

BC Performance Standards

Grade 9 Writing

Additional Samples

The BC performance standards for Grade 9 writing consist of rating scales that describe student achievement in March-April of a given year and samples illustrating typical tasks and student work at all four levels described in the rating scales.

The additional sample tasks for Grade 9 writing included here generally show two examples of student work for each task:

- one that meets expectations at a minimal level
- one that fully meets expectations

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| GRADE 9: IMPROMPTU WRITING (PERSONAL VIEWS AND RESPONSE)..... | 2 |
| SAMPLE 1: IMPROMPTU ESSAY..... | 2 |
| GRADE 9: WRITING TO COMMUNICATE IDEAS AND INFORMATION..... | 9 |
| SAMPLE 1: EDITORIAL..... | 9 |
| GRADE 9: LITERARY WRITING..... | 14 |
| SAMPLE 1: WRITING IN-ROLE..... | 14 |
| SAMPLE 2: SHORT STORY..... | 19 |

Grade 9: Impromptu Writing (Personal Views and Response)

Sample 1: Impromptu Essay

Context

In this class, students frequently write about their ideas and opinions before and after reading, discussion, and debating activities. As part of their writing instruction, they learned a variety of ways to generate and shape ideas for writing. From time to time, they were asked to write impromptu, timed essays on topics related to their experiences—often topics the class suggested. This teacher used these impromptu essays to help diagnose their independent writing skills and to assess their progress.

Process

The teacher read excerpts and short selections about people who had overcome obstacles (e.g., Terry Fox, Rick Hansen, Roberta Bondar, Silken Laumen, excerpts from *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* by Jack Canfield), and the class discussed some of the key qualities these people demonstrated. In the following period, students were given 50 minutes to plan, write, and check an impromptu essay on the topic “Overcoming Obstacles.” The teacher emphasized that they were to write about their own experiences (or observations of people close to them)—not recount stories from media or books.

The teacher briefly reviewed some of the prewriting strategies they had learned for generating and shaping ideas, and suggested that they consider questions such as:

- Why was it an obstacle?
- Did you have any help?
- What have you learned?
- Are you a better person for it?
- Was it worth the experience?

Students completed their work independently. The teacher encouraged them to use classroom resources (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, posters outlining writing strategies). Students did not have opportunities to consult with others or to make substantial revisions, but they were encouraged to check their work carefully and to indicate clearly any changes they would like to make.

Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)

Teacher's Observations

The writing is engaging but suffers from lack of paragraphing and problems with conventions.

- takes a clear point of view; presents some relevant ideas
- some development through explanations and examples
- generally easy to read; some sense of flow from one sentence to the next
- largely conversational
- some variety in sentence length and pattern
- beginning introduces the topic and attempts to engage the reader; includes a clear middle and an end
- sequence is logical
- links ideas with appropriate transitions (but written as a single paragraph)
- errors in spelling and grammar occasionally distract the reader, but meaning is clear
- follows basic rules for sentence construction, but includes some run-on sentences

Overcoming Obstacles

Tyler, a friend of my best friend was born without a full arm, and his left arm is just a stub. Tyler had to go to a bunch of treatment to learn how to co-operate with his handicap. They said he would not be able to participate in all the normal sports like hockey, baseball etc. Although he could play soccer, he just did not have the taste for sports. He would be good at computers, video games and stuff like that but the people that he wanted to hang out with were all good at sports. So one day he came outside to play football with me and my friends. He could not even pick up a football. So I decided to put him quarter back and he threw it very, very hard and all of us were amazed. He hung out with us for a bit and we started to like him for who he was and not for how good he could play sports. This was an important obstacle for him to overcome because everyone needs friends and when he wanted to be noticed people liked him for a nice guy after we got to know him.

Fully Meets Expectations

Teacher's Observations

This is a well-organized piece of writing for a first draft.

- develops a reasonable point of view with some voice and individuality
- builds a position or argument through the use of detail, example, explanations
- flows smoothly; easy to read
- uses a variety of sentence forms
- develops smoothly, from a clear introduction to a logical conclusion
- follows a predictable sequence
- related ideas are grouped together; paragraphing is logical
- occasional errors in spelling (e.g., misspells *chemotherapy*)
- verb tenses are consistent

Overcoming Obstacles

One of the greatest obstacles in life for a lot of people including Janet Proul is quitting smoking. Janet started smoking at the young age of fourteen, just to fit in and "be cool," just like her friends. If only she would have known back then what a bad effect smoking has on a person's health, lifestyle, and family.

At first smoking was just a fun and cool thing to do, but after a while this little spurt of the moment thing, developed into a serious addiction. She found herself smoking one to two packs every couple of days, and also ended up stealing money from her family to pay for the costly addiction.

Janet smoked for thirteen years before it finally got to her. It wasn't the constant complaints from her family when they got into the car, or the disgusted expression on people's faces when she walked by, but it was her health that motivated her to quit.

Janet went to the doctor for a yearly check-up when she found out she had a bit of cancer in her left lung. As frightened as she was, Janet decided that it was about time to end her filthy habit.

After six-months of chemo therapy to try and get rid of the cancer, Janet had tried to quit two times and had

failed each time. The cancer, fortunately had disappeared, but Janet couldn't get the words of her doctor saying, "you could have died from all those years of smoking."

Janet decided to get real help in quitting and paid for a physical therapist to help overcome her serious habit.

It has been two years since Janet has even touched a cigarette, and she is very happy to be able to live to see her children grow up.

She has realized that smoking is "not cool," and that she shouldn't have even started in the first place. There are much more important things to do in life, and smoking just prevents you to do those things by perhaps killing you. The best thing to do about smoking, is don't ever start!

Grade 9: Writing to Communicate Ideas and Information

Sample 1: Editorial

Context

Students in this class are responsible for publishing the school newspaper. They frequently write editorials and other opinion pieces (e.g., columns) and have learned about the key features and techniques for persuasive writing (e.g., narrowing a topic, taking and sustaining a point of view).

Process

Immediately prior to this assignment, the teacher conferenced with several students to review their portfolios and discuss their progress. The teacher also gave a mini-lesson on persuasive techniques.

The class brainstormed a list of current issues for editorials. Students chose various issues and listed their ideas, pro and con. They chose a point of view and wrote rough drafts. Using an editorial checklist, students read each other's work and offered advice about ways to strengthen the arguments. They word processed final copies and checked for surface errors. (Some students used the grammar and spell-checking functions.)

Students then submitted their editorials for consideration for the next issue of the newspaper.

Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)

Teacher's Observations

This student has chosen an appropriate topic for her editorial and has gathered accurate facts, but she has not stated her opinion.

- purpose is clear; focus lapses in places
- some development through relevant examples and details; some unsupported generalizations and illogical reasoning (e.g., “only reason they made such a big deal about this is because Ross is from Canada”)
- sentence structure shows variety; awkward in places
- introduction states the purpose
- conclusion brings the work to an explicit end (but it has little impact)
- errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar occasionally distract the reader, but meaning is clear
- includes problems with pronouns (e.g., several uses of *they* without antecedent)
- legible, easy to read

Note: The following is a transcript of the student's work.

Should we have taken the medal away from Ross Rabagliati? Some people say we should and others think he should keep it.

They found 17.8 nanograms per millilitre of marijuana in his system. He was only 2.8 nanograms over the FIS limit. I could understand if they made a big deal about it if he had more than that, but 2.8 isn't very much. It couldn't even be determine whether or not it was second hand smoke, or if he was the one smoking it. He claimed it was second hand smoke. He also claimed that he hadn't smoked up since April of '97. He stopped once he found out he was going to the Olympics.

Also, marijuana isn't a performance enhancing drug. Even if he had been smoking marijuana it wouldn't have helped him win the gold medal. So if he didn't have it in his system, he would have done alot better and would have gotten the gold medal anyways. If there was more in his system, Ross probably wouldn't have gotten the

gold or even gotten a medal at all. The silver and bronze medal winners had no marijuana in their systems and they still couldn't beat Ross who did. If it did enhance your performance then I could understand why people would be upset about it. But it doesn't enhance your performance and he still managed to win.

The Fédération Internationale du Ski (Canada) has placed marijuana as one of the illegal drugs. In Japan, at the Olympic games, marijuana is not on the list but is still illegal in the country. Therefore it is not banned from the Olympics. Just because they found a little in his system, they can't prove whether or not he was actually smoking it. It's not like they caught him with it. So if it's not banned from the Olympics, why would they care if Ross only had about a millionth of a gram in his system?

I think that the only reason they made such a big deal about this is because Ross is from Canada. If it was any other country, it wouldn't have made a difference. Think of all the people from Canada that have gotten their medals taken away. Ben Johnson, Silken Laumen and now Ross Rabagliati. Canada is going to get a reputation of all our athletes being drugies.

In conclusion, they gave Ross Rabagliati his medal back. Some people don't think that he should have gotten it back, but I guess it's just a matter of opinion. Even though recently they have discovered that two other athletes have been found with marijuana in their systems and they're not going to do anything about it.

Fully Meets Expectations

Teacher's Observations

A straightforward but polished piece that was published in the school newspaper.

- purpose is clear; focus is maintained throughout, with relationships among ideas made explicit
- carefully and logically developed, with relevant examples and details
- clear sense of audience; appropriate tone
- uses a variety of sentence forms
- logically sequenced and organized
- conclusion brings a sense of closure; attempts to have an impact on the reader
- spelling, punctuation, and grammar are generally correct
- carefully edited and proofread
- presentation shows care and pride in work (i.e., of an appropriate standard to submit as an editorial)

The Image

Modeling is becoming a more popular activity for teenage boys and girls. Magazines such as YM, Seventeen and Teen feature young models in the beginning of their careers. Many advertisements also feature models to try to sell their product. Unfortunately most of the models are thin, handsome and beautiful. These models have had an impact on the everyday teenagers who read the magazines or see the ads. They're considered as role models and some teenagers will go to great lengths to look exactly like them. Even music groups and actors are affecting the way teenagers see themselves in the mirror. Anorexia and bulimia are causing more deaths because of boys and girls who want to lose weight fast. Once a teenager develops one of these sicknesses, it is very difficult for them to stop. Most of them end up in the hospital looking like thin ghosts. They always see themselves as fat, no matter how little they weigh. Their reflection becomes a thing of horror and they can become obsessed with looking perfect. Actresses like Cameron Diaz and Jennifer Aniston are the ideal "Image." Some teens believe that they have to look like the "image" to be popular and liked. The "image" is not something to be proud of because it's killing teenagers.

Lately the "image" has started to change. YM has started using models that aren't very skinny but are not fat either. Hopefully this change will reduce the risk of teenagers getting bulimia or another eating disorder. Looking perfect isn't everything and teenagers are going to have to learn that. Slowly the world is turning it's back on looking perfect and teens will start to realize that looks don't matter very much anymore. They shouldn't be afraid to look into the mirror and smile.

Grade 9: Literary Writing

Sample 1: Writing In-Role

Context

Students in this classroom frequently take on roles of literary characters to write letters and journals and to role-play conversations. This activity was completed during a literature unit that emphasized character study.

Process

Students were asked to write two letters in-role. The first letter was to be a “Dear Abby” letter, written in the role of a character from one of the works studied in class. The second letter was to be a response, written in the role of an advice columnist. The teacher provided advice columns as models for the letters and responses. Students brainstormed a list of characters and “problems” that might be suitable. As a class, they discussed the features that would characterize effective letters (e.g., stays in-role—sounds like the character and conveys his or her personality, includes details to make the problem interesting).

Each student chose a situation and independently wrote, revised, and made final copies of their letters. Students were encouraged to consult the relevant literary work for authentic detail, to refer to the models provided by the teacher, and to use classroom resources such as dictionaries and thesauruses.

Students had two class periods of 60 minutes to work on their letters.

Note: This was an integrated reading and writing activity. Only the analysis for writing is presented here.

Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)

Teacher's Observations

These letters are short, straightforward, and not especially engaging. There is no character development.

- creates a straightforward story
- description tends to be direct and concrete
- vocabulary is varied, but tends to be simple and conversational
- variety of sentence lengths and types
- beginning presents the “story problem”
- ending is believable
- follows basic rules for sentence construction, but includes some run-on sentences

Dear Venus

I have a big problem I like this girl . Her father wants me to marry her and so do I but the problem is she likes this other guy named Lysander. I really like her and I want her to like me instead of this other guy. What should I do?

Demetrius

Dear Demetrius

I don't think you should marry some one that doesn't like you no matter what her dad thinks. Maybe you should get to know her a bit better before you decide to marry her because I don't think you know her well enough to marry her and she already likes another guy. I think you should just find another girl.

Venus

Fully Meets Expectations

Teacher's Observations

These letters are engaging, sustain the voice of the characters involved (the rat and “Abby”), and offer insight into character and theme.

- uses detail and description to develop characters and themes; attempts to “show” rather than tell
- some evidence that ideas were selected or developed with an audience in mind
- vocabulary is appropriate and varied
- the beginning reveals the “story problem” and introduces the characters
- ending is logical
- spelling, punctuation, and grammar are generally correct
- verb tenses are consistent

Note: The following is a transcript of the student’s work.

Advice Column

In the story “Side Bet”, a rat is stranded on an island w/ a man. They made an unspoken bet; whoever died first, would lose it. The stakes were their lives. The man gets rescued and the rat gets left behind. Before the rescueship leaves though, the man bought the rat a pile of biscuits to compensate for his leaving.

Mar. 4/ 1897

Dear Abby,

I am a rat with a weight problem, but first you should know how this came to be. I was stranded on a island with a man, and we had made a bet. Whoever won, would win. I won, but the man was rescued before I could claim my winnings. The scoundrel, though, was honest enough to compensate me by buying me a pile of biscuits. I know I should restrain myself so I could live longer, but I just can’t stop nibbling! I’ve tried everything! I’ve tried taking a dip in cold water every time I get the

temptation, but I always end up eating five or six biscuits afterwards! I've also tried running around the island for exercise, but I'm so tired afterwards that I always eat a lot of biscuits afterwards. I have no one to turn to! Please help me to lose weight!

- Big rat on Barren Island

Mar. 5/ 1897

Dear Big Rat,

I think it is good that you have identified the problem and are trying to solve it by exercising. It sounds to me though, as if you are trying to lose a large amount of weight in a short period of time. I suggest you take things on step at a time. You could bury the pile of biscuits in a number of places on the island, and every morning, set out 10 biscuits for the day. That way, the large pile of biscuits wouldn't always be tempting you. After you've accomplished that, you could maybe cut down half a biscuit each time, until you get to 3–4 biscuits a day. You could also do little exercises until you are more fit, then, do more challenging and intensive exercises. I also think you are eating to relieve your boredom, since there is no one to talk to on the island. You need to find a hobby. Good luck with your efforts.

- Abby

Grade 9: Literary Writing

Sample 2: Short Story

Context

This writing assignment was part of a unit on short stories in which students had studied the elements of a short story.

Process

Students were asked to write a story in response to a photograph. The teacher provided over 50 photographs on a variety of subjects so that students would have a wide choice. Students first worked in small groups, examining photographs and brainstorming story ideas. Each student then chose a picture and worked independently to outline his or her story, using a template for elements and techniques of a short story (protagonist, conflict, foreshadowing, rising action, climax, resolution).

Students worked with peer editors to revise their work, using a class editing sheet. They were encouraged to consult at least two different people before writing their final copies.

Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)

Teacher's Observations

A straightforward story. The student did not do a rough draft or take advantage of the opportunity for peer editing.

- uses some detail and description to develop characters, events, and images; description tends to be direct and concrete
- vocabulary is varied, but tends to be simple and conversational
- variety of sentence lengths and types
- beginning presents the “story problem”; overexplained
- ending is believable
- errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar occasionally distract the reader, but meaning is clear
- follows basic rules for sentence construction
- includes illogical shifts in verb tense
- legible, easy to read

Note: The following is a transcript of the student’s work.

The Decision

She didn’t know what to do? She had been gone for almost a year now and her friends and family hadn’t known about the pregnancy. Sarah was scared of their reaction so when she found out she was two months pregnant she ran. Now she knows what she did was wrong but she doesn’t know if her family would understand.

Sarah knew she had to do something when she saw a poster with her picture on it and a \$5,000 reward. She had gone to Saskatchewan and lived with a friend from elementary school. She knew no one would find her there. See, Sarah lived there when she was very young but they (family) ended up moving to British Columbia when she was eight years old. Her father, Zoltan, had a job where they moved alot so when Sarah saw the poster where she was two provinces away she knew she had to go back.

Now Sarah is walking down the street where she lived and she came to her house. It was just as she remembered; a blue door with a hole right above the keyhole, from when her brother left home, and a messy yard with toys scattered everywhere from her Mom's little daycare kids. Then she remembered how much her mom loved kids, especially her kids. Sarah remembered all the times they talked and played. Suddenly she wasn't so scared.

Sarah walked up the driveway to the side door and knocked 1,2,3 and waited two seconds, then 4. That was their little secret knock. Her mom opened the door and embraced Sarah so tightly. When she saw the little baby boy all she could say was, "I'm a Grandma?"

The mom took the baby boy out of Sarah's arms and went inside. Sarah didn't know what to think, but when she got to the kitchen she saw her mom on the phone and she heard her say "I'm a Grandma and you're a Grandpa!" When she looked up they both smiled and Sarah knew it was all going to work out!

Fully Meets Expectations

Teacher's Observations

This student sought the advice of several peer editors and made a number of changes based on their suggestions or questions.

- work shows some originality and creative development (e.g., foreshadowing in the opening paragraph)
- uses detail and description to develop events
- vocabulary is appropriate and varied
- experiments with irony (e.g., reference to “best friend” in final paragraph)
- attempts to heighten interest and suspense by creating uncertainty
- ending is logical, surprising
- describes the setting; attempts to create a mood and atmosphere
- spelling, punctuation, and grammar are generally correct
- verb tenses are consistent
- carefully edited and proofread
- presentation shows care and pride in work

Note: The following is a transcript of the student's work.

Night of Mystery

Students at Westbridge Private School were starting a new year. Some of the students had been there for one or two years, so they trusted each other. The students stayed at the school for the whole school year.

It was a miserable, rainy Friday night. Cheryl and Steve had been together for three years, and nothing could separate them. They were watching the ever so popular horror movie, “Scream,” with some of their friends in Cheryl's dorm. The students had a curfew of 11:00. Steve kissed his girlfriend goodbye and said, “I'll see you tomorrow.”

The next morning, most people slept in, except those who were on sports teams, and liked to go for a morning jog. Steve and Mike normally went jogging. Mike was jealous of Steve, because he was a much better player than he was, and was more popular.

At about 10:30, Cheryl got a call from Steve's best friend, Mike. "Where's Steve?" he asked.

"I don't know, isn't he in his dorm?"

"No, and he didn't go jogging this morning."

Cheryl quickly got dressed, and headed over to Steve's place. She thought that maybe, he had accidentally knocked the phone off the hook. Steve's dorm was on the other side of the campus, so she had to walk a long distance.

People were running past her, and Cheryl noticed horrified looks on their faces.

Cheryl started to walk faster, and eventually came across something that brought terror to her eyes. Her boyfriend's body lay on the cement. She put her fingers on his neck, and he had no pulse. Cheryl shrieked, a terrible cry for help, and fell to her knees, beside Steve's cold, pale body.

Moments later, help was there, and Cheryl was surrounded by the press, being pressured to answer questions.

For the next two weeks, students were living a nightmare. They couldn't go home because police suspected that the killer was one of the students. If they let the students go home, the killer would be released.

A few days later, Cheryl was woken up by the shrill sound of sirens. She went to the entrance of the school, where the police and principal were. Mike was in the police car, looking out the window. His admiration and jealousy for Steve, led to the death of his best friend. Cheryl could not believe that her boyfriend's best friend could betray him like that. The mystery was now solved.