"What should good student writing
at this grade level look like?"

The answer lies in the writing itself.

The **Writing Standards *in Action*
Project** uses high quality student
writing samples to illustrate
what performance to grade level
standards looks like—in action.

Writing Standards *in Action*

Grade 6
English Language Arts

Narrate
(Poem)

Sailing

Background Information

Writing Sample Title:

Sailing

Text Type and Purpose: Narrate

Grade level/Content area: Grade 6 English Language Arts

Type of Assignment: Poem

Standards Addressed: (W.6.3), (W.6.4),
(L.6.3), (L.6.5)

See descriptions of these standards in the right column of the next page.

Highlights:

This sample of student work exceeds grade level standards. It demonstrates the following attributes of effective writing.

The sample:

- Demonstrates effective use of rich poetic language

- Exhibits skillful use of poetic techniques

- Includes sophisticated organization that captures and brings clarity to a complex experience

Instructional Practices:

The teacher used the following practices:

- Opportunities for teacher and peer feedback

- Opportunity for reflection by the writer

- Models of effective writing

- Explicit instruction in elements of effective poetry

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

The student writing sample that follows includes standards-based commentary. The commentary found in this column describes how the writing meets the standards in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2017)* and other content frameworks when applicable.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary

1. Grade-specific standards addressed are:

- Listed in the column to the right of student work by strand, grade, and number (or number and letter, where applicable)

- Marked by a colored block with a letter code, also in the column to the right of student work

EXAMPLE: **A**

2. Colored arrow blocks beneath each standard in the right column:

- Are of the same color and letter code as the block that marks the standard being addressed

- Mark standards-based commentary related to the standard being addressed

- Appear in alphabetical order

EXAMPLE: **A1**

3. Corresponding colored arrow blocks within the text:

- Set off sections of student work to which commentary applies

- Do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order—but where evidence of a particular standard exists

EXAMPLE: (begin) **A1** section **A1** (end)

CONTINUED ▶

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Page 2   SAMPLE A6-7 (Narrate—Poem)

Assignment Description:

This is a "free verse poem" in which the teacher asked students to write a poem that contains the following criteria from the Free Verse Poem Guideline Rubric provided with the assignment:

- Strong lead—Does the poem start inside an experience, feeling, observation, or memory?

- Strong ending—Does the poem leave the reader with a feeling, idea, image or question?

- Line breaks and stanzas—Are lines/stanzas of the poem broken on nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs?

- Cut to the bone—Is the poem elegant shorthand? Are all the words used necessary?

- Use repetition (optional)—If repetition is used in the poem, does it stress an important word, phrase, idea or theme? (Repetition should not sound awkward.)

Intended Audience:

Teacher, students, parents

Time:

Unknown

Writing Process:

Pre-writing; drafting; self-editing; peer-editing/peer response; teacher-student conference; revising

Materials:

Free Verse Poem Guideline Rubric (see criteria)

Writing Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 3 (W.6.3)

Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured sequences.

EXAMPLE: A B C

Writing Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 4 (W.6.4)

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

EXAMPLE: E

Language Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 3 (L.6.3)

Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

EXAMPLE: D F

Language Standards
Grade 6, Standard 5 (L.6.5)

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

EXAMPLE: C

Please note:
The samples may contain inaccuracies in wording and content or shortcomings in the use of standard English conventions.

END OF BACKGROUND ■

Narrate

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:
Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

In this sample...

The writer conveys the experience of being alone in a sailboat on the ocean through a free verse poem. The reader can envision the experience of being on the ocean waters through the lens of sophisticated figurative and sensory language that reveals all the activity that is happening around the writer. Organization is skillful and subtle. The poem completes a full circle by beginning and ending with the strong sense of solitude.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary

The student writing sample that begins on this page includes in this column standards-based commentary describing how the writing meets the standards in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2017)* and other content frameworks, when applicable. Where they apply, sub-standards marked by letters are included.

Evidence for the commentary is noted in the text of the student writing using color-coded, numbered 'begin' and 'end' arrows.

For example:

A1 marks the beginning and A1 marks the end of the relevant section in the text.

Please note that the labeled arrows in the text do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order.

Sailing

F A1 Sailing. F

E1 A2 I hear the waves lapping against my boat.

It is just me. A1

It is magical. A2 E1

C3 B2 The glossy water is now wrinkled by the wind, B2

Like a blue tablecloth that was never ironed. C3

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ▶

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3:

A **W.6.3.a**

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.

A1 A1 Examples: 1

The writer clearly establishes in the opening of the poem the situation of being alone on the ocean *(Sailing. I hear the waves lapping against my boat. It is just me.).*

A2 A2 Examples: 1

The writer gives the poem a sense of immediacy and underscores the significance of details mentioned by writing in the first person *(I hear the waves lapping against my boat. It is just me. It is magical.).*

A3 A3 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer continues to develop the progression of the experience of being on the water with vivid descriptions *(the glare of the sun, the depths of the water, The blue of the sky…It's a new world.).*

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Page 4   SAMPLE A6-7 (Narrate—Poem)

MORE COMMENTARY ▶

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

C2 Seagulls soar **C2** overhead,

calling from way up there,

to their friends.

C3 **B1** The wide open sea greets me like home. **B1** **C3**

C1 All I see is **A3** the glare of the sun, **C1**

the depths of the water,

the blue of the sky. **A3**

C1 I hear the luff of my sail, **C1**

the call of the seabirds,

and my small wake bubbling behind me.

The wind makes my eyes water.

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3:
(continued)

B **W.6.3.b**

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

B1 B1 Examples: 1

The writer conveys a love of the sea and the sensation of sailing through keenly attuned description that draws on examples from personal experience to address the topic *(The wide open sea greets me like home.)*.

B2 B2 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer uses strong figurative language to develop the experience of sailing for the reader. Examples demonstrate the writer's ability to convey how it feels to be on the sea *(The glossy water is now wrinkled by the wind … The sea mixes itself all together, like making a cake)*.

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3 AND
Language. Grade 6, Standard 5:

C **W.6.3.d** AND **C** **L.6.5**

W.6.3.d
Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, figurative and sensory language, and techniques such as personification (e.g., "the fog crept in") to convey experiences or events.

L.6.5
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

C1 C1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer uses sensory language to great effect by identifying sensations from each of the senses *(All I see is the glare of the sun… I hear the luff of my sail… I smell salt spray,…This feels like nothing I've done before.)*.

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ▶

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Page 5   SAMPLE A6-7 (Narrate—Poem)

MORE COMMENTARY ▶

GRADE
6

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:
Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

F **C3** **C1** I smell salt spray, **C1** **C3**

and fuel from a passing fishing boat.

C1 This feels like nothing I've done before. **C1**

Only the giant grey-green abyss, **F**

and me.

F **A3** It's a new world. **A3** **F**

C2 Fish splashing,

Sail flapping. **C2**

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 3 <u>AND</u>
Language. Grade 6, Standard 5:
(continued)

C2 C2 Examples: 1 · 2

The writer effectively initiates a personal
response to sailing by using examples of
onomatopoeia *(Fish splashing, Sail flapping.)*
and alliteration *(Seagulls soar)* to create a rhythm
in the poem's language.

C3 C3 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer uses simile *(The glossy water is now
wrinkled in the wind, like a blue tablecloth that
was never ironed.)*, metaphor *(Only the giant
grey-green abyss...)*, personification *(The wide
open sea greets me like home.)*, and sensory
details *(I smell salt spray)* to bring alive the
speaker's sea-going experiences.

Language. Grade 6, Standard 3:

D L.6.3.b

Recognize variations from standard or formal
English in writing and speaking, determine
their appropriateness for the intended purpose
and audience, and make changes as necessary.

D D Examples: 1

The writer's awareness of graphic elements,
such as capitalization, line length, and the
formation of words enhances the depiction of
the experience. The isolation of each word in
alone… in… the… ocean in a line of its own
highlights the writer's sensation of solitude.

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ▶

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Page 6   SAMPLE A6-7 (Narrate—Poem)

MORE COMMENTARY ▶

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

B2 The sea mixes itself all together,

like making a cake. **B2**

Only this is better.

E2 Just the wind,

the waves,

and my sailboat

D alone

in

the

ocean. **D** **E2**

begin section **end**

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■

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Page 7   SAMPLE A6-7 (Narrate—Poem)

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 4:

E   **W.6.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

E1   E1 Examples: 1

The task was to write a free verse poem that contained both a strong lead and ending. The writer creates a clear and strong opening by strategically using the single word Sailing and then clearly sets the scene by writing *(I hear the waves lapping against my boat. It's just me. It is magical.)*.

E2   E2 Examples: 1

The writer addresses the second part of the task with a strong ending. The poem comes full circle, effectively conveying the sensation of being alone on the ocean, by closing with an image that mirrors the opening lines *(Just the wind, the waves, and my sailboat, alone, in, the, ocean.)*.

Language. Grade 6, Standard 3:

F   **L.6.3.a**

Maintain appropriate consistency in style and tone while varying sentence patterns for meaning and audience interest.

F   F Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer mixes single words, sentence fragments, and sentences of varying lengths and types. This contributes to the poem's effective style and to the vivid picture the poem paints *(Sailing… I smell salt spray, and the fuel from a passing fishing boat…. This feels like nothing I've done before. Only the giant grey-green abyss, and me… …It's a new world.)*.