



California Common Core Writing Standards and Anchor Papers

From original documents on California Department of Education website cde.ca.gov, in Appendix C of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts.

Grade 8

These documents are also available on our website www.knoxeducation.com along with student standards checklists and 11x17 posters, as well as teaching units, mini lessons, tools, and resources.

Opinion/Argument



WRITING STANDARDS: OPINION/ARGUMENT WRITING

<input type="checkbox"/>	Number	Standard
Text Types and Purposes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 1a.	Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 1b.	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 1c.	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 1d.	Establish and maintain a formal style.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 1 e.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Informative/Explanatory



WRITING STANDARDS: INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Text Types and Purposes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 2	Write informative/explanatory texts, <u>including career development documents (e.g., simple business letters and job applications)</u> , to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 2a.	Introduce a topic or <u>thesis statement</u> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 2b.	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 2c.	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 2d.	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 2 e.	Establish and maintain a formal style.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 2 f.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

Narrative



WRITING STANDARDS: NARRATIVE WRITING

Text Types and Purposes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 3b.	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 3d.	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 3 e.	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

Opinion/Argument

Informative/Explanatory

Narrative



WRITING STANDARDS: ALL GENRES

Production and Distribution of Writing		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 4.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 5.	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grade 8.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 6.	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
Research to Build and Present Knowledge		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 7.	Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 8.	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 9.	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 9. a.	Apply <i>grade 8 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new”).
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 9. b.	Apply <i>grade 8 Reading standards</i> to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced”).
Range of Writing		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8W 10.	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.



WRITING STANDARDS: Opinion/Argument Writing for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

<input type="checkbox"/>	Number	Standard
Text Types and Purposes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 1	Write arguments focused on <i>discipline-specific content</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 1a.	Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 1b.	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 1c.	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 1d.	Establish and maintain a formal style.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 1e.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.



WRITING STANDARDS: Informative/Explanatory Writing for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Text Types and Purposes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 2	Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 2a.	Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 2b.	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 2c.	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 2d.	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 2 e.	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 2 f.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.



WRITING STANDARDS: Narrative Writing for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Text Types and Purposes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 3	(Not applicable as a separate requirement)

Note: Students' narrative skills continue to grow in these grades. The Standards require that students be able to incorporate narrative elements effectively into arguments and informative/explanatory texts. In history/social studies, students must be able to incorporate narrative accounts into their analyses of individuals or events of historical import. In science and technical subjects, students must be able to write precise enough descriptions of the step-by-step procedures they use in their investigations or technical work that others can replicate them and (possibly) reach the same results.



WRITING STANDARDS: All Genres for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Production and Distribution of Writing		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 4.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 5.	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 6.	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.
Research to Build and Present Knowledge		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 7.	Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 8.	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources (<u>primary and secondary</u>), using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 9.	Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research.
Range of Writing		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8WHST 10.	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Samples of Student Writing

Following are writing samples that have been annotated to illustrate the criteria required to meet the Common Core State Standards for particular types of writing—argument, informative/explanatory text, and narrative—in a given grade. Each of the samples exhibits at least the level of quality required to meet the Writing standards for that grade.

The range of accomplishment within each grade reflects differences in individual development as well as in the conditions under which the student writers were expected to work. Some of the samples were written in class or as homework; others were written for on-demand assessments; still others were the result of sustained research projects. Where possible, each sample includes information about the circumstances under which it was produced. The samples come from students in kindergarten through grade 12. The students attended school in a number of states and districts across the country.

At the lower grades, the samples include “opinion” writing, an elementary type of argument in which students give reasons for their opinions and preferences. Because reasons are required, such writing helps prepare students for drafting the arguments they will be expected to create beginning in grade 6.

Acknowledgment

The Standards work group would like to express its appreciation to teachers and students at Monte Vista High School in California and the Randolph Technical Career Center in Vermont; other colleagues in California, Massachusetts, and Washington state; and ACT, Inc., and the *Concord Review*, who helped find and obtain permission for several of the samples included in the set. The group also would like to express its appreciation to the New Standards Project and to the International Reading Association, which allowed the use of several samples from their publications, and to the other student writers who granted permission to reproduce their work here.

Student Sample: Grade 8, Informative/Explanatory

This essay was written about a favorite activity. The writer wrote for one entire class period the first day and revised his essay the second day after discussing ideas for revision with a partner.

Football

What I like doing best is playing football, mainly because it is one of my best sports. One of the greatest things about it, in my opinion, is the anticipation, wondering what the other players are thinking about what you might do. Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.

At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore. That is true for everyone, but in time you get used to the aches and pains. After awhile, you develop mental discipline, which allows you to ignore some of the pain. The mental discipline then allows you to go all out, to unload everything you have, every play. That's how you win games, everyone going all out, giving 110%.

The game takes concentration, just as much as any other sport, if not more. You develop this aspect in practice. That is why it is so important to have hours and hours of it. Mentally, you have to get over the fear, the fear of eleven madmen waiting for chance to make you eat dirt. And that comes through practice. Once you overcome the fear, you can concentrate on the more important things, like anticipating the other guy's next move. Studying the playbook and talking with other players also helps.

During the game, your mind clears of all thoughts. These thoughts become instinct. You have to react, and react quickly, and you develop reactions and instinct in practice. For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled. But, you should react instinctively to that situation by increasing your momentum.

Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard. Right when you unload for a stick, all your body tightens. Then you feel the impact. After you regain your thoughts, you wonder if you're all right. You wait for your brain to get the pain signal from the nerves. Even so, if you do get that signal, which is always the case, you keep right on playing. You can't let that experience shake your concentration.

On offense, while playing receiver, you can actually "hear" the footsteps of the defensive back as you're concentrating on catching the ball. What separates the men from the boys is the one who "hears" the footsteps but doesn't miss the ball. That's mental discipline, concentration.

Football is very physical or else it wouldn't be fun. But it is also a mental game and that is why it's challenging. You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces the topic clearly, previewing what is to follow.**
 - *What I like doing best is playing football . . . Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.*
- **organizes ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.**
 - Information is organized into three components of the mental aspect of football: discipline, concentration, and instinct.

- **develops the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.**
 - *At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore.*
 - *For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled.*
- **uses appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.**
 - *At times . . . The first time . . . After awhile . . . During the game . . . For example . . . But . . . Playing defense . . . After . . . However . . .*
 - *On offense, while playing receiver, you can actually "hear" the footsteps of the defensive back . . .*
- **uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.**
 - *. . . playbook . . . defense . . . offense . . . receiver . . . defensive back*
- **establishes and maintains a formal style (with occasional lapses into cliché and undefined terms).**
- **provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.**
 - *The conclusion emphasizes the importance of the controlling idea (the mental aspect of football) by putting it in a new light: *You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.**
- **demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English (with some errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message) and some stylistically effective constructions (e.g., *Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard*).**

Student Sample: Grade 8, Informative/Explanatory

This analysis of a work of literature was completed as a homework assignment for an English class.

The Old Man and the Sea

In the book *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway tells the story of an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who, considered by the villagers to be the worst type of unlucky, is still determined to win a battle against a giant Marlin off the coast of Cuba. Santiago succeeds, but his successes do not come without great hardship and struggle. He spends three days being dragged in his skiff by the enormous marlin with minimal food and water, all the while enduring acute physical pain, tiredness, and an unending loneliness due to the absence of his young friend, Manolin. It is only after Santiago's prize fish is completely devoured by sharks that he returns home to the village scorners and the safety of Manolin's trust. As his suffering and loss compound, we can see that Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" offers a key insight into Santiago's life.

As the story begins, we learn that Santiago has gone eighty-four days straight without catching a fish. Young Manolin's parents will no longer allow the two to fish together, for they do not want their son being exposed any more to this type of failure. Santiago and Manolin are deeply saddened by this news, but Santiago does not let the loss of his friend or the defeat that others see him suffering keep him off the sea. Rather, with bright and shining eyes he thinks "maybe today. Every day is a new day" (pg. 32), and prepares to catch the biggest fish of his life. This shows that even though almost all of Santiago's acquaintances feel that his fishing career is over, he sees it about to reach its all time high. Though he knows he is physically older and weaker than most of his fellow fisherman, he refuses to let their opinions and stereotypes destroy his confidence and determination.

As the story progresses, Hemingway presents an even more vivid picture of Santiago refusing to be destroyed by the forces that threaten to defeat him. Even after he accomplishes the difficult task of hooking the giant Marlin, he finds his skiff being dragged by the fish for over two days. Living in the small boat is no easy task for Santiago, and soon injury and suffering seem to take over his entire body. His back is sore from sitting so long against the stiff wood, his face is cut from fishing hooks, his shoulders ache, and his eyes have trouble focusing. Most difficult to endure though is the terrible condition in which he finds his hands. The left one is weakened from a period of being tightly cramped, and both are extremely mutilated from the burn of the moving fishing line. It would have been so much easier for Santiago to simply give up and release the fish, yet he knows that if he endures a little longer, victory will be his. Even when it seems he has no effort left, Santiago promises himself "I'll try it again." (pg. 93) This is Santiago's real inner determination coming through. He has encountered so many obstacles during the past few days, yet he will not let them defeat his dream of killing the fish. There is no outside force promising a splendid reward if he succeeds, only those that threaten to ridicule him if he is destroyed. Santiago is working solely on his own desire to fulfill his dream and prove to himself that, although his struggles may cost him his life, he can accomplish even the seemingly impossible.

After three long days and nights, Santiago's determination pays off, and at last he manages to catch and kill the Marlin. It is only a very short time that he has to relish in his triumph though, for a few hours later vicious sharks begin to destroy the carcass of the great fish. For hours, Santiago manages to ward them off, but this time it is not he who wins the final battle. Spirits low and pain at an all time high, Santiago returns to the village, towing behind him only the bare skeleton of a treasure that once was. It seems as though Santiago is ready to just curl up and die, and indeed he has reason to feel this way. Yet as he rests alone and talk with Manolin, we see a hint of Santiago's determination, that has characterized his personality throughout the entire story, begin to shine through. Upon reaching home, he begins to make plans with Manolin about future adventures they will have together. Hemingway tells us that Santiago, in his youth, had loved to watch the majestic lions along his home on a white sand beach in Africa, and he still returns to those dreams when searching for contentment. That night, as Santiago drifts off to sleep, Hemingway tells that he was indeed "dreaming about the lions." (pg. 127) This is perhaps the truest test of how much courage and determination a person has. If even when they have suffered the biggest defeat of their life, they are able to look to the future and realize the wonderful things they still possess. Though the forces of nature and time destroyed Santiago's prize fish, he refuses to let that fact ruin the rest of his life. No one can take away his love for Manolin or memories of what once was, and because of this, no one can ever truly defeat Santiago.

In conclusion, throughout the entire story The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago refuses to surrender to the forces working against him. He ignores the comments of those who think he is unlucky, endures great physical pain, and rises up from the depths of sorrow over the lost Marlin to find happiness in what he does possess. Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" truly does display the amount of determination that Santiago shows throughout his life.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces the topic clearly, previewing what is to follow.**
 - The writer provides a brief summary of the plot in the introduction and then uses a quotation to advance the thesis of the essay and preview what is to follow: *As his suffering and loss compound, we can see that Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" offers a key insight into Santiago's life.*
- **organizes ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.**
 - Two key elements of the quotation (*destroyed but not defeated*) help establish the overall structure of the piece.
 - The second, third, and fourth paragraphs each recount extended examples of Santiago's struggle and determination (e.g., . . . *Santiago has gone eighty-four days straight without catching a fish. Young Manolin's parents will no longer allow the two to fish together, for they do not want their son being exposed any more to this type of failure . . . but Santiago does not let the loss of his friend or the defeat that others see him suffering keep him off the sea. Rather, with bright and shining eyes he thinks "maybe today. Every day is a new day". . .*).
- **develops the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.**
 - Concrete details: . . . *eighty-four days straight without catching a fish . . . [hands] extremely mutilated from the burn of the moving fishing line . . . towing behind him only the bare skeleton of a treasure that once was.*
 - Quotations: *That night, as Santiago drifts off to sleep, Hemingway tells that he was indeed "dreaming about the lions." (pg. 127)*
 - Examples: . . . *injury and suffering . . . His back is sore . . . his face is cut . . . his shoulders ache . . .*
- **uses appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.**
 - *As his suffering and loss compound . . . As the story progresses . . . Even after . . . After three long days and nights . . . In conclusion, throughout the entire story The Old Man and the Sea . . .*
- **uses precise language to inform about or explain the topic.**
 - . . . *minimal food and water . . . acute physical pain . . . eighty-four days straight without catching a fish . . . only the bare skeleton . . .*
- **establishes and maintains a formal style.**
 - *In the book The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway tells the story of an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who, considered by the villagers to be the worst type of unlucky, is still determined to win a battle against a giant Marlin off the coast of Cuba.*
 - *As the story begins, we learn . . . In conclusion . . .*
- **provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (and returns to the quotation used in the thesis statement).**
 - *In conclusion, throughout the entire story The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago refuses*

to surrender to the forces working against him. He ignores the comments of those who think he is unlucky, endures great physical pain, and rises up from the depths of sorrow over the lost Marlin to find happiness in what he does possess. Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" truly does display the amount of determination that Santiago shows throughout his life.

- **demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English (with occasional errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message).**

Student Sample: Grade 8, Narrative

This narrative was written to fulfill an assignment in which students were asked to introduce a special person to readers who did not know the person. The students were advised to reveal the personal quality of their relationship with the person presented. The student who wrote this piece borrowed ideas from a fictional piece she had read.

Miss Sadie

Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. But I still can see her. The old chair squeaking with every squig of her big, brown body. Her summer dresses stained from cooking in her sweet smelling kitchen. I see her gray hair pulled back in that awful, yellow banana clip. Most of all, I hear that voice. So full of character and wisdom.

I used to bring Miss Johnson cookies every summer day of 1988. I miss the days when I would sit on that shabby old porch and listen to her stories. "Melissa!" she would holler. "What 'chu doin' here? Come see me and my poor self, hah, ya?"

She once told me of her grandmother who escaped slavery, back when white men could only do anything, she would say. Her grandma ran for miles without food or water. It wasn't too long before her master came looking for her and took her home to whip her. I thought of how Blacks are treated today. I sighed. She would sing in her

soulful, blaring voice, old negro hymns pressed down from her mother and grand mother. I would sit there in amazement.

Once, Jimmy Taylor came walking by us yelling, "Melissa! Whattaya want with that old, fat, Black lady, anyways?"

Before I could retaliate, Miss Johnson said to me, "Now, you musn't. We must feel sorry for that terrible child. His mother must have done gone and not taught him no manners!" She actually wanted me to bow my head and pray for him. (Even though I went to his house and punched him out the next day.)

My friends would tease me for spending the whole summer with Sadie Johnson, "The Cuckoo of Connecticut," they called her. But I'm so very glad I did. She taught me then, to not care what other people thought. I learned that I could be friends with someone generations apart from my own.

My visits became less frequent when school started. I had other things to think about. Boys, clothes, grades. You know, real important stuff.

One day I was thinking, I haven't seen Miss Sadie in a while. So after school I trotted up to her house amidst the twirling, autumn leaves.

I rang her bell. The door cracked open and

the woman adjusted her glasses. "May I help you?"

"Miss Sadie, it's me, Melissa."

"I-I" she'd stammered. "I don't remember," she said and shut the door. I heard crying. I rang the door again and she screamed, "Please leave!" in a scared, confused voice.

I went home bewildered and my mother told me to stop bothering Miss Sadie. I said I wasn't bothering her. Mama said, "Miss Johnson has a disease. Alzheimer's disease. It makes her forget things... people, family even. And so, I don't want you over there anymore, you hear?"

Then, I didn't realize or comprehend, how someone so special to you could forget your own existence when you'd shared a summer so special and vivid in your mind.

That Christmas I went to bring Miss Johnson cookies. She wasn't there. I learned from a family member that she was in the hospital and that she'd die very soon. As the woman, a daughter maybe, spoke, my heart broke.

"Well, you make sure she gets those cookies," I said, my voice cracking and tears welling in my eyes.

Today, I've learned to love old people. For their innocence, for their knowledge. I've learned to always treat people with kindness, no matter how cruel they may seem. But mainly, I've learned, that you must cherish the time spent with a person. And memories are very valuable. Because Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. I'm glad that I can still see her.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **engages and orients the reader by establishing a context and point of view, and introducing a narrator and characters.**
 - The writer engages the reader by entering immediately into the story line and orients the reader by skillfully backfilling information about the setting (*the old chair squeaking; that shabby old porch*) and the narrator’s experiences with Miss Sadie (bringing Miss Sadie cookies, listening to her stories, listening to her sing *old negro hymns*).
- **organizes an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.**
 - The writer begins in the present, when *Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair*, then—appropriately for a narrator engaged in reflection—creates an image with specific details of Miss Sadie as she was in the past (*every sway of her big brown body . . . her gray hair pulled back in that awful, yellow banana clip*).
- **uses narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and characters.**
 - Reflection: *My friends would tease me for spending the whole summer with Sadie Johnson, “The cookoo of Connecticut,” they called her. But I’m so very glad I did. She taught me then, to not care what other people thought. I learned that I could be friends with someone generations apart from my own . . . Then, I didn’t realize or comprehend, how someone so special to you could forget your own existence when you’d shared a summer so special and vivid in your mind.*
 - Dialogue: *I rang her bell. The door cracked open and the women adjusted her glasses. “May I help you?”*

“Miss Sadie, it’s me, Melissa.”

“I-I,” she’d stuttered. “I don’t remember,” she said and shut the door.
 - Tension: *I heard crying. I rang the door again and she screamed, “Please leave!” in a scared, confused voice.*
 - Reporting internal thoughts and reactions: *“Whattaya want with that old, fat, Black lady, any ways?” . . . As the woman, a daughter maybe, spoke, my heart broke.*
- **uses 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.**
 - *no longer . . . still . . . used to . . . I miss the days . . . once . . . then . . . Today . . .*
- **uses precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.**
 - *The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body.*
 - *Her summer dresses stained from cooking. I smell her sweet smelling kitchen.*
 - *. . . her soulful, blaring voice . . .*
 - *. . . the twirling, autumn leaves.*
 - *The door cracked open . . .*
 - *“I-I,” she’d stuttered.*
- **provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.**
 - In the conclusion, the writer returns to the image in the beginning of the narrative (*Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. But I still can see her*) to reflect on the importance of memories (*I’m glad that I can still see her*).

- **demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English (with occasional errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message).**
 - Occasional sentence fragments were likely included for stylistic purposes (e.g., *The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body; Her summer dresses stained from cooking; Because Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days*).