

FAMILY PACKET

Family Packet, Grade 5, Cluster 2, Module 2: Writing a Strong Thesis (Central Idea)

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 is learning to write a strong thesis (central idea) for an informative Extended Constructed Response, or ECR. A strong thesis answers the exact prompt with a complete sentence. It names the topic, the action, and the writer's own answer. Students shape the prompt by marking the Noun of Importance, the Verb of Importance, and the WHY or HOW clue word. Then they write a thesis that matches the prompt. WHY prompts ask for a reason, often using because. HOW prompts ask for a way something happened, often using by or through.

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 is learning to shape a writing prompt. Your student circles important nouns, boxes the important verb, and draws a triangle around the clue word WHY or HOW. WHY asks for reasons. HOW asks for a way something happened. Your student will find the problem or conflict in a text and write a complete thesis (central idea) that answers the exact prompt.

We will read the informational passages "A Harvest to Remember" and "Spanish Rule in Early Texas." Students will use these texts to think about cooperation, survival, settlement, control, and lasting influence. Ask your student to name the three required thesis (central idea) parts, the Noun of Importance, the Verb of Importance, and the original answer.

With appreciation,

Your student's teacher

The Writing Academy, LLC

ASK FOR A DEMONSTRATION

Ask your student to show you the three shapes on any prompt, then explain what each shape means. If your student can teach it, the skill is sticking.

2 Family Tip Sheet

The skill, in plain words

Your student is learning to write a strong thesis (central idea). A strong thesis is a complete sentence that answers the exact prompt. It has three parts, the Noun of Importance, the Verb of Importance, and the writer's own answer. WHY prompts ask for a reason, often using because. HOW prompts ask for a way something happened, often using by or through.

The standard, in plain words

This week the work connects to two Texas standards. Your student plans a first draft by choosing a genre for the topic, purpose, and audience. Your student also composes a short 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 short answer.

The three shapes your student uses



Red circle

The main noun, the topic the question is about



Yellow box

The verb, the action the question asks for



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 question 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.

thesis (central idea)

a complete sentence that answers the exact prompt

Example, Squanto helped the Pilgrims prepare for a productive harvest by teaching them to grow crops.

because

a word that introduces a reason

Example, WHY prompts use because to state a reason.

by

a word that introduces a way something happened

Example, HOW prompts use by to state a way.

through

a word that introduces a process or method

Example, HOW prompts can use through to explain a process.

prompt

the question or task to answer

Example, Explain how Squanto helped the Pilgrims prepare for a productive harvest.

noun

a person, place, or thing

Example, in the prompt above, the noun to circle is Squanto.

verb

an action word

Example, in the prompt above, the verb to box is helped prepare.

clue word

a word that signals WHY or HOW

Example, in the prompt above, the clue word to triangle is how.

reason

an answer that tells why something matters or happened

Example, one reason Spain maintained control was the missions.

way

how something happens or a problem is solved

Example, Squanto helped by teaching the Pilgrims to grow crops.

complete

having all the needed parts

Example, a complete thesis has a noun, a verb, and an answer.

match

to fit together or go with

Example, the thesis must match the prompt.

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 the ECR TREE. It has two parts, the three shapes that read the question and the TREE that builds the answer.

The three shapes



Red circle

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



Yellow box

The verb (action), what the question asks the writer to do



Green triangle

The clue word, which signals WHY or HOW

The two question types

Thinking type	Clue words	What the writer explains
WHY	Why, reason, cause	Gives a reason or cause, often using because
HOW	How, process, method	Explains a process or the way something happened

The ECR TREE

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

R Reason/Way, tells why or how the thesis (central idea) is true.

E Evidence, gives text proof.

E Explanation, connects the proof to the thesis (central idea).

S Significance, states why the idea matters.

The roots are the passage and prompt. The trunk is the thesis (central idea). The branches are the reason or way, evidence, and explanation.

Mini version to use at home

Try it together

Read this question from class, *Explain how Squanto helped the Pilgrims prepare for a productive harvest*. Have your student circle the noun in red (Squanto), box the verb in yellow (helped prepare), and triangle the clue word in green (how). Then ask your student to write a complete thesis using by.

Answer for families. Squanto helped the Pilgrims prepare for a productive harvest by teaching them to grow crops, catch fish, and find food in the area.

TRACKS While reading, students also look for evidence in the passage using TRACKS, which stands for **Time, Reactions, Actions, Character or Concept, Key Knowledge, and Scenery or Setting**. Ask your student what TRACKS they found in this week's passages.

- How do you circle important nouns, box the important verb, and triangle the clue word? Show me with one prompt.
- What does a WHY prompt ask you to explain?
- What does a HOW prompt ask you to explain?
- Choose one passage. What problem did people need to solve, and how did it help you write your thesis (central idea)?
- Read one of your theses to me. Which clue word helped you write it?

Build a Thesis (Central Idea)

Use a simple topic such as pets or recess. Take turns turning a plain question into one complete sentence that names the topic, the action, and your own answer. Notice how each thesis (central idea) includes all three parts.

Because and By

Take one topic from the passages and build two thesis (central idea) sentences about it, a WHY sentence using because and a HOW sentence using by or through. Compare how the two sentences sound different.

6 What Strong Work Looks Like

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

Prompt. Explain how Squanto helped the Pilgrims prepare for a productive harvest.

Thesis (central idea)

Squanto helped the Pilgrims prepare for a productive harvest by teaching them to grow crops, catch fish, and find food in the area.

Evidence

The passage says that Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to grow crops like corn, catch fish, and find food in the area.

Explanation

With this knowledge, the Pilgrims were able to grow enough food for a productive harvest.

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 thesis (central idea) is a complete sentence with a noun, a verb, and an answer.
- ☐ The thesis answers the exact prompt.
- ☐ The evidence supports the answer, and the explanation shows how the evidence connects.

7 Progress at Home

My student can...

- ☐ find the main noun a question is about
- ☐ find the action verb the question asks for
- ☐ find the clue word and name WHY or HOW
- ☐ write a complete thesis (central idea) that answers the exact prompt
- ☐ use because for WHY prompts and by or through for HOW prompts
- ☐ choose one piece of evidence from the passage

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.