

Junior Great Books®

Series 4

Expanded
Writing Lessons



The Great Books Foundation

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How to Use These Lessons

These writing lessons expand the Essay Practice activities in Junior Great Books Series 4. They are designed to help students draw directly upon the thinking they have done in Shared Inquiry™ discussion as they write essays. Each lesson focuses on a key element of a strong essay, allowing you to target particular skills as you design your writing instruction.

Instructions

Before Shared Inquiry Discussion

1. **Determine** which skills your students need to practice when writing essays.
2. **Select** writing lessons accordingly, reviewing each one for specific preparatory instructions. (Some lessons call for students to complete a prior lesson or handout beforehand.)
3. **Give** students the Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer (pp. 14–15) to use before and after the discussion. (This handout replaces the Shared Inquiry page of the Reader’s Journal.)*
4. **Lead** Shared Inquiry discussion. Tailor your follow-up questions to help students practice skills they will draw upon when writing. For example:
 - **Developing a clear main idea:** *Can you say more about your answer? What do you mean when you say that?*
 - **Providing evidence:** *Where does that happen in the story? What part of the story made you think that?*
 - **Explaining evidence:** *How does this part show that? Why did this quote make you think that?*

After Shared Inquiry Discussion

5. **Conduct** your selected writing lesson(s). Make sure to collect and keep all student handouts (or have students collect them in a personal binder or folder). Many writing lessons build on student work done in prior lessons.

***NOTE:** In lessons 2 and 4, students partially complete this organizer after discussion so they can practice finding and explaining evidence during the lessons.

Writing a Clear Main Idea (30–45 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- ▶ Students write a clear, detailed response to the discussion question.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To generate a clear main idea in response to an interpretive question

Handouts

- Completed Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer (pp. 14–15)
- Main Idea Planner (p. 16)

1. **Ask** a few volunteers to share their answers after discussion from the Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer. Record the answers so that the whole class can see them.
2. **Tell** students that they will practice turning an answer to the focus question into the main idea of an essay. It is important that the main idea be clear and detailed so the reader understands what question is being answered and what that answer is.
3. **Choose** a recorded answer that needs to be clearer or more detailed and ask volunteers to help develop it further. For example:

Question (from “Thank You, M’am”): *Why does Mrs. Jones give Roger money for the blue suede shoes?*

Answer: *She does it because she feels sorry for him.*

Teacher: I would like to know who “she” and “him” are, and what “it” is in this sentence. Who wants to help me revise this so a reader will know who and what we’re talking about?

I would also like to know a little more about Mrs. Jones feeling sorry for Roger. Does she feel sorry that he can’t buy the shoes, or that there’s no one at home to give him dinner? Or is there another reason?

Revised answer: *Mrs. Jones gives Roger money because she feels sorry that he doesn’t have anyone to help him or take care of him.*

Repeat this step as needed to help students practice clarifying and developing answers.

4. **Have** students write clear, detailed answers to the focus question on the Main Idea Planner.

Using Discussion as a Foundation for Essay Writing

As you introduce this writing assignment, point out to students that they have already done a great deal of work in Shared Inquiry discussion that will help them with their writing. Each student has had the chance to come up with an answer to the discussion question, to develop that answer further by supporting it with evidence, and to hear other ideas and evidence from their classmates. The first step in transferring this thinking to the page is to clarify and elaborate on an answer to the focus question so that it becomes an effective main idea.

Developing Your Evidence (30–45 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- ▶ Students gather evidence to support a main idea.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To develop text evidence supporting a main idea

Handouts

- Partially-completed Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer (pp. 14–15)

NOTE: Before conducting this lesson, tell students to complete all sections of the Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer **except** the evidence boxes on the second page.

1. **Remind** students that after the discussion, they wrote a new or more-developed answer to the focus question. They will now draw upon the evidence they gave and heard during the discussion to support their revised answer. As they do this, they need to make sure the evidence is strong enough to make the answer convincing.

2. **Share** with students the following (by projecting it or writing it on the board):

Your evidence is strong when:

- It comes from more than one part of the story
- You can easily explain how it supports the main idea
- There is enough of it to make your idea convincing

3. **Project** (or draw on the board) the second page of the Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer. Fill out an example answer to the focus question. Work with the class to find evidence to support the answer. Remind students that they can use:

- Evidence they brought up or heard during discussion
- New evidence that they find for themselves
- Evidence they wrote before discussion that still supports their answer

This evidence should be in the form of direct quotes or paraphrases of the text. (See lesson 3, p. 7, for practice with paraphrasing.)

4. **Ask** questions as you work to help students:

- Find evidence in multiple parts of the text: *Can we find a piece of evidence from another part of the story?*
- Explain how the evidence supports the main idea: *Can you explain why you chose that?*
- Find enough credible evidence to support the main idea: *Who has another piece of evidence to support this answer?*

Continued on next page 

5. **Tell** students to add evidence to their own Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizers. Remind students to give the page numbers on which they found their evidence.

Using Text Evidence in Writing

In Shared Inquiry discussion, students are expected to regularly provide text evidence to support their ideas. Help them transfer this skill to writing by trying the following:

- In discussion, encourage students to articulate their evidence in complete sentences and to give page references. Ask follow-up questions such as, *Can you describe that part of the story with more detail?* or *Can you find the page that's on and read it to us?* Remind them to do this on paper, too.
- Have pairs of students work together to share evidence aloud with one another before writing it in the organizer. Encourage them to ask each other where the evidence came from and to restate anything that is not clear.
- Give students example sentence starters to use when giving evidence in writing, such as *On page 7 [character] says . . .*, or *In the story [description of event]*. More advanced students might practice adding page numbers in parentheses after direct quotes.

Paraphrasing (30–45 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- ▶ Students retell passages from the text in their own words.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To paraphrase the text in writing

Handouts

- Paraphrasing Guide (p. 17)

1. **Explain** to students that retelling part of the text in your own words—or **paraphrasing**—shows that you understand the text’s meaning.
2. **Share** the following with students (by projecting it or writing it on the board):
 - A good paraphrase:
 - Gives the important details of what happened in a part of the story
 - Does not give too little or too much information
 - Does not change what happened in the story
3. **Choose** a passage from the text that can be easily paraphrased but also possibly misunderstood. Read it aloud while students follow along. For example:

The strap broke with the single sudden tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy’s weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance. Instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. (“Thank You, M’am,” p. 13)

4. **Show** students two inaccurate paraphrases and one that is accurate. For example:
 - The boy falls on the sidewalk. (*Too general*)
 - The boy breaks the woman’s purse, so she kicks him and he falls down. (*Misunderstanding*)
 - The woman’s purse strap breaks, which makes the boy fall. The woman kicks him in the behind. (*Accurate*)

Have students identify which paraphrase they think is correct and why. Then solicit suggestions for correcting the other paraphrases (see box below).

5. **Assign** students (or ask them to choose) a short passage from a text they read. Have them copy and paraphrase it on the Paraphrasing Guide. If time allows, have volunteers share their passages and paraphrases.

Helping Students Paraphrase the Text

At first, students may include too much or too little detail in a paraphrase or change the meaning of the original text. Include some of these mistakes in your incorrect paraphrases. Then ask questions like:

- *Are there any important ideas from the passage that are left out?*
- *Are there any details here that are not important to understanding what happened?*
- *Does this paraphrase change what happened in the text?*

Prompt students to ask themselves similar questions and revise their paraphrases if necessary.

Explaining Your Evidence (30–45 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- ▶ Students practice writing explanations of their evidence.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To develop evidence by explaining how it supports a main idea

Handouts

- Partially-completed Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer (pp. 14–15)

NOTE: Before conducting this lesson, tell students to complete all sections of the Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer **except** the explanations of evidence on the second page.

1. **Remind** students of times in the discussion where the same piece of evidence was used by different people to make different points. Emphasize that evidence doesn't speak for itself. A writer has to explain how it supports his or her idea.
2. **Project** (or draw a version of) the second page of the Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer that contains a sample main idea and a piece of supporting evidence.
3. **Model** explaining how that evidence supports the answer, then model writing the explanation in the organizer using a sentence starter such as, *This shows that . . .* or *I think this means . . .* Below is a complete example from "Thank You, M'am":

SHARED INQUIRY DISCUSSION ORGANIZER, *continued*

Name: _____

After Discussion

You may have changed or added to your answer while you discussed the focus question. Below, write your answer after discussion. Then give up to three pieces of evidence that support your answer. Explain how each piece of evidence supports your answer.

Your answer after discussion: Mrs. Jones gives Roger money to buy shoes because she feels sorry that he doesn't have anyone to help him or take care of him.

<p>Evidence #1 <u>"The woman said, 'You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is wash your face. Are you hungry?'"</u> Page: <u>15</u></p>	<p>How this evidence supports your answer: <u>This shows that Mrs. Jones feels sorry for Roger because she thinks she could be a better mother than Roger's real mother.</u></p>
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4. **Ask** volunteers to supply further evidence to support the sample main idea and to explain that evidence. Try using follow-up questions to elicit explanations, such as:

- *How does this quote show that?*
- *Why did this part make you think that?*
- *Why do you think [character action] means that?*

Record evidence and explanations in the organizer. You may wish to transition from modeling to having volunteers generate their own written explanations of evidence.

5. **Have** students practice writing explanations of the evidence in their own Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizers. If you wish, have them work with a partner before writing (see box below).

Explaining Evidence to a Partner

Students may find it easier or more natural to explain their evidence aloud to a partner before writing. Articulating their ideas aloud can also help them clarify and develop their thinking. Before students write in the organizer, try having pairs explain their evidence aloud to one another. Remind them to speak in full sentences, finishing incomplete thoughts or going back and restating ideas that are unclear. You may also wish to give them example questions to ask if they:

- Are confused by something their partner says (*Can you tell me what that means?*)
- Want more information (*Can you say more about that?*)

Writing a Strong Introduction (30–45 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

► Students develop an effective written introduction.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

► To write a strong introduction to an essay

Handouts

- Completed Main Idea Planner (p. 16)
- Introduction Planner (p. 18)

NOTE: Students should complete the Main Idea Planner (p. 16) before beginning this lesson. See lesson 1, “Writing a Clear Main Idea,” for practice with this skill.

1. **Share** the following with students (by projecting it or writing it on the board):

A good introduction:

- Gets the reader’s attention
- Tells the reader enough about the story to know what you are writing about
- Tells the reader the main idea of the essay

2. **Explain** that an introduction should get the reader’s attention with a strong opening sentence. Share some examples of strong opening sentences with students (see box below).

3. **Project** (or write on the board) an example main idea. (See p. 4 for an example from “Thank You, M’am.”) Solicit ideas for strong opening sentences to introduce the main idea.

5. **Tell** students that an introduction also needs to tell the reader a little bit about the story characters and event(s) that the essay is going to talk about. It should then introduce the main idea. Choose one of the opening sentences and model writing the rest of an introduction.

Example (from “Thank You, M’am”):

Strong opening sentence in the form of a question.

Introduction of the main idea.

Would you be nice to someone who tried to rob you? In “Thank You, M’am,” a boy named Roger tries to snatch Mrs. Jones’s purse. Instead of calling the police, she ends up giving him ten dollars to buy the shoes he wants. I think that Mrs. Jones gave Roger the money because she feels sorry that he doesn’t have anyone to help him or take care of him.

Explanation of the characters and events that will be discussed in the essay.

6. **Distribute** copies of the Introduction Planner and have students practice writing an introduction for their main idea.

Writing an Opening Sentence

Share some examples of different types of strong, attention-getting opening sentences with students.

- An **exclamation**: *Imagine being kind to a thief!*
- A **question**: *Would you be nice to someone who tried to rob you?*
- A **strong statement**: *You might think Mrs. Jones is mean, but she’s not.*

Remind students that their opening sentences should be directly related to the essay’s main idea.

Writing a Strong Conclusion (30–45 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

▶ Students practice developing an effective written conclusion.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

▶ To write a strong conclusion to an essay

Handouts

- Completed Main Idea Planner (p. 16)
- Completed Introduction Planner (p. 18)
- Conclusion Planner (p. 19)

NOTE: Students should complete the Main Idea Planner (p. 16) and the Introduction Planner (p. 18) before beginning this lesson. See lesson 1, “Writing a Clear Main Idea,” and lesson 5, “Writing a Strong Introduction,” for practice with these skills.

1. **Share** the following with students (by projecting it or writing it on the board):

A good conclusion:

- Reminds the reader of your main idea
- Leaves the reader with an idea or a question to think about

2. **Project** (or write on the board) an example main idea and introduction. (See p. 4 and p. 10 for examples from “Thank You, M’am.”) Remind students of the components of a strong main idea and introduction.

3. **Let** students know that a conclusion should remind readers of the main idea, but should say it differently from the introduction. Ask several volunteers to offer different ways the main idea might be stated. Then model writing a restatement of the main idea, using a sentence starter such as *In conclusion, I think . . .* or *The evidence shows that . . .*

4. **Tell** students that a conclusion should also leave the reader with something to think about. It might be something important they learned from answering the focus question, or a question they still have. The idea or question should always connect to the main idea. Model writing a closing idea or question to complete your conclusion. Example (from “Thank You, M’am”):

Restatement of the main idea.

● In conclusion, I think Mrs. Jones felt sorry for Roger because he had nobody at home to take care of him. This is why she gave him the money to buy new shoes. I learned that Mrs. Jones turned out to be a lot kinder than I thought she was ● at the beginning.

Something the writer learned when answering the focus question.

5. **Distribute** copies of the Conclusion Planner. Have students review their introductions and main ideas from lesson 5, then practice writing a matching conclusion.

Drafting an Essay (60–90 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- ▶ Students write an essay with an introduction, body, and a conclusion.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To organize and develop prewriting into an essay

Handouts

- Completed Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizer (pp. 14–15)
- Essay Drafting Guide (pp. 20–21)
- Writer’s Checklist (p. 22)

1. **Review** with students the core elements of a complete essay:
 - An introduction
 - Body paragraph(s)
 - A conclusion
2. **Ask** students to review their completed Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizers. Tell them that each piece of evidence and the explanation of that evidence will become a **body paragraph** of an essay.
3. **Explain** that each body paragraph will be linked together with **transitions**. These help a reader see how the essay is organized. Give students examples of transitional words and phrases such as *First of all*, *In addition*, *Next*, and *Finally*. If you wish, show them some examples of writing with strong, clear transitions.
4. **Distribute** copies of the Essay Drafting Guide. Have students write body paragraphs using the evidence and explanations they recorded in their Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizers. Remind them to turn their notes into complete sentences and include a transition between each paragraph. Note: Struggling students might start with a single body paragraph containing evidence and explanations, and work up to discrete paragraphs.
5. **Have** students write an introduction and conclusion for the essay, using the main idea (answer after discussion) in their Shared Inquiry Discussion Organizers. See lesson 5, “Writing a Strong Introduction” (p. 10) and lesson 6, “Writing a Strong Conclusion” (p. 11) if students need practice with these skills. Note: If students find it easier to start with the introduction and draft chronologically, they may do so.
6. **Distribute** copies of the Writer’s Checklist. Have students check to be sure they have included all components on the checklist before they hand in their drafts.

Revising a Draft (60–90 minutes)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- ▶ Students revise a multiparagraph essay.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To revise an essay based on teacher feedback

Handouts

- Teacher's Notes (p. 23)
- Writer's Checklist (p. 22)

1. **Have** students choose a piece of writing that they would like to revise (or choose pieces for them). NOTE: If students are just beginning the revision process, have them choose a section of an essay to revise (e.g., a single paragraph). Once they have some practice revising their work, they can move on to revising an entire essay.
2. **Fill out** a copy of the Teacher's Notes for each student draft. Point out areas for improvement and give brief suggestions for how they can improve their drafts.
3. **Return** drafts to students with your notes. Ask them to take some time to think about the notes before they revise. If necessary, meet one-on-one with students to explain your notes and make suggestions for revision.
4. **Ask** students to revise their drafts based on your notes. Where necessary, distribute relevant handouts to allow them to practice specific skills (for example, writing a conclusion). If a large group or the whole class is struggling with a particular skill, consider repeating the corresponding lesson.
5. **Have** students review the Writer's Checklist before turning in their revised drafts along with your original notes. Use the Writing Rubric to score finished essays (pp. 24–25).

SHARED INQUIRY DISCUSSION ORGANIZER

Name: _____ Date: _____

Story: _____

Before Discussion

The focus question: _____

Your answer before discussion: _____

Give a piece of evidence from the story that supports your answer.

Evidence: _____

Page: _____

Continued on next page 

Name: _____

After Discussion

You may have changed or added to your answer while you discussed the focus question. Below, write your answer after discussion. Then give up to three pieces of evidence that support your answer. Explain how each piece of evidence supports your answer.

Your answer after discussion: _____

Evidence #1 _____

How this evidence supports your answer:

Page: _____

Evidence #2 _____

How this evidence supports your answer:

Page: _____

Evidence #3 _____

How this evidence supports your answer:

Page: _____

MAIN IDEA PLANNER

Name: _____ Date: _____

Story: _____

Focus question for discussion: _____

Your answer after discussion: _____

Circle any part of your answer that could be clearer. Underline any part of your answer you could write more about.

Now write your revised answer below. Someone who has not read the story should understand what question you're answering, and what your answer is. Be clear and explain who and what you are talking about.

Your revised answer:

This revised answer will be the **main idea** of your essay. The evidence you choose and your reasons for choosing that evidence will become the **body** of your essay.

PARAPHRASING GUIDE

Name: _____ Date: _____

Story: _____

Choose a short part of the story that you like. Write it below.

Page: _____

Now **paraphrase** that part of the story (retell it in your own words).

As you write your paraphrase, ask yourself:

- Am I giving the most important details of what happened?
- Can I get rid of any details that are *not* important to understanding what happened?
- Does my paraphrase match what actually happened in the story?

WRITER'S CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to see if you have completed the important parts of your essay draft. If anything is missing, go back and revise your draft before you turn it in.

Does your draft include ...

- ✓ an introduction?
- ✓ body paragraphs?
- ✓ transitions between paragraphs?
- ✓ a conclusion?

Did you ...

- ✓ clearly state your main idea?
- ✓ give evidence that supports your main idea?
- ✓ explain how your evidence supports your main idea?

Did you proofread your draft for ...

- ✓ spelling?
- ✓ grammar?
- ✓ punctuation?

TEACHER'S NOTES

Name: _____ Date: _____

Story: _____

Think about your teacher's notes as you revise your draft.

Make your main idea clearer.

Teacher's note: _____

Give more evidence to support your main idea.

Teacher's note: _____

Explain how your evidence supports your main idea.

Teacher's note: _____

Paraphrase parts of the story (use your own words).

Teacher's note: _____

Work on your introduction.

Teacher's note: _____

Work on your conclusion.

Teacher's note: _____

Overview

The writing rubric focuses on two traits critical to good essay writing—content (ideas and evidence) and organization. It does not include such elements of writing as voice, sentence structure, word choice, and conventions or mechanics. To assess these elements, apply your usual rubric or standards.

Assess student papers after they have been revised at least once. This will give you the fairest indication of what your students can do.

Instructions

1. **Review** the writer’s checklist (p. 22) and the writing rubric with your students each time they revise, so they have a clear notion of what to aim for.
2. **Use** the writing rubric to give each essay a score for content and a score for organization, since students might do better with one element than with the other. If you wish, combine the two for a final grade.
3. **Include** at least one positive observation in your comments, specifically responding to students’ ideas or evidence (e.g., “I was very interested in your idea about . . .” or “This quote was very convincing because . . .”), and a suggestion for the next assignment.



Continued on next page

		CONTENT Ideas and Evidence	ORGANIZATION Structure
PERFORMANCE LEVEL	4	<p>THE PIECE FULLY DEVELOPS AND EXPLAINS AN IDEA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main idea is clear and strong; the reader can follow it throughout. • The evidence clearly supports the main idea and is selected from different places in the text; the reader finds the whole piece understandable and convincing. 	<p>THE PIECE IS COMPLETE AND EASY TO FOLLOW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction, body, and conclusion develop the main idea; the reader can see the main idea develop. • The piece presents the main idea and evidence with logical connections and transitions; the reader can follow it readily.
	3	<p>THE PIECE CONTAINS A CLEAR, SUPPORTED IDEA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main idea is clear; the reader can easily identify it. • Evidence supports aspects of the main idea and is selected from more than one place in the text; the reader finds the evidence probable. 	<p>THE PIECE IS FAIRLY COMPLETE AND EASY TO FOLLOW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an introduction; the reader can connect it with the main idea. • Most of the piece deals with the main idea and supporting evidence; the reader can see how parts are connected.
	2	<p>THE PIECE CONTAINS A POINT WITH SOME SUPPORT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main idea is mostly clear; the reader may lose track of it. • Some evidence is given from a limited range of the text; the reader can see how it supports the main idea. 	<p>THE PIECE IS PARTIALLY DEVELOPED AND NOT ALWAYS EASY TO FOLLOW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is minimal; the reader can still see what the main idea is. • The piece sometimes jumps from one idea or piece of evidence to another; the reader can follow but sometimes gets lost.
	1	<p>THE PIECE LACKS A CLEAR POINT OR SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main idea is unclear; the reader may struggle to identify it. • There is minimal evidence; the reader has trouble seeing how it supports the main idea. 	<p>THE PIECE IS INCOMPLETE AND DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The piece lacks an introduction; the reader cannot easily locate the main idea. • The ideas or evidence are disjointed; the reader has trouble seeing how parts of the piece are related.