

FAMILY PACKET

Family Packet, Grade 4, Cluster 2, Module 1: Growing the Tree

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 a new way of thinking about writing. An informative extended response grows like a tree. The passage and the prompt are the roots, the thesis (central idea) is the trunk, and the reason or way, evidence, and explanation are the branches. 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.

Family Letter

Dear Families,

This week your student is beginning Grade 4 Cluster 2, the informative extended constructed response. We picture the response as a growing tree. The roots are the passage and the prompt, the trunk is the thesis (central idea), and the branches are the reason or way, the evidence, and the explanation.

We are reading two passages, *The Energy We Use Everyday*, about renewable and nonrenewable resources, and *Columbus's Arrival*, about Columbus's 1492 voyage and its lasting effects. Your student will move from a short response to an extended response by choosing a clear thesis (central idea), using exact evidence, and explaining what the evidence shows.

I am excited about your student's growth as a writer. Please ask your student to point to the roots, trunk, and branches of an ECR tree and to explain what each part does. Understanding how a response grows helps students organize their thinking in every subject.

With appreciation,

[Classroom teacher signature]

The Writing Academy, LLC

ASK FOR A DEMONSTRATION

Ask your student to show you the parts of the ECR tree and explain what the roots, trunk, and branches do. If your student can teach it, the skill is sticking.

Family Tip Sheet

The skill, in plain words

Your student is learning that an informative extended response grows like a tree. The roots are the passage and the prompt, the trunk is the thesis (central idea), and the branches are the reason or way, the evidence, and the explanation. When students can name each part and connect it back to the trunk, they can build a response that stays focused and complete.

The standard, in plain words

This week the work connects to Texas standards for writing. Your student develops a focused, structured draft and composes an informational text with a clear central idea, using genre characteristics and craft. In plain words, your student plans a response with a clear main idea and grows it with organized, supported details.

The tree your student uses



Roots

The passage and the prompt, where the response begins



Trunk

The thesis (central idea), the main idea of the response



Branches

The reason or way, evidence, and explanation

How to help without giving the answer

- Ask your student to teach you the parts of the ECR tree, roots, trunk, and branches.
- Ask which part is the thesis (central idea) and which detail from the passage proves it.
- If the answer only repeats a detail, ask what that detail shows about the main idea.
- Ask whether every branch connects back to the trunk.
- Let your student write the response. Your job is to ask good questions, not to supply the answer.

Key Words

prompt

the question or task a writer is asked to answer

Example, Explain how renewable and nonrenewable resources affect decisions about energy use.

thesis (central idea)

the main-idea sentence that a response will prove

Example, Renewable and nonrenewable resources both affect energy decisions because each has advantages and limitations.

roots

the passage and the prompt that the response grows from

Example, the energy passage and the prompt are the roots of the ECR tree.

trunk

the thesis (central idea), the main part that holds the response

Example, the thesis (central idea) sits on the trunk.

branches

the reason or way, evidence, and explanation that grow from the trunk

Example, exact evidence grows on a branch.

evidence

proof from the text, often exact words

Example, the text says renewable energy sources are not always available.

explanation

the writer's thinking about what the evidence means

Example, this shows people must plan carefully.

conflict

a problem or struggle in a text

Example, the conflict helps the writer think of a reason or way.

renewable

able to be replaced over time and used again

Example, sunlight and wind are renewable resources.

nonrenewable

not able to be replaced quickly once it is used

Example, some resources cannot be replaced quickly.

resource

a material or supply that people use

Example, people use many resources for energy.

TREE

Roots, Trunk, and Branches for an informative ECR

Example, the TREE helps the writer grow a full response.

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.

Our Thinking Tool

This week your student uses one main thinking tool, the ECR Tree. It has three parts, the roots, the trunk, and the branches. Every part of the response must connect back to the trunk, the thesis (central idea).

The three parts of the ECR tree



Roots

The passage and the prompt, where the response begins



Trunk

The thesis (central idea), the main idea of the response



Branches

The reason or way, evidence, and explanation

What each part does

Part	What it is	What the writer does
Roots	The passage and the prompt	Reads both passages closely and shapes the prompt before writing
Trunk	The thesis (central idea)	Writes one clear main idea that answers the prompt
Branches	The reason or way, evidence, and explanation	Grows each branch and connects it back to the trunk

The ECR tree in steps

Step 1 Name the roots, the passage and the prompt. **Step 2** Write a thesis (central idea) for the trunk. **Step 3** Grow branches with a reason or way, exact evidence, and an explanation.
A strong response keeps every branch connected to the trunk.

Mini version to use at home

Try it together

Draw a simple tree with roots, a trunk, and three branches. Read this prompt from class, Explain how renewable and nonrenewable resources affect decisions about energy use. Ask your student to name the roots, write a thesis (central idea) for the trunk, and grow one branch with a reason or way, one exact detail, and one explanation.

Answer for families. The roots are the energy passage and the prompt. A strong trunk is, Renewable and nonrenewable resources both affect energy decisions because each has advantages and limitations. One evidence branch is, Renewable energy sources are not always available, and the explanation shows that people must plan carefully.

TRACKS While reading, students also look for evidence in the passages 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.

- What are the roots, trunk, and branches of an informative ECR?
- What is the difference between a reason or way, evidence, and explanation?
- Choose one passage. What is one clear thesis (central idea) you could write?
- Read one exact detail from the passage. What does that evidence show?
- How does your explanation connect the evidence back to your thesis (central idea)?

Grow an Idea

Start with a main idea about one of the passages, such as energy resources affect decisions. Grow it by adding one reason or way, one exact detail, and one sentence that explains what the detail shows.

Evidence or Explanation?

Take turns saying a sentence from the passage and a sentence about what it means. The listener names which is evidence and which is explanation, then says how the branch connects to the thesis (central idea).

What Strong Work Looks Like

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

Prompt. Explain how renewable and nonrenewable resources affect decisions about energy use.

Roots

The Energy We Use Everyday plus the energy decisions prompt.

Trunk, the thesis (central idea)

Renewable and nonrenewable resources both affect energy decisions because each has advantages and limitations.

Branch, the evidence

The text states, Renewable energy sources are not always available, and nonrenewable resources cannot be replaced quickly once they are used.

Branch, the explanation

This shows people must plan carefully and weigh advantages against limitations when they choose an energy resource.

Checklist for strong work

- ☐ The student names the passage and the prompt as the roots.
- ☐ The thesis (central idea) on the trunk answers the prompt.
- ☐ The evidence is an exact detail from the passage.
- ☐ The explanation connects the evidence back to the thesis (central idea).
- ☐ Every branch connects back to the trunk.

Progress at Home

My student can...

- ☐ name the roots, trunk, and branches of an ECR tree
- ☐ write a thesis (central idea) that answers the prompt
- ☐ choose exact evidence from the passage
- ☐ explain what the evidence shows
- ☐ connect the explanation back to the thesis (central idea)
- ☐ check that the response has a focused structure

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.