



# Collections

# Collections of Student Writing

**I**ndividual pieces of student work accompany the New Standards Primary Literacy Standards, illustrating “how good is good enough” to meet the standards, grade by grade. In the classroom, however, teachers evaluate student work and progress over the course of a year or more. This section adds that dimension of time to student work. It contains several kinds of collections of student writing.

## **Growth Over One Year**

These collections feature selected writing pieces of individual students over the course of one school year. For example, Melissa’s collection includes six pieces that, taken together, provide a snapshot of Melissa’s literacy development in kindergarten.

In reviewing these collections, it is important to pay special attention to each student’s first piece, which shows the student’s skill level at the beginning of the school year. The kindergarten and first-grade collections come from students who entered school with very different skills. The second-grade collection comes from a student whose writing did not meet first-grade standards at the start of the year. The third-grade collection comes from a strong student.

The point is, students with a wide range of skills can and will make noticeable progress over the course of a school year — if they are in very good writing programs, as the students whose work appears here are.

## **Growth Over Four Years**

This collection shows the growth of a highly literate and imaginative writer throughout the primary years. In good writing programs, students with similar skills likely can show similar growth.

This collection is interesting, too, in demonstrating that students’ phonetic and literary skills develop unevenly. But with much encouragement and many opportunities to practice, these skills even out, and students produce writing that is more polished.

## **One Assignment, Four Grade Levels**

This collection shows how students at each grade level respond to the same assignment. In this case, the students are explaining a familiar task, carving a pumpkin into a jack-o’-lantern. Even a kindergartner can lay out the sequence of steps required to get the job done. But the progression of accumulated skills demonstrated grade by grade is remarkable. Year by year, students gain more control over their writing. The downhill slant of the kindergartner evens out by first grade. The first grader adds a title page and transition language. The second grader blends narrative and functional writing — and enlivens her piece with more sophisticated words, such as “supermarket,” “banana” and “zigzags.” The third graders produce revised works

with illustrations that are synchronized carefully with the text. Their writing is confident and creative.

In the early primary grades, students have to work very hard simply to coordinate the dance between eyes and hands, pencils and paper. Nevertheless, beginning in kindergarten, students are remarkably able to make their meaning clear and compelling. Commentary on

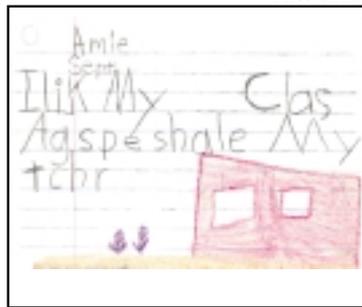
the student writing in these collections shows how they do it. The commentary explains how and why the student work meets the standards — or how and why it falls short.



Kindergarten



Kindergarten



First Grade



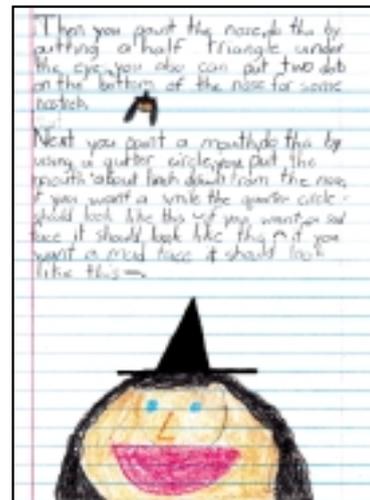
Second Grade



Third Grade



Third Grade

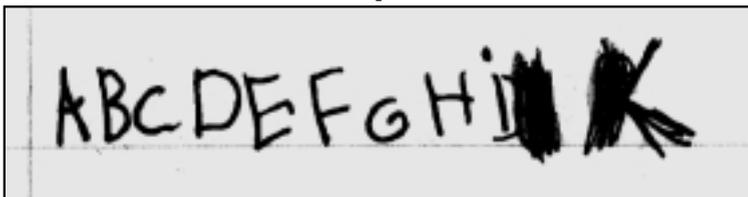


Third Grade

## “Melissa’s Collection” Kindergarten Growth Over One Year

**T**he six samples produced by this kindergarten student demonstrate remarkable growth over the course of a year. The student, Melissa, started kindergarten after one year in a prekindergarten program. Her kindergarten teacher provided time each day for students to engage in a writers’ workshop, so Melissa generated her own topics, wrote regularly, worked with response groups, conferred with her teacher, and edited and polished selected pieces. Her remarkable growth as a writer is due in no small part to the quality of her instruction. The full collection of Melissa’s kindergarten writing provides evidence of her meeting the Writing Habits and Processes Standard. One of the pieces in this collection is an example that meets the standard for kindergarten narrative writing, “I wit fihn,” and a second piece, “Fraggs,” is an example that is above the standard for informational writing.

Mid-September



**The first sample**, “ABCD ...,” was generated in mid-September, about a week into the school year, after the teacher had distributed “writing journals” to the class and directed the students to write about anything they wanted her to read. The teacher’s plan

was to respond to these journals on a daily basis. Melissa’s entry shows that she wanted her teacher to know that she knew some of the alphabet. As a writing sample this, of course, is limited, but it does demonstrate that Melissa has one of the basic tools of literacy.

November 5



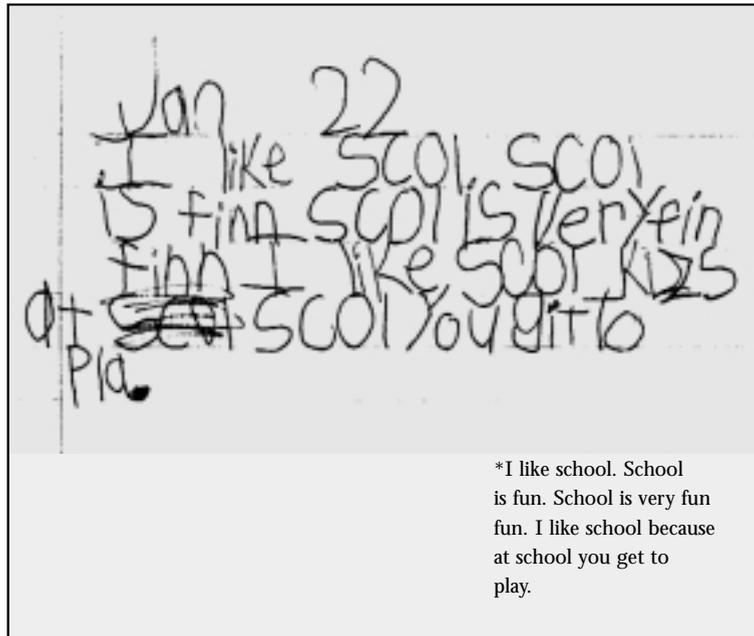
\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

**The second sample**, a simple piece of expressive writing dated Nov. 5, illustrates that Melissa understands to write from left to right across the page (we could probably infer the left-to-right ordering from the alphabet sample, but we could not be certain). Melissa’s sample also shows that she is attempting letter-sound correspondence (she has represented *like* with the beginning and ending sounds, though the ending

sound is represented by the letter *c* rather than by the actual ending consonant). Melissa relies heavily on beginning and ending consonant sounds to represent whole words. She still is not creating word boundaries, and whether her writing could be read by another person, even someone who is knowledgeable about phonetic spelling, is doubtful.

January 22

**The third sample**, dated Jan. 22, shows that Melissa continues to spell phonetically while beginning to spell some words correctly. There are word boundaries and a left-to-right, top-to-bottom ordering. There is evidence that Melissa can use both uppercase and lowercase letters. Her writing clearly can be read by another person. The message contains a total of 21 words, although only 12 different words actually are represented (some are repeated). Of these, seven are spelled correctly. Those words not spelled correctly still can be read because they are spelled phonetically. Melissa's sample also demonstrates her awareness of punctuation (she uses a period). The sample represents the kind of expressive writing typical of kindergarten and first-grade writers. Notice the repetition ("scol is finn scol is very fin"), which is commonplace as young writers attempt to "write more." ▶▶



\*I like school. School is fun. School is very fun fun. I like school because at school you get to play.

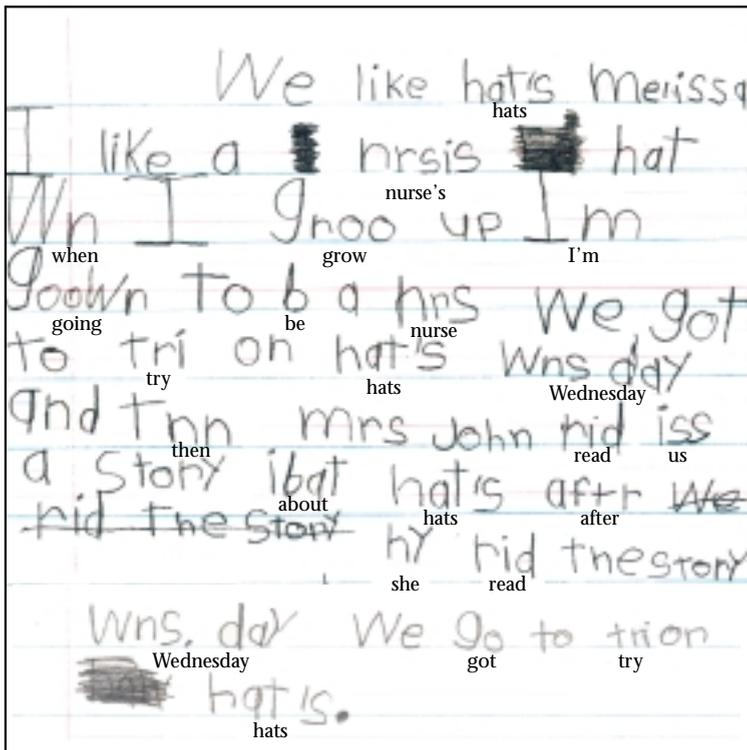
\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

February/March



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

The fourth sample contains 30 different words, 15 of which Melissa spells correctly and 10 of which Melissa uses more than once. This is an early sample of a polished (revised) piece. That is, Melissa designed a cover for the piece, gave it a title and made several revisions to clarify her meaning. She did not copy the piece over because her teacher allowed for less than perfect copy. This sample actually lacks a certain coherence. It begins with an assertion about a preference of Melissa's ("I like a nrsis hat") followed (inferentially) by the cause for this preference ("Wn I groo up Im goown to b a nrs"). Following this attempt to set a context for the piece, Melissa describes a sequence of events about trying on hats after the teacher read a story to the class about hats. The piece shows Melissa's awareness of both the apostrophe (though she uses it to make plurals rather than possessives) and the period (though she employs only one, which marks the end of the sample).



April 7

The fifth sample, dated April 7, at first might appear to represent a step backward because Melissa misspells more words. However, this 37-word message repeats fewer words — only five appear more than once. (She spells seven words correctly.) The message is significantly more complex than what Melissa wrote in January, and her vocabulary is more advanced. The writing now more closely approximates Melissa's oral language — she is confident enough as a writer not to inhibit her word choice. Correctly spelling words like *cousin*, *adventure*, *caught* and *roly-poly* would require more understanding of orthographic rules than would be reasonable to expect from kindergarten writers.

This is an example that meets the standard for narrative writing at the end of kindergarten. It has an initiating event ("I wit fihn wit mY ciznn's and mY ilcl Erll and mY dad"), a reaction to the event ("it wizz andvhr!") and then the subsequent events ("we clild hil ... we oalso coct 2 fih ... we wrri fiidn roolepoles").

(See page 72 for a more complete analysis of this student work.) ▶▶

~~A~~ April 7  
 I wit fihn wit  
 mY ciznn's and mY  
 ilcl Erll and mY dad  
 it wizz andvhr!  
 we clild hil it wizz  
 fihn! and we oalso  
 coct 2 fih on our  
 way bac we wrri  
 fiidn roolepoles

April 7

\*I went fishing with  
 my cousins and my  
 Uncle Earl and my dad.  
 It was an adventure!  
 We climbed hill. It was  
 fun! And we also  
 caught 2 fish. On our  
 way back we were  
 finding roly-polys.

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

May 6

Frogs \*frogs  
 To day befor We had  
 rilda groos Mrs John  
 red us a strorry a  
 baout frogs We had  
 to riet a baout frogs.  
 We haf a tadpol in  
 the Sciens Sentr.  
 It has 2 bac

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

The sixth piece, dated May 6, is quite remarkable and clearly exceeds the kindergarten standard. It is a well-developed report of information — which in itself far exceeds what would be reasonable to expect in kindergarten. Moreover, it is well punctuated. Periods for the most part come where they belong, although there are several run-on sentences. There is control for the use of uppercase and lowercase letters — all sentences start with capital letters, and the teacher’s name is capitalized. The title of the piece is underlined. There is even a period at the end of the term of address (“Mrs.”).

There is one tense mistake — a shift from the present to the past (“frogs lad [laid] eggs”) toward the end of the piece. She spells 28 of the words correctly. She also organizes her writing in coherent sections. Melissa begins by setting the context for the piece and then establishes her expertise — how she knows this information.

ligs and wen it  
 has 2 frunt ligs  
 its tal disupirs  
 and it can not ext  
 wen its maot is  
 Chejn. Then the  
 Scknn gets to little  
 and the frogs pol  
 off thrr scknn an

thaa ext it. Saum  
 of the frogs bloo  
 baubools. Frogs lad  
 eggs that look like  
 jete and the fish ext  
 some but some  
 hach to tadpoos.  
 It gros bigr and  
 bigr and bigr.

Then she discusses the tadpole’s metamorphosis — the emergence of front legs, the disappearance of the tail, the change of the mouth, the disappearance of the skin. Next, she switches to remarking on frog behaviors — blowing bubbles, laying eggs, eating skin. Finally, she tells us about

the eggs hatching to tadpoles and the growth of these tadpoles. This piece exceeds expectations for kindergarten report writing.

## “Alex’s Collection” Kindergarten Growth Over One Year

**T**his collection of seven samples was drawn from the portfolio of Alex, who was enrolled in a bilingual program and lived in a monolingual family. The bilingual program had a very strong daily reading and writing workshop. Alex’s starting point is more typical of children entering kindergarten than Melissa’s (see page 236). It is also important to know that unlike Melissa, Alex did not attend a prekindergarten program.

September 7



September 18

**The first entry**, dated Sept. 7, is a simple picture of familiar objects — a house, a cloud and grass. The teacher instructed the class to write a story, and Alex drew a response. There are a few details in the drawing. The house has windows and a door with a handle. To the right of the house is a plant or a small tree.

**Eleven days later**, Alex still is drawing in response to an invitation to write. His second drawing, however, is much more detailed. This time, the house has windows with windowpanes and a chimney with smoke coming out. There is a sun with beams. The drawing also includes a person with facial features and hair.

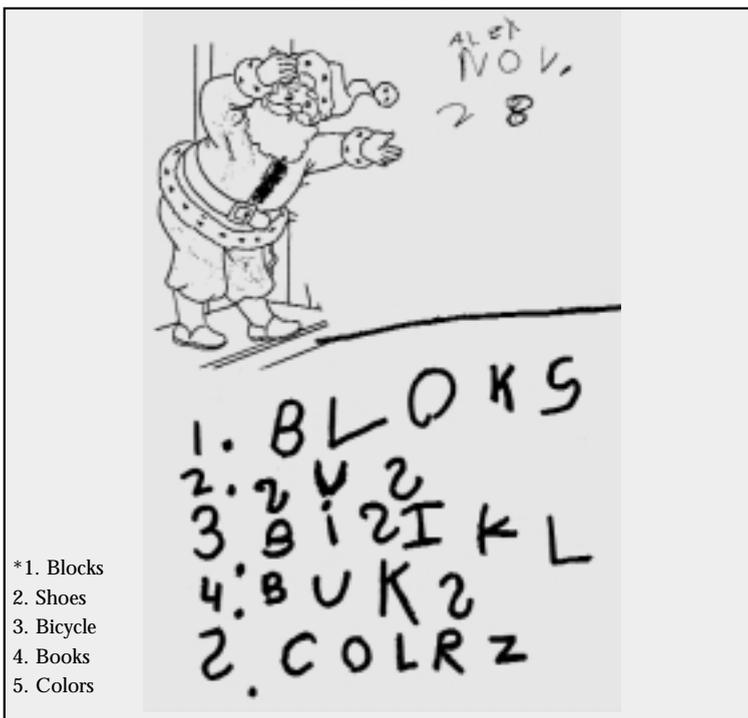


September 28



Ten days later, Alex's writing has undergone an amazing transformation. Although drawing is still an important part of writing for him, he has begun to incorporate into the text random letters with which he is familiar. Alex demonstrates an awareness of segmentation when he uses dashes and arrows and "happy faces" between some letter groups. He also demonstrates an awareness that writing is not part of the picture — it is separate — and that it moves from left to right and top to bottom.

November 28

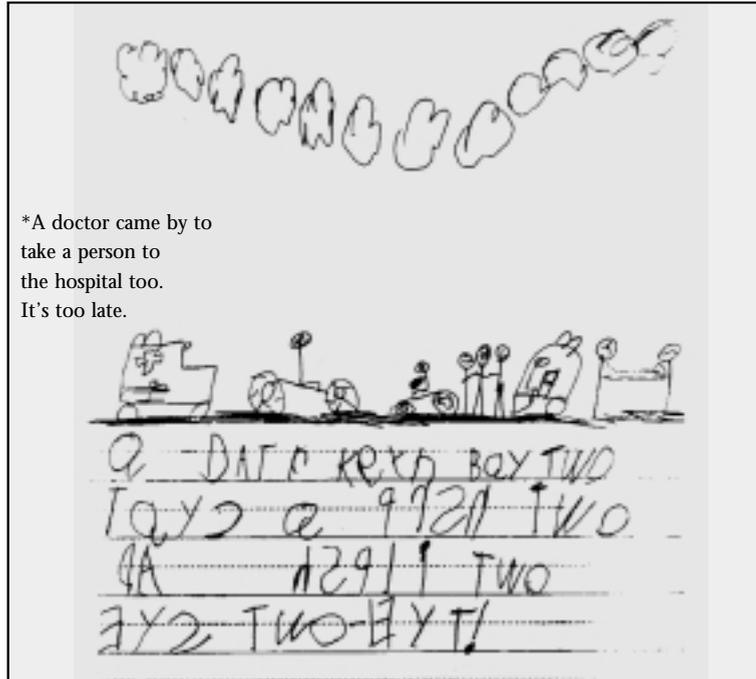


- \*1. Blocks
- 2. Shoes
- 3. Bicycle
- 4. Books
- 5. Colors

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

March

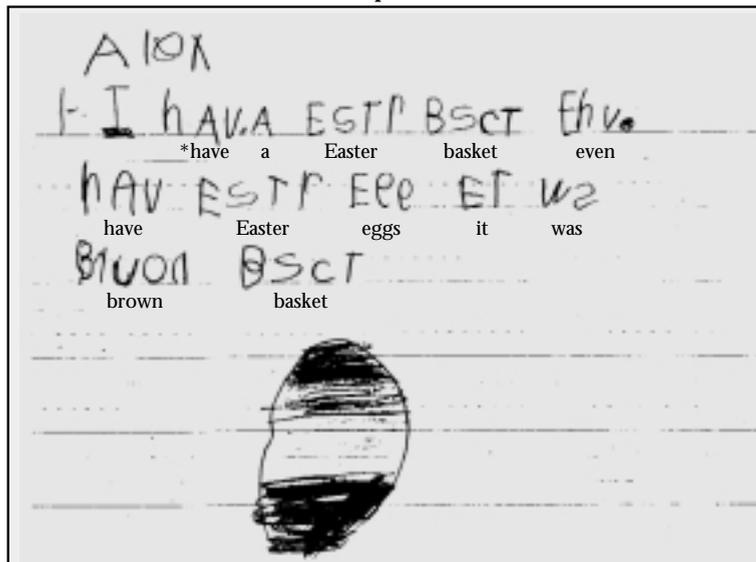
In the next sample, done in March, Alex's writing undergoes another change: A whole story emerges in text form and is supported by the illustration. The spelling of the piece is somewhat problematic, although for the most part initial sounds are represented correctly, and the word "two" is spelled consistently. The lengths of the spaces between words are uneven, and he reverses several letters. He ends the piece with an exclamation point. Initially, this writing may seem somewhat disappointing because the spelling in the December piece was so much easier to read. However, December's sample simply listed five words. In this sample, he is telling a story, and the story requires many words, some of which are unfamiliar to him.



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

In April, Alex's spelling once again is more controlled, but the text is more a label than a story. He again reverses some of the letters, but he represents the initial and final consonants more consistently and uses three lowercase letters. The spacing between words is more regular. ▶▶

April



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

May



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

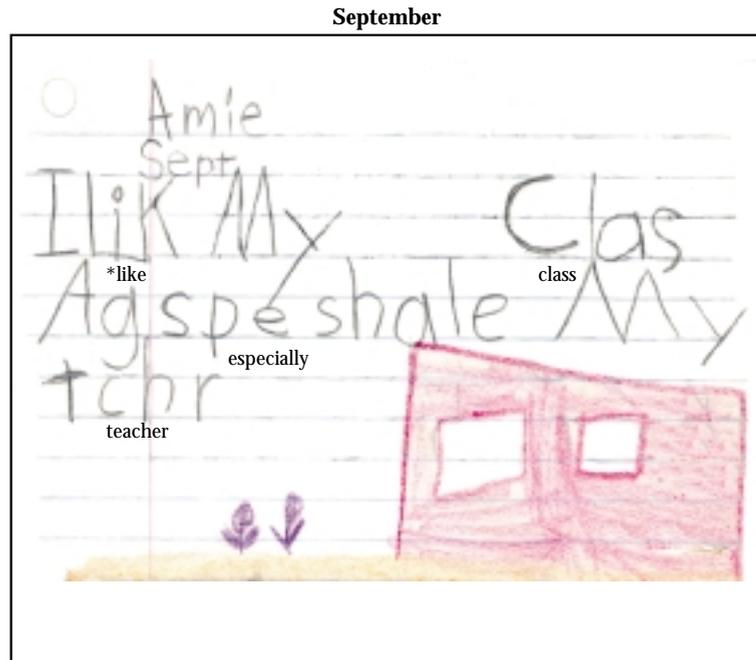
**Alex's collection** presents a snapshot of growth from September to May that is fairly typical of many kindergarten students. He has learned a great deal as a writer, but his growth has not always been smooth and predictable. He backslid when he attempted more challenging tasks, and sometimes he lost control of even simple things, such as maintaining equal spacing between words. But that is how children usually grow as writers. At the end of kindergarten, Alex is not nearly as fluent as Melissa (the writer of the other kindergarten collection), nor does he control for spelling or conventions as well as she does, but he did not enter kindergarten with the same background. He nevertheless is well on his way, and if his growth during first grade is as continuous as his growth during kindergarten, he likely will meet the standard for writing at the end of first grade.

**The last sample**, done in May, is again a narrative and is the longest piece to date with 20 words. In this sample, Alex spells five high-frequency words ("AnD," "A," "GirL," "TO" and "car"), and the text for the most part is readable. As he does in all of his writing, Alex represents words consistently ("TA" is always *the*), even if they are represented incorrectly, and he is very

aware of periods — there are 10 of them scattered throughout this piece. The space between words is fairly regular, though he uses a dash once instead of a space. The letters are both lowercase and uppercase, but there are clearly more of the latter. The story is carried by the text but is supported by a very detailed drawing.

## “Amie’s Collection” First-Grade Growth Over One Year

**T**his collection of student work was produced by Amie, a first grader who wrote daily in a writer’s workshop. She had to generate her own topics, take comments and suggestions from other writers, and polish a certain number of pieces during the year. The full collection of Amie’s work provides evidence of meeting the Writing Habits and Processes Standard. Furthermore, the third sample, “On Saturday,” is an example that meets the standard for narrative writing. The last sample, “How To Tacke A Test,” is an example that meets the standard for functional writing for first grade.

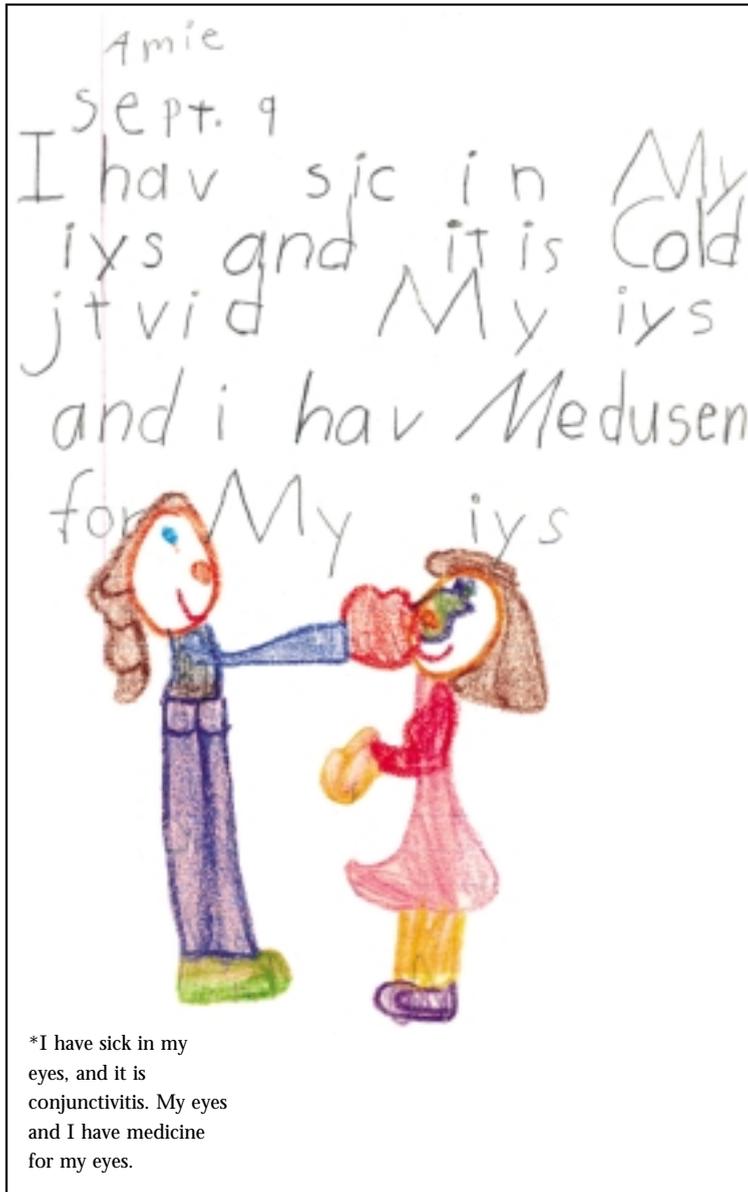


\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

Amie wrote the first sample, “I Lik My Clas,” on the first day of school. She spells four of the seven words phonetically, and she spells the other three words correctly, controlling for word boundaries and demonstrating

left-to-right and top-to-bottom movement. Her message can be read — although “Agspeshale” may give readers some problems. A picture accompanies the text, though it is doubtful whether the picture ties to the text. ►►

September 9



\*I have sick in my eyes, and it is conjunctivitis. My eyes and I have medicine for my eyes.

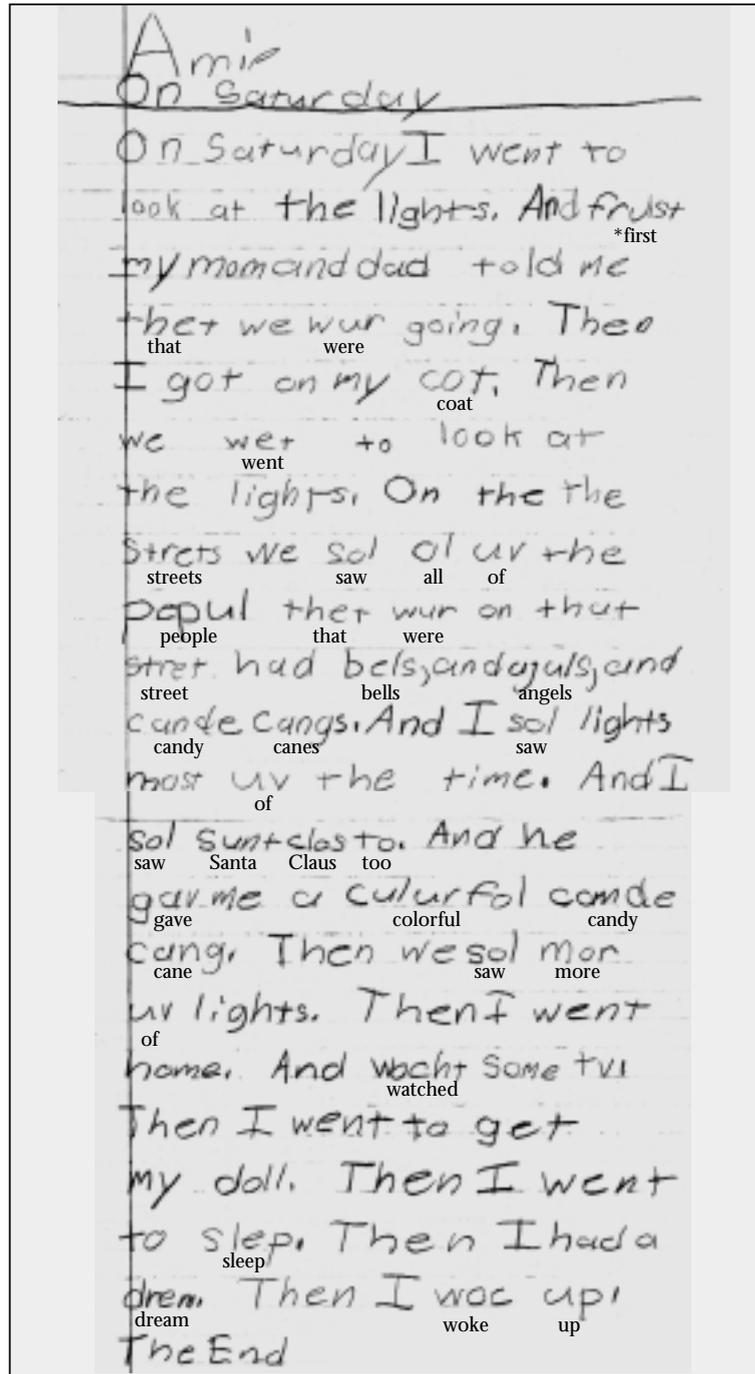
**The second sample**, “I hav sic in My iys,” written on Sept. 9, just one week after the first sample, shows significant growth on Amie’s part. This 19-word sample has seven words spelled correctly. Clearly, the picture and text are related. Like the first piece, this sample shows that Amie understands letter-sound correspondences because she represents sounds with letters — at least with beginning and ending consonants — and she uses common English letter sequences. Vowels are commonplace throughout this sample, and most of them are determined logically. Again, the vocabulary is well beyond Amie’s range as a speller (*conjunctivitis* and *medicine*). In this piece, the picture clearly illustrates the text, and Amie, like many first graders, is focusing on herself and her experiences as subjects for expressive writing.

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

December 14

**In the third sample**, written on Dec. 14 and titled "On Saturday," growth in Amie's writing is of a different order of magnitude altogether. Amie's development over four months is stunning (by contrast, her development is less impressive over the next four months). The piece comprises 115 words, 22 of which are repeated. She begins the piece with a setting in time ("On Saturday") and holds it together with a series of transition words ("And frust," "Then," "And," etc.). It is a long list of events built around what Amie did and saw on a Christmas outing with her family. It contains specific details and a gradual winding down of events before its close ("The End"). In fact, the ending is reminiscent of the bed-to-bed narrative style typically affected by writers in the second grade in which they convey a whole litany of events. Amie controls for the use of capital letters at the beginning of sentences and periods at the end. She also uses a capital letter for the name of a day of the week.

(See page 113 for a more complete analysis of this student work.) ▶▶



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

March 29

1) Amie  
 March 29  
 About My Perens  
 \*parents  
 Yesterday my  
 dad got glassis.  
 Today my mom  
 is getting new glassis  
 and bigger ones.  
 My dad has his  
 so he can read  
 and drive beter

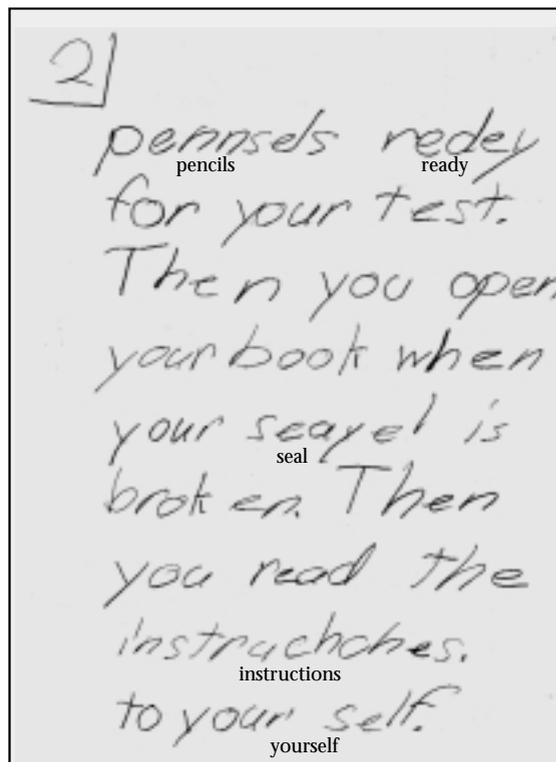
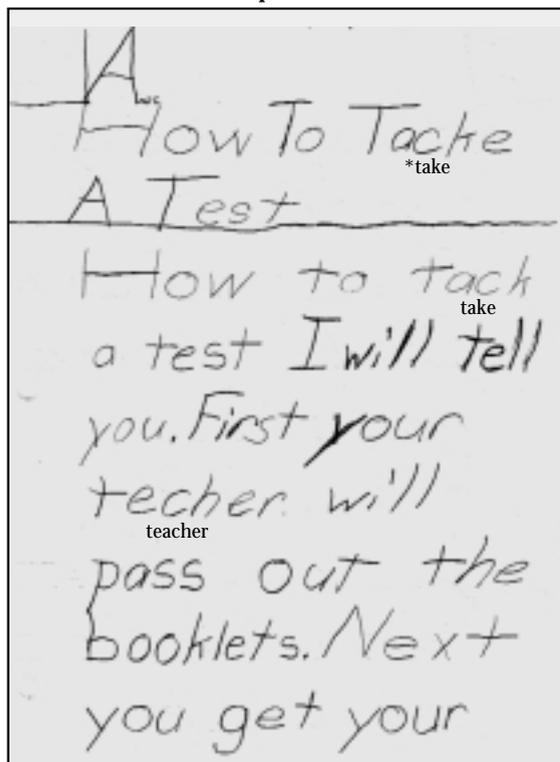
2) My mom is gett'g  
 new one becuse her  
 old one are real  
 old and rusty.  
 They both  
 can see beter  
 my mom cud  
 are already see.  
 But she still wants

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

The fourth piece, dated March 29, contains 67 words with only 11 misspelled. Amie titles this piece “About My Perens” and writes about her father and mother getting new glasses. She explains the reasons for these new acquisitions — the father gets them to read and drive better; the mother gets them because hers are “old and rusty.” Amie explains, however, that her parents already can see — without glasses, it is assumed. This piece is not as impressive as the December one, but the spelling is more developed. She correctly spells “Yesterday” and “Today,” as well as many other words. Her misspellings are logical (“glassis” for *glasses*, “biger” for *bigger* and “beter” for *better*). She controls for capital letters at the start of sentences and periods at the end. She even uses an apostrophe correctly in a contraction (“That’s”).

3) new one. and  
 my dad cud  
 are already see.  
 That's a boate  
 my perens.  
 The End

April 13



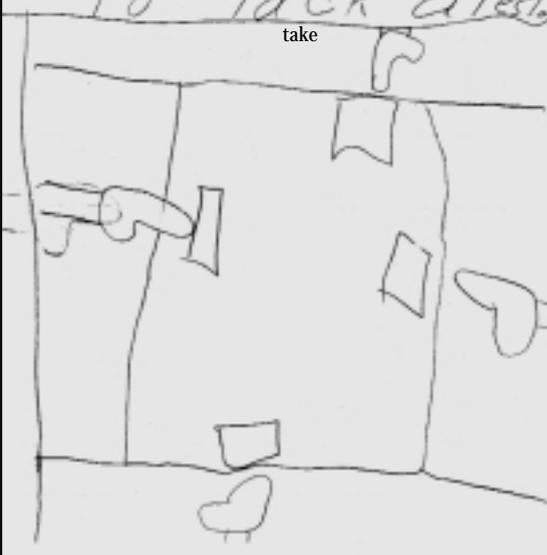
\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

The fifth piece is dated April 13 and titled “How To Tacke A Test.” It shows a writer well on the way to controlling for correct spelling. The development around the issue of author’s craft is less easy to determine. This is clearly a piece of functional text, appropriate for first grade. The sample has 74 words with some repetitions. The only misspellings (“tacke,” “tack,” “pennsels,” “instruches,” “closs,” “Findley,” etc.) are words that might

give a first grader problems. This writing sample explains how to take a test. It outlines a series of general instructions that range from passing out the test booklets to finishing the test and stretching. It contains a picture — not wholly detailed — that shows student tests (and chairs) distributed around the four sides of a table. (See page 126 for a more complete analysis of this student work.) ▶▶

3 | Then you mark  
your answer.  
Then after you  
are finished  
with a chapter  
one. Your teacher  
will close your  
book. Finally you  
stretch.

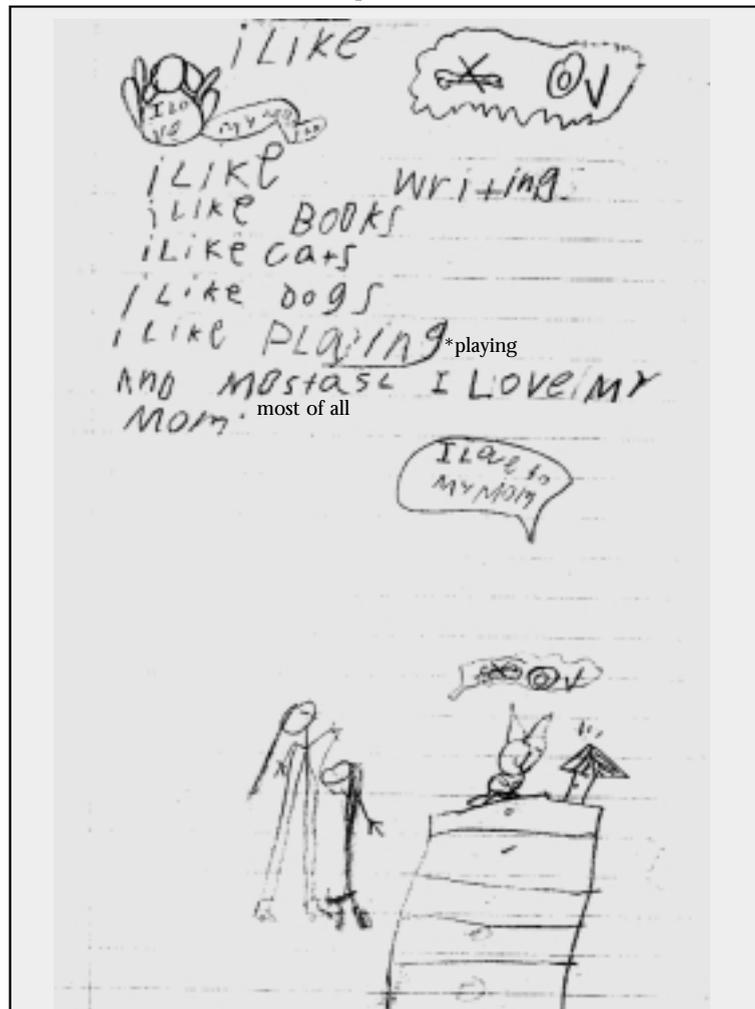
4 | That's the way  
to take a test.



## “Nora’s Collection” Second-Grade Growth Over One Year

**T**his collection of student work illustrates one student’s growth over the course of a year. The student, Nora, started second grade with a fairly limited understanding of writing. Her original sample gives no indication that she is capable of meeting the expectations set out for the end of first grade, but her writing is typical of what many students bring to second grade. By the end of the year, however, Nora’s writing indicates that she has begun to make real improvement as a writer: She has moved from simple listing to constructing a focused account.

September

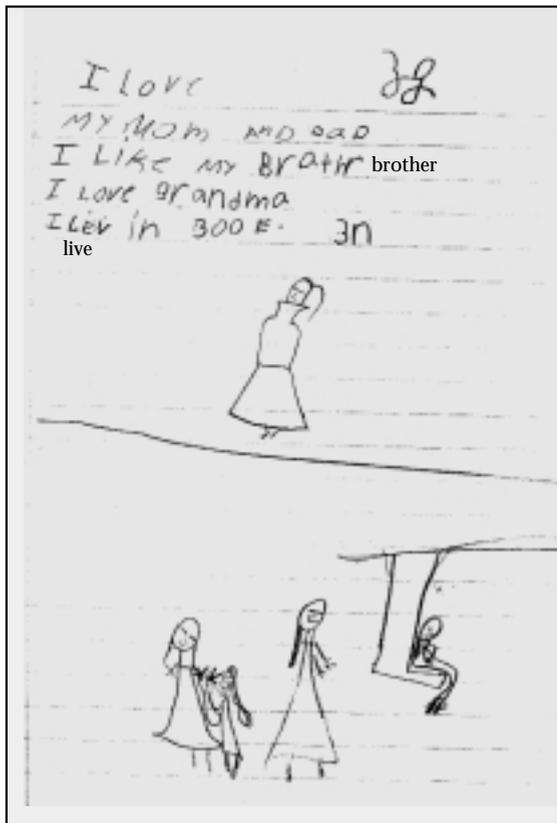


\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

The first piece, done in September, is a basic list of what Nora likes and loves. The writing is justified to the left margin and is made up entirely of one-clause units. Of the six ideas expressed, five of them are made up of only three words — two in which the subject and predicate are the same. This pattern is fairly typical of first-grade writing and is familiar to readers of easy books. Most

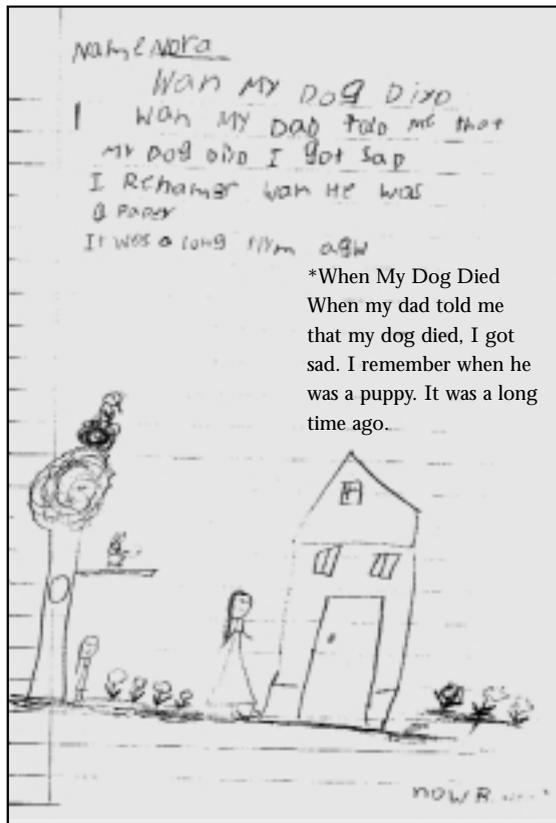
of the words are spelled correctly. The last idea breaks the pattern. The clause begins with a qualifying phrase (“and mostasl”), and the verb changes from “Like” to “Love.” This modification in the wording of the last idea is very common in books written for emergent readers, and it is, therefore, possible to infer that Nora modeled her writing on these early books. ►►

October



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

December



\*When My Dog Died  
When my dad told me that my dog died, I got sad. I remember when he was a puppy. It was a long time ago.

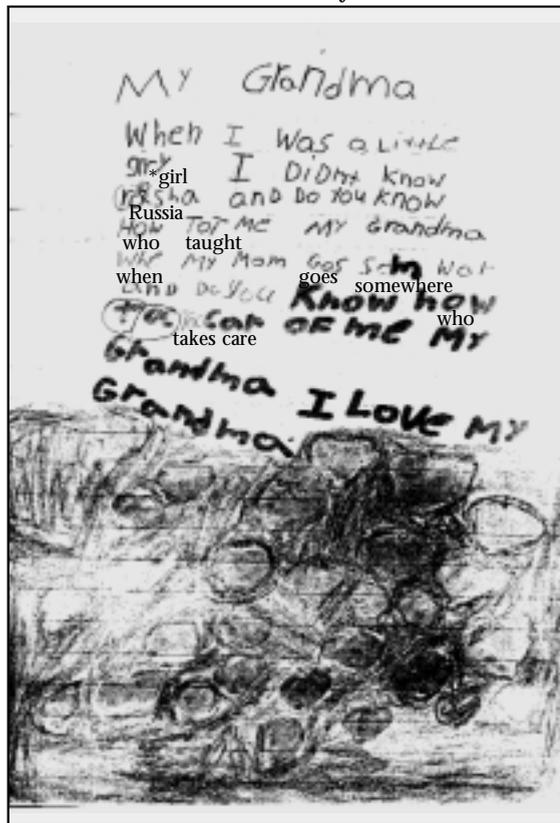
\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

**The second sample**, completed in October, is a good deal like the first. The subject again is the author's feelings for people. The last idea breaks the pattern. The writing is justified to the left margin, the syntax is single-clause units and the spelling is mostly correct. The drawing that accompanies the writing clearly is attached (as it was in the first sample) to the meaning of the piece — it is illustrative. Both drawings are fairly detailed — note the expressions on the faces of the characters.

**The third piece**, produced in December, shows Nora's emerging sense of story. This piece is titled "Wan MY Dog DiYD," and she moves from relying on single-clause units to using a variety of syntactic patterns. The first sentence actually is made up of two dependent clauses and one independent clause; the second sentence is made up of one dependent and one independent clause; the final sentence is a single independent clause. The spelling in this piece is not as controlled as it was in the previous samples; Nora con-

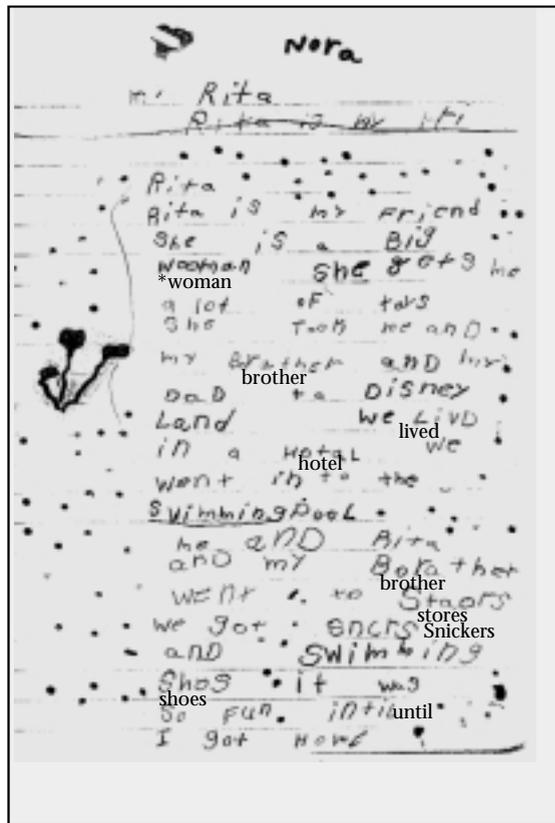
sistently misspells *when* ("Wan") along with several other words. The text is made up of an initiating event, a reaction and an associated memory ("I RenamBr wan He was a PaPeY"), and another reaction. The drawing, again, is quite detailed, though it does not illustrate the text.

Mid-January



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

March



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

The fourth piece, done in mid-January, is titled “My Grandma.” Nora begins the piece by setting a context for the writing (“When I Was a Little giry I DiDnt Know Rasha and Do You Know How ToT Me My Grandma”). She then explains that when her mother goes somewhere, her grandma takes care of her. She concludes with “I Love MY Grandma” almost as a summary statement, an affection that grows naturally as the result of these two things the grandmother does for her. Nora gets herself into a problem with syntax when she tries to use “anD Do You Know” a second time because

this phrase does not fit into her sentence production. So the text reads “Whe My Mom Gos Som war anD Do You Know ... .” The spelling in this fourth sample does not pose a problem for readers familiar with phonetic spelling. The misspellings are logical, and many words are spelled correctly.

The fifth sample, written in March, is substantially longer than the other pieces. It has a title and a narrative structure. Nora begins by introducing the subject of the piece, Rita, who is “my Friend” and “a Big wooman” who “gets me a lot oF toyS.” She then

recounts a trip to Disneyland that she took with Rita, her dad and her brother. She tells about four separate things that happened on the trip: living in a hotel, going into the swimming pool, going to stores, and getting Snickers and swimming shoes. Nora ends the piece with a concluding reaction (“it was so Fun intiL I got Home”). With the exception of the last sentence, the whole text is made up of simple sentences. The spelling in this piece is much improved; she misspells only eight words. The writer’s drawings disappear, though the page is decorated.



Late Spring



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

The final sample, done in late spring and titled “aDventures,” recounts the activities of Rita, Nora and Nora’s brother. The opening sentence establishes the subject of the piece — the agents and the actions. Then Nora details seven specific things the trio has done together. The writing is in part reminiscent of the style of the first two samples, and at first, it might appear that Nora no longer is developing as a writer. “We go to Stors we go to RitAs Haws We go to toys aras we go to the Parc” is a simple and indiscriminating list of things Nora, Rita and Nora’s

brother do. However, the last two sentences are more complicated structures (“We eat JaPan FooD and afr that We go get iccreem and then we go Home and tomoroW is a Nyou Day so I’ll Be sing Her tomarow”), and the piece begins with a context-framing remark. This piece also has a picture; though this particular drawing is small, it clearly ties to the text (Nora asleep waiting for “a Nyou Day”). The spelling is still uneven — she misspells 10 words — but as in the previous sample, some difficult words are spelled correctly.

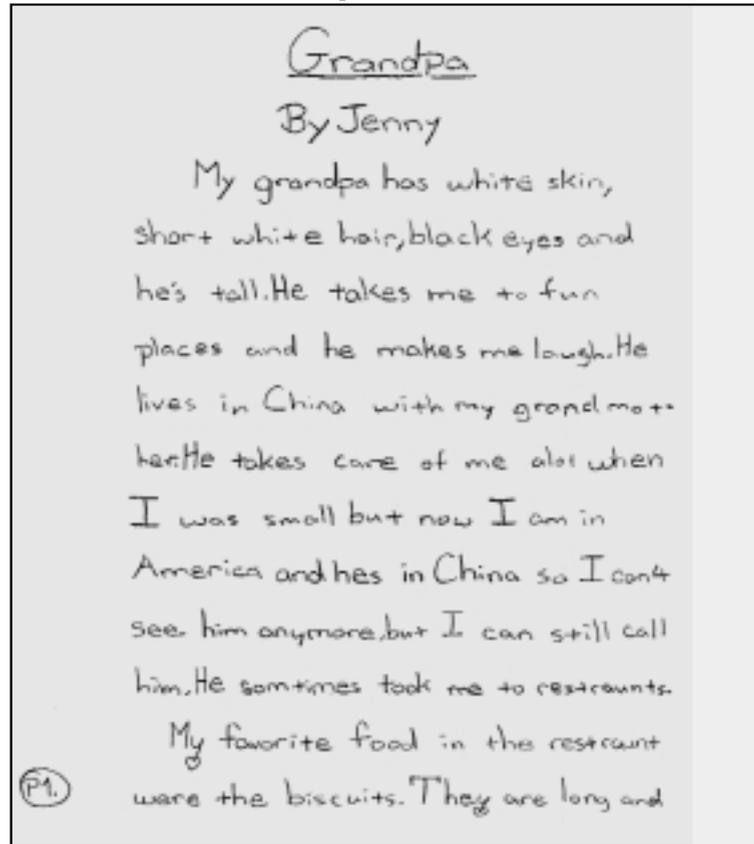
Nora’s samples show that she has grown considerably as a writer during the second grade. Her writing demonstrates that she has developed a sense of storytelling. She relies primarily on text rather than on pictures to convey meaning, and when she uses art, it generally illustrates the text. She knows that text is generated by paragraphs rather than at the margins. She is able to recount a series of events. She also embeds details in these accounts and gives her work a title.

## “Jenny’s Collection” Third-Grade Growth Over One Year

**T**hese five pieces come from the portfolio of Jenny, a third-grade student. She writes routinely in a writer’s workshop and is an enthusiastic author who is serious about revising and editing. Of the five pieces in this collection, three are attempts to produce fiction, and two are nonfiction efforts that draw upon a recurring theme in Jenny’s writing — her family and coming to America.

Jenny’s growth as a writer seems, at first, less dramatic than that of younger writers. There is good reason for this. Much of what young writers learn is already in place by third grade. Now, growth becomes a deeper understanding of craft, a willingness to take on and work through a demanding topic, or the ability to expand the length of a piece by emphasizing a central moment or a character description. So what happens at third grade is a refinement rather than the more dramatic moves — from pictures with random letters to letter strings and words to phrases to sentences — typically seen at kindergarten and first grade. Yet, if we look closely at the piece she wrote on Sept. 14 and the piece she wrote on May 8, we will see that refinement, too, can be dramatic.

September 14



**The first sample is** “Grandpa,” an informational piece about Jenny’s grandfather. It begins with a physical description of the grandfather (“white skin, short white hair, black eyes and he’s tall”). It goes on to say that he and Jenny used to visit fun places and that he made her laugh. Jenny explains that she no longer sees her grandfather because he remained in China when she moved to America. She closes the piece by saying that she likes her grandfather a lot.

Only once does Jenny lose control of the piece — she digresses about biscuits — though she does have problems with verb tenses (“takes” for *took* and “watch” for *watched*). This piece, done in September of her third-grade year, shows Jenny is a very thoughtful writer who is able to communicate her feelings to the reader (she obviously cares a great deal for her grandfather) by providing details. ►►

Mid-September

skinny. In hot summer days me and my grandpa took walks around the block. Sometimes we watch pink, blue and some other different colored clouds pass by our house and watch birds fly pass by us. I like my grandpa alot.

(P.2)

November 5

December

(1) Santa is missing  
 One night 2 little elves were ~~playing~~<sup>sitting</sup> by the fire testing toys for Christmas. Each elf was given a job. Judy was given the job to watch all the dogs and cats for presents. Lily was given the job to be assistant and ~~was~~<sup>was</sup> ~~fin~~<sup>fin</sup> check the toys for presents. Suddnly there was a knock at the door. One of the little elves came and said "Santa is Missing!!!!!" They went outside their house and went down 40 states, to go to Santa's house. All the elves looked

(2) for Santa, but no sign of him. Judy and Lily got on the sleigh and went to go see if Santa was around. But no sign of him anywhere. The elves did not know that when Santa was testing his sleigh late last night he fell off because ~~when~~<sup>while</sup> he was ~~testing~~<sup>testing</sup> the sleigh, the reindeer's thought it was Christmas, but it really wasn't, so they took off. But after a while they noticed that Santa wasn't on the sleigh

The second piece, "Santa is missing," is a fiction story written in December. The plot has a problem/solution structure. (Santa is missing, and it's the day before Christmas Eve.) The main characters are Judy and Lily, two elves, and Flower, Lily's assistant. To find Santa, the elves go outside and look. Ultimately, they discover a small cottage and find Santa inside. They take him home and get him "some hot coaco and a wet towel." Santa is revived and, realizing that he has not missed Christmas, exclaims, "This is my best present!"

③  
 anymore. So they went back home. Then one of the elves that were guarding the door walked up to Lily and said "I didn't even see ~~it~~ last night." "Hmmm..." said Judy. "This is quite a mystery," said Lily. "You bet!" said Judy. "Let's go outside and look for Santa." Said Flower. "Oh," said the other elves. "I'll lead the way," said Flower. They walked a long way until they came upon a small cottage.

④  
 "Let's go inside and see if there are some hot cocoa." said some of the little elves, because I'm freezing!" All the elves agreed. They explored the whole cottage. When they were in the basement they saw an old man dressed just like Santa Claus. "Hey, that's Santa Claus!" said <sup>Flower</sup> one of the little elves. "Let's go take him home. I'll go get some hot cocoa and a wet towel," said Mrs. Claus.

Although this plot has several gaps — it's not clear why the reindeer ran off and left Santa — the story line is relatively coherent. The dialogue lets the writer inject some thoughts that otherwise would be difficult to communicate to the reader ("This is quite a mystery," said Lily. "You bet" said Judy"). Often, the details provided ("Judy was given the job to watch all the dogs and cats for presents") distract the reader rather than add information. But, with all its limitations, the story has charm, and its very length represents a challenge for third-grade writers. ▶▶

⑤  
 When they got home Santa woke up and told them his story about how he got there. "So I walked and found the cottage and rested in it." "At least it is still one day before Christmas," said Mrs. Claus. "This is my best present!" said Santa and they all gave him a big hug.  
 The END

## February

**The third piece**, “My Great, Great Grandfather,” was written in February and is especially interesting because of all that Jenny attempts as a writer. The piece begins with recollections from Jenny’s early childhood, before she was four. The wording here clearly imitates written language (“I lived upon my mothers milk”) rather than oral language. The story then shifts in time.

One night when her mother was ill, Jenny was in a nursery, and she was cold and couldn’t sleep. She was comforted by a story her grandfather told about her great-great-grandfather. He was wounded in the Civil War, and an older man, Mike, saved him. Later, they both were captured by marauders. The great-great-grandfather ultimately was released, but what happened to Mike was unknown. The great-great-grandfather’s story was passed down in the family, and Jenny’s grandfather was following the tradition in the piece. (This part of Jenny’s piece parallels Patricia Polacco’s *Pink and Say*, so much so that it is safe to assume that Jenny is familiar with this book.)

Jenny’s piece, then, has a story-within-a-story structure, which she brings off effectively.

There is quite a bit of literary language (“In the afternoon I took naps in my crib and at night I lay sound asleep by her,” “I moved a little closer to him so I could hear him better while he told his story,” “he could carry large and powerful guns,” “But before he closed the door behind him, he whispered softly to me. ‘Sweet dreams.’ And then he left”). The syntax, the vocabulary (“marauders,”

My Great, Great  
Grandfather  
By: Jenny

The last place I could remember was in a pleasant mansion. While I was young I lived upon my mothers milk for I had no teeth and could not eat anything else. In the afternoon I took naps in my crib and at night I lay sound asleep by her. My life was always like that until the age of 4. My mother was sick. I had to go to the nursery room. It was in late December and snow was falling, outside. I was cold. I could only make myself a little warm under the covers on my bed, because I didn't know how to make a fire in the fireplace. Then the door opened. In walked my grandfather. "Have

“flutter”) and the detail (“He lay on the grass wide eyed opened to see if someone would come and help him”) are quite impressive. If the story has problems, they are the contrived dialogue and the holes in the grandfather’s story, e.g., why was the great-great-grandfather released?

nothing to do?" he asked me. "Yep." I said shivering. "Well,let me tell you a story while you try to go to sleep." He made the fire very warm in the fireplace. I moved a little closer to him so I could hear him better while he told his story. "When your great,great,grandfather was 21,he went to the Civil War. He was very brave in the war and proved himself that he could carry large and powerful guns because he was so strong. One day he got injured very badly.He got shot in the arm and leg and he couldn't walk nor move a bit. He lay on the grass wide eyed opened to see if someone would come and help him. Well,his hopes came true. Across the river came a young man a little older than him. "Whats the matter with you?"he asked "Can't you move a bit?" "Nope." said



Bob.(That's your  
great,great,grandfather.)

"I'm Bob." I'm Mike." "Why don't I  
take you to my so we can rest a  
little bit? Sure if you can carry  
me."Bob said. Bob fell asleep on the  
way and woke up in a comfortable  
bed under a quilt. Feeling warm,he  
opened his eyes. "Where am I? Your  
in my house."said Mike.After a few  
days later I could walk."We got to  
get back to the war."said Mike.After  
we put on our uniforms,we set off.  
Half way we ran into two maruaders  
on their horses. They reached for us  
and took us to a place where the  
slaves stayed

After a year or two,I was let free.  
I didn't know what happened to Mike.  
Well, I had a happy life after all. I  
told this story to Mary,then Mary told  
it to her son William,William told it  
to his grand daughter you. Jenny. My  
eyes started to flutter as he said his  
last sentence. "And that was the  
story of your great,great,grandfather  
in the Civil War." He took one last  
look at me. I was asleep. Then he  
walked out of the nursery room. But  
before he closed the door behind him,  
he whispered softlyto me. "Sweet  
dreams." And then he left.

**The End**

## February

The “SUPER MAN” piece, also done in February, is not as impressive as the other fiction pieces. The story, again, has a problem/solution structure. (The hero is weak, and the solution is the “mysterious kind of medicine called the SUPER MAN. Shot.”) There is not much of a plot beyond the hero’s getting the shot, growing full of energy and muscles, and being able to fly. Jenny gives no information about the hero’s flight other than “He did many interesting things.” At the end, she tells us that the hero “could do this again and have another adventure. But that’s another story.”

The story is told in the third person and is the thinnest piece in this collection, with little to recommend it other than the effective use of repetition in the opening lines (“Once there was a man that was very weak. He had weak legs, a weak will, and he was very thin”). This kind of story, a variation of the action hero genre, is typical of the kinds of stories elementary school writers enjoy producing. As students develop characters more fully, these stories will take on some depth, but even writers in middle school continue to be fascinated by this genre. This piece is included here because even a writer as talented as Jenny might attempt the form. Moreover, the piece shows that student writing, like adult writing, will be uneven. Few writers are equally good in many genres. ▶▶

①  
 Jenny  
 Once there was a man that was very weak. He had weak legs, a weak will, and he was very thin. His name was Chad Leisure. He was 21 years old and he wanted to get stronger and fatter. So one day he went to the hospital to get a mysterious kind of <sup>medicine</sup> called the SUPER MAN. Shot. When the nurse motioned him in one of the rooms she said “You’ll have to get a shot if you want to take this kind of medicine.” But before he had time to say OK,

②

the nurse ~~to~~ pulled a syringe out of a drawer and filled it with SUPER Man. After the nurse pulled the syringe out of his skin, he started to feel tired. Oh well, it's 9:30 already so he drove home and went to sleep. When he woke up in the morning, he felt <sup>like he was</sup> full of energy. He looked down at his hands and arms. He had grown much faster and his body was now filled with muscle. After breakfast, he took the medicine again. This time, he started to fly. He flew for abo

③

ut 4 hours. While he was flying, he got lost, and found his back home again. He did many interesting things while he was flying. Before he went to sleep he thought that he could do this again and have another adventure. But that's another story.

February 8

My Trip To Fort Worth  
 The story of Jenny  
 Jenny ought to be my first name  
 but my mother and father calls me  
 Jen I was living in China, and my  
 my family only knew a little bit  
 of english. One day while I was  
 playing on the slide, I glanced at  
 my parents. They were sitting on a  
 wooden bench. Their faces were urgent  
 and it like as if that they were  
 having a serious conversation. Two  
 weeks later my mommy said

It  
 that our family would be going to  
 America tomorrow. Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle, and  
 Auntie aren't coming with us. It's just  
 you, me, and daddy," said my mommy. I  
 started to cry because I didn't want  
 to leave, and I'd miss my grandma  
 grandpa and aunts and uncles. "You'll  
 go to school in America, but that  
 doesn't mean ~~I~~ you'll never get  
 to see your other relatives. We will  
 still see them someday." replied my mommy.

The final sample is another informational piece on Jenny's family that she began on Feb. 8. "My Trip To Fort Worth" tells how Jenny learns that her immediate family is moving to America. This whole sample later is embedded almost unchanged into her May 8 revision titled "Starting A New Life" (see pages 268-272). She worked extensively on the final draft. The revision draft (pages 264-268) makes clear the extent of changes between the first draft and the final piece. Jenny's arrows, cross-outs and insertions reflect a writer who is not afraid of "re-visioning." ►►



she told me that ~~she~~<sup>she</sup> would not  
 only go there, but we would  
 stay there, and people will  
 call me Joe. My mom explained  
 that Americans wouldn't  
 understand our language, so we're  
 very different from American  
 people. "Your father and I have  
 decided you is a good American  
 name for you," she said.  
 "hāi mā mā means good mommy  
 because she always wore a smile  
 on her face, and she was never angry at me."

爷爷  
 ā diāo is a Chinese word for grandpa.  
 ā pǐ is a Chinese word for grandma.  
~~Why I would miss my other  
 relatives is because my~~  
 ā diāo gave me almost everything  
 (he spoiled me alot.)  
 I want ~~my grandpa~~  
~~bring me back to China~~  
 She took me to the park everyday to ride  
~~across the street from my house,~~  
 little airplanes, little motor cars, and boats  
~~there was a park and my~~  
 hāi mā mā is what I call my babysitter.  
 My babysitter takes me there too.  
~~grandpa takes me there too.~~

51  
While I watched my mommy and daddy pack, I thought alot about how America would be like. Who would spoil me? Who will take me to the park? Who will wear a smile for me? I had so many questions to ask and think about! At dinner I couldn't eat anything. All I thought about was America. America. The word got stuck in my mind all day. Even at night my eyes were wide open staring at

52  
the ceiling. I believed that I would never go to sleep tonight, but after 1 hour I fell into a restless doze. My dad had gone in another plane and he already arrived in America when my mom and I were still on the plane. It was a very long flight to America. Once in a while I would always think about my ~~dad~~ and ~~mom~~ and what was going on at their house.

29  
 Once again the questions came back  
 into my mind. Who will spoil me?  
 Who will take me to the park?  
 Who will wear a smile for me?  
 I opened my mouth to ask the ques-  
 tions but no sound came out of  
 my mouth so I closed my mouth  
 and remained silent. That night my mommy  
 told me how great America was going to  
 be, but I still missed my home town,  
 especially my relatives and my

30  
 hǎo mǐ mǐ.  
 After my mom and I joined  
 my dad, my mother <sup>was</sup> said  
 A smile spread across my face and  
 I <sup>was</sup> had a new life to begin.  
 Two years later in kindergarten, things  
 were going pretty well. I didn't  
 know America was so interesting but I  
 always thought about my Nǎi and  
 my Nǎi and my hǎo mǐ mǐ once in  
 a while. I always would think about



May 8


  
 the questions too. Who will spoil me?  
 Who will take me to the park?  
 Who will wear a smile for me?  
 I always remembered what  
 mother said "You will go to school in  
 America, but that doesn't mean  
 you'll never get to see your other  
 relatives, he will still see them someday."  
 Now my name is changed to Jenny, but  
 my parents still call me Jen since I've had  
 that name for a long time in America.

## Starting A New Life

By: Jenny

晶晶  
 晶晶 ought to be my name but my  
 mother and father calls me Bū Bū (that  
 means baby in Chinese.) I was living  
 in China, and my family only knew a  
 little bit of English. One day  
 while I was playing on the slide,  
 I glanced at my parents. They  
 were sitting on a wooden bench.  
 Their faces were urgent and it  
 looked as if they were having a  
 serious conversation. Two weeks  
 later, my mommy said our family  
 would be going to America soon.

She told me that we would not only go there, but we would stay there, and people will call me Jen. My mom explained that American's wouldn't understand our language, so we're very different from American people. "Your father and I have decided Jen is a good American name for you," she said. "Grandpa, grandma, uncle, and auntie aren't coming with us. It's just you, me, and daddy," said my mom. I started to cry because I didn't

want to leave, and I'd miss my ā diá, ā pó, and my hǎo mā mā. Ā diá is a Chinese word for grandpa. Ā diá gave me almost everything I want. (He spoiled me alot.) Ā pó is a Chinese word for grandma. She took me to the park everyday to ride little airplanes, little motor cars, and boats. Hǎo mā mā is what I call my babysitter. My babysitter takes me there too. Hǎo mā mā means good mommy because she always wore a smile on her face.

By comparing the early piece, the revision draft and the final piece, the reader realizes that "Starting A New Life" is a very carefully planned piece of writing. Jenny begins by telling the reader about her name; later, she explains that her name was changed when she moved to America; at the end, she returns to the issue of her name change.

In addition to using her name to thread through and conclude her writing, Jenny uses repetition for emphasis. The three questions ("Who would spoil

me? Who will take me to the park? Who will wear a smile for me?") are the essence of what worried Jenny the most about leaving China. She sets up these questions by explaining that her grandfather "spoiled [her] alot," her grandmother took her "to the park everyday" and her babysitter always "wore a smile on her face." So when Jenny asks her questions, she also is asking who will be like her grandfather (and give her "almost everything"), like her grandmother (and take her to the park) and like her babysitter (and smile

for her). This strategy is very effective and very sophisticated, and she handles it quite well.

Jenny also does several other things well. She provides some concrete details ("while I was playing on the slide ... They were sitting on a wooden bench. Their faces were urgent and it looked as if they were having a serious conversation"), she embeds some Chinese words, she reveals internal conflict ("I thought alot about," "The word got stuck in my mind," "I believed that I would never go to sleep,"



While I watched my mommy and daddy pack, I thought a lot about how America would be like. Who would spoil me? Who will take me to the park? Who will wear a smile for me? I had so many questions to ask and think about! At dinner I couldn't eat anything. All I thought about was America. America. The word got stuck in my mind all day. Even at night my eyes were wide open staring at the ceiling. I believed

that I would never go to sleep tonight, but after 1 hour I fell into a restless doze. My dad had gone in another plane and he already arrived in America when my mom and I were still on the plane. It was a very long flight to America. Once in a while, I would always think about my *ā diā* and *ā pō* and what was going on at their house. Once again the questions came back into my mind. Who will spoil me?

“Once again the questions came back into my mind”) and she uses language that does not sound like speech (“While I watched my mommy and daddy pack, I thought”). “Starting A New Life” is a long piece (eight pages) and is accomplished both in style and story. In it, Jenny overcomes many weaknesses. She uses dialogue effectively, and the details she provides illuminate rather than distract the reader. As an end-of-the-year effort, it represents dramatic refinement.

Who will take me to the park?  
Who will wear a smile for me?  
I opened my mouth to ask the questions but no sound came out of my mouth, so I closed my mouth and remained silent. That night my mommy told me how great America was going to be, but I still missed my home town, especially my relatives and my hāo mānā. After my mom and I joined my dad, my mother said "You will go to school in America,

but that doesn't mean you'll never get to see your other relatives. We will still see them someday," replied my mom. A smile spread across my face and I knew I had a new life to begin. Two years later in kindergarten, things were going pretty well. I didn't know America was so interesting, but I always thought about my ā dia' and my ā pō and my hāo mānā once in a while. I always would think about the questions too.



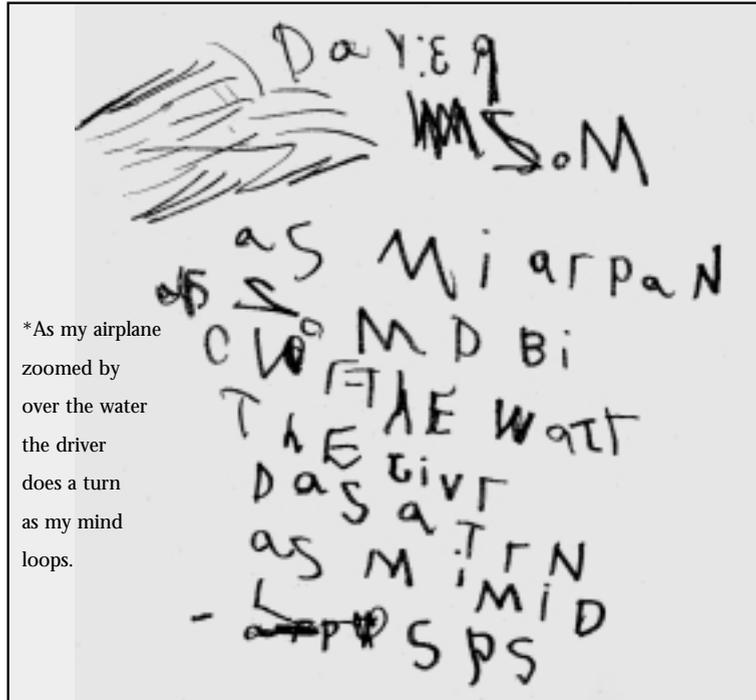
Who will spoil me? Who will take me to the park? Who will wear a smile for me? I always remembered what mother said. "You will go to school in America, but that doesn't mean you'll never get to see your other relatives. We will still see them someday!" Now my name is changed to Jenny, but my parents still call me Jen since I've had that name for a long time in America.

“Evan’s Collection”  
**Kindergarten through Third Grade  
 Growth Over Four Years**

**T**his collection of student work contains samples from each of four levels — kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade. The samples from kindergarten, first grade and second grade are all first-draft efforts drawn from Evan’s notebook. The third-grade sample is a polished piece of text.

Evan is a remarkably talented writer, equally comfortable with poetry and prose. What also is apparent to anyone looking across all four samples is that Evan’s control of form emerged much earlier than did his control of spelling. In fact, to someone not familiar with reading phonetic spelling, the kindergarten sample (“ZoM”) is almost unintelligible.

Kindergarten



\*As my airplane zoomed by over the water the driver does a turn as my mind loops.

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

**This kindergarten sample** indicates that Evan knows quite a bit about print conventions. He understands that text moves left to right across a page and top to bottom down a page. He does not control evenly for space between words, but he does have a sense about line breaks. He gives his work a title and correctly spells two sight words (“as” and “The”). He represents words with initial and final consonants and embeds vowels occasionally, at least those that say their own name.

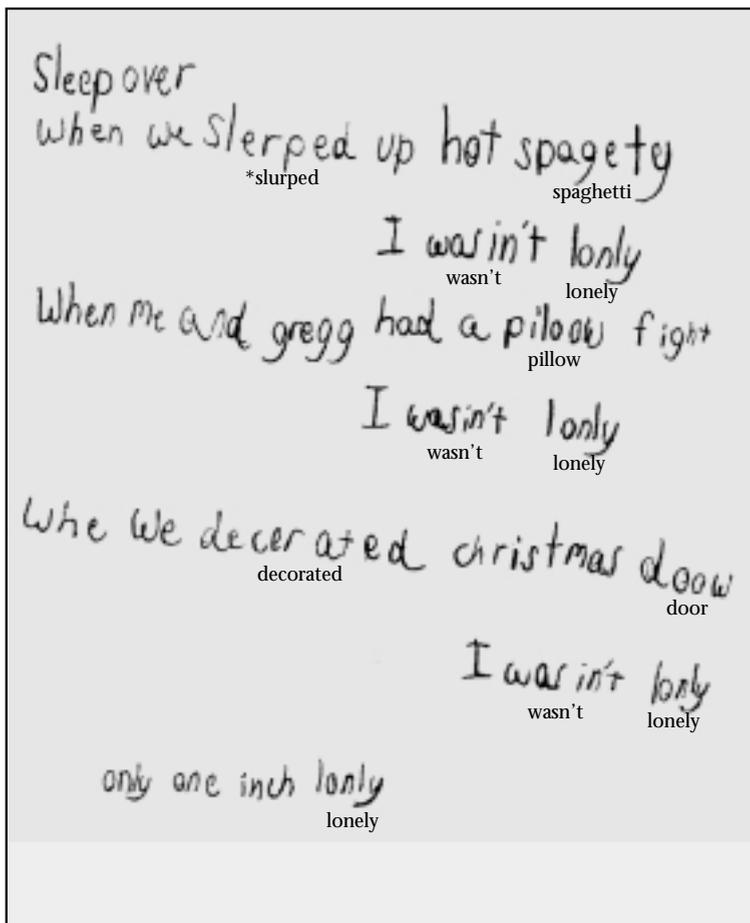
“ZoM” is quite a good piece of poetry. “ZoM” is onomatopoeic in the

title; it occurs as a past-tense verb in the poem’s second line. The poem presents two images. One is of a plane zooming by and heading out over water where the pilot does a turn. In the second image, Evan’s mind is doing a loop, surprising the reader, who is expecting the image of looping to attach to the plane, not to the speaker’s mind. The parallel images of the plane zooming and the mind looping give the reader a sense of a mind alive with movement, not frantic but graceful, like a plane seeming to meander slowly above the ocean. ►►

First Grade

The first-grade piece, "Sleep over," is another poem. Again, Evan demonstrates adroit use of line breaks, this time coupled with artful use of repetition. The final line of the poem plays with both a variation on the refrain and the meaning, which is underscored by printing the text somewhat smaller and separating it from the body of the poem for visual impact. The poem is constructed around three very joyful childhood images that take place during a sleepover — eating spaghetti, having a pillow fight and decorating for Christmas. Evan at first claims not to have been lonely during the visit but then in the last line comes back with the disclaimer that maybe he was lonely but "only one inch lonely."

As with the kindergarten piece, the surprise is that Evan so clearly can demonstrate control of form yet have difficulty with spelling. It is not that the spelling errors are problematic given Evan's age — they are not. It is just that the sophistication of the writing leads a reader to expect more control of spelling (not "slerped" for *slurped* and "was in't" for *wasn't*). Another sample from first grade underscores this mismatch of spelling and writing proficiency.



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

## First Grade

“I Wish” is made up of three images that together capture Evan’s desire for “amazing ikskovrings and in vanchris.” His first wish is to sail into the strongest waves and almost tip over. His second wish is to have adventures and “to travll threuth trails with spibry wabas of stiks.” His third wish is to run through fields and play tennis with his dad. The poem is wonderfully expressive of Evan’s voice and provides the reader a very real sense of this particular first grader’s daydreams.

In this work, Evan further demonstrates a novice understanding of spelling (“s alle” for *sail*, “waevis” for *waves*, and “amazing ikskovrings” for *amazing discoveries*). As with “Sleep over,” however, the misspellings are logical, and it is pretty safe to assume this is a case of a student’s understanding of and talent for writing completely outstripping his age-appropriate control of spelling. ▶▶

I Wish we sail in  
the strangest waves  
of wind and almost tip  
<sup>but</sup> tip 3 quarters.  
I wish we go to islands  
and find amazing <sup>discoveries</sup> ikskovrings  
and in vanchris to travll  
<sup>adventures</sup> threuth <sup>trails</sup> with spibry <sup>webs</sup> wabas  
of stiks.  
I wish dad will run throuth  
the fields with us and play  
tennis with us in the tennis courts

\*I wish we sail in  
the strangest waves  
of wind and almost tip  
but tip three quarters.  
I wish we go to islands  
and find amazing discoveries  
and adventures to travel  
through trails with spidery webs  
of sticks. I wish Dad will run through  
the fields with us and play  
tennis with us in the tennis courts.

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

Second Grade

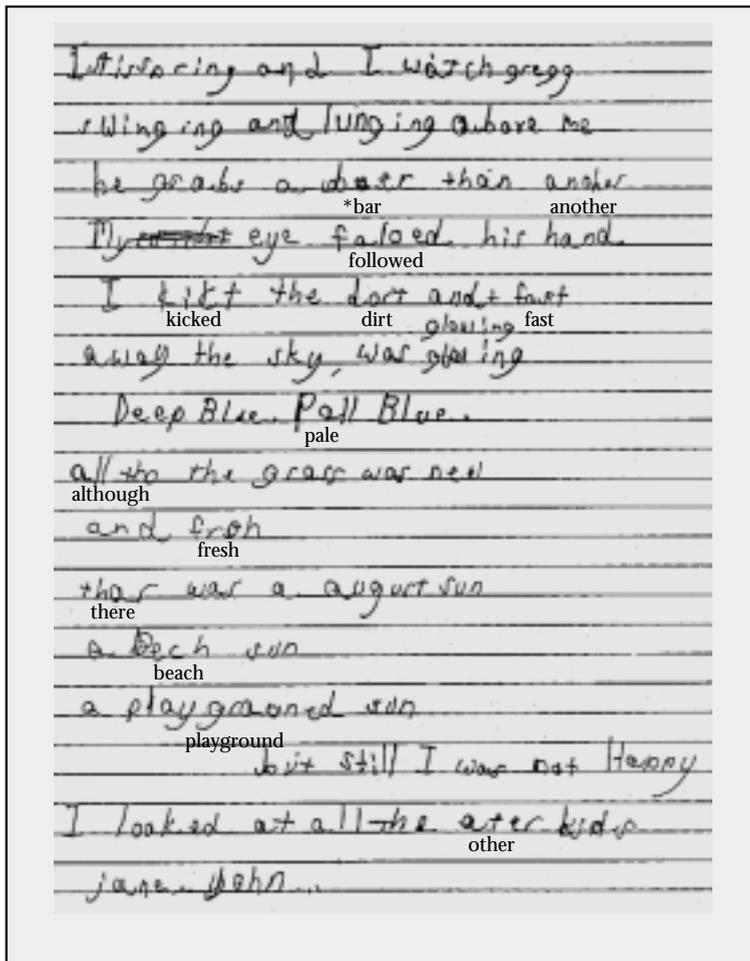
By second grade, Evan's talent for poetry is even more apparent. The untitled poem that begins "It is spring" tells about conquering fear and the elation that follows. Perhaps this work, more than any of the others, makes explicit the gap between Evan's achievement as a poet and as a speller. Consider the lines:

he grabs a bær than anoher  
 My eye faloed his hand  
 I kikt the dort and fast  
 away the sky, was glowing  
 Deep Blue. Pall Blue.

A reader has to work not to be brought up short by misspellings. All of the misspelled words interrupt the flow of the reading: "bær" for *bar*; "faloed" for *followed* and "kikt" for *kicked*. Yet each of these misspellings is logical and not unreasonable for a second-grade student. It is the contrast between the power of the imagery and the level of spelling proficiency that again surprises the reader. One child watches while another makes his way across the monkey bars, one hand after the other. The first child kicks the dirt. The sky glows, deep blue and pale blue. Here is an image of challenge laid down, one boy to another. At the poem's end, the boy has picked up the challenge and made his way across the monkey bars until:

I rech out with my top  
 it tocht silid graond I stod  
 up and saw the brods fling  
 and falt like fling to

Evan's capacity to capture exaltation by comparing his emotion to the sense of flying is amazing. Many older, much more practiced writers could not begin



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

to express themselves as effectively. True, the spelling again is problematic, but Evan is, after all, only in second grade. What is significant across all of Evan's pieces is the dissonance a reader feels trying to accept the unevenness of Evan's proficiency. We continually are brought up short, asking how it is possible that someone whose thinking is so mature, whose knowledge about poetry is so extensive, can be such a poor speller.

And that is exactly the point of this collection. Children do not grow evenly. They grow in fits and starts. One competence may very well outstrip another. Fortunately, Evan's teacher knew this and did not force him to focus on spelling and did not require that he use only words he could spell correctly. Consequently, Evan could work at getting his thoughts down on paper and on trying to write poetry.

then I looked at the monkey bars  
 I walked near bar a tating  
 I looked back  
 then up at the scary  
 bars  
 next day  
 I walked to the monkey bars  
 greg said nothing I grabbed the  
 first bar it was cold  
 I reached for the next but  
 my foot lost hold I was  
 hanging by my hands  
 but I kept going  
 the next, the next,  
 one after another

It seemed like a hour before  
 I reached the other ~~side~~  
~~side~~  
 I reach out with my top  
 it touch solid ground I stood  
 up and saw the birds flying  
 and felt like flying too



## Third Grade

## When The Stars Come Out

Dad just says straight out of the blue, "No." No, I can't have a puppy of my own. I remember the litter of puppies lying at my feet. One peered at me, licking my fingers and whimpering, nudging at me gently. I wanted that one. But Dad says no. My tears start as a trickle and then burn my eyes when Dad says no. He's wrong to say no. He doesn't know a thing about King Charles Cavalier spaniels and yet he says no.

I have a dream. I can picture it now. Dad comes back from canoeing and walks into my bedroom and hears a woof. That would be terrific. It's my dream. In my dream, I run outside to meet the new snow. I watch my puppy snuffling the snowy trail of mouse. I laugh. He snuffles at me as if he's saying "oopsey." But it is just a dream. Now I look at my snow prints in the snow and hope that someday there'll be another pair right beside mine. Maybe someday my dog and I will make an angel in the snow.

And when it begins to get dark and it's time to come in, we'll go up to bed and watch the night. When the stars come out and the pink clouds leave, when my lights are long past out, my dog and I will be fast asleep.

By Evan

**The third-grade sample**, "When The Stars Come Out," is an edited example of expressive writing. It is an excellent piece of writing, though perhaps not as remarkable as the second-grade poem. The piece begins with an image: a father denying his son's request for a puppy. Next, Evan remembers a particular pup that "peered at me, licking my fingers and whimpering, nudging at me gently." The precise word choice, as well as the syntax, reminds us that Evan is a

poet who works in realms of images and rhythms. The same power of image, supported this time by repetition ("when") and by syntax that emphasizes the repetition, marks the final paragraph of this piece:

And when it begins to get dark and it's time to come in, we'll go up to bed and watch the night. When the stars come out and the pink clouds leave, when my lights are long past out, my dog and I will be fast asleep.

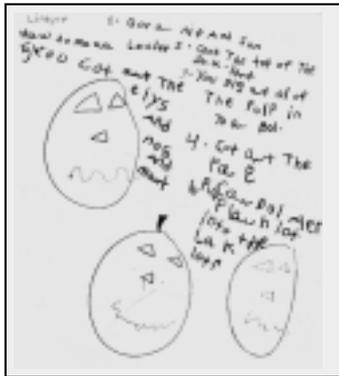
Because this piece has been edited, we are not distracted by any spelling irregularities, and we can concentrate on the substance of the text. There is some discontinuity in the second paragraph. The dream sequence (the father returning and hearing the dog's bark) stops abruptly when Evan goes on to recount a snow scene with the dog. But even with this problem, this is particularly good writing for a third-grade student.

## “The Jack-o’-Lantern Collection” Functional Writing Growth Over Four Years

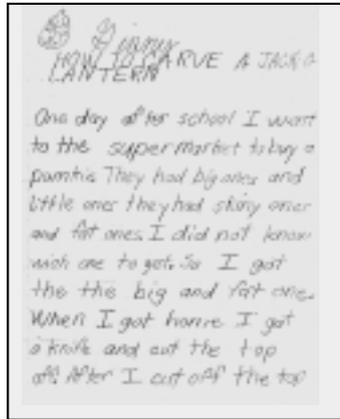
The following five pieces of writing demonstrate performances for the Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres Standard. Each one represents work that meets the standard for functional writing at each of four grade levels, kindergarten through third grade (there are two third-grade samples). By reading through the collection as a whole, one can see student writing proficiency increase across the grade levels.

The pieces were done in response to the same prompt: Explain the steps involved in carving a jack-o’-lantern to someone who does not know how. However, not all the pieces were done at the same time of the year. Two pieces, those at first and second grades, were done in October. Those at kindergarten and third grade

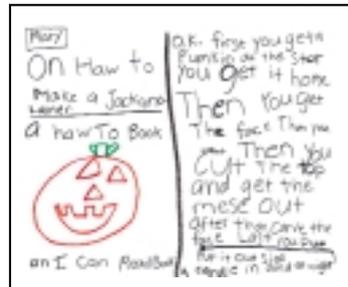
were done in February. What is important to remember is that each of the texts as a whole represents a performance that meets end-of-year standards for functional writing. ►►



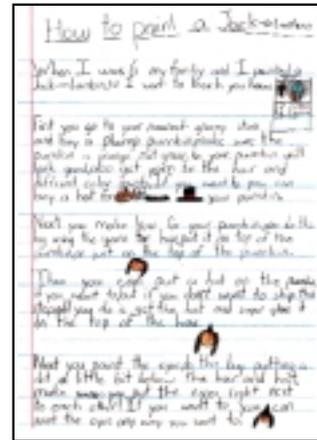
Kindergarten



Second Grade



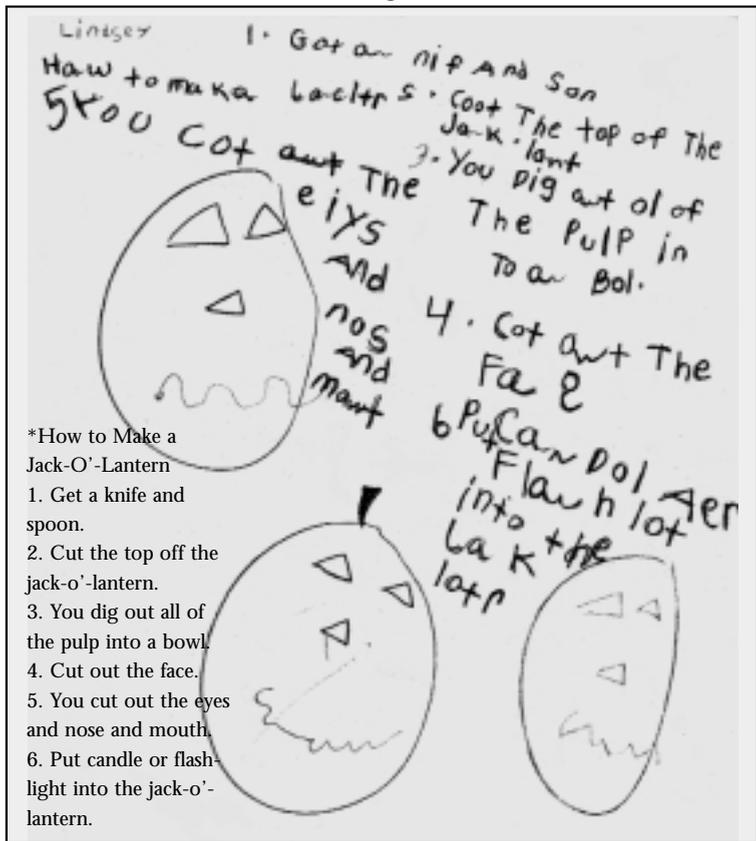
First Grade



Third Grade



Kindergarten



\*How to Make a Jack-O'-Lantern  
 1. Get a knife and spoon.  
 2. Cut the top off the jack-o'-lantern.  
 3. You dig out all of the pulp into a bowl.  
 4. Cut out the face.  
 5. You cut out the eyes and nose and mouth.  
 6. Put candle or flashlight into the jack-o'-lantern.

\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

Kindergarten

This piece of writing is a good example of a kindergartner using writing to get things done by giving directions. Lindsey provides the reader a clear sense of the basic steps in making a jack-o'-lantern. The sample represents functional writing that meets the standard for kindergarten.

Lindsey begins by identifying and naming the materials one will need to carve the pumpkin ("1. Got a nif And Son"). She then sequences the steps from beginning to end, segmenting the steps by using numbers (1-6), so the reader can easily follow the directions.

Lindsey uses simple, short, almost choppy sentences. It is, however, easy to read this text and follow the directions, and relatively short sentences are often the norm in functional writing.

Lindsey makes deliberate choices to explain how to get this job done ("Coot The top of," "Dig owt ol of The Pulp" and "Put CaNDol Aer Flowhlot into the Jak lotr") and to convey accurately the actions of the steps.

This piece of writing is an excellent example of a kindergartner showing control of her knowledge of letter-sound correlation. She represents

words by including beginning, ending and some internal consonant sounds along with internal vowels, although the vowels are not always the correct ones. There are also the beginnings of spacing between words, along with left-to-right and top-to-bottom directionality. Many sight words also are included in the writing and are spelled accurately ("And," "The," "You," "Put," "to" and "into").

Lindsey demonstrates awareness of conventions or punctuation at the beginning or ending of sentences.

This piece was written in February.

## First Grade

**First Grade**

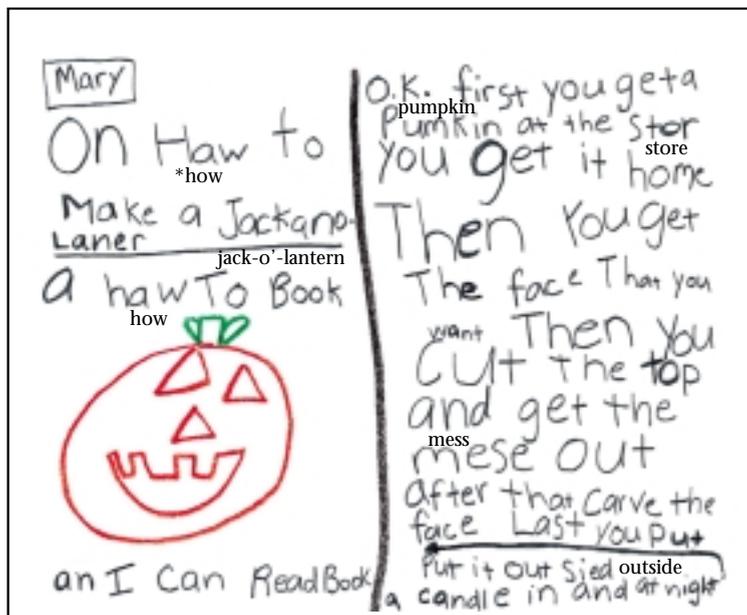
Mary's sample is a rich example of a child's literacy development. It has been polished — that is, Mary worked on it to correct gross misspellings and a sequencing problem (see the editing arrow at the bottom right). It represents functional writing that meets the standard for first grade.

This piece of writing provides the reader a general sense of the steps involved in making (carving) a jack-o'-lantern. It begins by explaining to the reader where to get a pumpkin ("at the stor") and then sequences the steps from the beginning ("get The face That you want") to the end ("Put ... a candle in and at night Put it out sied"). Although the detail is minimal ("get a Pumkin at the stor" and "get [carve] The face That you want"), the reader has a clear sense of the "what" of the process, though not exactly of the "how."

Mary demonstrates a familiarity with the genre by labeling the work as a functional work ("a haw To Book") and by ascribing a reading level to it ("an I Can Read Book"). She also creates a title page that is formatted and illustrated appropriately. She makes the text coherent through the use of transition words ("first," "Then" and "Last").

This piece does not meet the Language Use and Conventions Standard for first grade because Mary shows no awareness of end punctuation. It does have some notable features, however.

Mary uses an informal beginning ("O.K.") at the start of this writing sample, clearly connecting it to the



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

patterns of oral language. At the same time, she uses transition words that obviously mark the piece's association with written text. This piece has varied sentence openers rather than a repeated sentence stem to scaffold ideas: The syntax is primarily a subject-verb patterning of simple sentences introduced by a variety of appropriate transition words.

Mary uses words from her daily vocabulary ("mese") as well as words familiar to the genre of directions ("first," "Then" and "Last"). Her work contains a large proportion of correctly spelled, high-frequency words and can be read by others because most of the perceived sounds are phonetically represented. Familiar words and word endings are spelled correctly. There are actually only six misspellings.

This piece was written in October.



## Second Grade

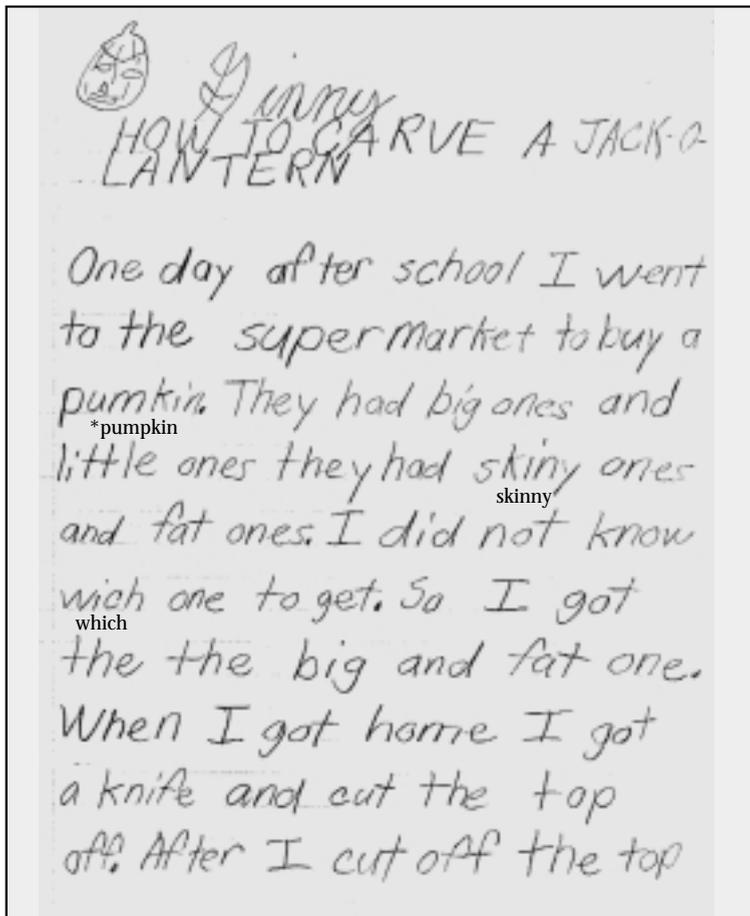
**Second Grade**

This is a good example of a second-grade student's ability to produce a narrative procedure. It provides a reader a clear sense of the steps involved in carving a jack-o'-lantern. It represents functional writing that meets the standard for second grade.

Ginny establishes a context for the piece ("One day after school") and sets a narrative frame for the procedure ("I went to the supermarket to buy a pumpkin"). After identifying the topic in the title, she shows the steps in the procedure by using clear, straightforward details ("big ones and little ones," "skinny ones and fat ones," "dug the seeds out," "two2 triagels") and appropriate transition words and phrases ("So," "When I got home," "After," "Then" and "Next"). The piece has an implied closure in the final step: the lighting of the candle in the pumpkin.

This piece meets the Language Use and Conventions Standard for second grade. Ginny uses sentences that are direct and explanatory, typical of procedural writing. Sentence patterns are typical of literary language ("They had big ones and little ones they had skinny ones and fat ones") as well as of oral language.

Ginny makes word choices that show a vocabulary large enough to exercise options ("supermarket" instead of *store*, "triagels" instead of *holes*). She uses words for numbers as well as showing the number ("two2 triagels") and uses shapes ("triagels," "squar," "banana" and "zigzags") to describe the pumpkin face.



\*Translation of phonetically spelled words

Ginny correctly spells most words, especially high-frequency words. She also uses logic to spell unfamiliar words, writing "pumkin," an accurate reproduction of the way many people pronounce the word *pumpkin*.

Ginny uses periods at the end of sentences and capitalizes correctly, beginning all sentences with a capital letter and consistently capitalizing the personal pronoun *I*.

This piece was written in October.

I got a pan and dug the seeds out of the pumpkin and put them in the pan. Then I got a pencil and drew two triangles for the eyes and a square for the nose. And a banana for the mouth and five zigzags for the teeth. Next I cut them all out and put the candle in the middle of the pumpkin and lit the candle.

Third Grade: Revised Version

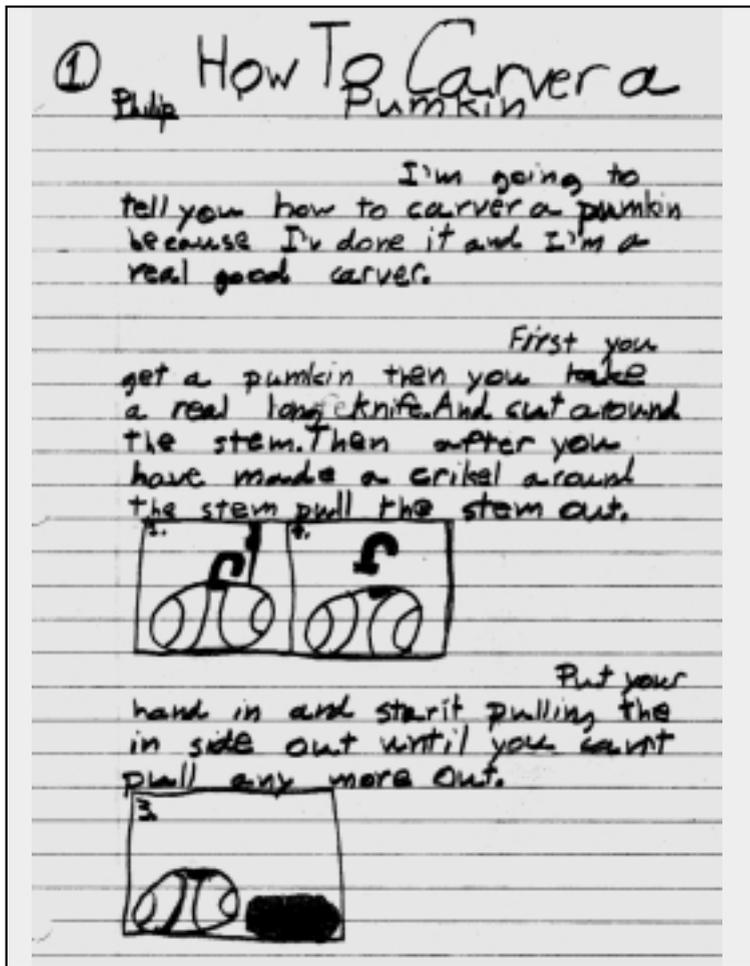
**Third Grade**

This piece provides a clear example of how a third grader can engage a reader's interest and show — with clear illustrations — the steps involved in an action. This sample takes apart the procedure of carving a pumpkin and shows the steps involved in some detail. It represents functional writing that meets the standard for third grade.

Both the title (“How To Carver a Pumkin”) and the initial sentence (“I’m going to tell you how to carver a pumkin”) establish a context and identify the topic of the piece. It is a clear guide to the process of carving a pumpkin and in clear, sequential language gives the reader suitable information for performing the task. This piece is particularly noteworthy because Philip has revised his illustrations and, by so doing, reveals his understanding of their importance to his piece. (He changes illustrations 2, 3 and 9 — see first draft, page 286.) By putting pictures into the text at critical junctures, Philip makes explicit what is being said; the pictures actually help the writer be more concrete.

This example has one complex sentence (“Put your hand in and starit pulling the in side out until you can’t pull any more out”). In general, however, the sentence structure is straightforward and simple. Philip uses the expected transition words (“First,” “Then” and “Now”).

He uses everyday language but incorporates shape names (“crikel” and



“trigals”) to describe the procedure and the carving of the pumpkin. The revised piece contains a number of misspelled words (“pumkin,” “I’v,” “crikel,” “starit” and “trigals”) but not nearly so many as the first draft (there are 22 changes).

Philip consistently starts all sentences with capital letters and uses

periods at the end of all sentences. In addition, he correctly uses apostrophes in all contractions (“I’m,” “I’v” and “can’t”); however, he misuses the apostrophe in one instance (“eye’s”).

This piece was written in February.

②

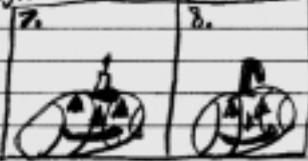
Now you take a little knife and cut two little triangles eyes. Then you cut a mouth with triangles teeth.



Now you cut a little triangle in the middle for a nose.



Now you place a candle in side then light it with a match or a lighter. Now put the top on.



③

Now you can put the pumpkin on your porch.




Third Grade: First Draft

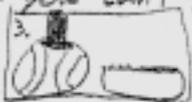
① How To carved a pumpkin  
Philip

I'm going to  
tell you how to make a pumpkin  
<sup>because</sup> I've done it and I'm  
a real good, <sup>carver</sup> carver.

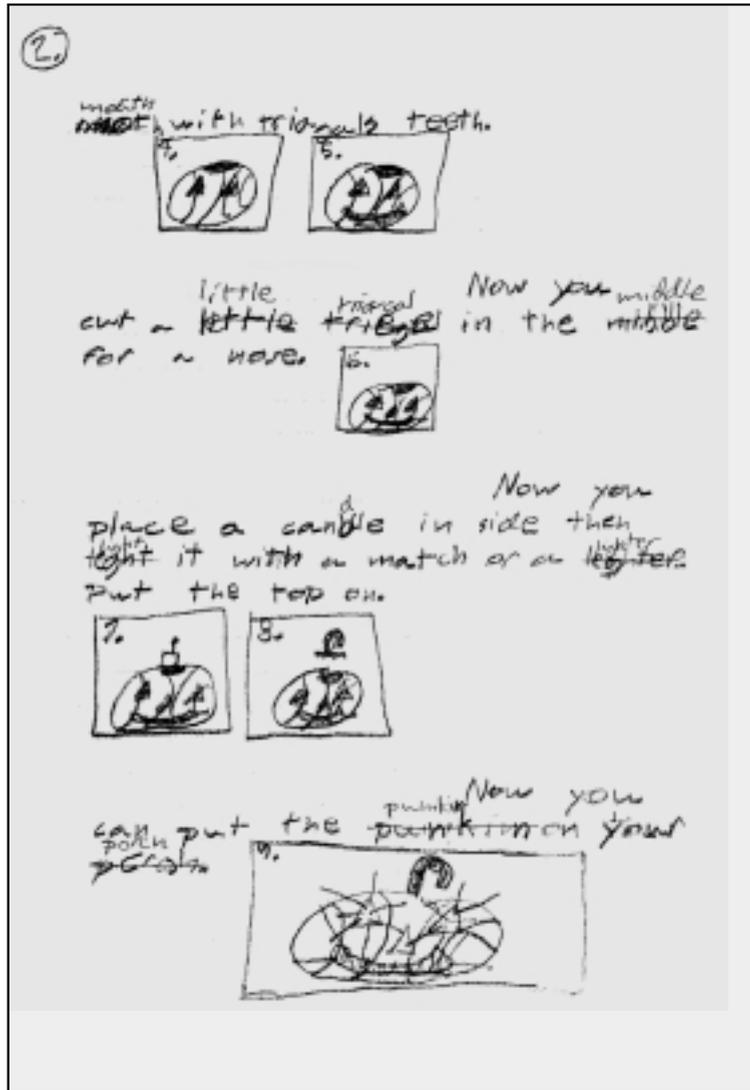
<sup>First</sup> First you  
get a <sup>pumpkin</sup> pumpkin then you take  
a real long knife. And cut  
around the <sup>seed</sup> seeds. Then <sup>after</sup> after  
you have made a circle around  
the <sup>seed</sup> seeds pull the <sup>seed</sup> seeds out.



Put your  
hand in and start pulling the  
in sides out <sup>until</sup> until you can't pull  
any more out.



Now you  
take a <sup>little</sup> little knife and cut two  
little triangles eyes. Then you cut a



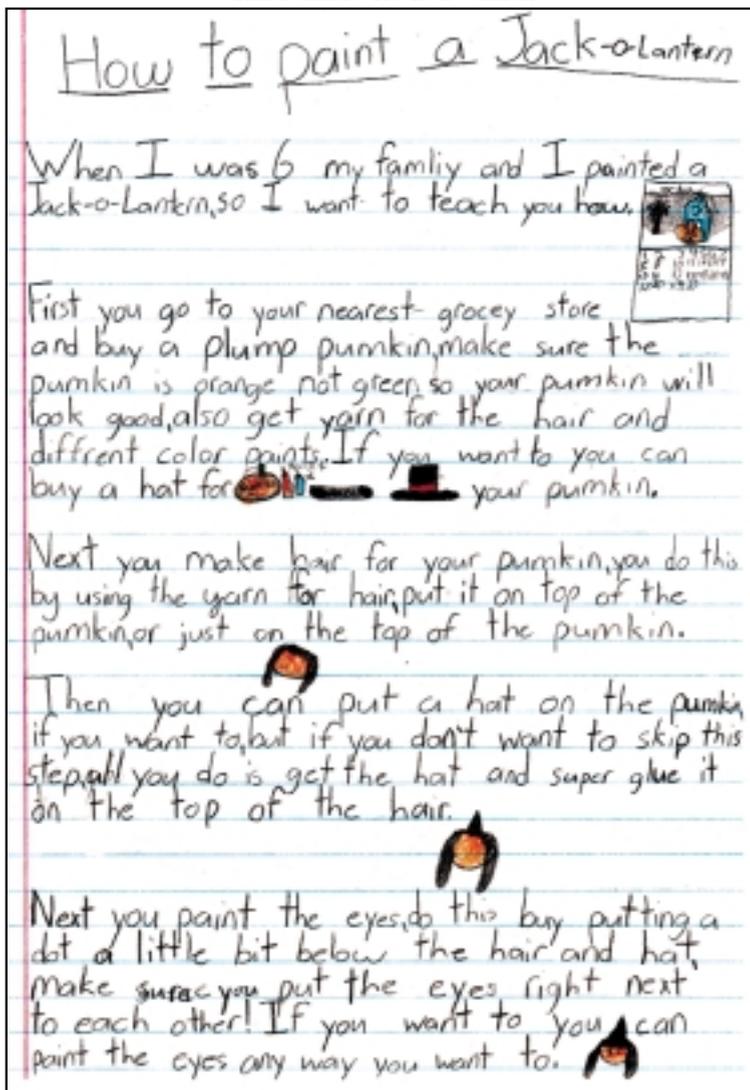
Third Grade: Revised Version

**Third Grade**

Catherine's sample represents the third-grade standard for functional writing. By changing the topic from how to carve a jack-o'-lantern to how to paint a jack-o'-lantern, Catherine is able to bring her own experience and expertise to the topic to provide a richly detailed explanation.

The piece engages the reader by establishing Catherine's credentials for writing the piece ("When I was 6"). It addresses the reader directly ("I want to teach you how"). The topic is identified clearly. The piece provides considerable detail in a step-by-step guide to painting a pumpkin. Clear, descriptive language is used throughout ("plump" and "orange not green"). Catherine gives explicit instructions about how to paint the nose ("a half triangle under the eyes"). She also includes illustrations at strategic points in the guide. The illustrations contribute to the functional purpose of the text rather than just decorate the page.

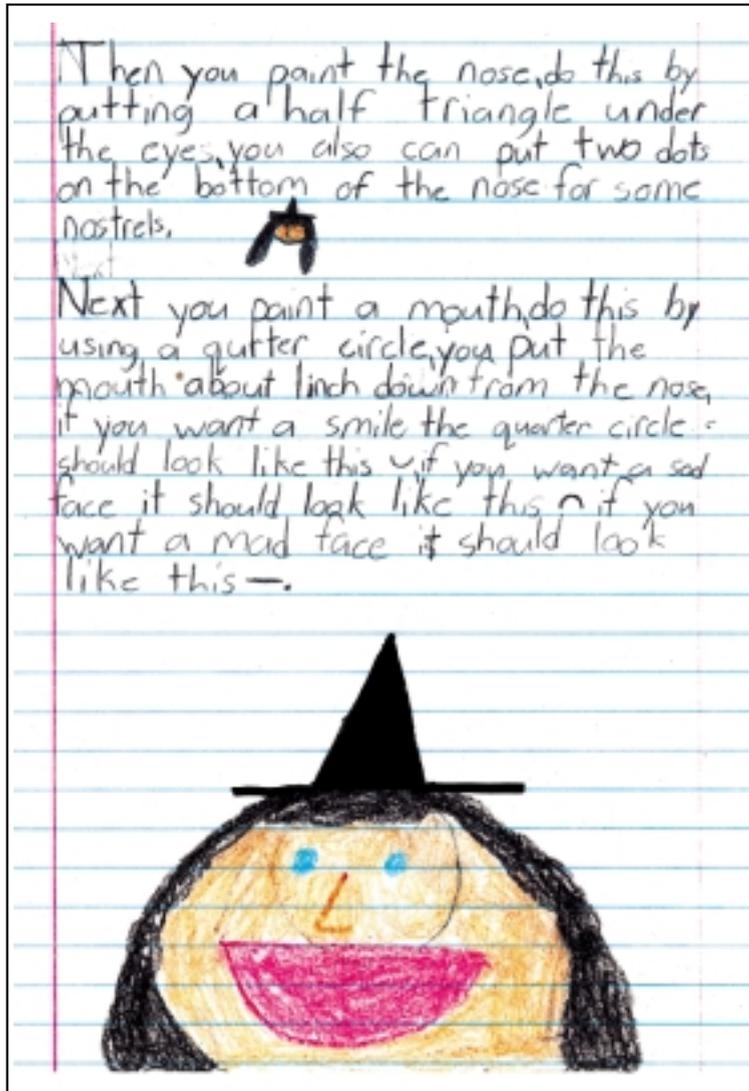
This sample is noteworthy for several other reasons. Catherine presents options to the reader ("you can put a hat on the pumpkin if you want to," "if you want a smile" and "if you want a sad face"). The language is very precise ("about 1 inch down from the nose," "half triangle" and "quarter circle"). The illustrations provide an additional guide to actions. The small drawings demonstrate the addition of each feature — hair, hat, eyes, nose and mouth. Catherine consistently is aware of the reader: She accommodates the reader throughout the piece by referring to



"you" and anticipates possible errors ("Make sure you put the eyes right next to each other!").

The two drafts of the sample show that she made editing and syntax changes and chose to delete information. (See first draft, page 290.) She made a copying error from the first

draft to the final draft in the third paragraph. The meaning actually is more clear in the first draft ("put [the yarn] on top of the pumpkin, or just on top of the stem").



Syntactically, the piece is well written. The sentence structure is varied, with clear and appropriate coordination and subordination of ideas. Catherine repeats certain structures (“do this by”) and produces parallel phrases with appropriate omission (“if you want a smile the quarter circle should look like this ... if you want a sad face it should look like this ... if you want a mad face ...”).

Catherine uses precise language throughout and uses transition words appropriately. The spelling also is mostly correct. She misspells *pumpkin* throughout, misspells *nostrils* and *grocery*, and misspells *quarter* once and then spells it correctly another time. She also uses “buy” instead of *by* once, but the correct word is in the first draft, indicating another copying error.

Catherine uses complex sentence structures throughout the piece but does not have control of punctuation required by these constructions. Commas are not used correctly, producing run-on sentences. The use of capital letters to begin sentences is inconsistent.

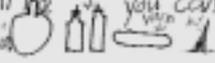
This piece was written in February.



Third Grade: First Draft

How to paint a Jack-o-lantern

When I was 6 ~~me~~ ~~and~~ my family and I painted ~~a~~ Jack-o-lantern. <sup>you need a paint, a knife, and paints</sup> So I want to teach you how.

First ~~you~~ you go to your nearest ~~store~~ grocery store and buy ~~a~~ plump pumpkin, make ~~sure~~ sure the ~~pumpkin~~ pumpkin is orange not green so your ~~pumpkin~~ pumpkin will look good. also get yarn for the hair, and different color paints. If you want ~~the~~ <sup>you can</sup> you can get a little hat for your pumpkin. 

Next you make hair for your pumpkin, you do this by using the yarn for hair. ~~make a loop~~ ~~put it on top of the pumpkin~~ ~~or just on top of the stem~~ put it on top of the pumpkin, or just on top of the stem. Super glue it to ~~the~~ the pumpkin.

~~Then you~~ Then you can put a hat on the pumpkin <sup>if you want</sup> if you don't want to skip this step <sup>you get</sup> you get the hat, and super glue it ~~on~~ on the top of the hair. 

Next you paint the eyes, do this by putting a dot ~~in the~~ a little bit below the hair and hat, make sure you put the eyes right next to each other! If you want to you can paint the eyes any way you want to.

Then you paint the nose, do this by putting a half triangle under the eyes ~~if you~~ you can put two dots on the bottom of the nose for some noses.

Next you paint a mouth, do this by a quarter of a circle, you put the mouth under the nose about 1 inch down from the nose, if you want a smile the quarter circle should look like this , if you want a sad face it should look like this , if you want a mad face it should look like this .

