

FAMILY PACKET

Family Packet, Grade 4, Cluster 1, Module 1: Level Up Your Thinking

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 Cluster 1 of the Grade 4 writing curriculum. The focus is the Short Constructed Response, a clear thesis, the central idea, strong evidence from the text, and an explanation that proves the idea. The big lesson is that stronger thinking comes from precise word choice, not from simply writing more. We are reading two passages, "A Promise Written Long Ago," about the Magna Carta and fairness, and "Morning in the Village," about a day in a Caddo community. 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 Cluster 1 of the Grade 4 writing curriculum, "Level Up Your Thinking." The focus is the Short Constructed Response, a clear thesis, the central idea, strong evidence from the text, and an explanation that proves the idea. The big lesson is that stronger thinking comes from precise word choice, not from simply writing more.

We are reading two passages, "A Promise Written Long Ago," about the Magna Carta and fairness, and "Morning in the Village," about a day in a Caddo community. Your student will learn to upgrade a response so the thinking is clearer and more precise.

Please try this at home. When your student tells you about something read or done, ask, What exactly showed you that? That is the evidence and explanation habit we practice this week.

With appreciation,

[Classroom teacher signature]

The Writing Academy, LLC

ASK FOR A DEMONSTRATION

Ask your student to teach you the SCR structure. If your student can name the thesis, the evidence, and the explanation, the skill is sticking.

2 Family Tip Sheet

The skill, in plain words

Your student is learning that a Short Constructed Response is built from a thesis, the central idea, evidence, and explanation, and that the precision of the words a writer chooses, not the length, reveals the depth of thinking. Words reflect thinking, not decoration. A response is upgraded by making the thinking clearer and more precise, not by making it longer.

The standard, in plain words

The work connects to the Texas standards for informational writing. Your student composes brief informational responses with a clear central idea, and revises drafts to improve word choice. In plain words, your student learns to state a clear idea, prove it with the author's exact words, and explain what the proof means.

The SCR structure your student uses

Part	Question to ask
Thesis (central idea)	What clear idea will I prove?
Evidence	Which exact words prove it?
Explanation	What does the proof mean?

How to help without giving the answer

- Ask your student to teach you the SCR structure. Explaining it out loud is part of how the skill sticks.
- Ask what exactly showed the idea. Let your student name the exact words.
- Ask what the proof means, beyond restating it.
- If your student is stuck, ask about one word. Ask which word could show stronger thinking.
- Let your student write the answer. Your job is to ask good questions, not to supply the answer.

evidence

proof from the text, often exact words

Example, my evidence is the author's exact sentence.

explanation

the writer's thinking about what evidence means

Example, my explanation shows what the proof means.

thesis (central idea)

the clear main idea a response will prove

Example, my thesis is that the village works together.

precise

exact and clear

Example, a precise word here is indicates.

infer

to figure out using clues and thinking

Example, I can infer that farming matters to the village.

suggests

points toward an idea

Example, this quote suggests cooperation is important.

demonstrates

shows clearly

Example, the text demonstrates how people work together.

upgrade

to make something stronger or better

Example, I upgrade my answer by choosing precise words.

Magna Carta

a document from 1215 that limited the king's power

Example, the Magna Carta protected certain rights.

justice

fairness and equal treatment under the law

Example, the document showed care for justice.

rights

freedoms and protections that belong to people

Example, one right the document protected was fair judgment.

Three Sisters

corn, beans, and squash grown together to help each other

Example, the Three Sisters helped the village have food.

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 the SCR structure and the This Means ladder. The SCR structure builds the response, and the ladder shows how precise words reveal a higher thinking level.

The SCR structure

Thesis (central idea) The clear idea the response will prove.

Evidence The author's exact words from the text.

Explanation What the evidence means and why it matters.

Words show your thinking level. Leveling up your language levels up your thinking.

The This Means ladder

Stronger and stronger words	What they show
This shows	Points to what the evidence means.
This suggests	Points toward an idea.
This demonstrates	Shows the idea clearly.
This strengthens the inference	Builds a conclusion from clues.
This ultimately reveals	Shows the larger idea.

Mini version to use at home

Try it together

Read this response from class, The people work together. The text says they grew crops. This means they help. Ask your student what level it shows and one word that would level it up.

Answer for families. One strong answer could say the response restates rather than proves, so it shows a lower thinking level, and upgrading says to indicates with a real explanation would level it up.

Words = Thinking Level A strong SCR states a thesis, proves it with the author's exact words, and explains what the evidence means. **Precise words reveal deeper thinking.**

5 Conversation Starters and a Simple Family Activity

- Ask what the difference is between evidence and explanation.
- Ask how changing one word can make an answer show stronger thinking.
- Ask which passage your student found more interesting, and what proved the idea.
- Ask why proving an idea with exact words is stronger than just saying it.

Prove It

Make a simple claim about your day, such as, today was busy. Then prove it with one exact detail. Ask your student to do the same, a claim, then proof.

Level It Up

Start with a plain sentence, then say it again with a more precise word. Talk about how the stronger word changed the meaning, not just the sound.

6 What Strong Work Looks Like

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

Prompt. Why does the village work together?

Thesis (central idea)

Even though each person has a role, the village works together due to shared responsibility.

Evidence

The text indicates that "Corn, beans, and squash grew in long rows" and "They brought pottery and tools to trade."

Explanation

This suggests cooperation is necessary for the community to thrive.

Checklist for strong work

- ☐ The thesis states a clear, accurate idea.
- ☐ The evidence quotes the author's exact words.
- ☐ The explanation goes beyond restating the quote.
- ☐ At least one signal word is upgraded on purpose.
- ☐ The student can name the thinking level and the words that reveal it.

7 Progress at Home

My student can...

- ☐ tell the difference between evidence and explanation
- ☐ identify the thinking level of a response from its words
- ☐ upgrade a response with a more precise word
- ☐ write a thesis, add evidence, and explain what it proves
- ☐ prove an idea with the author's exact words
- ☐ check the response for conventions

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.