

FAMILY PACKET

Family Packet, Grade 3, Cluster 2, Module 1: TREES and Shaping the Prompt

A warm, plain language guide to what your student is learning this week, with easy ways to talk and work together at home. **Every page is in English and Spanish.**

Welcome, families. This week your student begins writing an extended constructed response, a longer answer that grows like a tree. Students learn to shape a writing prompt before writing, finding the topic, the charge, and the clue word. This packet shows you what is happening in class, the words your student is learning, the thinking tool your student uses, and simple ways to help from home. You and your student can work through it together in about ten minutes.

Ask your student to teach you what they learned. Teaching it out loud is part of how the learning sticks.

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En español

Todo este paquete también está disponible en español.

1 Family Letter

Dear Families,

This week your student begins writing extended constructed responses, longer answers that grow like a tree. We are learning a skill called TREES and Shaping the Prompt. Before writing, students circle the topic in red, box the charge in yellow, and triangle the clue word in green. WHY asks for a reason, and HOW asks for a way or method.

This week we read two true stories, "Laura Ingalls Wilder" and "Carmen Lomas Garza." Laura Ingalls Wilder preserved everyday frontier life in her Little House books. Carmen Lomas Garza preserves Mexican-American family life through her art, including holiday tamale making. Students learn about purposeful structure, informational writing, and capital letters in proper nouns such as Laura Ingalls Wilder and Wisconsin.

I am excited about your student's growth as a writer. Please ask your student to explain a marked prompt and teach you the three shapes.

With appreciation,

With appreciation,

[Classroom teacher signature]

The Writing Academy, LLC

ASK FOR A DEMONSTRATION

Ask your student to show you a marked prompt and explain each color and shape. If your student can teach it, the skill is sticking.

2 Family Tip Sheet

The skill, in plain words

Your student is learning to shape a writing prompt before answering it. A prompt has three parts to find, the topic, the charge, and the clue word. The topic is the noun of importance, the charge is the verb of importance, and the clue word tells whether the prompt asks WHY or HOW. When students name the thinking the prompt needs, they know exactly what kind of answer to write.

The standard, in plain words

This week the work connects to two Texas standards. Your student organizes writing with purposeful structure, including an introduction, and composes an informational text with a clear central idea. In plain words, your student learns to plan before writing and to keep one clear main idea through a longer answer.

The three shapes your student uses



Red circle

The topic, the noun of importance
the prompt is about



Yellow box

The charge, the verb that tells
what the topic does



Green triangle

The clue word, WHY or HOW

How to help without giving the answer

- Ask your student to teach you the three shapes. Explaining it out loud is part of how the skill sticks.
- Ask your student to show you a marked prompt and explain why each shape sits where it does.
- Ask what the prompt is really asking, WHY or HOW. Let your student name it and give the reason.
- If your student is stuck, ask about the clue word first. Ask which word signals WHY or HOW.
- Let your student write the answer. Your job is to ask good questions, not to supply the answer.

3 Key Words

prompt

the writing task that tells what to write about

Example, the prompt tells us what to prove.

topic

the noun of importance, what the prompt is about

Example, in the prompt above, the topic is Wilder's stories.

charge

the verb of importance, what the topic does

Example, in the prompt above, the charge is help.

clue word

the word signaling WHY or HOW

Example, the clue word why tells us this is a WHY prompt.

thesis (central idea)

the sentence that gives the answer to the prompt

Example, Wilder's stories help readers understand history.

evidence

proof taken straight from the passage

Example, paragraph 4 describes wide fields and small homes.

explanation

telling what the evidence shows

Example, those details let a reader build a picture in the mind.

significance

why something matters

Example, the significance of her stories is that they teach history.

structure

the way the parts of writing are put together

Example, good structure helps the reader follow the answer.

informative

writing that gives true information about a topic

Example, this is an informative response about real people.

prairie

a wide, flat area of land covered with grass

Example, Laura Ingalls Wilder lived on the prairie.

culture

the customs, beliefs, and ways of life of a group

Example, Garza's art shares Mexican-American culture.

Tip for reading together. When a new word appears in a passage, pause and let your student use the sentence around it to figure out the meaning before you explain. Naming the guess out loud builds confidence.

4 Our Thinking Tool

This week your student uses one main thinking tool, called TREES, which grows an extended constructed response like a tree. Students also shape the prompt first, using the three shapes to read the question.

The three shapes



Red circle

The topic, the noun (who or what) the prompt is about



Yellow box

The charge, the verb (action) the prompt asks the writer to do



Green triangle

The clue word, which signals WHY or HOW

The two thinking types

Thinking type	Clue word	What the writer explains
WHY	Why, reason, purpose	Gives a reason, often using because
HOW	How, way, method	Explains a way or method, often using through or by

The TREE parts

Trunk Thesis (central idea), one sentence that answers the exact prompt.

Branches Reasons or ways that support the thesis (central idea).

Leaves Evidence and explanation that prove each reason.

Significance The bigger idea or lesson beyond the text.

Mini version to use at home

Try it together

Read this prompt from class, Explain why Laura Ingalls Wilder's stories help readers understand history. Have your student circle the topic in red (Wilder's stories), box the charge in yellow (help), and triangle the clue word in green (why). Then ask your student to name the thinking type and give the reason.

Answer for families. The topic is Wilder's stories, the charge is help, the clue word is why, and the thinking type is WHY, because it asks for a reason.

TRACKS While reading, students also look for evidence in the passage using TRACKS, which stands for **T**ime, **R**eactions, **A**ctions, **C**haracter or **C**oncept, **K**ey **K**nowledge, and **S**cenery or **S**etting. Ask your student what TRACKS they found in this week's passages.

- Ask your student to show you a marked prompt and explain each color and shape.
- Ask your student to teach you the difference between a WHY prompt and a HOW prompt.
- Talk together about what Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote and why readers enjoyed it.
- Talk together about what Carmen Lomas Garza paints and how both artists preserve history.
- Ask which part of understanding a prompt feels hardest and listen to the explanation.

Mark the Question

Ask an everyday question, such as why the family went to the store that morning. Have your student name its topic, charge, and clue word aloud. Two minutes and no paper are needed.

Ordinary Day Story

Invite a family member to describe an ordinary day from the past. Have your student choose one detail worth keeping for a reader a hundred years from now.

6 What Strong Work Looks Like

Here is a strong answer to this week's writing prompt. Each sentence has its own job.

Prompt. Explain why Laura Ingalls Wilder became an important author.

Thesis (central idea)

Laura Ingalls Wilder's stories help readers understand history because they describe daily life on the prairie.

Evidence

Paragraph 4 describes wide fields, small homes, and busy days on the farm, so readers can picture prairie life.

Explanation

Those details let a reader build a picture in the mind, which is why her stories help readers understand history.

Checklist for strong work

- ☐ All three shapes appear on the prompt, and each mark sits on the correct word.
- ☐ The student names WHY or HOW and gives the clue word as the reason.
- ☐ The answer has a thesis (central idea) that answers the exact prompt.
- ☐ The evidence supports the answer, and the explanation shows how the evidence connects.
- ☐ The response grows like a tree, with a trunk, branches, leaves, and significance.

7 Progress at Home

My student can...

- ☐ find the topic, the noun of importance a prompt is about
- ☐ find the charge, the verb that tells what the topic does
- ☐ find the clue word and name WHY or HOW
- ☐ explain what a prompt is asking in my own words
- ☐ name the parts of the TREE, trunk, branches, leaves, and significance

Student name

Family signature

Date

Please sign and send this page back to school with your student. The teacher will celebrate the progress together with your student.