

FAMILY PACKET

Family Packet, Grade 5, Cluster 2, Module 3: The Reason/Way Branch of the ECR

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 build the Reason/Way branch of an informative ECR. Before writing, students brainstorm many ideas connected to a thesis (central idea), group similar ideas into baskets, keep one strong idea from each basket, and narrow to two or three focused directions. 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.

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 organize the Reason/Way branch of an informative ECR. Your student will brainstorm many ideas connected to a thesis (central idea), group similar ideas into baskets, keep one strong idea from each basket, and narrow to two or three focused directions.

We will read the informational passages "Spanish Rule in Early Texas" and "A Harvest to Remember." Ask your student to explain how missions and presidios shaped daily life and Spanish control, or how cooperation helped the Pilgrims survive. The growing TREE has roots in the passage and prompt, a trunk for the thesis (central idea), and branches for reason or way, evidence, and explanation.

With appreciation,

Your student's teacher

The Writing Academy, LLC

ASK FOR A DEMONSTRATION

Ask your student to show you how they sort ideas into baskets and explain why each basket holds similar thinking. If your student can teach it, the skill is sticking.

2 Family Tip Sheet

The skill, in plain words

Your student is learning to build the Reason/Way branch of an informative ECR. Writers start with many ideas connected to a thesis (central idea), group ideas that are alike into baskets, keep one strong idea from each basket, and narrow to two or three directions that are truly different. Those directions become the reasons or ways the writer explains.

The standard, in plain words

This week the work connects to two Texas standards. Your student develops depth of thought with specific facts and details. 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 name several ideas for one topic, then group the ideas that are alike.
- Ask which two or three ideas are truly different from one another, and why each one stays.
- If your student is stuck, ask about one basket at a time. Ask what makes those ideas belong together.
- Let your student do the sorting. Your job is to ask good questions, not to supply the answer.

prompt

the question or task to answer

Example, Explain how missions and presidios shaped daily life in early Texas.

thesis (central idea)

one sentence that answers the exact prompt

Example, missions and presidios shaped daily life by teaching, protecting, and building.

brainstorm

to list many ideas quickly

Example, brainstorm every way a mission changed daily life.

basket

a group of similar ideas

Example, all the ideas about protecting belong in one basket.

group

to put similar ideas together

Example, group the ideas that are alike before choosing.

narrow

to reduce a large list to a few strong choices

Example, narrow the ideas to two or three focused directions.

reason

an explanation of why something happens

Example, one reason the harvest mattered was cooperation.

way

how something happens or works

Example, one way missions shaped daily life was teaching farming.

relevant

connected to the thesis (central idea)

Example, only relevant details stay in the basket.

off topic

not connected to the thesis (central idea)

Example, the off-topic idea moved out of the basket.

different

not the same as another idea

Example, the final baskets must be truly different.

cooperation

working together toward a result

Example, cooperation helped the Pilgrims survive.

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. The trunk is the thesis (central idea). The Reason/Way branch grows from the trunk and feeds the evidence and explanation branches. To build it, students brainstorm, group, and narrow their ideas.

The four steps of building the Reason/Way branch

Step	What the writer does
Brainstorm	List every idea connected to the thesis (central idea)
Group	Put ideas that are alike into baskets
Keep one	Choose the strongest idea from each basket
Narrow	Keep two or three baskets that are truly different

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

Use the thesis (central idea), *Missions and presidios helped Spain control Texas by protecting settlements and shaping daily life*. Have your student brainstorm every way missions and presidios shaped daily life, group the similar ideas, keep one strong idea from each basket, and narrow to two or three focused directions.

Answer for families. Strong baskets could be Protection, Teaching and Daily Life, and Religion and Conversion. Each basket becomes a different direction the writer can explain.

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.

- Why do writers brainstorm many ideas before they choose their best ones?
- How can grouping ideas into baskets make writing more organized?
- In "Spanish Rule in Early Texas," what are different ways missions shaped daily life?
- In "A Harvest to Remember," what are different ways cooperation helped the Pilgrims?
- Which of your ideas are truly different, and which ones repeat?

Sort the Ideas

Choose a big idea such as ways to help at home. List as many ideas as possible, group the ideas that are alike, and choose the two or three strongest ideas that are truly different. Talk about which ideas you set aside and why.

Same or Different?

Say two ideas from one of the passages aloud. Decide together whether they belong in the same basket because they are alike, or in different baskets because they are truly different angles.

6 What Strong Work Looks Like

Here is a strong thesis (central idea) with three distinct Reason/Way baskets. Each basket would grow into its own body paragraph.

Prompt. Explain how missions and presidios helped Spain maintain control in early Texas.

Thesis (central idea)

Missions and presidios helped Spain control Texas by protecting settlements and shaping daily life.

Basket 1, Protection

Presidios protected nearby settlements, so the area stayed safe for Spanish rule.

Basket 2, Teaching and Daily Life

Missions taught farming and building, so daily life followed Spanish ways.

Basket 3, Religion and Conversion

Priests converted Native Americans and spread Catholic customs, which extended Spanish influence.

Checklist for strong work

- ☐ The thesis (central idea) is written before the branches are brainstormed.
- ☐ The student lists several connected ideas from the passages.
- ☐ Similar ideas are grouped into labeled baskets.
- ☐ One strong idea is kept from each basket, and off-topic ideas are deleted.
- ☐ The final two or three baskets are truly different directions.

7 Progress at Home

My student can...

- ☐ write a thesis (central idea) before brainstorming its branches
- ☐ list several ideas connected to the thesis (central idea)
- ☐ group similar ideas into baskets and label each basket
- ☐ keep one strong idea from each basket
- ☐ delete off-topic or repeated ideas
- ☐ narrow to two or three baskets that are truly different

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.