

ILLUSTRATING THE WRITING STANDARD

Christopher Columbus!

By the end of year 4, students are required to create a variety of texts in order to think about, record, and communicate experiences, ideas, and information across the curriculum. To meet the standard, students draw on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for writing described in the Literacy Learning Progressions for students at this level.

This example is placed at "By the end of year 4" because it demonstrates that the student is meeting the writing demands of the curriculum at level 2. The student has used a simple text structure to respond to the task, has included mostly relevant content (with some detail), has attempted complex sentences (with some errors), and has chosen some specific nouns, verbs, and adjectives to convey ideas and information.

As part of a social studies unit, the students in this year 4 class are inquiring into the ways in which explorers of the past affected the places they went to and the people they met. The class shared the stories of several explorers, and students chose one explorer to research further. The class developed a series of questions to guide their research and they took notes as they researched, which they then used to report on the changes that their chosen explorer caused.

The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the writing demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.

Transcript: Christopher Columbus!

Christopher Columbus! Page 1
 Christopher Columbus was born in Italy in the 1400s. Columbus's dream was to sail in a boat all the way to the Indies. He said that there was only land to the west. So he asked King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella if he could sail the west. The King and Queen said yes if you get us gold and silver and spices. The King and Queen gave Columbus 3 boats to sail in with some other people. If they broke any rules on the boat they would get a really big punishment. They only had a little food to eat and when they were able to sleep. Then they about 2 months he seen land and some

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The student uses a simple text structure and language appropriate for the purpose of reporting what she has learned. She begins with a statement that introduces the subject of the report and provides the reader with some background information.

The events are mostly sequenced and the student has used a variety of simple connectives ("So", "Then", "When", "but", "because").

The student uses topic-specific vocabulary ("dream", "sail", "the west") as well as increasingly specific words and phrases, in particular, precise nouns ("gold", "silver", "spices", "gifts") and verbs ("sail", "swam", "nelled - kneeled") to provide clarity and detail.

Then in about 2 and 1/2 months he seen land and some indies swam out and gave him gifts.

The student chooses and conveys information that is mostly relevant to the curriculum task ("he nelled down and renamed the land", "all they did was cut them self", "So he took some people on his boat and took them bake to spain but most of the indeins died because there not used to the disesis that Colubus is used to").

The student uses both simple, compound, and complex sentences that vary in both beginning and length, although not all are grammatically correct.

Indies swam out and gave him gifts.
 When Columbus hoped of his ship he nelled down and renamed the land. Then he showed the Indians swords and guns. All they did was cut them selves. Then Columbus had an idea. He wade a cut to the King and Queen. He said "These Indians will be great slaves. So he took some people on his boat and took them back to Spain. Most of the Indians died because they were not used to the disesis that the white men gave them. Columbus is used to

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Most words from essential lists¹ 1-4 and some from list 5 are spelt correctly. Unfamiliar words are recorded phonetically with some awareness of spelling conventions. The student underlines words that she is unsure how to spell, but she has not followed this up by checking and correcting these words. The student uses a variety of tense structures although not all subjects and verbs are in agreement ("most of the indeins died because there not used to the disesis that Colubus is used to").

So he took some people on his boat and took them bake to spain but most of the indeins died because there not used to the disesis that Colubus is used to.

¹ These lists are in Croft (1998). They are examples only, and teachers may refer to other reputable lists of high-frequency words.