

FAMILY PACKET

Family Packet, Grade 4, PREPARE, Module 1: The Writer's Job Comes First

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 the Grade 4 PREPARE unit, which teaches writers what to do before the first draft. The big idea is that a writer identifies the job first, the topic, the purpose, and the audience, and then chooses the response genre that fits that job. We are reading two short passages, "Dream," about a young narrator who stands beside Mama at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march, and "Serve," about a granddaughter interviewing her grandfather about President John F. Kennedy's call to serve. 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 the fourth grade PREPARE unit, which teaches writers what to do before the first draft. The big idea is that a writer identifies the job first, the topic, the purpose, and the audience, and then chooses the response genre that fits that job.

We are reading two short passages, "Dream," about a young narrator who stands beside Mama at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march, and "Serve," about a granddaughter interviewing her grandfather about President John F. Kennedy's call to serve. Your student will learn that one source can support many kinds of writing, and will write a personal narrative about a time someone's words or example changed a thought or decision.

Please try this at home. Ask your student, Before you write, how do you decide what kind of writing to make? Then share a quick story of a time someone's words changed your mind. Talking about a real experience is wonderful preparation for narrative writing.

With appreciation,

[Classroom teacher signature]

The Writing Academy, LLC

ASK FOR A DEMONSTRATION

Ask your student to say the Genre Compass aloud, TOPIC to PURPOSE to AUDIENCE to RESPONSE GENRE. If your student can name the job before the form, the skill is sticking.

2 Family Tip Sheet

The skill, in plain words

Your student is learning that a writing task becomes clearer when the writer identifies the job before choosing the form. Students use the Genre Compass, TOPIC to PURPOSE to AUDIENCE to RESPONSE GENRE to PLANNING STRATEGY. One source experience can support many different writing jobs, and the writer chooses the response genre from the topic, purpose, and audience before drafting.

The standard, in plain words

The work connects to the Texas standards for planning and composing. Your student plans a first draft by selecting a genre for a particular topic, purpose, and audience, and composes literary texts using genre characteristics and craft. In plain words, your student learns to name the job, choose the form, and use the tools of that genre to plan and draft.

The Genre Compass your student uses

Decision	Question
TOPIC	What is the writing about?
PURPOSE	What job must the writing do?
AUDIENCE	Who needs this writing?
RESPONSE GENRE	What kind of writing best accomplishes the job?
PLANNING STRATEGY	Will brainstorming, freewriting, or mapping organize the thinking?

How to help without giving the answer

- Ask your student to teach you the Genre Compass. Explaining it out loud is part of how the skill sticks.
- Ask what the writing needs to do before asking what kind of writing it is.
- Ask who will read the writing and what that reader needs.
- If your student is stuck, ask about the purpose first. Ask what job the writing must do.
- Let your student write the answer. Your job is to ask good questions, not to supply the answer.

genre

a kind of writing, such as narrative, informative, or opinion

Example, the best genre for this job is personal narrative.

topic

what the writing is about

Example, the topic is a time someone's words changed my mind.

purpose

the job the writing must do

Example, the purpose is to tell what happened and why it mattered.

audience

the reader or readers the writing is for

Example, the audience is my classmates.

narrative

writing that develops an experience through a character and events

Example, this narrative develops the experience of the game.

brainstorm

a planning strategy that lists many ideas quickly

Example, I brainstormed moments that could become a story.

freewrite

a planning strategy of writing without stopping to find ideas

Example, I freewrote to uncover the moment I wanted to tell.

map

a planning strategy that organizes ideas visually

Example, I mapped people, events, and the important moment.

revise

to improve ideas, organization, or sentences

Example, I revised two sentences for better structure.

edit

to correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Example, I edited my narrative before sharing it.

justice

fairness and equal treatment for all people

Example, the march stood for justice and fairness.

service

helping others and the community

Example, the president's call asked people to serve.

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 two thinking tools, the Genre Compass and TRAILS. The Genre Compass names the writing job, and TRAILS develops a personal narrative as an experience instead of a list of events.

The Genre Compass

Decision	Question
TOPIC	What is the writing about?
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TRAILS, the narrative planner

Element	What it develops
T Topic or Experience	Names the experience the narrative will develop.
R Relationships	The people, ideas, or connections that matter.
A Actions, Thoughts, and Dialogue	Precise actions and the thoughts or dialogue that reveal the experience.
I Important Moment	The discovery, decision, or event that changes the experience.
L Lesson or Lasting Effect	What the writer understands, feels, or carries away.
S Setting	Where and when the experience happens, with details that make the place real.

Mini version to use at home

Try it together

Ask your student to tell a small true story and then name the topic, purpose, audience, and response genre for retelling it as a narrative.

Answer for families. One strong answer could name the topic as a moment on the court, the purpose as narrating the experience so classmates understand why it mattered, the audience as classmates, and the genre as personal narrative.

TRAILS When the purpose is to let a reader experience a moment, the writer chooses narrative and develops it with **Topic, Relationships, Actions, Thoughts, and Dialogue, Important Moment, Lesson or Lasting Effect, and Setting.**

5 Conversation Starters and a Simple Family Activity

- Ask what the difference is between the topic you write about and the job your writing has to do.
- Ask what would change if the student told the same true story to a friend and to a principal.
- Ask what different kinds of writing, or genres, a writer can choose from.
- Ask about a time someone's words or example changed your student's mind.

One Idea, Many Jobs

Pick one family memory. Talk about how you would tell it as a story, explain it as information, and turn it into a thank-you note. Notice how the purpose changes what you include.

Change of Mind

Share a short story about a time someone's words changed what you decided to do. Ask your student to name the moment your thinking changed.

6 What Strong Work Looks Like

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

Prompt. Write a short personal narrative about a time someone's words, actions, or example changed what you thought or decided to do. Plan the experience with TRAILS and write for classmates.

T (Topic or Experience)

The gym was loud, but I felt alone at the free-throw line. My hands were shaking, and I almost walked away.

A (Actions, Thoughts, and Dialogue)

Then my coach knelt beside me and said quietly, "You don't have to be perfect, you just have to try." I took a slow breath, bent my knees, and let the ball go.

L (Lesson or Lasting Effect)

I did not score every time after that, but I stopped being afraid to try. Now, when a task feels too big, I hear my coach's words and take the first shot anyway.

Checklist for strong work

- ☐ The student names the topic, purpose, audience, and response genre before drafting.
- ☐ The genre choice is justified by the writing job, not by the source's reading genre.
- ☐ TRAILS plans the experience, not a list of events.
- ☐ The narrative has a setting, actions and dialogue, an important moment, and a lasting effect.
- ☐ The writing is aimed at classmates who need to understand why the moment mattered.

7 Progress at Home

My student can...

- ☐ name the topic, purpose, and audience of a writing task
- ☐ choose a response genre and explain why it fits the job
- ☐ choose a planning strategy that matches the thinking
- ☐ plan a personal narrative with TRAILS instead of listing events
- ☐ write a narrative with an important moment and a lasting effect
- ☐ revise for sentence structure and edit 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.