



Good as Gold Writing Activities

for Grades 5–6

Teacher Instructions

It's Election Time

Objective: Research and practice informative and explanatory writing by describing the nominees for President of the United States

Time needed: Two 40- to 45-minute periods

Materials needed: copies of the “It’s Election Time” student activity sheet

Skills supporting learning standards: research, informative/explanatory writing, participation in group discussions

Getting Started

1. With the approaching 2016 presidential election, ask students to identify the nominees for President of the United States.
2. Ask students to provide facts they know about each nominee.
3. Review the difference between fact and opinion. A fact is true information that can be confirmed. An opinion is a belief or what someone thinks or feels about something. For example:
 - ★ **FACT:** A presidential candidate must be a natural born citizen of the United States, a resident for 14 years, and 35 years of age or older.
 - ★ **OPINION:** A presidential candidate who has been a US resident his or her whole life and is older than 50 has more experience and is better qualified to do the job.
4. Distribute the activity sheet and review it with your class. Students will research the nominees using the writing prompts on the sheet. Then they will use the information they gathered to write an informative factual piece about the nominees.
5. Optional: Have students track the race for the White House. Encourage them to follow the news and write three to five facts describing what happens on the campaign trail each week. Students can also add their opinions about the campaign weekly.

For additional classroom resources about the election, visit election.scholastic.com.

Road Trip

Objective: Practice informative and narrative writing by researching a US national monument, park, or historic place and using it as the setting for an adventure story

Time needed: 30 to 45 minutes, plus research time

Materials needed: copies of the “Road Trip” student activity sheet

Skills supporting learning standards: narrative writing, research, vocabulary development, participation in group discussions

Getting Started

1. To start this activity, ask students the following questions to get them thinking about national parks and places:
 - ★ *What state has the largest national park? (Alaska—Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve)*
 - ★ *What was the country’s first national park? (Yellowstone National Park, which straddles Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana; established in 1872)*
 - ★ **True or False:** *There’s a national park, monument, or historic site in every state. (True)*
 - ★ *Name a national park where you can see alligators and crocodiles. (Everglades National Park in Florida)*
 - ★ **True or False:** *The Underground Railroad is on the National Register of Historic Places. (True)*
2. Next, ask students to name any national monuments, parks, or historic sites they’ve visited and list them on the board. Supplement the list with examples from the activity sheet, including the Lincoln Memorial (DC), Grand Canyon (AZ), and Yosemite National Park (CA), and locate these on your class map. Explain that the government has designated these areas to be preserved and protected for the public.
3. Distribute the student activity sheet and review it with your class. As an alternative to doing a report on a national monument or park, students will research a location to use as a setting for an imaginary narrative about a road trip. The activity sheet includes prompts to help students do their research and plan their stories.
4. Provide students with access to resources to research national monuments and parks. For example, students might visit the National Park Service site for kids (nps.gov/kids) and the kids’ portal for the US government (kids.gov). Students should research a location and take notes before beginning their stories.
5. Remind students to use the prompts on the sheet to plan their stories before writing and to use details to describe the setting and location, as well as their adventure. They should write their stories on separate paper.
6. Once done, invite students to share their adventure stories with the class.

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Innovative Inventions

Objective: Practice explanatory and persuasive writing by creating a new invention

Time needed: Two 30- to 45-minute sessions

Materials needed: copies of the “Innovative Inventions” student activity sheet, markers, crayons, blank paper

Skills supporting learning standards: informative/explanatory writing, persuasive writing, research, analytical thinking, presentation development, participation in group discussions

Getting Started

1. Start this activity with an invention challenge. Ask students the following questions:
 - ★ *Who invented the telephone?* (Alexander Graham Bell)
 - ★ *Who invented the gasoline-powered automobile?* (Karl Benz is believed to have created the first gas-powered car.)
 - ★ *Who invented peanut butter?* (Aztecs and Incas made an early version of peanut butter. In the US, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the creator of the cereals, patented a process for making peanut butter from peanuts as a protein source for people who couldn't chew well.)
 - ★ *Who invented the pencil?* (Many credit the English in the 16th century.)
2. Next, ask students to identify inventions that have helped society and if they know how any of these inventions got their start. Explain that inventions start with ideas and determination.
3. Distribute the activity sheet and review it with the class. Assign students to teams of three or four. Explain that each team is going to brainstorm and sketch an invention, write an informative description of the invention and what it does, and then create a pitch or presentation to persuade people that the item will help them.
4. Provide students with class time to develop their ideas using the prompts on the activity sheet and to rehearse their presentations. Students should create sketches of their inventions for their presentations.
5. Invite each group to present its invention. After each presentation, ask students why they chose the item they created.
6. As a follow-up activity, have students research American inventors and write a paragraph describing the inventor and what he or she created. For example, the student activity sheet includes the following inventors:
 - ★ George Washington Carver—invented more than 300 uses for peanuts
 - ★ Thomas Edison—patented the incandescent lightbulb
 - ★ Mary Anderson—invented the windshield wiper

Check Out This Place

Objective: Practice narrative writing and vocabulary development by creating a poem celebrating a US community

Time needed: 45 minutes, plus research time as needed

Materials needed: Copies of the “Check Out This Place” student activity sheet; reference and research resources

Skills supporting learning standards: narrative writing, vocabulary development, participation in group discussions, research

Getting Started

1. Ask students what they like about their communities and other places they've been to in the US. Also ask if there are places in the US that they would like to visit and why.
2. Explain to students that they are each going to write a poem about a place in the US that they like or that they would like to visit.
3. Distribute the activity sheet and read the directions and question prompts to the class. Students should answer each prompt to help them generate ideas to use in their poems.
4. Emphasize to students that to support their poems and help describe the place they choose, they have to weave in some facts about the place. These might be historic or fun facts.
5. Review similes and metaphors with students. A simile is a phrase that compares two things that are different using the words “like” or “as.” For example: wise as an owl, gentle as a lamb, and clouds like cotton. Remind students that saying “I like clouds” is a statement, not a simile, since it is not a comparison. A metaphor makes a similar comparison of unlike things without the words “like” or “as.” For example: They are two peas in a pod, she is a shining star, and America is a melting pot.
6. After they complete the prompts, students should write their poems on separate sheets of paper in a style of their choice. Provide students with word or line counts if necessary.
7. Once done, invite students to share their poems. They might also draw pictures of the places they describe in their poems.

Sources:

It's Election Time

loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/elections/candid.html

Road Trip

nps.gov/aboutus/faqs.htm

nps.gov/ever/planyourvisit/index.htm

nps.gov/nr/travel/underground

nps.gov/linc/index.htm

nps.gov/grca/index.htm

nps.gov/archeology/sites/antiquities/about.htm

blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/NLCS/monuments.html

Innovative Inventions

pbs.org/transistor/album1/addlbios/bellag.html

loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/auto.html

nationalpeanutboard.org/history/who-invented-peanut-butter

bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/AKHAcJoNQQ-DaYEz1dvZ9Q

energy.gov/articles/history-light-bulb#Incandescents

women-inventors.com/Mary-Anderson.asp

Name: _____

Road Trip

The Antiquities Act of 1906 is a law that enables the president to designate historic landmarks and structures, other objects of historic or scientific interest, and archaeological sites on public land as national monuments. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed an act that established the National Park Service to care for the nation's parks. Today, there are more than 100 national monuments and 400 protected areas in the US park system, such as Harriet Tubman's Underground Railroad, the Lincoln Memorial, the Grand Canyon, and Yosemite National Park.



Directions: Write an imaginary story about a trip to a national monument, park, or site. Use the prompts below to help you plan your story.

1. CHOOSE a national monument, park, or site for your setting.

Research the location and answer the following questions.

- Which location did you choose? _____
- Where is it? _____
- What does it look like? _____
- What can you do there? _____
- Why is this place special? _____

2. IDENTIFY the characters in your story. Write their names below and include a brief description of each character.

3. THINK about the plot. What happens? What problems do your characters encounter? Do your characters have a funny, scary, or educational adventure?

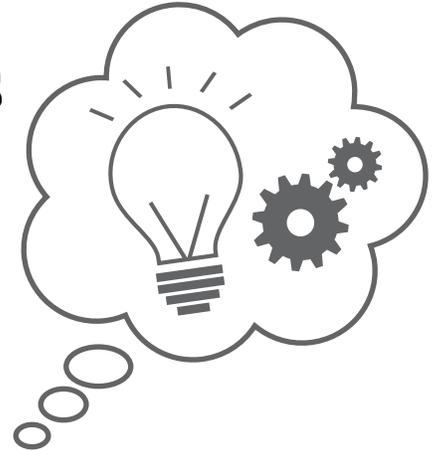
4. DECIDE on the ending. How will your story finish?

5. WRITE your story! Now that you have a plan, write your story on a separate sheet of paper. Remember to include a strong beginning, middle, and end. Use details to describe your adventure.

Name: _____

Innovative Inventions

Throughout history, American inventors have created products or made discoveries that have impacted our lives, from George Washington Carver to Thomas Edison to Mary Anderson, to name just a few. Could you be the next great inventor from the US?



Directions: Work with your team to brainstorm an idea for a new invention. Use the questions below to help you plan your creation.

WHAT is your invention? _____

WHAT is it called? _____

WHAT does it do? _____

WHAT does it look like? (Draw a picture on the back of this page.)

HOW does it work? _____

WHY will people want to use it? _____

HOW much does it cost? _____

Pitch It!

Once you've answered the questions, create a 15-second presentation or summary about your invention. Your goal is to convince people (consumers) to use it. Be persuasive. Let them know how your product will help them.

Name: _____

Check Out This Place

There are a lot of great places in the US—from national parks to oceans, lakes, and mountains to your own hometown!

Directions: Think about a place that you really like or a place that you would really like to visit. Start by brainstorming using the prompts below. Then use your answers and ideas to write a poem on the back of this sheet. The format and style are up to you.



1. **WHICH** place will you write about in your poem? _____

2. **WHERE** is it? _____

3. **WHAT** do you like about this place? _____

4. **LIST** four facts about this place.

5. **LIST** five exciting adjectives that describe this place. (Consider your senses. What does this place look, sound, and smell like?)

6. **WHAT'S** a good simile or metaphor to describe this place?

7. **WHAT** do you want others to know about this special place?

