

Grade 4: Module 1A: Unit 2: Lesson 10

Writing to Explain: Drafting Strong Explanatory Paragraphs



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Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)

- I can explain what a text says using specific details from the text. (RI.4.1)
- I can determine the main idea using specific details from the text. (RI.4.2)
- I can take notes and categorize information. (W.4.8)
- I can effectively participate in a conversation with my peers and adults. (SL.4.1)

Supporting Learning Targets

- I can write an explanatory paragraph to explain the cultural traditions of the Iroquois.
- I can connect what I already know about the Iroquois to the ideas in other texts and media.

Ongoing Assessment

- Four-Square graphic organizers
- Explanatory paragraph drafts

| Agenda | Teaching Notes |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Opening</p> <p>A. Reviewing the Learning Targets</p> <p>2. Work Time</p> <p>A. Examining Model Explanatory Paragraphs (20 minutes)</p> <p>B. Application: Planning a Paragraph (20 minutes)</p> <p>3. Closing and Assessment</p> <p>A. Debrief (5 minutes)</p> <p>B. Exit Ticket (5 minutes)</p> <p>4. Homework</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this lesson, students learn how to write strong explanatory paragraphs to answer the question: “What is lacrosse and why is it important to the Iroquois?” • In this lesson, students look at two explanatory models in order to generate criteria for success for their explanatory paragraph. They are not given a formal rubric. For teacher reference, some suggestions of key success criteria are listed in the Supporting Materials. • In advance: look at the Four-Square graphic organizers. Students will use one of these to organize their explanatory paragraph. |

| Lesson Vocabulary | Materials |
|---|---|
| <p>explain, explanatory, focus, idea, organization, purpose, topic sentence, supporting details, conclusion, develop, cause, solution</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanatory Paragraph Models (one per student) • Strong Explanatory Paragraphs anchor chart (new; teacher-created) • Four-Square Graphic Organizer (one per student) • Next Steps for Planning Your Paragraphs anchor chart (new; teacher-created; see Work Time B) • Index cards (one per student) • Explanatory Paragraphs: Criteria for Success (for teacher reference) |

| Opening | Meeting Students' Needs |
|---|--|
| <p>In this lesson, students look at models in order to generate criteria for success for their explanatory paragraph. They are not given a formal rubric. For teacher reference, some suggestions of key success criteria are listed in the Supporting Materials. But it is important that students construct their own criteria, in their own language, based on examining the strong and weak models. Do not just hand them the list of criteria. The rationale behind this is to ensure that students actively contribute to and “own” the criteria upon which their writing will be assessed.</p> <p>Work TimeA. Examining Model Explanatory Paragraphs (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind students that they have been learning about how to write to explain in previous lessons. Now they are going to write a strong explanatory paragraph, using evidence from <i>The Iroquois</i> book. Tell them that they will be using the Four-Square graphic organizer to help them plan their evidence for their paragraph. Tell students that one way writers get better is by looking at other writers’ work, and thinking about the techniques or “moves” those writers made. Today, students will look at examples, or models, of two explanatory paragraphs. Tell them that the purpose is to look at what the writer was explaining and how he or she did it in a way that was clear to the reader. Tell students that by looking at models of weaker and stronger work, they will get clearer about what they are expected to produce. Show the Explanatory Paragraph Model # 1 to the students. Explain to the student that this paragraph comes from a chapter in their <i>Iroquois</i> book. Read the paragraph aloud. Invite the students to turn and talk about the content: “What did you learn from the paragraph?” Invite a few students to share. Then ask the students to read the paragraph a second time to analyze what “moves” or decisions the writer made. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “How did the writer <i>explain</i>? What information did the writer include? How does the paragraph flow?” Are there specific words that make the writing strong? Have students annotate parts of the paragraph where there is evidence of details, transitional linking words, and powerful and precise word choice. Ask students to turn and talk with a partner about their analysis. Distribute the Explanatory Paragraph Model # 2. Have students read it once to get the flow, then turn and talk about what the paragraph is about. “What did you learn about cornhusk dolls from the paragraph?” Invite a few students to share. Then ask them to reread, paying attention to the moves the writer made. Ask students to talk about what similarities or differences they noticed between the first and second models. Students should notice that this model is weaker than Model 1. Ask students to make suggestions: “What needs to be improved?” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For ELLs, consider providing extra time for tasks and answering questions in class discussions. ELLs often need more time to process and translate information. ELLs receive extended time as an accommodation on NY State assessments. Clarifying vocabulary meets the needs of ELLs and other students developing academic language. Use thoughtful grouping: Consider partnering an ELL with a student who speaks the same L1 when discussion of complex content is required. This can allow students to have more meaningful discussions and clarify points in their L1. |

- Listen for comments such as: “The author needs to include more information” or “The sentences are short and lack detail.”

B. Work Time Application: Planning a Paragraph (20 minutes)

- Explain to the students: “Now that you have looked at models of explanatory paragraphs and the rubric, you will begin planning and drafting your own explanatory paragraphs about lacrosse and how it is an important tradition to the Iroquois. Explain that they will use evidence, or examples, from the news article and the *Iroquois* book for their explanatory paragraph. Encourage them to use “Haudenosaunee” in place of Iroquois in their paragraphs.
- Display the **Four-Square graphic organizer** on your document camera.
- Tell students that the document has a center rectangle with space for the topic sentence of a paragraph, boxes for supporting details, and a box for the conclusion. Review the meaning of *topic sentence*, *supporting details*, and *conclusion* as needed.
- Share with students the next steps in their writing process:

Next Steps for Planning Your Paragraph

- Decide on a topic sentence for your paragraph. What’s the purpose or main idea you are explaining?
 - Identify three details that explain the following: “What is lacrosse and why is it important to the Iroquois?” and add them to your graphic organizer
 - Begin to think about the end of your paragraph. Tomorrow, you will write a first draft and get feedback from a classmate. \
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- Circulate and support students as needed.
 - Remind them that today is mostly about articulating what they have learned that might help them focus their paragraph writing. Tell students that their task today is to think about their topic, not to write a pretty polished paragraph. Emphasize this throughout, since students often have a misconception that writing in a specific structure will inherently make writing “good.” The first thing that will make writing good is having enough knowledge about a topic that the writer has something to say.
 - Collect students’ graphic organizers in order to give students feedback.

| Closing and Assessment | Meeting Students' Needs |
|---|--|
| <p>C. Debrief (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have students discuss with a partner: <p>“How did the graphic organizer help them to figure out what they need to explain to the reader?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the class: “Can you predict what we are going to do next?” | |
| <p>D Exit Ticket (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand each of the students an index card. Tell the students to respond to the questions: “What does it mean to explain? Why is it so important to explain how the Iroquois have continued cultural traditions?” Collect students’ writing as an informal assessment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For ELLs, consider providing extra time for tasks and answering questions in class discussions. For students needing additional support, offer a sentence frame or starter. |
| Homework | Meeting Students' Needs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For tonight’s homework, continue reading at your independent level at home. <p><i>Note: Review students’ graphic organizers and provide specific feedback. Students will use this feedback during Lesson 11.</i></p> | |

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Supporting Materials



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Explanatory Paragraph Models

Explanatory Paragraph Model #1

Excerpt from Chapter Two from *The Iroquois*

The earliest Iroquois moved into the area of present-day New York about 1,000 years ago. They settled near the south shore of Lake Ontario and along the Mohawk River. The flat land along the shore of Lake Ontario was good for farming. Elm trees provided wood for homes and cooking fires. The people used maple syrup from trees to sweeten their foods. The men hunted deer, rabbits, wild turkeys, and other animals. They fished for trout, salmon, and bass in the rivers and lakes.

From *The Iroquois*-page 11

Explanatory Paragraph Model #2

The Longhouse

A longhouse has lots of space. Each family lived in a room and shared a fire pit with other families. There was space for sleeping and food for all. The size of a longhouse was based on the size of the clan.

Excerpted and modified from the *Iroquois*-page 13

Explanatory Paragraphs: Criteria for Success

(For teacher reference: students should generate a similar list with teacher support)

| Criteria | Not Yet | Approaches Expectations | Meets Expectations | Exceeds Expectations |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Controlling Idea: Maintains a clear purpose throughout the paragraph | | | | |
| Development: Presents details to support the focus | | | | |
| Organization: Maintains an organized structure | | | | |
| Conventions: Includes language appropriate to the audience with few conventional errors | | | | |

Four-Square Graphic Organizer (For Writing)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>The first example to support “What is lacrosse and why is it important to the Iroquois?”</p> <p>Details:</p> | <p>Another example to support “What is lacrosse and why is it important to the Iroquois?”</p> <p>Details:</p> |
| <p>Topic Sentence:</p> | |
| <p>A third example to support “What is lacrosse and why is it important to the Iroquois?”</p> <p>Details:</p> | <p>Conclusion Statement:</p> |

(For more information about the Four-Square approach see: *Four-Square Writing Method: A Unique Approach to Teaching Basic Writing Skills*, Gould, E.J and Gould, J.S. [Teaching and Learning Company, 1999].)