

We invite teachers to have students discuss these samples before, while, or after they write to the same practice prompt.

An Important Eighth Grade Discussion: Comparing Narrative and Expository Writing

Narrative writing tells a story. It depends on lively and memorable details to keep a reader interested in the writing. In fifth grade, Nevada students write a narrative passage for their state writing examination.

Expository writing, on the other hand, explains facts and opinions. Using skills of organization, writers develop a main idea and then support the main idea with the details they choose to share. Expository writing is more about explaining than describing.

In 2010, Nevada eighth graders began preparing to have their writing assessed using a new rubric: an expository one. As we practiced with our eighth graders, we received many excellently-written samples, like the one found on this page. No doubt about it, Cameo is a pretty good writer!

Unfortunately, even though this sample is a good one, it would score better using the fifth grade narrative rubrics than it would with our new expository rubric for eighth grade. With a small group, read the practice prompt carefully, then read Cameo's response. Where do you see her narrative skills shine? What advice would you offer her to re-think and re-write this idea so it comes across as more expository than narrative. Prepare to share a revision strategy for Cameo with your whole class.

Cameo's Practice Prompt: Books, movies, and television can offer opportunities to learn valuable lessons. Write about a lesson learned from a book, movie, or television show that proved to be of value to you.



Cameo's Writing Sample: "A Lesson Learned"

The creepy music that came from the sixty-five inch TV was the guide that something big and horrible would happen soon. The flickering lights of the moving figures on the wide screen leapt toward us, when our intense moment of fear turned into a nightmare. A door slammed nearby, and scratching noises reverberated through the shade-clad windows. My hair stood on end, as my friends quickly looked to me, and the TV went blank. If my imagination was getting at me, then why were my friends' faces full of anxiety and fear?

It was the night before my thirteenth birthday, and a slumber party commenced at my house. After a day of swimming, my friends and I decided that we would watch a scary movie. All sorts of movies were thrown at me, but it was Jaws that won. I knew that I shouldn't give into peer pressure, but I did. Scary movies aren't my thing.

The movie began to grow in intensity, and eerie sounds could be heard right outside my home. I ran upstairs to tell my parents to stop scaring us when I realized they were all accounted for. They didn't believe me when we told them the sliding glass was slamming, the outside lights flickering, and something was begging to come in through the windows. One friend fell down on the ground and started to cry with fear, as the front door pounded. When we opened the door, a noose was hanging from the porch. Twenty minutes of our screams finally had my mom coming to quiet us down. When we approached the back door, a tall dark figure holding a knife stood pressed against the glass. Our heads pounding, my friends and I fell over each other trying to flee the scene. It was when I saw my mom's smile that I realized the gruesome figure was my uncle Arthur. If it weren't for my friends being there, I would have peed my pants.

I have now learned my lesson and will no longer let peer pressure get in the way of my movie choices! I have been so spooked, that the next time a friend asks to watch a scary movie, my answer will always be "No!"

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Ann's Practice Prompt: Books, movies, and television can offer opportunities to learn valuable lessons. Write about a lesson learned from a book, movie, or television show that proved to be of value to you.



Ann's writing: "Coraline"

Black buttons scared me ever since I watched that creepy movie. My brother went to get a movie from Redbox (the best system of renting movies ever)! He usually got movies that were really disapproving to me. It was usually scary movies, violent movies, or suspenseful ones. This time he'd gone too far. The movie scared me for life that night. It was disturbing, and made me hate buttons. Even so, it taught me many valuable lessons.

My family and cousins watched the movie Coraline. *Uhhh!* I shudder at the thought of it. The movie was about a girl who had a bland, boring life. She never had the things she wanted, and her parents ignored her because of work. She moved to a boring house and explored it. While Coraline was playing, she found a little door that led to the same world, but things were different. She stumbled into her house and found her mother in the kitchen cooking a delicious dinner. Coraline was surprised to see her mother turn around and she found buttons on her eyes! It's scary how eyes can change everything. In that other world, she got everything she ever wanted and had a great life with her "Other Mother". Therefore, she greedily kept going to the other world. Her neighbor had warned her to not go through the little door, but she kept going. One day, she had gone too far. The Other Mother wanted to sew buttons into her eyes! Coraline escaped her, but found out she could not get back to the real world. Coraline was scared and worried. Her greediness made her parents disappear.

I learned several valuable lessons from this disturbing movie. I learned that being greedy is not a good thing. Not being thankful for what you have can cost you a lot. Never be an unthankful child or you might lose your eyes and get buttons sewn into your eye sockets.