

SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH FAMILIES

Schools are encouraged to share student work with families on Common Core-aligned performance tasks. There are many different ways to have these conversations with families. Here is an example of a template attached to a student response on the Forensic Anthropology assignment from the Grade 8 Literacy Task Bundle. For additional resources, visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary/Toolkit/Support/default.htm>.

Teacher: _____

Grade/Class: _____

Date: _____

PERFORMANCE TASK: FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY

You are a forensic anthropologist. You are taking your dog for a walk, and he breaks free and sprints down the block. When you catch up with him, you find him digging in the dirt. Your dog pulls out what looks like a bone. Upon further investigation, you realize your dog has discovered the remains of a human body. As a forensic anthropologist, you must identify the body. What steps will you take and with whom will you consult?

Write an informative/explanatory essay in which you explain the steps you will take and the people you will consult. In your text, be sure to:

1. Explain at least three steps you will take (after calling the police to report the body) and write reasons for these steps. In other words, explain why you take these steps and why take them in this order?
2. Explain who you will consult and write your reasons for consulting these people.

KEY CRITERIA

For this assignment, I used a rubric to measure how well each student explains a topic and uses appropriate evidence to support his or her reasoning.

This rubric is on a 4-point scale, with 4 being the highest score.

Students are scored based on how well they:

- ✓ *Describe at least three steps they will take*
- ✓ *Use evidence from at least two texts to defend their choices*
- ✓ *Justify the reasons they selected each step*
- ✓ *Explain the steps in a logical order*

ATTACHED EXEMPLARY RESPONSE:

Student A (4 points)

I am a forensic anthropologist. As a forensic anthropologist, it is my job to identify the skeletal remains of unknown people in order to figure out who they are and why they died. Last week when I was walking my dog, he found a bone and the bone was human. It was my job to identify the body.

The first thing I did was get someone to pick up the decedent's bones and bring them to my office to examine. Then, I went to work to determine the victim's biological profile. In the article "What is Forensic Anthropology?" the author writes that the biological profile is the age, sex, height, and race of the person. Determining the biological profile is an important early step in identifying human remains. I figured out the age of the victim by checking the decedent's sutures of the skull, the teeth, the collarbone, the ends of the long bones in the arms and legs, the pubic symphysis, which is the area where the hipbones meet, and the joints between bones where the bones and cartilage meet. Angela Libal explains in the chapter "Identifying the Victim" that checking those bones and teeth help figure out someone's age because they all wear with age. After the age, I determined the sex of the decedent by checking the pelvis. The pelvis was wide so I knew it was a woman. After that, I found out the race by checking the shape of the skull, teeth and body's joints. Libal explains in "Identifying the Victim" that the skull, teeth and joints are different in the different races. Next, I found out the height of the decedent by measuring a long bone and then using a mathematic equation. Libal explains that since the body is proportionate, the length of one bone can be used to figure out the height of a person. After identifying biological profile, I checked for any marks on the bones like healed breaks, surgical marks, diseases, and abnormalities. These markings help match the bones with a missing person because markings are the same before and after death.

As a forensic anthropologist, I consulted with other people to find out who my dog found. After identifying the biological profile and unique markings, I called the FBI because they have one of the largest databases of missing people. I gave them all the information I got from examining the bones, and they searched through the database for a missing person that matched that profile. Their database did not have a match for the owner of the bones my dog found because the decedent was not reported as missing.

Since there was no match in the FBI database, I then consulted with a forensic artist. Forensic artists are important because they are able to reconstruct the face of a victim. In "Giving Faces to the Lost," the author says "The artist (usually also a forensic anthropologist) uses the skull and knowledge of human anatomy to sculpt a face that will look enough like the victim to be recognizable to someone who knew her." This is significant because it explains that without a forensic artist using facial reconstruction it's hard to know what the person's face looks like. A face is needed to create a picture so others can identify the person.

Comment [VM1]: This sentence introduces the first of four steps: identifying the victim's biological profile.

Comment [VM2]: In these sentences, the writer concisely explains why s/he would identify the victim's biological profile first. The writer uses evidence from two texts to explain what the biological profile is, what bones, etc. are important in determining age, sex, and race, and how s/he determined height.

Comment [VM3]: In these sentences the writer transitions to the second step s/he would take to identify human remains. The writer provides a reason why s/he would check markings on the bones.

Comment [VM4]: The writer's third step includes the first of two consultants s/he would call. Here the writer explains why calling the FBI is important to identifying a victim.

Comment [VM5]: Here the writer provides a fourth step and another consultant. The reasons for this step/consultant are concisely explained. The writer also explains why this step is necessary by using evidence from the chapter, "Giving Faces to the Lost."

ATTACHED STUDENT RESPONSE

Student B (3 points)

One day as I was walking my dog down the block he randomly frees himself and runs away. As I am chasing after him I see him digging in the dirt. Then when I am overlooking him to see what he is doing I realize he has picked out a bone. When I examine the bone it had come to my attention that this was the bone of a human being. At that moment I realized that this was the job for a forensic anthropologist like myself.

The first thing I did was carefully collect the rest of the remains at the crime scene. I put them in the plastic bag that I was planning to use for my dog. Once I had gathered all the bones and jewelry, even some bloody cloths I immediately went to the lab to check this out.

Once I got to the lab the first thing I must find out is the sex, age, race and height. This biological profile as explained in the chapter, "Giving Faces to the Lost," is usually the start of an investigation. I soon discovered that the bones belonged to a 14 year old girl who was a 5' 3 hispanic. Then there's an examination for tattoos, piercings, scars, etc. not much was found except two ear piercings in this case.

We still didn't know the identity of the female victim. It was necessary to hand over the skull to a forensic artist for facial reconstruction. As he worked on constructing what was most likely be the face of the girl, I went to get some help from a blood specialist to examine the blood spatter on the earth I found.

With the face model that the facial artist made, we asked for help to post pictures of the facial model on neighborhood bulletin boards and in stores. As results came back we were able to get a match on the face of the girl from two store clerks and contacted the family. They told us that they still believed she was on her camping trip that's why they didn't file a missing child. Eventually I got some help from forensic odontologist to find the dental records of this young lady. This was to confirm the family's identification of Alvarez. Finally, as the DNA of the blood came back it turned out to be the murderer's blood. Overall the story was that he was stabbed in the leg by the girl when she was trying to defend herself. He was sentenced to jail for life for the murder of Alexis Alvarez.

Comment [VM6]: This sentence introduces the first step the writer would use to identify the remains.

Comment [VM7]: Here the writer introduces the second step and provides a brief explanation of why this step using evidence from one text.

Comment [VM8]: Here the writer provides the third step; however, s/he does not explain the reasons for this step. The information for this step is provided in one of the unit texts although the writer does not explicitly name the text.

Comment [VM9]: The writer's fourth step, provided in these sentences, includes a person who would be consulted as well as a reason why this step is necessary. The reason, however, is incomplete and general.

Comment [VM10]: The writer provides another step in the process of identifying the victim, but does not write any reasons for this step and consultant.

Comment [VM11]: The writer's final step, provided in these sentences, includes a person who would be consulted with an incomplete reason for his/her involvement. Here we see an example of the writer's use of domain-specific vocabulary.