook my head.

My Mom flung me into her arms and ran, soaring farther away from the storm. After what seemed forever, my mom stopped running. Screams and yells echoed off walls. I covered my ears.

A person right in front of us said:

"Get inside quickly!"

My mom answered "okay" and then I was carried into a building, that looked like the town hall.

My mom set me down in a corner, in the town hall and sat next to me. "Mom?" I croaked.

"Yes Sweetie?" She said in a sweet voice, almost like honey.

"Is this going to happen ever again, this storm?" I asked my voice still thick with dust.

She did not answer and I knew that she knew this wouldn't be the the last time the black mountains of dust attacked the plain states.

File Name: N7P Dust Storm

Narrative

Grade 7

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

Dust Storm

My family thought our lives were absolutely perfect. My twelve year old mind thought so, too, until our Sunday paper arrived. I heard the clunk of the mail slot, and sprinted to get the first peek of the paper. People on the first page were being interviewed by frantic news reporters, wanting to know reasons for our year long hot weather. I thought they were crazy, until they were right.

Days went by, and the hot temperatures got worse. Hot baths were long gone, replaced with iced cold water. We had all ate the cold foods we could eat, no more ovens or fires, if you were rich enough. Our family had a fire, and a pan. We stopped doing that yesterday. I slipped out of my thoughts as my younger sister, Leesh, yelled out names. "Mom! Dad! Mary! Come see this!"

The yell was far distance, followed by a scream so high pitch, I sprinted outside, into the woods to find Leesh. Mom and Dad followed, pale with panic and worry. I smelled my own blood, from all the thorns in our woods. I felt the trickling on my legs, my bare legs, and arms, lucky my sundress hasn't yet ripped. "Leesh! Leesh - where are you?" I saw our fallen treehouse, and something a little beyond the trees.

"Mom, Dad, get Leesh down. I think I see something beyond the trees!" They opened there mouths to say something, but they were lost for words, as I ran. Tree

branches, sticks, thorn bushes, and stumps were my obstacles. I noticed the animals all ran the opposite way, with fear and shock in their faces and eyes. I got to the end, staring in shock at the terrifying sight in front of me.

Over the hills, rather than sun and clouds, I saw it. A big, pitch black cloud, thousands and thousands of feet tall, making any tree look like action figures. It moved with the wind blowing its way towards me. It came up the last hill, the one I stood on. The dust cloud swallowed me, and it whipped me in the face, stinging me like needles piercing every inch of my helpless body. I still sprinted, as fast as my legs could take me, swallowing the dust in my mouth, nose, and burning eyes. I wheezed, coughed, and barely breathed. I felt myself suffocating, remembering my name, will myself I would make it. You can do this Mary, you can get out of this. I opened my mouth to scream, instead filling myself with gallons of dust in my throat and lungs. I realized I was finally back in the woods, almost reaching my terrified family. I took huge rock, and wrote with saliva and dust. My vision blurred and I tripped over tree branches, rocks, and anything in my way. I tumbled, over my head, crashing on the ground. I felt myself suffocate before my head hit the rock, never seeing light or dust, as my body shut down.

File Name: N8P Daydreams of A Migrant Mother**Narrative****Grade 8****On-Demand Writing - Uniform Prompt****Daydreams of A Migrant Mother**

The cool afternoon wind brushed against my face. I watched as the kids played with a rabbit they had found in the woods. All around me the sounds of the camp faded in my mind. The sounds of babies crying turned to a soft wail. The yelling of the kids turned to quiet murmurs as I drifted into my mind.

For the past few weeks since we left Oklahoma, I've been worried. It's been really rough living on the road without a proper home and I just really want the best for my family. The kids have been going to a public school just two miles from where we'd been camping. They've told me that the kids have given them ugly looks and said awful things about them calling them "Okies" or saying they were retarded. I couldn't stand any of my kids having to go through this misfortune. I focused my vision on my two kids Annie and Joey. They were laughing and shoving some grass in the rabbit's mouth. I didn't want them living like this but there was nothing I could do. I felt useless and weak.

The wind blew again and I went back to my daydreaming. My husband had been out for three days looking for any job available. We had planned to be at least in a home that put a roof over our heads but we accomplished nothing. Most of our close friends

that had traveled with us already had a job and housing. The feeling bothered me. I looked around and saw some of the families huddled under their tents. I don't want to be like this anymore I thought. But yet again there was nothing I could do. Sometimes I felt angry with myself. As if I wasn't trying my hardest, but eventually it would just turn to sorrow.

My thoughts were disrupted by Annie and Joey running up to me smiling. I looked down on them and smiled, wondering how lovely childhood must be with no worries.

"Ma, when are we going to eat, I'm starving?" asked Joey.

Even I didn't know the answer to that question, we had completely run out of food. I pondered on how I would say this to them. I gave up and just said, "I don't know Joey."

In Common: Effective Writing for All Students Collection of All Student Work Samples, K-12

By The Vermont Writing Collaborative, with Student Achievement Partners and CCSSO

6–8 Annotated for Argument, Informative, and Narrative Work Samples

On-Demand Samples

These pieces were written in response to a uniform text-based prompt.

The text changes at different grades, but the task and prompt remains essentially the same.

Grades 6-8, Prompt for Argument Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

A group of parents and teachers in your school have made a proposal to the school board. In their proposal, they are suggesting that the school join in a national movement called “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The parents and teachers in the group believe that not using any electronic media for an entire week would be good for students for many reasons.

They have taken the proposal to a teachers’ meeting, so that teachers can discuss the issue of whether or not to ask their students to participate in the “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The teachers have decided they would like to hear from the students before they decide.

This is not a simple issue, so you need to think very carefully about it. You have three texts to read relating to the issue: “Social Media as Community,” “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” and “Attached to Technology and Paying a Price.” As you read and re-read these texts, think about what they show you about the issue. Think about what position you will take and what evidence you will use to support your thinking.

Finally, write an essay, in the form of a letter to the teachers, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

Should your school participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week?” Be sure to use evidence from the texts, as well as your own knowledge, to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a strong and effective piece of argument writing:

- *Takes the audience into account*
- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/position statement clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the position, and explains that evidence logically*
- *Takes into account what people who disagree with you might think and tries to respond to that*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: A6P Dear Teachers, Parents, and School Board**Opinion/Argument****Grade 6****On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt**

Dear Teachers, Parents, and School Board,

The children in my class have been talking about the proposal that some of you have made which is whether or not our school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen” week. I don’t think that if we did that, it would have a positive effect on the children in our school. There are a few reasons that we might want to participate but I weighed it out and I don’t think that we should participate. These are the reasons.

One reason that I don’t think that our school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen” week is that when we can use computers, we can get assignments done faster during the school day so that we can move on to other things. For example, when you are given a task to type, if you write it by hand, it will take a much longer time than if we just decided to type it. If we are given an assignment that we have to do research on, we can usually get a lot more useful information from the internet than even from a book sometimes. Also, we will be able to move on to our next subject much faster because our research or typing will be finished.

Another reason that I don’t think we should shut down our screens for a week is because the Internet is the most reliable source for information. In the article “Is Google Making Us Stupid” it said the internet has the world’s best images, writing and ideas. That means that it will have better, more honest and reliable information than even a book. The internet lets us expand our range of thinking and see things in a

Introduces a claim:

Introduction gives context for the proposal about “Shut Down Your Screen Week”

States focus / claim

Organizes the reasons and evidence clearly**Supports the claim with clear reasons and relevant evidence.**

Evidence here is from writer's own experience, and **demonstrates an understanding of the topic**

Uses words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claims and reasons

different way from possibly someone else's perspective. The internet's information lets us think better and faster. Some people say that the internet is not helping us learn and not making us brilliant but I don't believe that is the case. I'm only eleven years old and I have already learned things off the internet like how solar power works and how animals like dolphins survive so that is obviously a myth. Google and the internet gives us ready and free access to information on just about anything.

Acknowledges counterclaims, then rebuts with clear **reasons and relevant, credible evidence** and reasoning from the writer's own experience

The last reason that I think that we shouldn't participate is because overall, calling, emailing, texting, or video chatting is more efficient. It takes less time and we are in the twenty-first century. We live in a time when it is a very normal thing to call or text someone instead of writing to them or just going to visit them. It might seem overwhelming and people might say that it is making us stupid but I find it fun and interesting to explore. I don't think that I could go a week without music or TV! I couldn't do it! I know for certain people this might not be the route that they want to take and that is fine but this world is only going to get more tech-like, it really is.

Supports the claim with clear reasons and relevant evidence. Evidence here is from writer's own experience and **demonstrates an understanding of the topic**

As you can see, these are the reasons that I believe that we shouldn't participate in the "Shut Down Your Screen" week.

Provides a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented

Your friend,

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to take a position on whether their school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” This writer begins by offering some context concerning the issue, and then asserts the claim that in her view the school should not participate.

The writer develops her claim with several reasons, which she supports with some relevant, credible evidence, demonstrating her understanding of the topic. The evidence in this piece comes from her own experience. The writer organizes her ideas clearly and supports her claim with logical reasoning. In addition, she acknowledges a counterclaim and then refutes the counterclaim with support for her own position, even though use of counterclaim is not stated in the Standards for this grade level. Throughout the essay, the writer uses words, phrases, and clauses as transitions to clarify the relationships among claims, reasons, and evidence, and to create cohesion. The conclusion follows from the argument presented.

The writer maintains a reasonably formal style throughout the piece.

File Name: A7P Dear Teachers

Opinion/Argument

Grade 7

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

Dear Teachers,

I have recently begun learning about the “Shut Down Your Screen” week. This is a program where kids in school and out of school don't use any electronics for one week. Everyone in your school would participate. This is a way to save the way we think and try something new. My question is should we participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week?” I think it would be a good idea for many reasons.

First, I think we should participate because using too much technology affects the way we think and behave. In the article Attached to Technology and Paying a Price by Matt Richtel it gives many scientifically proven facts that using technology too much affects the way we think. If you are juggling e-mail, phone calls and other incoming information it can lose people’s focus. Also as the text states, “The stimulation provokes excitement that researchers say can be addictive. In its absence, people feel bored.” This means that people can become addicted and when not using technology become bored with things they used to love to do.

Another reason I think we should participate in this program is because using technology while doing something else (multitasking) really just creates more trouble focusing. Scientists did an experiment where they took someone that multitasks and someone that doesn’t. It was proven that even though the multitasker multitasks more, they did a worse job than the other person. Therefore technology and multi-tasking does nothing for you.

Introduces a claim:
Introduction gives context for the proposal “Shut Down Your Screen Week” and states a **claim**

Organizes the reasons and evidence locally

Supports the claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, including direct quotations, from **accurate, credible sources,** thereby **demonstrating understanding of the topic**

Uses words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim, reasons, and evidence

Establishes and maintains a formal style

Another reason I think we should participate is it puts a bad toll on children. Some people may say that playing a video game or watching a movie with your family helps to bond with family. That may be true, but you can get addicted and not want to do anything else. “Lily, a second grader, is allowed only an hour a day of unstructured time, which she often spends with her devices.” This shows that kids are playing on devices and not outside or with friends. If we participate, we, the kids, can do other things and be more social.

Therefore, I think we should participate in the “Shut Down Your Screen Week.”

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Acknowledges an opposing claim and then counters with logical reasoning and relevant evidence

Provides a concluding statement that follows from but does not add support to the argument presented

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to take a position on whether their school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” This writer begins by offering context concerning the issue and then asserts the claim that, in her view, the school should participate.

The writer develops her claim with several reasons, which she supports with some relevant, credible evidence, demonstrating her understanding of the topic and the texts she has read. The evidence in this piece comes from those texts. The writer organizes her ideas clearly and supports her claim with logical reasoning. In addition, she acknowledges a counterclaim and then refutes it with support for her own position, which is not required in the Standards for this grade level and, again, includes evidence from the texts. Throughout the essay, the writer uses words, phrases, and clauses as transitions to clarify the relationships among claim, reasons, and evidence and to create cohesion.

The writer maintains a formal style throughout the piece. The conclusion follows from the argument presented but does not significantly support it.

File Name: A8P Shut Down Your Screen

Opinion/Argument

Grade 8

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

Shut Down Your Screen

Dear Teachers,

I believe that we should participate in shutdown your screen week. I think that everyone in the school should not use any electronics for one week. Since the invention of the computer, cellphone and other electronics, people have been using them more and more and more. These electronics have big upsides, you're never alone if you have cell service and Facebook allows people to talk to multiple friends at once when they're not in the same room, town, state, or country. But they also have their downsides. What makes us truly great is our ability to think deeply and focus, but when we use electronics or the internet we aren't doing either of these things. In fact, using these things makes us think more shallow and focus less. I think that we should participate in shut down your screen week.

One reason is that using electronics and multi-tasking causes focus problems, on and off computers. In *Attached to Technology and Paying a Price* by Matt Richtel, it says, "Scientists say juggling email, phone calls, and other incoming information can change how people think and behave. They say our ability to focus is being undermined by bursts of information." This ability to focus is enormously important, it's one of the things that we depend on almost every day. Like when you're driving a car to work or flying a plane. If you're distracted while doing one of these things it can have dire consequences for yourself and for others. Multi-tasking can also affect creativity, deep thought, causing problems for work and family life. By participating we could give

Introduces a claim:

The introduction gives specific context for the proposal about "Shut Down Your Screen Week" and then states a claim

Organizes the reasons and evidence logically

Supports the claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, including direct quotations, **from accurate, credible sources,** thereby **demonstrating understanding of the topic**

Uses words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence

people a chance to develop new habits of not using their phone or computer all the time.

A second reason that we should participate is that heavy multitaskers have trouble filtering out irrelevant information on and off the computer. In *Attached to Technology and Paying the Price* by Matt Richtel it says the multitaskers “had trouble filtering out the blue ones – the irrelevant information.” If we participated, we could give these people a chance to develop new habits that would help them filter out irrelevant information and only pay attention to the things that are important. For example, if someone’s playing with their daughter, they would check their email every time they received an email instead of focusing on playing with their daughter.

Now, some people say that we shouldn’t participate because technology makes you smarter, why stop doing something that’s helping yourself. In an imaging study by Dr. Small, he found that “Internet users showed greater brain activity than nonusers, suggesting they were growing their neural circuitry.” While they may be growing their neural circuitry, they were also changing a characteristic of the brain that was thought to be unchangeable, the ability to only process one stream of information at a time. This ability allows humans to think deeply, an important characteristic in today’s society. By changing it, they were preventing themselves from having the ability to think deeply.

Technology is a new thing, and it has many advantages and conveniences. But for many it becomes more than a convenience, it becomes an obsession. For this reason I believe that we should participate in shut down your screen week, to give people a chance to make new habits and make technology a convenience again, not a necessity.

Supports the claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, including direct quotations, from accurate, credible sources, thereby demonstrating understanding of the topic

Acknowledges an opposing claim, which the writer distinguishes from the claim and then counters with logical reasoning and relevant evidence

Establishes and maintains a formal style

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the argument presented

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to take a position on whether their school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” This writer begins by offering specific, well-developed context concerning the issue and then asserts the claim that, in his view, the school should participate.

The writer develops his claim with several reasons, which he supports with some relevant, credible evidence, demonstrating his understanding of the topic and the texts he has read. The evidence in this piece comes from those texts. The writer organizes his ideas clearly and supports his claim with logical reasoning. In addition, he acknowledges a counterclaim, distinguishes it from his own claim, and refutes it with support for his own position, even though this development of a counterclaim is not stated in the Standards at this grade level, and again includes evidence from the texts. Throughout the essay, the writer uses words, phrases, and clauses as transitions to clarify the relationships among claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence and to create cohesion.

The writer maintains a formal style throughout the piece. The conclusion follows from and supports the argument presented.

Grades 6-8, Prompt for Informative / Explanatory Writing

Common Core Standard W.CCR.2

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different – or not.

The Great Depression of the 1930s, in the United States, was one of these events. Lasting for nearly ten years, the Great Depression closed thousands of banks, put millions of people out of work, and seared itself into the memory of those who lived through it.

The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, responded by creating new government programs to help Americans, known as the New Deal.

You are going to read three texts about the Great Depression: a memoir called *Digging In* by Robert Hastings, a poem, “Debts” by Karen Hesse, and a short text about the programs of the New Deal of President Roosevelt. As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the Great Depression seems to have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, using these texts, you will write an essay, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

According to these texts, what effect did the Great Depression have on people who lived through it? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a good informative essay:

- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence*
- *Concludes effectively*

- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: I6P Effects of The Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 6

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Effects of The Great Depression

The Great Depression affected the people that lived through it in many ways. The things at I am going to explain are some of the things that affected the people who lived through the Great Depression. Having barely any money was one of the things that affected them. Also having less supplies affected them too. Having to take care of kids too also might have affected the people during the Great Depression.

First, I am going to talk about how having almost no money affected the people. It affected them because they were getting their money by working. Then their jobs were shutting down so their amount of money was shrinking and shrinking. They would do neighborhood favors and jobs but the amount of money they would get was five dollars. They also had to pay a bill for electricity every month. They had to pay for gas if you had a car and their house. That is why having almost no money affected them a lot.

Focus / **topic** of the piece is clearly stated

Introduces the topic clearly: The writer gives no context, but does lay out the ideas she will discuss in the essay to follow

Organizes ideas, concepts, and information by category, within an overall cause-effect structure.

Here, writer discusses the effect of no money. **Develops the topic with relevant, accurate facts and concrete details using domain-specific vocabulary to explain** the effects of a lack of money during the Great Depression.

Uses appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts

Another reason the Great Depression affected the people was they were having less of the supplies they had. Like some of the people stopped delivery for several things such as milk and ice. They were also using less electricity and selling their cars.

Those are some of supplies they had a shortage or had to not use as much.

Develops the topic with relevant, facts and concrete details about the effect of the Great Depression on childcare

Also if they had kids they would need to do extra work and be able to care for them. They also had to pay more money if they had kids because they have to feed them too. They also had to take care of them. The parents have to care for them. If they are sick they can not just leave them at home they have to take care of them. They also might worry about them. If you had kids during the Great Depression not only would you worry about your kids and family.

Analyzes evidence

That is why if you had kids during the Great Depression it might be more difficult.

Now you can see how living through the Great Depression was very difficult and affected many people who lived through it. It affected people in many ways like having no money or having a very little amount of it. Also if you had kids it might have been a little more difficult. They also had to live with less supplies. That is why I think the Great Depression affected the people who lived through it.

Establishes and maintains a reasonably formal style

Provides a concluding section that restates and follows from the explanation presented

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer gives no background about the Great Depression in the introduction (a weakness), but does state her topic / focus that the Great Depression affected people who lived through it in many ways and lays out what she will discuss in the writing to follow.

The writer organizes the evidence clearly by category (various effects of the Great Depression) to support the topic, and uses basic but appropriate transitions to clarify relationships between ideas and concepts. Within each chunk of text, the writer uses some domain-specific vocabulary ("*neighborhood favors and jobs*", "*stopped delivery for...milk and ice*") to name and explain / analyze the evidence about the effects, which she has taken from the texts she has read. This makes the writer's thinking and understanding easy to follow.

While the language is sometimes basic and informal ("*I am going to tell you*"), the bulk of the essay has an appropriately formal style for this grade level. The conclusion, while a bit repetitious, follows from the information presented.

File Name: I7P Living Through The Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 7

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Living Through The Great Depression

The Great Depression affected many people especially those who lived through it. With that said the main point of this essay is how people who lived through the Depression were affected during it.

During The Great Depression people had things to deal with that made them struggle. Some people didn't have an abundant amount of money not a decent amount. Instead they had little or none at all. It was a struggle to earn money with the lack of jobs, people ended up doing side jobs to earn money. In "Digging In" the family of four had to find ways to obtain money. They ended up cutting back on a lot of things like the water system and starting using their well. The father did his best to get some type of income by doing side jobs, like cutting the boys hair for _____. People also looked to

Roosevelt for help or farming for a decent or better income. For instance in the

poem "Debts The family owned land that they used for farming. The father

Introduces the topic clearly, previewing what is to follow: The writer gives little context but does state a main idea/focus

Organizes ideas and information using categories: The writer organizes text-by-text within an overall cause-effect structure

Develops topic with appropriate, relevant facts and concrete details, uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary in evidence from the text to inform about the topic

Continues to develop topic with appropriate accurate, facts and concrete details, uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary in evidence from the text

Uses appropriate, varied transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts

Develops topic with appropriate accurate, facts and concrete details, uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary in evidence from the text

**Analyzes
evidence**

grew wheat three years ago and hasn't been able to since. With scarce rain no wheat grew, without wheat to harvest no money would flow in. Bay, the father, even thought about getting a loan from Mr. Roosevelt, and he promised he didn't have to pay a dime 'till the crop came in. All he could do was hope things got better. Not only did people have things to worry about the President did too. In the article "The New Deal" Roosevelt wanted to find a way to help the people suffering from the Great Depression. He created several ways to help with some of the issues. He made the NIRA and NRA, these systems banned child labor and address unemployment by regulating the number of hours worked per week. The FERA gave \$3 billion to states for work relief programs. In the end these systems only helped people take care of their basic needs.

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented

The people who lived through the Great Depression had to find ways to obtain income, work and help. The Government did their best to support the people through this time but have you ever thought that this might happen again.

Establishes and maintains a reasonably formal style

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer gives no context about the Great Depression in the introduction but does state the main point (the Great Depression affected people who lived through it in many ways), which serves to preview the essay that follows.

The writer organizes ideas, concepts, and information clearly using the texts as categories, and supplies textual evidence to support the main point. She uses appropriate transitions. For example, she writes, *“Not only did people have things to worry about, the President did too.”* (Note: this would be easier to see if the writer had started a new paragraph with each transition.)

Within each chunk, the writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to name and explain the effects, which she has identified from the texts she has read. This makes the writer’s thinking and understanding easy to follow.

The essay has an appropriately formal style. The conclusion follows from and supports the information presented.

File Name: I8P Dignity and Hope

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 8

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Dignity and Hope

The Great Depression. This notorious event put Americas hope to the test. Leaving Americans economically and metally drained. The Great Depression devistated America and will never be forgotten. If not for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his beneficial "New Deal" who knows what horride ruins would remain as a result of The Great Depression.

"With no dependable income, we cut back on everything possible." This excerpt from the story "Digging in" by Robert J. Hastings shows the situation that each and every American faced. In the story, it is said that the family substituted toothpaste and toilet paper, for soda and catalog pages. Even common nessecities had to be sacrificed during The Great Depression.

Along with their wallets, Americans spirits were also crushed. In the poem

"Debts" by Karen Hesse, the father of the family is facing a serious drought but still

believes in rain. When reality sets in that rain is not likely to come, he is filled with rage and leaves to *** to the farm to avoid feuding with his pregnant wife.

This man was a farmer, and had to rely on the most unreliable thing for a source

Introduces the topic clearly, previewing what is to follow: The writer gives a bit of context and indicates the focus /main ideas that will be developed

Organizes ideas and information using categories: The writer organizes text-by-text within an overall cause-effect structure

Develops the topic with relevant, well-chosen, accurate facts and concrete details

Uses appropriate, varied transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts

Analyzes evidence

Develops the topic with relevant, well-chosen, accurate facts and concrete details

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary in well-chosen evidence from the poem to explain the topic

of income, mother nature. This man, and every other Americans spirits were tested during The Great Depression, and the number of those who still had hope was diminishing. With America facing an economic doom, Americans turned to one man, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. With the promise of a New Deal to help end The Great Depression Roosevelt won the election by a landslide. He created jobs for three-million single men between seventeen and twenty-three years of age.

Roosevelts work relief program put 8.5 million Americans to work building roads, bridges, airports and more. Although Roosevelt did not end The Great Depression, he provided Americans with work and hope.

Establishes and maintains a format style

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented

The Great Depression left Americans mentally as well as economically depleted. This event tested the will of the American people, and left

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer gives a bit of context about the Great Depression in the introduction and then states his main points (the Great Depression devastated people who lived through it; Roosevelt’s intervention was critical), which serve to preview what follows.

The writer organizes ideas, concepts, and information clearly by category, building his essay text-by-text and using textual evidence to support the main points. He uses appropriate, varied, and strong transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas. For example, he writes, *“Along with their wallets, Americans spirits were also crushed.”* Within each chunk of the essay, the writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to name and explain the effects, which he has identified from the texts he has read. While he does not give a great deal of evidence, what he does include is precise and well-chosen, with some analysis (*“When reality sets in...”*) This makes the writer’s thinking easy to follow.

The essay has an appropriately formal style. The conclusion follows from and supports the information presented.

some citizens without any hope. With the help of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, America was able to get through The Great Depression with dignity and hope.

File Name: I8P Dignity and Hope

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 8

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Dignity and Hope

The Great Depression. This notorious event put Americas hope to the test. Leaving Americans economically and metally drained. The Great Depression devistated America and will never be forgotten. If not for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his beneficial "New Deal" who knows what horride ruins would remain as a result of The Great Depression.

"With no dependable income, we cut back on everything possible." This excerpt from the story "Digging in" by Robert J. Hastings shows the situation that each and every American faced. In the story, it is said that the family substituted toothpaste and toilet paper, for soda and catalog pages. Even common nessecities had to be sacrificed during The Great Depression.

Along with their wallets, Americans spirits were also crushed. In the poem "Debts" by Karen Hesse, the father of the family is facing a serious drought but still believes in rain. When reality sets in that rain is not likely to come, he is filled with rage and leaves to *** to the farm to avoid feuding with his pregnant wife. This man was a farmer, and had to rely on the most unreliable thing for a source of income,

Grades 6-8, Prompt for Narrative Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.3

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different.

You are going to read a short article about the Dust Bowl days in American history titled “Black Blizzard.” You will also look at some photographs taken during that time period. As you read and study the photographs, think about how this experience may have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, you will write a narrative, showing how a particular small moment during this experience affected one person.

Remember, a good narrative:

- *Establishes a clear point of view*
- *Focuses closely on one character or characters*
- *Uses strong sensory details to make the character(s) and event come alive*
- *Uses precise language*
May use dialogue and description to capture the character(s) and event
- *Concludes effectively*

Here are your choices for your narrative:

- A young child watching the “black blizzard” rolling in over the plains
- A young child, watching a tractor knock down his family home in Oklahoma, several years into the Dust Bowl drought
- A mother sitting on her front steps in a migrant camp in California
- An unemployed father, arriving at a squatter camp in California from Oklahoma

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The narrative will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: N6P Black Mountains of Dust**Narrative****Grade 6****On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt****Black Mountains of Dust**

I was sitting at a park bench when I saw the endless black heading towards me. "Mom look!" I screamed. My mom turned around and faced me. A look of pure horror was painted across her face.

"Margaret come on we need to go now!"

She shouted. We ran across roads and dried up cropt fields. We did not dare

look back. Suddenly I wasn't running away from the black cloud. Instead I was face down in the dirt. Oh no I had tripped over my shoelace! I slowly

looked up where was my mom? The cloud loomed closer and closer. I choked feeling the gritty dust in my throat. I tryed to crawl forward but needles shot through my legs. Oh great in a time like this my legs fall

asleep! A whiff of dust blew toward me, burning my eyes and making everything blurry.

"Mom!" I screamed. "Mom!"

I tryed to yell again but was choked by more dust. "Mom" I whined.

Where was she. I started coughing from all of the dust in my lungs and throat.

Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context for the narrative that follows and **introduces a narrator and characters**. The narrator and her mother needing to escape the storm becomes the central focus /conflict in the narrative.

Uses narrative technique of dialogue to develop events. Event sequence to follow unfolds naturally and logically.

Uses transitional phrase to signal shift from one setting to another

Uses precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey events and develop characters

Uses the narrative technique of dialogue to develop events and characters; controls pacing by slowing down the action

"Margaret! Darling come on!" My mom motioned me to get up but I shook my head.

My Mom flung me into her arms and ran, soaring farther away from the storm. After

what seemed forever, my mom stopped running. Screams and yells echoed off walls. I covered my ears.

Uses transitional clause to signal shift from one time frame to another

A person right in front of us said:

"Get inside quickly!"

My mom answered "okay" and then I was carried into a building, that looked like the town hall.

My mom set me down in a corner, in the town hall and sat next to me. "Mom?" I croaked.

"Yes Sweetie?" She said in a sweet voice, almost like honey.

"Is this going to happen ever again, this storm?" I asked my voice still thick with dust. She did not answer and I knew that she knew this wouldn't be the the last time the black mountains of dust attacked the plain states.

Provides a conclusion which follows from and then reflects on the events and focus / conflict of the narrative, the dust storm of the Dust Bowl days

In this on: demand narrative, the writer tells the story of a girl and her mother being caught in a dust storm during the days of the Dust Bowl. She focuses the narrative around the central conflict of trying to escape the storm. The protagonist/narrator is a girl who is terrified by the storm she she is caught up in it.

The writer organizes an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Some development of the events and characters is done through dialogue. Some precise words and phrases, descriptive details, and sensory language are used as well. At times in the narrative, it would have been helpful to have had a bit more description along with the dialogue, but, in general, the writer controls plot and character development adequately.

File Name: N7P Dust Storm

Narrative

Grade 7

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

Dust Storm

My family thought our lives were absolutely perfect. My twelve year old mind thought so, too, until our Sunday paper arrived. I heard the clunk of the mail slot, and sprinted to get the first peek of the paper. People on the first page were being interviewed by frantic news reporters, wanting to know reasons for our year long hot weather. I thought they were crazy, until they were right.

Days went by, and the hot temperatures got worse. Hot baths were long gone, replaced with iced cold water. We had all ate the cold foods we could eat, no more ovens or fires, if you were rich enough. Our family had a fire, and a pan. We stopped doing that yesterday. I slipped out of my thoughts as my younger sister, Leesh, yelled out names. "Mom! Dad! Mary! Come see this!"

The yell was far distance, followed by a scream so high pitch, I sprinted outside, into the woods to find Leesh. Mom and Dad followed, pale with panic and worry. I smelled my own blood, from all the thorns in our woods. I felt the trickling on my legs, my bare legs, and arms, lucky

Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context for the narrative to follow, and by **introducing a narrator and characters:** The arrival of the storm becomes the focus/conflict of the narrative, which is told from the perspective / point of view of a first person narrator

Uses the narrative technique of foreshadowing **to develop events**

Uses a transitional clause to convey sequence and signal a shift from one time frame to another

Uses the narrative technique of dialogue **to develop events and characters**

Uses precise descriptive sensory language to convey experience

my sundress hasn't yet ripped. "Leesh! Leesh - where are you?" I saw our fallen treehouse, and something a little beyond the trees.

"Mom, Dad, get Leesh down. I think I see something beyond the trees!" They opened their mouths to say something, but they were lost for words, as I ran.

Tree branches, sticks, thorn bushes, and stumps were my obstacles. I noticed the animals all ran the opposite way, with fear and shock in their faces and eyes. I got to the end, staring in shock at the terrifying sight in front of me.

Uses precise descriptive sensory language to convey events

Over the hills, rather than sun and clouds, I saw it. A big, pitch black cloud, thousands and thousands of feet tall, making any tree look like action figures. It moved with the wind blowing its way towards me. It came up the last hill, the one I stood on. The dust cloud swallowed me, and it whipped me in the face, stinging me like needles piercing every inch of my helpless body. I still sprinted, as fast as my legs could take me, swallowing the dust in my mouth, nose, and burning eyes. I wheezed, coughed, and barely breathed. I felt myself suffocating, remembering my name, will myself I would make it. You can do this Mary, you can get out of this. I opened my mouth to scream, instead filling myself with gallons of dust in my throat and lungs. I realized I was finally back in the woods, almost reaching my terrified family. I took huge rock, and wrote with saliva and dust. My vision blurred and I tripped over tree branches, rocks, and anything in my way. I tumbled, over my head, crashing on the ground. I felt myself suffocate before my head hit the rock, never seeing light or dust, as my body shut down.

Uses precise descriptive sensory language to convey experience; language captures the action going on here, as the dust swallows the narrator

Provides a conclusion which follows from the events and focus / conflict of the narrative, the dust storm of the Dust Bowl days

In this on-demand narrative, the writer tells the story of a girl and her family caught in a dust storm during the days of the Dust Bowl. She focuses it around the narrator's conflict with the huge storm. The protagonist/narrator is a girl who is terrified by the storm as she is caught up in it.

The writer organizes an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically, including a bit of effective foreshadowing at the beginning of the narrative, which strengthens the piece. The writer uses minimal dialogue; most of the detail is provided through description. There is a significant amount of precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive detail, and sensory language used to portray events. The narrative concludes with the narrator falling and losing consciousness—perhaps a bit overly dramatic for an ending but reasonable for this grade level. Because the narrator is losing consciousness, she understandably cannot reflect on the experience (as the Standards require).

File Name: N8P Daydreams of A Migrant Mother**Narrative****Grade 8****On-Demand Writing - Uniform Prompt****Daydreams of A Migrant Mother**

The cool afternoon wind brushed against my face. I watched as the kids played with a rabbit they had found in the woods. All around me the sounds of the camp faded in my mind. The sounds of babies crying turned to a soft wail. The yelling of the kids turned to quiet murmurs as I drifted into my mind.

For the past few weeks since we left Oklahoma, I've been worried. It's been really rough living on the road without a proper home and I just really want the best for my family. The kids have been going to a public school just two miles from where we'd been camping. They've told me that the kids have given them ugly looks and said awful things about them calling them "Okies" or saying they were retarded. I couldn't stand any of my kids having to go through this misfortune. I focused my vision on my two kids Annie and Joey. They were laughing and shoving some grass in the rabbit's mouth. I didn't want them living like this but there was nothing I could do. I felt useless and weak.

The wind blew again and I went back to my daydreaming. My husband had been out for three days looking for any job available. We had

Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context for the narrative to follow and introducing a **narrator and characters**: The struggle to live at a migrant camp is the central conflict of the narrative, which is told from the perspective / point of view of a first person narrator

Uses transitional clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among events

Uses the **narrative technique of reflection to develop events**, as well as the **character** of the narrator

Uses transitional clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among events

planned to be at least in a home that put a roof over our heads but we accomplished nothing. Most of our close friends that had traveled with us already had a job and housing. The feeling bothered me. I looked around and saw some of the families huddled under their tents. I don't want to be like this anymore I thought. But yet again there was nothing I could do.

Uses precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey events

Sometimes I felt angry with myself. As if I wasn't trying my hardest, but eventually it would just turn to sorrow.

Uses the narrative technique of reflection to develop events, as well as the character of the narrator

My thoughts were disrupted by Annie and Joey running up to me smiling. I looked down on them and smiled, wondering how lovely childhood must be with no worries.

"Ma, when are we going to eat, I'm starving?" asked Joey.

Provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated events, the struggle to survive at the migrant camp

Even I didn't know the answer to that question, we had completely run out of food. I pondered on how I would say this to them. I gave up and just said, "I don't know Joey."

In this on-demand narrative, the writer tells the story of a mother watching her children in a migrant camp during the days of the Dust Bowl. She focuses it around the narrator's internal and external conflicts as she struggles with helping her family survive in the camp. The protagonist/narrator is the mother.

This narrative lacks a real sequence of events, but it still unfolds naturally and logically. The writer uses minimal dialogue; most of the detail is provided through the narrator's reflection as she watches her young children playing. The mother's character—caring and overwhelmed—is captured through this reflective detail. The narrative concludes with the mother unable to find a solution to her situation, unable even to find her children something to eat. The lack of tidy resolution is appropriate to this narrative and suggests the maturity of the writer.

In Common: Effective Writing for All Students Collection of All Student Work Samples, K-12

By The Vermont Writing Collaborative, with Student Achievement Partners and CCSSO

9–12 Unannotated for Argument, Informative, and Narration Work Samples

On-Demand Samples

These pieces were written in response to a uniform text-based prompt. The text changes at different grades, but the task and prompt remains essentially the same.

Grades 9-12, Prompt for Argument Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

A group of parents and teachers in your school have made a proposal to the school board. In their proposal, they are suggesting that the school join in a national movement called “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The parents and teachers in the group believe that not using any electronic media for an entire week would be good for students for many reasons.

They have taken the proposal to a teachers’ meeting, so that teachers can discuss the issue of whether or not to ask their students to participate in the “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The teachers have decided they would like to hear from the students before they decide.

This is not a simple issue, so you need to think very carefully about it. You have three texts to read relating to the issue: “Social Media as Community,” “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” and “Attached to Technology and Paying a Price.” As you read and re-read these texts, think about what they show you about the issue. Think about what position you will take and what evidence you will use to support your thinking.

Finally, write an essay, in the form of a letter to the teachers, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

Should your school participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week?” Be sure to use evidence from the texts, as well as your own knowledge, to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a strong and effective piece of argument writing:

- *Takes the audience into account*
- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/position statement clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the position, and explains that evidence logically*
- *Takes into account what people who disagree with you might think and tries to respond to that*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

Argument Writing

Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

Teacher Directions

- The texts provide the information needed to address the prompt, and students should independently read the texts carefully before writing. Encourage students to refer back to the text while writing and to take notes, and to mark up the text as much as is helpful to them.

- Students should be given three sessions for the prompt. Allow approximately 45 minutes for each, but the prompt should not be strictly timed. Students should be given as much time as needed to plan, write, and proofread.

- The writing must be done without help, but students may have access to personal dictionaries, or any other resources to support spelling and mechanics that they are accustomed to using while writing.
 - Be sure students have paper to take notes or do whatever pre-planning they might choose to do.
 - If students are writing by hand, provide lined paper from your classroom for writing. If they are using a word processor, make sure they save their work so it can be accessed the next day.

- This will be first draft writing, but encourage students to proofread and correct any errors they find.

File Name: A 9-10P High School Should Not Participate

Opinion/Argument

Grade 9-10

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

High School Should Not Participate

To whom it may concern:

L _____ High School should not participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” Technology can be beneficial, especially to students. A vast majority of students finds it helpful to have access to technology. Technology makes quicker, more efficient work. Without the advancements of technology, we are no farther along than school children in the 1960’s.

The internet and social media, such as Facebook, improve the social lives of those who use it. In the article Information, Communication and Society, a survey found that whether the participants were married or single, people who used social media had more close friends. An average American who uses social media is half as likely to be socially isolated. They also know more diverse people. Also, users of social media never lose ties because of relocating, because you can always keep your friends on social media.

Internet search engines allow us better access to information. In my experience, information is far more accessible and quick than searching through books. That allows for time to complete other class assignments. According to Peter Norvig, director of research for Google, Inc., in an article for the New York Times, “The internet contains the world’s best writing, images, and ideas; Google lets us find the relevant pieces instantly.” Some argue that ads and irrelevant sites may be distracting, but more find that the benefits are worth it. Eighty-one percent of experts polled by the Pew Internet Research Project support this opinion.

The internet also makes a good learning tool. In an article by Matt Richtel for the New York Times, he proves that it helps our brains. “Imaging studies show the brains of Internet users become

more efficient at finding information.” Basically, the more we use online resources to learn, the better our brains become at learning. Also, in the same article, it says, “Internet users showed greater brain activity than non-users...” The internet even develops our brain to think more! Technology is improving our brains.

I have heard it argued that children “rot” their brains with video game systems. In the previously mentioned article by Matt Richtel, he says, “At the University of Rochester, researchers found that players of some fast-paced video games can track the movement of a third more objects on a screen than nonplayers...games can improve reaction time and the ability to pick out details amid clutter.” It seems that the more people play fast-paced video games, the more efficient they become at finding important details. These games may not be so “brain rotting “ after all. They could even be argued as beneficial.

Some also argue that because of new technologies, people limit how much they associate together, even in the same area. Social media disproves this argument. Not only can people associate easily with friends, they can also chat with relatives. They can also show relatives photos, even if they are states away. People who use social media are more likely to know more diverse people, according to the article by Keith Hampton. People still associate with people just as much as before, if not more. They are merely doing it in a different manner than before social media was in use.

Cyber bullying has now become an issue. I would like to bring to attention that all bullying is a big issue. I do not think that technology has caused bullying. It has just allowed for a new way to bully someone. I have never been cyber-bullied. I personally was bullied in a face-to-face manner. A bully will take any chance to bully a target. Social media has not caused bullying.

Like most tools, technology is useful if used correctly. Work quality on a computer can be better, because people have more time to check over their work and improve it. Unfortunately, some people are lazy, and use that extra time they could use for editing for other things. That is not a problem with the tools, it is a problem with the people. People who use such technology correctly and efficiently should still have access. If our screens are shut down, there is no access. We should not participate in “Shut Down Your Screen Week.”

Sincerely,

File Name: A 11-12P Proposal to Shut Down Screen**Opinion/Argument****Grade 11-12****On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt****Proposal to Shut Down Screen**

To whom it may concern:

A group of parents, and some teachers, have made a proposal to the school board. They would like the school to participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” A week without any electronics is what parents believe the school needs. Technology is a big contradiction. It is useful with all the tools it has, yet it can be a distraction, or addicting. Our school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week” because of the following issues with technology.

“Based on a representative survey of 2,500 Americans...those who used social media had more close confidants,” says Keith Hampton. Facebook, Twitter, and other social media allow people to connect with each other and have social interactions, but through the web. The web, or a phone, that allows people to be more social is a major issue today. Kids, especially high school students, feel no need to talk to a friend in person. They can just text them. The problem with Facebook, or texting, is that people interact differently than they would in person. Cyberbullying is one of the biggest issues with the web today. People say things on the web that they wouldn’t say to the person’s face. Bullies feel safe when hidden behind a screen. Whether or not the survey of 2,500 people was accurate, it still did not account for the differences in interactions for media and in person. Having no electronics for a week would allow students to see that difference.

Although technology allows students to do research, that research isn’t helping students to do strategic and logical thinking. “What really makes us intelligent isn’t our ability to find lots of information quickly. It’s our ability to think deeply about that information,” says Nicholas Carr, author of the book *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. Brain scientists have researched and found out that deep thinking only happens with a calm mind. “The greater our

concentration, the richer our thoughts,” Nicholas Carr says. The internet is a useful search engine, but does not allow students to go deeply into thought. Google allows people to find anything by the click of a button. This isn’t the way students should learn. Nicholas Carr says, “If you’re really interested in developing your mind, you should turn off your computer and your cellphone – and start thinking. Really thinking.”

Technology can be distracting, but most of all it is addictive. Scientists say that using email, texting, or searching the web can change how someone thinks or behaves. “The stimulation [of technology use] provokes excitement – a dopamine squirt – that researchers say can be addictive. In its absence, people feel bored,” says Matt Richtel of the New York Times. Addiction to technology may not compare to the addiction of certain drugs, but being a student who is addicted to something that creates different social interactions, and doesn’t allow deep thought, could be very bad. “In 2008, people consumed three times as much [technology] each day as they did in 1960,” Matt says. This rate has already increased, and a break from it wouldn’t be a bad thing. Researchers worry that constant digital stimulation like this creates attention problems for children with brains that are still developing, who already struggle to set priorities and resist impulses,” Matt says. Students in high school, or even in college, have brains that are still developing. A week off from the technology would allow these students to develop skills, with their growing brains, that could be used instead of electronics.

Our school should start participating in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” It would allow students to see the difference in social interactions of electronics and in person. The week would allow students to go into deep thought and understand subjects and ideas that Google cannot. Lastly, technology is addictive and a break is what students need to understand the consequences of it being addictive. By our school doing this national movement, we could change the way school is taught to better help each and every student.

Grades 9-12, Prompt for Informative / Explanatory Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.2

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different – or not.

The Great Depression of the 1930s, in the United States, was one of these events. Lasting for nearly ten years, the Great Depression closed thousands of banks, put millions of people out of work, and seared itself into the memory of those who lived through it.

The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, responded by creating new government programs to help Americans, known as the New Deal.

You are going to read four texts about the Great Depression: a memoir called *Digging In* by Robert Hastings, a poem “Debt” by Karen Hesse, a short text about the programs of the New Deal of President Roosevelt, and President Roosevelt’s second inaugural address to the nation in 1937. As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the Great Depression seems to have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, using these texts, you will write an essay, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

According to these texts, what effect did the Great Depression have on people who lived through it? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a good informational essay:

- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

Depression affected Americans.

File Name: N9-10P Gains of the Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 9-10

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Gains of the Great Depression

During the Great Depression, millions of people lost jobs, and families struggled to find financial footholds. It lasted for ten years, leaving very strong memories of dramatically dark times. Throughout those years, people found new ways to cope with the struggles, and interestingly enough, new emotions and belief in the ideals of America. Everybody learned the importance of being resourceful, while also keeping hope for the future and growing more unified and patriotic as a country.

One important effect of the Great Depression was how it made people and families resourceful. That quality is largely a part of the memoir Digging In, where a man who lived during the Depression talked about his family's frugality, and how they had to "cut back on everything possible" in order to save money. Some of the things they had to cut back on included city water, selling their car, and discontinuing purchases of toothpaste, toilet paper, and snacks, just to name a few. They also "took care of what [they] had", and listed all the ways they used a cotton cloth, which included using it as a dish cloth, bandage, quilt piece and more. These qualities of being frugal and resourceful weren't bad; they taught people to not be wasteful and to

not spend money on things that aren't necessary. Being resourceful became a part of life during the Depression as a way to help families stay financially afloat.

More significantly the Great Depression, in a broad sense, brought a sense of patriotism and more unity as a country. Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt enriched his second inaugural address with these ideals. He said that the greatest change he had witnessed was the "change in the moral climate of America" and that they were on the road of progress. Another quote of his was "in seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people." What Roosevelt was implying was if the people wanted their country to go in the right direction, they all had to work together. Working together wouldn't be hard, due to the entire country's new sense of belief in their country, also known as patriotism. The United States' stronger sense of unity that came about during the depression helped citizens work through the hard times.

Most importantly, the Depression oddly enough brought a sense of hope. In some cases, farmers had to keep hope for the future and that it would bring rain for their crops so they could get money, as a farmer had in a poem called "Debts". In an article about "The New Deal", an explanation was given about how Roosevelt gave the country hope by creating many reforms that were aimed to "relieve poverty, reduce unemployment, and speed economic recovery". This hope for the future gave people something worth living for during times when suicide didn't seem like a bad idea. Indeed, this sense of hope was a very important effect that the Great Depression had on the people who lived through it.

Even though the Depression devastatingly affected tens of millions of people, the way it changed people's outlooks was inspiring. Instead of tossing a cotton bag in the garbage, people learned to be resourceful and used them as towels and dish cloths. A stronger sense of pride in their country helped them work through the hardships together, with patriotism and unity. Above all else, without hope for the future, people would've given up on trying to fix their severely wounded economy. These enhanced senses of resourcefulness, unity, along with patriotism and hope were all ways that the Great Depression affected Americans.

File Name: I 11/12P Hope During The Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grades 11-12

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Hope During The Great Depression

Life is difficult. Sometimes, it is devastatingly so. Yet the human race can be defined by the dual characteristics of perseverance and hope. We, the human race, are the infamous turtle of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, we take each obstacle in stride and keep on going on. The Great Depression is one of the best examples of humankind's tendency towards both perseverance and hope. The fact that so many people managed to live through the terrible poverty of the Great Depression is a testament to the tenacity of hope and optimism in humans, and Americans in particular.

The texts provided for this analysis all discuss the Great Depression and its effects on the people who lived through it. On the whole, the theme translated from the texts is that the people who survived the Great Depression developed, as a direct result of the Depression, a curiously strong sense of optimism. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his Second Inaugural Address, attributes this sense of optimism to democracy, and its "...innate capacity to protect its people against disasters once considered inevitable, to solve problems once considered unsolvable." Roosevelt is, of course, making a blunt reference to his popular and effective programs under the New Deal. It is true that the New Deal had come at just the right moment, and that millions of people were helped through the New Deal, particularly the WPA, or Works

Progress Administration, which was, as put in the fourth source from PBS, a "major work relief program...[employing] more than 8.5 million people to build bridges, roads, public buildings, parks and airports." 8.5 million people is a lot of people to employ, and based upon these facts alone it would seem that the New Deal was indeed reason to hope.

Yet the other sources, and indeed even later on in Roosevelt's speech, indicate that such hope was perhaps misplaced, at least in the extent that the hope was placed upon Roosevelt. In "Digging In", the second source written by Robert J. Hastings, the narrator reflects on her father's efforts to get money: "it was a day's work here and a day's work there...a few days on the WPA..." Thus, it seems that although the WPA may have employed 8.5 million people, it was not by any means a source of income, if people were only able to work for a few days at a time. However, the focus of "Digging In" is not to evaluate federal programs, but to evaluate the effectiveness of one's own efforts to help oneself. More than anything, the lengths to which the narrator's family went in order to save money exemplifies, once again, an incredible amount of perseverance. From the selling of the car, to the renouncement of milk and ice, the family maintains their perseverance and their hope. Towards the end of the passage, the narrator's mother speaks of this imperative hope: "I've learned that whatever happens, your Daddy always has a little dab of money put back somewhere..." Whether or not this was true, it certainly seems to be a sentiment that enabled the family to maintain their sanity

In Roosevelt's speech, there is a section in which he employs anaphora to give emphasis to the negative effects of the Depression by repeating, for several lines, "I

see..." followed by a sad image, thought, or idea. He finishes the anaphora with "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." While this rhetorical emphasis is used mainly to lead into his positive images to follow, in order to be more convincing towards his audience, the negative scenes which he describes were not only rhetorical, but quite real. People were homeless and clotheless and foodless during the Great Depression, millions of them. That is why it is so incredible that the primary effect of such a tragedy was to create a generation of hopeful people. Such hope is characterized in the first source, a poem by Karen Hesse entitled "Debts". In this poem, the narrator describes that "Daddy is thinking/ of taking a loan from Mr. Roosevelt and his men..." This connection to the New Deal emphasizes that the government, through President Roosevelt, helped instigate the massive flood of hope in the American people. The dad in the poem wants to buy wheat even though such an idea is completely impractical; the dad is a naively hopeful character.

As the "Ma" says in the last phrase of the poem, "well, it rains enough...to keep a person hoping./But even if it didn't/your daddy would have to believe." This quote defines succinctly the mind-set amongst Americans living in the Depression that hope will lead to greatness. Perhaps this was because Americans could do nothing else but hope, and work, and trust in the leaders of their country. It is human nature, after all, to do everything one can to keep oneself going. Thus, the Depression imprinted a sense of hope on the people that lived through it. It is a sense of hope that has not been witnessed to the same extent in our time, yet hope continues to persevere in humans.

Grades 9-12, Prompt for Narrative Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.3

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different.

You are going to read a short article about the Dust Bowl days in American history titled “Black Blizzard.” You will also look at some photographs taken during that time period. As you read and study the photographs, think about how this experience may have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, you will write a narrative, showing how a particular small moment during this experience affected one person.

Remember, a good narrative:

- *Establishes a clear point of view*
- *Focuses closely on one character or characters*
- *Uses strong sensory details to make the character(s) and event come alive*
- *Uses precise language*
May use dialogue and description to capture the character(s) and event
- *Concludes effectively*

Here are your choices for your narrative:

- A young child watching the “black blizzard” rolling in over the plains
- A young child, watching a tractor knock down his family home in Oklahoma, several years into the Dust Bowl drought
- A mother sitting on her front steps in a migrant camp in California
- An unemployed father, arriving at a squatter camp in California from Oklahoma

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The narrative will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

Narrative**Grade 10****On-Demand Writing - Uniform Prompt****The Day The Tractor Came**

I was four years old when our house was destroyed. I didn't understand why but I could remember when the big red tractor came belching its smoke, gleaming in the hot midday sunshine, and rolling over the landscape plowing long furrows in perfect unison. Years later they told me it was the bank - the monster that lived and breathed profits from the land. We lived on that land and worked it until it was exhausted. I was still in the womb when the drought came with its monstrous black clouds of dust that enveloped the landscape. Pa said that the storms caused the land to be barren of profit. When the profit ceased, the bank found other means to satisfy its never-ending appetite for the financial food known to farmers as profit.

I'll never forget the day the bank took our house. Pa told me that the bank was cultivating the land because we could no longer sustain the profit ourselves. I did not know nor cared what it meant. I was just a kid playing Indians and Cowboys with my two brothers and sister the day the tractor came. The shiny monster had been plowing the land all day long when it finally got to our small cabin. My father put up a stand, but to no avail. The tractor driver delivered his monotonous address to Pa about the bank's situation and needs. Legally it was fair, but it did not seem fair. Finally, Pa stepped away from the tractor squatted down and buried his head in his hands. Without hesitation, the driver fired up the incredible machine and let its engines roar. Looking back, the tractor

driver seemed to have an ultimate connection with his machine because he was an obstinate man controlling an unstoppable force. Slowly, the machine approached the house as if it were not even there. At immediate contact, the walls and roof caved in as if it were a flimsy cardboard box against a freight train. The tractor then proceeded without a care in the world, unaware and unconcerned of the devastation left in the dust, as if there never was a house there.

Back then, I was merely a child watching and wondering what his father would do next. Pa had always been a strong man, a man that our family could depend on. However, in five minutes, the tractor was able to reduce Pa to nothing. Never before had I seen my father break down with hopelessness. Seeing him there without a plan made me feel as though we were alone in a desert with nowhere to turn. But the tractor, the arrogant tractor, took my small life and shattered it into million pieces, and left it on the ground in front of me. What few memories I had in that house flashed before me as I watch them knocked to the ground. My home, the house where I was born, the house where I learned to walk, and the house my father had built with his own craftsmanship was so quickly destroyed, returning to the dust from which it came. But what do I care? I was merely a child in a large, dusty, lonely world.

File Name: N 11-12P (Better Than the Sunset.)

Narrative

Grade 12

On-Demand Writing - Uniform Prompt

(Better Than the Sunset.)

Adam sat on the porch and watched the clear blue sky. Today was his sixth birthday and all he wanted was to watch the sunset. It was only noon and he had hours to go. Inside the house his mother was cooking and his father was out in the fields. He didn't mind being alone on his birthday. He liked the quiet.

He sensed it before he saw it. Something felt wrong. Everything was too quiet, much the same as the minutes before a hurricane. Those moments were magical. The world seemed to stand still; the air charged with electricity.

Waiting to explode into chaos.

Today was no different. A cloud that had not been present only seconds before covered the sun. Adam looked up and squinted into the still bright sky. The cloud covering the sun was alone. It would not be a thunderstorm. Suddenly a huge shadow loomed before him. It sped forward from the tree line and deftly made its way towards him.

Time slowed down and he watched as animals exploded from their hiding places. The wide yard was chaos as a hundred tiny bodies ran for cover. His breath caught in his throat and while he *was* afraid he could not tear his eyes away. There was something beautiful about the way the cloud of black dust crept towards him, swallowing

everything in its path. To him it looked like a monster. Big and ugly and destructive and yet somehow extraordinary at the same time.

He vaguely registered that his name was being called, but there was nothing urgent enough to tear him away from the havoc unfolding before his eyes. He ignored the voices and watched as his mother's flowerbed was swallowed in seconds. Next were the tractor and then the shed. His big blue eyes grew wide as the cloud of angry, swirling black dust drew ever closer. His heart pounded now not from fear, but from something else. Adrenaline sang through his veins. It was exhilarating to watch his own death approach. He had no intention of dying today, but he couldn't bear to run inside and lose sight of this beautiful destruction.

The voices grew more and more frantic and the swirling mass of dust threatened closer and closer. And still Adam sat, watching and waiting for what was to be swallowed next. The shadow of this beast loomed over the house and he craned his head back to watch the hurricane of dust descend upon him. If possible time slowed even more. The door behind him burst open, the wood creaking and groaning in protest at the force shoved against it. The span of seconds in which his father ran towards him, shouting his name, stretched and seemed to become years. His footsteps pounded against the rotting planks of the porch, the noise exploding in Adam's ears. He looked between his father and the black monster, which had now reached the bottom step.

His father's strong arm reached towards him and closed around his body like a metal vice. His small bones jarred from the impact. He watched over his father's shoulder as the storm wailed closer.

I'll catch you, it seemed to be mocking.

As suddenly as time had slowed, it began again. The dust exploded around them just as his father slammed the door, shutting out the world. Black dust curled under the door and shifted forward in fury. His mother shoved a wet towel in the crack and pressed another to Adams face. Together, the three of them huddled in the middle of the room, gasping and hacking and choking for air. But Adam didn't mind. He had only one thought as the black dust wormed its way into his lungs and stole his breath.

That was better than the sunset.

In Common: Effective Writing for All Students Collection of All Student Work Samples, K-12

By The Vermont Writing Collaborative, with Student Achievement Partners and CCSSO

9–12 Annotated for Argument, Informative, and Narration Work Samples

On-Demand Samples

These pieces were written in response to a uniform text-based prompt.

The text changes at different grades, but the task and prompt remains essentially the same.

Grades 9-12, Prompt for Argument Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

A group of parents and teachers in your school have made a proposal to the school board. In their proposal, they are suggesting that the school join in a national movement called “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The parents and teachers in the group believe that not using any electronic media for an entire week would be good for students for many reasons.

They have taken the proposal to a teachers’ meeting, so that teachers can discuss the issue of whether or not to ask their students to participate in the “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” The teachers have decided they would like to hear from the students before they decide.

This is not a simple issue, so you need to think very carefully about it. You have three texts to read relating to the issue: “Social Media as Community,” “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” and “Attached to Technology and Paying a Price.” As you read and re-read these texts, think about what they show you about the issue. Think about what position you will take and what evidence you will use to support your thinking.

Finally, write an essay, in the form of a letter to the teachers, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

Should your school participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week?” Be sure to use evidence from the texts, as well as your own knowledge, to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a strong and effective piece of argument writing:

- *Takes the audience into account*
- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/position statement clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the position, and explains that evidence logically*
- *Takes into account what people who disagree with you might think and tries to respond to that*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: A9-10P High School Should Not Participate

Opinion/Argument

Grade 9-10

On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt

High School Should Not Participate

To whom it may concern:

L High School should not participate in the national "Shut Down Your Screen Week." Technology can be beneficial, especially to students. A vast majority of students finds it helpful to have access to technology. Technology makes quicker, more efficient work. Without the advancements of technology, we are no farther along than school children in the 1960's.

The internet and social media, such as Facebook, improve the social lives of those who use it. In the article Information, Communication and Society, a survey found that whether the participants were married or single, people who used social media had more close friends. An average American who uses social media is half as likely to be socially isolated. They also know more diverse people. Also, users of social media never lose ties because of relocating, because you can always keep your friends on social media.

Internet search engines allow us better access to information. In my experience, information is far more accessible and quick than searching through books. That allows for time to complete other class assignments. According to Peter Norvig, director of research for Google, Inc., in an article for the New York Times, "The internet contains the world's best writing, images, and ideas; Google lets us find the relevant pieces instantly." Some argue that ads and irrelevant sites may be distracting, but more find that the

Introduces a precise claim: The introduction states a claim and then gives context about the subject of technology, acknowledging it as a **substantive topic**

Creates an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence

Develops the claim fairly, supplying evidence for it, but does not develop the counterclaims or acknowledge significant limitations of the claim

Distinguishes the claim from an opposing claim

benefits are worth it. Eighty-one percent of experts polled by the Pew Internet Research Project support this opinion.

The internet also makes a good learning tool. In an article by Matt Richtel for the New York Times, he proves that it helps our brains.

“Imaging studies show the brains of Internet users become more efficient at finding information.” Basically, the more we use online resources to learn, the better our brains become at learning. Also, in the same article, it says, “Internet users showed greater brain activity than non-users...” The internet even develops our brain to think more! Technology is improving our brains.

I have heard it argued that children “rot” their brains with video game systems. In the previously mentioned article by Matt Richtel, he says, “At the University of Rochester, researchers found that players of some fast-paced video games can track the movement of a third more objects on a screen than nonplayers...games can improve reaction time and the ability to pick out details amid clutter.” It seems that the more people play fast-paced video games, the more efficient they become at finding important details. These games may not be so “brain rotting “ after all. They could even be argued as beneficial.

Some also argue that because of new technologies, people limit how much they associate together, even in the same area. Social media disproves this argument. Not only can people associate easily with friends, they can also chat with relatives. They can also show relatives photos, even if they are states away. People who use social media are more likely to know more diverse people, according to the article by Keith Hampton. People still associate with people just as much as before, if not more. They are merely doing it in a different manner than before social media was in use.

Cyber bullying has now become an issue. I would like to bring to attention that all bullying is a big issue. I do not think that technology has caused bullying. It has just allowed for a new way to bully someone. I

Develops the claim fairly, supplying evidence for it, but does not develop the counterclaims or acknowledge significant limitations of the claim

Distinguishes the claim from an opposing claim

Establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline

Uses words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships between claim and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim and counterclaims

Acknowledges counterclaim, pointing out its limitation, anticipates audience's (other students, parents, teachers, school board) concern.

have never been cyber-bullied. I personally was bullied in a face-to-face manner. A bully will take any chance to bully a target. Social media has not caused bullying.

Like most tools, technology is useful if used correctly. Work quality on a computer can be better, because people have more time to check over their work and improve it. Unfortunately, some people are lazy, and use that extra time they could use for editing for other things. That is not a problem with the tools, it is a problem with the people. People who use such technology correctly and efficiently should still have access. If our screens are shut down, there is no access. We should not participate in “Shut Down Your Screen Week.”

Sincerely,

Acknowledges counterclaim, pointing out its limitation, anticipates audience's (other students, parents, teachers, school board) concern.

NOTE: “people are lazy” is an *ad hominem* approach, and should not be used

Provides a concluding statement that follows from but does not add support to the argument presented

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to take a position on whether their school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” This writer begins by asserting the claim that, in his view, the school should not participate and then discusses technology in a broad and substantive sense to provide context concerning the issue.

The writer develops his claim with several reasons, which he supports with sufficient, relevant, credible evidence, demonstrating his understanding of the topic and the texts he has read. The evidence in this piece comes from those texts and from the writer’s experience. The writer organizes his ideas clearly and supports his claim with logical reasoning. In addition, he acknowledges multiple counterclaims, distinguishes them from his own claim, and refutes them with support for his own position, which again includes evidence from the texts. In some cases, the writer introduces counterclaims specifically to anticipate the concerns of the likely audience (other students, parents, teachers, school board members). However, the writer does not develop the counterclaims or acknowledge their strengths, and he resorts to *ad hominem* (“people are lazy”) in the closing paragraph—approaches inconsistent with the Standards at this grade level. Throughout the essay, the writer uses words, phrases, and clauses as transitions to clarify the relationships among claim, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence and to create cohesion.

The writer maintains a formal style and objective tone throughout the piece. The conclusion follows from the argument but does not significantly support it.

File Name: A11-12P Proposal to Shut Down Screen**Opinion/Argument****Grade 11-12****On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt****Proposal to Shut Down Screen**

To whom it may concern:

A group of parents, and some teachers, have made a proposal to the school board. They would like the school to participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week.” A week without any electronics is what parents believe the school needs. Technology is a big contradiction. It is useful with all the tools it has, yet it can be a distraction, or addicting.

Our school should participate in the national “Shut Down Your Screen Week” because of the following issues with technology.

“Based on a representative survey of 2,500 Americans...those who used social media had more close confidants,” says Keith Hampton. Facebook, Twitter, and other social media allow people to connect with each other and have social interactions, but through the web. The web, or a phone, that allows people to be more social is a major issue today. Kids, especially high school students, feel no need to talk to a friend in person. They can just text them. The problem with Facebook, or texting, is that people interact differently than they would in person. Cyberbullying is one of the biggest issues with the web today. People say things on the web that they wouldn’t say to the person’s face. Bullies feel safe when hidden behind a screen. Whether or not the survey of 2,500 people was accurate, it still did not account for the differences in interactions for media and in person. Having no electronics for a week would allow students to see that difference.

Although technology allows students to do research, that research isn’t helping students to do strategic and logical thinking. “What really

Introduces a knowledgeable claim and establishes its significance: The introduction gives context about the subject of technology, acknowledging it as a **substantive topic**, and then states a claim, albeit not very precisely

Develops the claim and a counterclaim fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the concerns, values, and possible biases of the audience (other students, parents, teachers, school board members)

Addresses significance of claim and topic

Points out limitation on claim

Uses words, phrases, and varied syntax to create cohesion, clarify the relationships among claims and reasons

makes us intelligent isn't our ability to find lots of information quickly. It's our ability to think deeply about that information," says Nicholas Carr, author of the book *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. Brain scientists have researched and found out that deep thinking only happens with a calm mind. "The greater our concentration, the richer our thoughts," Nicholas Carr says. The internet is a useful search engine, but does not allow students to go deeply into thought. Google allows people to find anything by the click of a button. This isn't the way students should learn. Nicholas Carr says, "If you're really interested in developing your mind, you should turn off your computer and your cellphone – and start thinking. Really thinking."

Technology can be distracting, but most of all it is addictive. Scientists say that using email, texting, or searching the web can change how someone thinks or behaves. "The stimulation [of technology use] provokes excitement – a dopamine squirt – that researchers say can be addictive. In its absence, people feel bored," says Matt Richtel of the New York Times. Addiction to technology may not compare to the addiction of certain drugs, but being a student who is addicted to something that creates different social interactions, and doesn't allow deep thought, could be very bad. "In 2008, people consumed three times as much [technology] each day as they did in 1960," Matt says. This rate has already increased, and a break from it wouldn't be a bad thing. Researchers worry that constant digital stimulation like this creates attention problems for children with brains that are still developing, who already struggle to set priorities and resist impulses," Matt says. Students in high school, or even in college, have brains that are still developing. A week off from the technology would allow these students to develop skills, with their growing brains, that could be used instead of electronics.

Our school should start participating in the national "Shut Down Your Screen Week." It would allow students to see the difference in social interactions of electronics and in person. The week would allow students

Acknowledges counterclaims, then distinguishes from claim with reasons and relevant, credible evidence from text, using valid reasoning

Creates an organization that logically sequences claim, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence throughout

Develops the claim fairly and thoroughly, supplying evidence for it in a manner that anticipates the concerns, values, and possible biases of the audience (other students, parents, teachers, school board members).

Uses depth of evidence

Establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline

Provides a conclusion that follows from and supports the argument presented

to go into deep thought and understand subjects and ideas that Google cannot. Lastly, technology is addictive and a break is what students need to understand the consequences of it being addictive. By our school doing this national movement, we could change the way school is taught to better help each and every student.

Recognizes and appeals to the **audience's concerns**, values, and **possible biases**, coming back to further **establishing the significance of the claim**

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to take a position on whether or not his school should participate in the national "Shut Down Your Screen Week." This student gives an introduction about technology in a broad and substantive sense as context on the issue and makes a claim that in his view the school should not participate.

The writer reminds the reader of the significance of his claim by pointing out one of the reasons to support that claim ("*Cyber bullying is one of the biggest issues with the web today*"), then develops the overall claim with several reasons, which he supports with sufficient relevant, credible evidence, demonstrating his understanding of the topic and the texts he has read. The evidence in this piece comes from those texts and from the writer's experience. The writer organizes his ideas clearly and supports his claim with logical reasoning. In addition, he acknowledges and treats fairly multiple counterclaims, distinguishes them from his own claim, and refutes them with support for his own position, which again includes evidence from the texts. The writer introduces counterclaims specifically to anticipate the concerns, values, and possible biases of the likely audience (other students, parents, teachers, school board members). Throughout the essay, the writer uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to clarify the relationships among claim, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence and to create cohesion.

The writer maintains a formal style and objective tone throughout the piece. The conclusion follows from and supports the argument presented, reminding the reader of the significance of the topic and claim to this particular audience (other students, teachers, parents, school board members).

Grades 9-12, Prompt for Informative / Explanatory Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.2

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different – or not.

The Great Depression of the 1930s, in the United States, was one of these events. Lasting for nearly ten years, the Great Depression closed thousands of banks, put millions of people out of work, and seared itself into the memory of those who lived through it.

The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, responded by creating new government programs to help Americans, known as the New Deal.

You are going to read four texts about the Great Depression: a memoir called *Digging In* by Robert Hastings, a poem “Debt” by Karen Hesse, a short text about the programs of the New Deal of President Roosevelt, and President Roosevelt’s second inaugural address to the nation in 1937. As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the Great Depression seems to have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, using these texts, you will write an essay, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

According to these texts, what effect did the Great Depression have on people who lived through it? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a good informational essay:

- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: I9-10P Gains of the Great Depression**Informative / Explanatory****Grade 9-10****On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt****Gains of the Great Depression**

During the Great Depression, millions of people lost jobs, and families struggled to find financial footholds. It lasted for ten years,

leaving very strong memories of dramatically dark times. Throughout those years, people found new ways to cope with the struggles, and

interestingly enough, new emotions and belief in the ideals of America.

Everybody learned the importance of being resourceful, while also keeping hope for the future and growing more unified and patriotic as a country.

One important effect of the Great Depression was how it made people and families resourceful. That quality is largely a part of the memoir Digging In, where a man who lived during the Depression talked about his family's

frugality, and how they had to "cut back on everything possible" in order to save money. Some of the things they had to cut back on included city

Integrates water, selling their car, and discontinuing purchases of toothpaste, **quotations** toilet paper, and snacks, just to name a few. They also "took care of
effectively
into **analysis**

Introduces the topic:

The writer gives strong context that sets the stage for the essay; includes **topic / focus** of the piece, which previews what is to follow

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic

Analyzes ideas, concepts, and information to make **important connections**

Organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions:

The writer cites several texts but organizes the essay mainly by abstract **concept** (e.g., resourcefulness, patriotism), not text.

Develops the topic with well-chosen, relevant, sufficient, accurate facts and concrete details

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the

what [they] had", and listed all the ways they used a cotton cloth, which included using it as a dish cloth, bandage, quilt piece and more. These qualities of being frugal and resourceful weren't bad; they taught people to not be wasteful and to not spend money on things that aren't necessary. Being resourceful became a part of life during the Depression as a way to help families stay financially afloat.

Establishes and maintains a formal style, objective tone while attending to norms and conventions of discipline in which the student is writing

More significantly the Great Depression, in a broad sense, brought a sense of patriotism and more unity as a country. Former President Franklin

D. Roosevelt enriched his second inaugural address with these ideals. He said that the greatest change he had witnessed was the "change in the moral climate of America" and that they were on the road of progress. Another quote of his

was "in seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people." What Roosevelt was implying

Uses appropriate, varied transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts and create cohesion

was if the people wanted their country to go in the right direction, they all had to work together. Working together wouldn't be hard, due to the entire country's new sense of belief in their country, also known as patriotism. The United States' stronger sense of unity that came about during the depression helped citizens work through the hard times.

Analyzes evidence

Most importantly, the Depression oddly enough brought a sense of hope. In some cases, farmers had to keep hope for the future and that it would bring rain for their crops so they could get money, as a farmer had in a poem called "Debts". In an article about "The New Deal", an explanation was given about how Roosevelt gave the country hope by creating many reforms that were aimed to "relieve poverty, reduce unemployment, and speed economic

Develops topic with well-chosen, relevant, sufficient, accurate facts and concrete details from New Deal text

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic

recovery". This hope for the future gave people something worth living for during times when suicide didn't seem like a bad idea. Indeed, this sense of hope was a very important effect that the Great Depression had on the people who lived through it.

Reminds audience of the focus / topic / main point of the essay.

Even though the Depression devastatingly affected tens of millions of people, the way it changed people's outlooks was inspiring. Instead of tossing a cotton bag in the garbage, people learned to be resourceful and used them as towels and dish cloths. A stronger sense of pride in their country helped them work through the hardships together, with patriotism and unity. Above all else, without hope for the future, people would've given up on trying to fix their severely wounded economy. These enhanced senses of resourcefulness, unity, along with patriotism and hope were all ways that the Great

Makes an important distinction, demonstrating understanding of the complexity of the topic

Provides a conclusion that follows from and supports the information presented by articulating implications and the significance of the topic

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer provides some context about the severity of the Great Depression in the introduction and then states his main points (the Great Depression taught people to be resourceful as well as inspired unity), which serves to preview what follows.

The writer organizes ideas, concepts, and information clearly by concept, using textual evidence to support the main points. While he uses the texts extensively, they are not the organizing principle; rather, the concepts of resourcefulness and unity are. The writer uses appropriate, varied, and strong transitions to clarify relationships and create cohesion (for example, "*Indeed, this sense of hope...*"). Within each chunk of the essay, the writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to name and explain the effects, which he has identified from the texts he has read. The writer analyzes evidence thoughtfully throughout so that the reader grasps the complexity of the topic.

While the essay is compelling and even dramatic, it has an appropriately formal style. The conclusion follows from and supports the information presented, and in it the writer analyzes the implications and significance of the topic.

Even though the Depression devastatingly affected tens of millions of people, the way it changed people's outlooks was inspiring. Instead of tossing a cotton bag in the garbage, people learned to be resourceful and used them as towels and dish cloths. A stronger sense of pride in their country helped them work through the hardships together, with patriotism and unity. Above all else, without hope for the future, people would've given up on trying to fix their severely wounded economy. These enhanced senses of resourcefulness, unity, along with patriotism and hope were all ways that the Great Depression affected Americans.

File Name: I 11-12P Hope During the Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grades 11-12

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Hope During The Great Depression

Life is difficult. Sometimes, it is devastatingly so. Yet the human race can be defined by the dual characteristics of perseverance and hope. We, the human race, are the infamous turtle of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, we take each obstacle in stride and keep on going on. The Great Depression is one of the best examples of humankind's tendency towards both perseverance and hope. The fact that so many people managed to live through the terrible poverty of the Great Depression is a testament to the tenacity of hope and optimism in humans, and Americans in particular.

Introduces the topic: The writer provides context, acknowledging the **complexity** of the **concept** of life's difficulty.

Uses the domain-specific technique of metaphor (the turtle in *Grapes of Wrath*) **to manage the complexity of the topic**

Develops topic with appropriate, accurate, facts and concrete details; uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary in well-chosen evidence from the text (here, the Second Inaugural)

The texts provided for this analysis all discuss the Great Depression and its effects on the people who lived through it. On the whole, the theme translated from

States
focus

the texts is that the people who survived the Great Depression developed, as a direct result of the Depression, a curiously strong sense of optimism. President

Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his Second Inaugural Address, attributes this

sense of optimism to democracy, and its "...innate capacity to protect its

people against disasters once considered inevitable, to solve problems

once considered unsolvable." Roosevelt is, of course, making a blunt

reference to his popular and effective programs under the New Deal. It is

Integrates
quotations
effectively
into
analysis

true that the New Deal had come at just the right moment, and that millions of

people were helped through the New Deal, particularly the WPA, or Works

Progress Administration, which was, as put in the fourth source from PBS, a

"major work relief program...[employing] more than 8.5 million people to build

bridges, roads, public buildings, parks and airports." 8.5 million people is a lot

of people to employ, and based upon these facts alone it would seem that the

New Deal was indeed reason to hope.

Yet the other sources, and indeed even later on in Roosevelt's speech,
indicate that such hope was perhaps misplaced, at least in the extent that the

hope was placed upon Roosevelt. In "Digging

second source written by Robert J. Hastings,

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary and techniques to manage the complexity of the topic

In", the

Establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which the writer is working

Develops the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant, relevant, accurate facts and concrete details from the text

Organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information: Beginning with a discussion of Roosevelt's optimism in his Second Inaugural, the writer **creates a unified whole** in which **each new element builds on that which precedes it**

Analyzes Roosevelt's speech in terms of author's craft (anaphora); connects the use of this rhetorical device to the essay's topic of perseverance and hope, to **manage the complexity of the topic**

Uses appropriate, varied transitions and syntax to clarify relationships among complex ideas and concepts and create cohesion. This section of the essay **builds from the section which precedes it and connects to the next** ("Digging In") to **create a unified whole**

the narrator reflects on her father's efforts to get money: "it was a day's work here and a day's work there...a few days on the WPA..." Thus, it seems that although the WPA may have employed 8.5 million people, it was not by any means a source of income, if people were only able to work for a few days at a time. However, the focus of "Digging In" is not to evaluate federal programs, but to evaluate the effectiveness of one's own efforts to help oneself. More than anything, the lengths to which the narrator's family went in order to save money exemplifies, once again, an incredible amount of perseverance. From the selling of the car, to the renouncement of milk and ice, the family maintains their perseverance and their hope. Towards the end of the passage, the narrator's mother speaks of this imperative hope: "I've learned that whatever happens, your Daddy always has a little dab of money put back somewhere..." Whether or not this was true, it certainly seems to be a sentiment that enabled the family to maintain their sanity

In Roosevelt's speech, there is a section in which he employs anaphora to give emphasis to the negative effects of the Depression by repeating, for several lines, "I see..." followed by a sad image, thought, or idea. He finishes the anaphora with "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." While this rhetorical emphasis is used mainly to lead into his positive images to follow, in order to be more convincing towards his audience, the negative scenes which he describes were not only rhetorical, but quite real. People were homeless and clotheless and foodless during the Great Depression, millions of them. That is why it is so incredible that the primary effect of such a tragedy was to create a generation of hopeful people. Such hope is characterized in the first source, a poem by Karen Hesse entitled "Debts". In

**Uses the most
significant and relevant
evidence to develop
topic**

this poem, the narrator describes that "Daddy is thinking/ of taking a loan from Mr. Roosevelt and his men..." This connection to the New Deal emphasizes that the government, through President Roosevelt, helped instigate the massive flood of hope in the American people. The dad in the poem wants to buy wheat even though such an idea is completely impractical; the dad is a naively hopeful character.

As the "Ma" says in the last phrase of the poem, "well, it rains enough...to keep a person hoping./But even if it didn't/your daddy would have to believe." This quote

defines succinctly the mind-set amongst Americans living in the Depression that hope will lead to greatness. Perhaps this was because Americans could do nothing else but hope, and work, and trust in the leaders of their country. It is human nature, after all, to do everything one can to keep oneself going. Thus, the Depression imprinted a sense of hope on the people that lived through it. It is a sense of hope that has not been witnessed to the same extent in our time, yet hope continues to persevere in humans.

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented and reflects on the significance of topic

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer provides context about the deep difficulty of living during the Depression in the introduction. She analyzes the metaphor of Steinbeck's turtle to help manage the complexity of the topic. In the second paragraph, she offers her main point/focus: the Great Depression created a *"curiously strong sense of optimism"* in people.

The writer organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly to support the main point using textual evidence, doing so in such a way that each section builds on the one that precedes it. While she draws on texts extensively, they are not the organizing principle; rather, the concepts of hope, optimism, and perseverance are. The writer uses appropriate, varied, and strong transitions to connect concepts and create coherence. (For example, *"However, the focus of "Digging In" is not to evaluate federal programs, but to evaluate the effectiveness of one's own efforts to help oneself."*) Within each chunk of the essay, the writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary and techniques to name and explain the effects, which she has identified from the texts she has read. The writer analyzes evidence thoughtfully throughout so that the reader grasps the complexity of the topic.

Grades 9-12, Prompt for Narrative

Writing Common Core Standard W.CCR.3

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different.

You are going to read a short article about the Dust Bowl days in American history titled “Black Blizzard.” You will also look at some photographs taken during that time period. As you read and study the photographs, think about how this experience may have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, you will write a narrative, showing how a particular small moment during this experience affected one person.

Remember, a good narrative:

- *Establishes a clear point of view*
- *Focuses closely on one character or characters*
- *Uses strong sensory details to make the character(s) and event come alive*
- *Uses precise language*
May use dialogue and description to capture the character(s) and event
- *Concludes effectively*

Here are your choices for your narrative:

- A young child watching the “black blizzard” rolling in over the plains
- A young child, watching a tractor knock down his family home in Oklahoma, several years into the Dust Bowl drought
- A mother sitting on her front steps in a migrant camp in California
- An unemployed father, arriving at a squatter camp in California from Oklahoma

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The narrative will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

File Name: N9-10P The Day The Tractor Came**Narrative****Grade 10****On-Demand Writing - Uniform Prompt****The Day The Tractor Came**

I was four years old when our house was destroyed. I didn't

Uses

sensory

details to

convey vivid

picture of

experience

understand why but I could remember when the big red tractor came

belching its smoke, gleaming in the hot midday sunshine, and rolling

over the landscape plowing long furrows in perfect unison. Years later

they told me it was the bank - the monster that lived and breathed profits

from the land. We lived on that land and worked it until it was exhausted. I

was still in the womb when the drought came with its monstrous black

clouds of dust that enveloped the landscape. Pa said that the storms caused

the land to be barren of profit. When the profit ceased, the bank found other

means to satisfy its never-ending appetite for the financial food known to

farmers as profit.

I'll never forget the day the bank took our house. Pa told me that the

bank was cultivating the land because we could no longer sustain the profit

ourselves. I did not know nor cared what it meant. I was just a kid playing

Indians and Cowboys with my two brothers and sister the day the tractor

came. The shiny monster had been plowing the land all day long when it

finally got to our small cabin. My father put up a stand, but to no avail. The

tractor driver delivered his monotonous address to Pa about the bank's

Engages and orients the reader by setting out a problem as the focus for narrative to follow, establishing a point of view, and introducing a narrator and characters: A child's anguish over the destruction of his home by a tractor is the central focus of the narrative, which is told from the perspective of a first person narrator.

Uses a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole

Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory and figurative language to convey a vivid picture of the events, setting, and characters

Creates a smooth progression of events

Uses the narrative technique of personification (portraying the tractor as the enemy) to develop events and characters

situation and needs. Legally it was fair, but it did not seem fair. Finally, Pa stepped away from the tractor squatted down and buried his head in his hands. Without hesitation, the driver fired up the incredible machine and let its engines roar. Looking back, the tractor driver seemed to have an ultimate connection with his machine because he was an obstinate man controlling an unstoppable force. Slowly, the machine approached the house as if it were not even there. At immediate contact, the wall and roof caved in as if it were a flimsy cardboard box against a freight train. The tractor then proceeded as if there never was a house, without a care in the world, unaware and unconcerned of the devastation left in the dust.

Back then, I was merely a child watching and wondering what his father would do next. Pa had always been a strong man, a man that our family could depend on. However, in five minutes, the tractor was able to reduce Pa to nothing. Never before had I seen my father break down with hopelessness. Seeing him there without a plan made me feel as though we were alone in a desert with nowhere to turn. But the tractor, the arrogant tractor, took my small life, shattered it into million pieces, and left it on the ground in front of me. What few memories still had in that house flashed before me as I watch them knocked to the ground. That was my home, the house where I was born, the house where I learned to walk, and the house my father had built with his own craftsmanship so quickly destroyed returning to the dust from which it came. But what do I care; I was merely a child in a large, dusty, lonely, world.

Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory and figurative language to convey a vivid picture of the events, setting, and characters:

Precise, vivid language captures the force of the tractor as it destroys the

Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory and figurative language to convey a vivid picture of the events, setting, and characters:

Precise, telling details contrast the misery of the family with the lack of

Uses a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole

Uses the narrative technique of reflection to develop events, as well as the character of the narrator

Provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is resolved over the course of the narrative

In this on-demand narrative, the writer tells the story of a child watching his home being razed by a tractor during the days of the Dust Bowl. He focuses it around the narrator's experience of losing the home his father had built. The narrator and main character is the child.

The writer uses a clear sequence of events to develop the story, using some skillfully executed flashbacks to illuminate the present experience with the tractor. The writer uses no dialogue; most of the detail is provided through the narrator's reflection and through vivid descriptions of events. The narrator's state of mind—bewildered and shocked—is captured through this reflective detail. The narrative concludes with the narrator reflecting on his powerlessness and aloneness. The lack of tidy resolution is appropriate to this narrative and suggests the maturity of the writer.

File Name: N11-12P (Better Than the Sunset.)**Narrative****Grade 12****On-Demand Writing - Uniform Prompt****(Better Than the Sunset.)**

Adam sat on the porch and watched the clear blue sky. Today was his sixth birthday and all he wanted was to watch the sunset. It was only noon and he had hours to go. Inside the house his mother was cooking and his father was out in the fields. He didn't mind being alone on his birthday. He liked the quiet.

He sensed it before he saw it. Something felt wrong. Everything was too quiet, much the same as the minutes before a hurricane. Those moments were magical. The world seemed to stand still; the air charged with electricity.

Waiting to explode into chaos.

Today was no different. A cloud that had not been present only seconds before covered the sun. Adam looked up and squinted into the still bright sky. The cloud covering the sun was alone. It would not be a thunderstorm.

Suddenly a huge shadow loomed before him. It sped forward from the tree line and deftly made its way towards him.

Time slowed down and he watched as animals exploded from their hiding places. The wide yard was chaos as a hundred tiny bodies ran for cover. His breath caught in his throat and while he *was* afraid he could not

Engages and orients the reader by setting out a situation and its significance, establishing a point of view, and introducing a character:

The writer delays the introduction of the problem of the dust storm, instead focusing on a setting. The narrative is told from the perspective of a third person limited narrator.

Establishes the **problem** (coming of the dust storm) and **its significance**, using narrative technique of **suspense**

Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the events, setting, and character

Uses a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome, the coming of the storm

tear his eyes away. There was something beautiful about the way the cloud of black dust crept towards him, swallowing everything in its path. To him it looked like a monster. Big and ugly and destructive and yet somehow extraordinary at the same time.

Uses description and reflection to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome, how the child will experience the storm

He vaguely registered that his name was being called, but there was nothing urgent enough to tear him away from the havoc unfolding before his eyes. He ignored the voices and watched as his mother's flowerbed was swallowed in seconds. Next were the tractor and then the shed. His big blue eyes grew wide as the cloud of angry, swirling black dust drew ever closer. His heart pounded now not from fear, but from something else. Adrenaline sang through his veins. It was exhilarating to watch his own death approach. He had no intention of dying today, but he couldn't bear to run inside and lose sight of this beautiful destruction.

Reflection builds towards the outcome of how child will experience this storm

The voices grew more and more frantic and the swirling mass of dust threatened closer and closer. And still Adam sat, watching and waiting for what was to be swallowed next. The shadow of this beast loomed over the house and he craned his head back to watch the hurricane of dust descend upon him. If possible time slowed even more. The door behind him burst open, the wood creaking and groaning in protest at the force shoved against it. The span of seconds in which his father ran towards him, shouting his name, stretched and seemed to become years. His footsteps pounded against the rotting planks of the porch, the noise exploding in Adam's ears. He looked between his father and the black monster, which had now reached the bottom step.

Creates a smooth progression of events

Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the events, setting, and characters: Here, the writer conveys the danger of the moment

His father's strong arm reached towards him and closed around his body like a metal vice. His small bones jarred from the impact. He watched over his father's shoulder as the storm wailed closer.

I'll catch you, it seemed to be mocking.

As suddenly as time had slowed, it began again. The dust exploded around them just as his father slammed the door, shutting out the world.

Black dust curled under the door and shifted forward in fury. His mother shoved a wet towel in the crack and pressed another to Adam's face.

Together, the three of them huddled in the middle of the room, gasping and hacking and choking for air. But Adam didn't mind. He had only one thought as the black dust wormed its way into his lungs and stole his breath.

That was better than the sunset.

Creates a smooth progression of events

Provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is resolved over the course of the narrative: The writer contrasts the danger of the storm with the child's experience of it to establish an ironic ending.

In this on-demand narrative, the writer tells the story of a child experiencing a dust storm during the days of the Dust Bowl. He focuses it around the irony of such a dreadful thing being such a magical experience for the child. The main character is the child, and the narrative is told from a third-person limited point of view.

The writer uses a clear sequence of events to develop the story, beginning with the main character watching the sunset and using the notion of the sunset to create a cohesive whole by the end of the narrative. The writer uses no dialogue; most of the detail is provided through reflection on the part of the child and through vivid description of events. The child's state of mind—shocked but also thrilled—is captured through this reflective detail. The narrative concludes with the child thinking, "*That was better than the sunset,*" an ironic resolution that is appropriate to this narrative and that suggests the maturity of the writer.