



# GRADE 4 LITERACY: JOHN MUIR

## UNIT OVERVIEW

This task is embedded in a 2-3 week unit that uses the topic of human impact on environment as a means to teach students how to analyze and navigate informational texts. Students will write an essay at the end of the unit demonstrating their mastery of the content and their ability to make inferences within a specific text.

## TASK DETAILS

**Task Name:** John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter

**Grade:** 4

**Subject:** Literacy

**Task Description:** Students write an essay using key details from the text to explain why John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts and describe the effect that his work had on preserving the beauty of nature.

### **Standards:**

**RI.4.1** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

**RI.4.10** By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

**W.4.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

**SL.4.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

### **Materials Needed:**

"John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter" (<http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/reading-comp/5th-muir.pdf>)



# GRADE 4 LITERACY: JOHN MUIR PERFORMANCE TASK

## John Muir Task

*The prompt below is designed to be used with the text “John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter” (<http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/reading-comp/5th-muir.pdf>)*

Write an essay using key details from the text to explain why John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts. Describe the effect that his work had on preserving the beauty of nature. Your essay should follow the conventions of standard English, including capitalization, punctuation and spelling.



# GRADE 4 LITERACY: JOHN MUIR RUBRIC

## Performance Task

Write an essay using key details from the text to explain why John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts. Describe the effect that his work had on preserving the beauty of nature.

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## Rubric

Score	Description
4	The student provides a complete and accurate response that meets all of the requirements of the task. The response shows thorough and insightful understanding, includes comprehensive and detailed text-based support, connects ideas and elaborates, is well organized with clear focus, addresses all parts of the prompt, and provides a strong introduction and conclusion.
3	The student provides a thorough and mostly accurate response that meets most of the requirements of the task. The response shows less insight, includes ample and relevant text-based support, connects ideas, is well organized, and addresses most of the prompt.
2	The student provides an adequate and partially accurate response that meets some of the requirements of the task. The response shows a literal understanding of the text, some organization, includes modest text-based support, and addresses part of the prompt.
1	The student provides an incomplete and less-than-accurate response that only superficially touches on the requirements of the task. The response shows little, if any, understanding, lacks focus, and includes little text-based support.
0	The student fails to provide a relevant response to the task.



## GRADE 4 LITERACY: JOHN MUIR ANNOTATED STUDENT WORK

This section contains annotated student work at a range of score points and suggested next steps for students. The student work shows examples of student understandings and misunderstandings of the task.

## Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir Annotated Student Work

### Student A (4 points)

#### A Tree's Voice

Long ago there was a tree who could not speak...well not actually, it was John Muir who spoke on it's behalf. John Muir was born in Scotland, April 21, 1838. Soon after, his family immigrated to America and bought a farm where John Muir spent many years admiring nature. In the passage: "John Muir: The Conservationist on the Quarter" by Liana Mahoney, we learn that even as a young man John loved nature. John Muir spent most of his life working to protect to conserve nature. His work also helped make changes to how was use our land.

John Musir loved nature. Even as a child he loved to watch nature. One thing that bothered him to the the bottom of his soul was that trees were being cut in order to make farmlands for cattle and sheep to graze. He knew trees were important to forests, and the animals and even people. John Muir wrote essays, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and letters to convince people to protect nature. John Muir dedicated his life to his work.

John Muir's work changed the way we see nature. The first step in John's plan was to convince the president Theador Roosevelt to see what he saw. John took Theador on a 3-day camping trip to show the president the beauty of nature. Afterwards The president set aside 148 million acres of land for nation forests and national parks. Then the U.S. Congress passed a law that no one can build homes or businesses there. So parks like Yosemite and Sequoia and national park must stay unchanged.

John Muir made us understand the beauty of the outside world. Since he saved Yosemite Sequoia, and National Park we can now enjoy the beauty of these parks. John Muir died in California 1914. But even if he died, the presidents' law still lives on so we can see what John Muir loved.

**Comment [AL1]:** Creative introductory sentence showing connection to Muir's appreciation of the wilderness. First sentence is linked to the title of the essay (W.4.2.a, W.4.2.c)

**Comment [AL2]:** The student includes information here from prior knowledge that is not included in the text. This information is not required by the task but it appropriately supports the introduction and flow of thoughts ( W.4.2.d).

**Comment [AL3]:** Good inference /elaboration - "...bothered him to the bottom of his soul..." and clear statement of the problem ( RI.4.1, RI.4.10; W.4.2.b, W.4.2.d).

**Comment [AL4]:** Need better transition here (W.4.2.a)

**Comment [AL5]:** Good conclusion linking John Muir's past actions to their ongoing effects (RI.4.10, W.4.2.c, W.4.2.e).

## **Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir Annotated Student Work**

### **Student performance on the criteria within the rubric**

The score for this essay is 4.

The student shows a good understanding of the text and John Muir's perspective on preserving the environment. This is apparent in the opening sentence, which is linked to the title of the essay. The topic is developed and is supported with facts and details. The essay includes a clear introduction and conclusion and contains accurate factual information from the article. The student connects ideas and elaborates with details from both the text and prior knowledge. Although use of prior knowledge is not required for the task, it is included appropriately and it supports the ideas. The essay shows good organization and development: the student presents the problem in the body of the essay and describes steps that Muir took to address his concerns and accomplish his goals. The conclusion nicely sums up the lasting effects of Muir's efforts.

### **Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student**

It is clear that the student made an attempt to write good transitions. An area of focus may be to make transitions a little better connected to the information following them so that essay flows more smoothly - e.g., the end of the second paragraph states, "John Muir dedicated his life to his work." The third paragraph begins, "John Muir's work changed the way we see nature. The first step in John's plan was to convince the president Theodor Roosevelt to see what he saw." In this case, the sentence about Muir's "first step" does not follow and a better transition might include something about a plan instead of changing "the way we see nature." A secondary focus can be on spelling and capitalization (e.g., "Afterwards The president...").

**Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir  
Annotated Student Work**

**Student B (3 points)**

“John Muir”

Can you believe what one man could do? I read the article “John Muir the Conservationist on the Quarter” by Liana Mahoney. In the article I learned about a man named John Muir. John Muir was born on April 21, 1838. He was a man who loved nature the way it was. He walked more than a thousand miles across the country, through fields and woods admiring nature. John Muir devoted his life to conservation and also to preserving of beauty of nature.

John Muir wrote about the problems too. He wrote that people were cutting down the trees for more farmland. He also wrote places he visited describing their beauty. Soon people started to listen. For example Theodore Roosevelt the president of the United States of America, was convinced that was a need to protect our land.

John Muir hard work paid off. After the visit from the president, president Roosevelt set aside 148 million acres of land for national forest and established five national parks. A law was also passed that says that people cannot build homes or businesses. Thanks to him we can enjoy the parks and all its natural beauty.

John Muir worked long and hard every day to keep things in nature just the way they are. Today people continued his work.

**Comment [D1]:** Introduction establishes Muir’s love of nature but the last sentence of the paragraph should begin a new paragraph with a transition sentence. (W.4.2.a, W.4.2.c)

**Comment [D2]:** Focus is mostly clear and contains text based support (RI.4.1, W.4.2.b)

**Comment [D3]:** The conclusion needs more work in summing up the points in the article (W.4.2.e)

## **Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir Annotated Student Work**

### **Student performance on the criteria within the rubric**

This essay scored a 3.

The student shows an adequate but sometimes literal understanding of the text and John Muir's efforts to conserve land. The focus is mostly clear and contains text-based support. The essay contains accurate factual information from the text and supporting details. There are complete sentences and transitions are generally good, but there is some repetition between the 1st and 2nd paragraphs. There are a few spelling and capitalization errors, but nothing that interferes with comprehension.

The student shows some insight into Muir's love of nature and desire to preserve land, but needs to go a little further into cause and effect - why it is important not to cut down trees.

### **Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student**

To move this student from "3" work to "4" work, she should build beyond the literal, text-based supports towards drawing inferences about Muir's life and work. For example, the teacher could hone in on the quote from Muir about the beauty of nature and how this ties into the first part of the prompt, and his persuading of Roosevelt later in the article. Another inference might be to speculate on what this country might look like without areas of land protected from development.

## Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir Annotated Student Work

### Student C (2 points)

#### The Important Conservationist

“John Muir the conservationist on the quarter” by Liana Mahoney was one of the well-known conservationist around the world. He fought to keep nature beautiful and safe. He loved nature and showed it in many ways.

John Muir dedicated his life to conserving nature. One way John Muir conserved is by stoping people from cutting down trees that are needed. One example is how trees are needed for farmland animals to have enough space. Another way John Muir conserved was by protecting our world from getting changed. The last way John Muir conserved was by persuading people to conserve forest by writing letters, newspapers, books, essays, articles and magazines. John Muir’s determination to preserve the beauty of nature changed the way people thought about nature. by preserving John Muir wanted to keep our national parks clean and safe, he also persuded people to conserve nature. Lastly, John Muir affected our world by convincing president Theodore Rosavelt, The congress and the sierra club to mak a law promising to never change and destry natural parks like the yosemetie park and the sequoia park.

As a conservationist John Muir never gave up and fought for our world to stay the same way it was. In honor of him there were many places named after him such as Mountain Muir, and Muir beach. John Muir was an important Man.

**Comment [KA1]:** Misunderstanding of the text. Using the word “safe” which is not text-based, without elaboration (i.e., “safe from development,” ) is confusing and is not a reference to details and examples from the text (RI.4.1, RI.4.10)

**Comment [KA2]:** Misunderstanding of text—trees were cleared in order to make space for grazing sheep and cattle. (RI.4.10)

**Comment [KA3]:** Reflects incorrect inference, possibly due to comprehension issues (RI.4.1, RI.4.10)

**Comment [KA4]:** This sentence is a nice concluding statement related to the information presented (W.4.2.e)

## **Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir Annotated Student Work**

### **Student performance on the criteria within the rubric**

This essay scored a 2.

This essay shows misunderstandings beginning with the introduction ("He fought to keep nature beautiful and safe."—"safe" can be interpreted in numerous ways that are not relevant to the text). While the student clearly expresses the text's main idea ("John Muir dedicated his life to conserving nature"), there is little elaboration, and much of the information provided by the student is not text-based ("One way John Muir conserved is by stopping people from cutting down trees") and/or displays a misunderstanding of the text ("One example is how trees are needed for farmland animals to have enough space"). Similar ideas from the text are presented in a repetitive fashion throughout, displaying an overall lack of clarity and organization ("...Muir conserved was by persuading people to conserve forest by writing letters...articles and magazines." "by preserving John Muir wanted to keep our national parks clean and safe, he also persuaded people to conserve nature."). Poor grammar also causes additional confusion ("Another way John Muir conserved was by protecting our world from getting changed.")

### **Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student**

An important area of focus would be to assist this student in monitoring for comprehension, to increase her engagement of the text and help avoid any potential misunderstandings. Assisting with these skills would also help to refine focus on relating the main idea to the text's supporting details, and connecting them in a coherent and meaningful way. Student could also use assistance in how to best utilize a graphic organizer to refine key points/supporting details and connect with text, rather than transferring/reiterating their writing from a G.O. directly to their essay. A review of the basic structure of an essay/organization and grammar skills would also be helpful.

**Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir**  
**Annotated Student Work**

**Student D (1 point)**

Have you ever picke up a quarter and looked carefully at the back? There's a guy on the back. Do you know what his name is? His name is John Muir. Im going to tell you about him. John Muir loved nature he even loved it as a kid. He likes to explore nature. He was so interested in nature that he even wrote an article. John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts and the effect that his work had on preserving the beauty of nature. John Muir devoted his life to conservation efforts. Im going to tell you about him first he spent much of life exploring nature. He even persuaded the president and now you know who is John Muir.

**Comment [D1]:** The first several sentences are engaging and the student's voice comes through. However, there is no clear introduction of a topic (W.4.2.a)

**Comment [D2]:** Recites the prompt without reference to details and examples from the text; does not develop the topic with facts, examples, etc. (RI.4.1, W.4.2.b)

**Comment [D3]:** Repetition of previous sentence.

**Comment [D4]:** This sentence is a good example of a detail that is fleshed out more in the graphic organizer than in the essay.

## **Grade 4 Literacy: John Muir Annotated Student Work**

### **Student performance on the criteria within the rubric**

The score for this essay is a 1.

Essay lacks introduction and conclusion. Student shows little understanding of the text in her writing, although in the pre-writing she displays a somewhat more thorough understanding of how details support an idea (" He aske the presedent to come and sleep under the forest/he cared about it that he persuaded the presedent to come.") The development of ideas is minimal at best, but there is (again) some planning evident in the student's use of a details/elaboration table (see next page). Ideas are disjointed and unorganized; references to the text are random, undeveloped, and/or exhibit a repetition of ideas ("He likes to explore nature." "I'm going to tell you about him first he spent much of life exploring nature.")

### **Suggested next steps/areas of focus for the student**

Most important area of focus would be around developing and following through on her organization strategies, specifically using a graphic organizer and/or pre-writing activities to strengthen organization, planning the response to the prompt and the use of text-based support in writing. Secondary to this would be to review the criteria for the construction of a proper introduction and conclusion and on appropriate use of language in academic writing.