

# 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

---

## VOLUME 6.2

### Expository Writing Unit for *Children of the Dust Bowl*

**Sarah Collinge**  
with Bethany Robinson



Read Side by Side  
9514 180th St. SE  
Snohomish, WA 98296  
425-412-3724  
[www.readsidebyside.com](http://www.readsidebyside.com)

# Table of Contents

Welcome .....	3
Day 1: Plan & Draft: Introduction.....	5
Day 2-4: Draft: Body Paragraphs.....	8
Day 5: Draft: Conclusion.....	10
Day 6: Revise: Strong Words & Causal Language.....	11
Day 7: Revise: Include quotes to support the main ideas .....	14
Day 8: Edit: Capitalize Proper Nouns .....	15
Day 9: Edit and Revise .....	18
Day 10: Publish: Title & Illustration/Cover/Banner .....	20
Day 11-15: Publish & Share.....	21
Checklist for Assessing an Expository Essay.....	22

## Welcome to the 6.2 Expository Writing Unit for *Children of the Dust Bowl*!

If this is your first time using this guide, you will want to read through this introduction carefully, as it provides information that you will find critical to your establishment of a successful language arts block!

This expository writing unit is meant to be taught in conjunction with the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*, Unit 6.2, *Children of the Dust Bowl*. The book *Children of the Dust Bowl* will be used as a mentor text to build students' background knowledge and expose students to the craft of writing.

This unit takes approximately 15 days to complete, from brainstorming and planning to sharing the published piece! Lessons in this unit give students explicit instruction in the steps of the writing process and the structure of persuasive writing. Some craft and grammar lessons will be incorporated as students revise and edit their writing. You may want to supplement with additional craft, grammar, and spelling lessons between writing units.

Prior to starting the unit, you will want to consider how students will share their writing. Student read their writing aloud to their own classmates, visit another classroom, or make their writing available for others to read in the classroom, library or other public location.

After students have had the opportunity to publish their writing, assess their work using the checklist for grading a narrative story provided at the end of the unit.

### ***Schedule***

To complete this unit, you will need to set aside 30-minutes for writing, 2-4 times a week.

**Instructional days** begin with a whole-class lesson. Lessons will be 10-15 minutes in length, allowing a short time after the lesson for students to work on the assignment. While working, students will access the help of a writing partner as needed. It may be helpful to seat partners next to each other during the work time. The teacher then confers with partnerships as needed.

**Working days** allow students to get started right away on writing projects. During the work time, students will continue to access a partner or the teacher for help as needed. If it is challenging to find time every day for writing, teachers might assign these work-projects as homework.

*Expository schedule:*

<b>1. Plan &amp; Draft</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write a draft using the 4-quadrant method.</li><li>• Use transition words.</li></ul>	Days 1-5
<b>2. Revise &amp; Edit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use strong language.</li><li>• Use causal language.</li><li>• Include quotes from the text.</li><li>• Capitalize proper nouns.</li></ul>	Days 6-8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Edit and revise using a checklist.</li></ul>	Day 9
<b>3. Publish &amp; Share</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a title &amp; banner.</li><li>• Complete a final product that is handwritten, typed, or other.</li><li>• Share with a real audience.</li></ul>	Days 10-15

## Day 1: Plan & Draft: Introduction

**Lesson Goals:** Brainstorm ideas for writing in response to the prompt. Begin to plan a piece of writing using the *Quadrant Chart*.

### Materials:

Note Taking Sheet (Filled out from 6.2 Read-Aloud Unit)

### Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Introduce the expository writing prompt:

*The largest migration of people in U. S. history occurred between 1935 and 1940 when one million people left the Panhandle for California. What caused these people to move? Explain two or more geographical factors and economic factors that related to this movement of people. Also explain the challenges that these geographic factors and economic factors caused. How did the Okies respond to these challenges? What can you learn from this historic event and how can you apply this learning to the present day?*

An expository piece of writing provides a main idea, summarizes important events or ideas, and includes details as evidence or examples. Expository writing is factual and includes a list of references. The style of writing is typically formal; it does not include dialogue or slang. It may include quotes taken directly from the text. If an opinion is included in the piece of writing, the author reserves sharing his/her opinion until the conclusion.

1. *Discuss* the note-taking sheet filled out during the 6.2 Read-Aloud Unit.
2. *Plan:* Add any new ideas to the note-taking form.
3. *Draft:* Model drafting the introduction, which answers the prompt.  
*Example:*

What was the largest migration in U. S. history? Between 1935 and 1940 one million people moved from the Panhandle to California. Geographic factors and economic factors led to this large movement of people. Drought and severe dust storms in the Panhandle made farming impossible. Farmers and their families suffered from poverty and displacement. Despite these challenges, the Okies were determined to accept hardship without showing weakness. Instead of giving up, the Okies remained hopeful and worked hard to change their fate.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to plan their own introductions. Then, give time for partners to share their writing plan and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my introduction?
- What might I do to improve it?

Notes:	
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Tell about the Okie migration to California. Explain that there were both geographic and economic reasons for the migration.</p> <p>Describe how the Okies responded to hardship.</p>
<b>Body Paragraph 1:</b>	<p>Explain two or more geographic factors relating to the movement of the Okies to California.</p> <p>How did the Okies respond to these challenges?</p>
<b>Body Paragraph 2:</b>	<p>Explain two or more economic factors relating to the movement of the Okies to California.</p> <p>How did the Okies respond to these challenges?</p>

Between 1935-1940 one million people moved from the Panhandle to California. "It was the largest migration of people in U.S. history." (Stanley, p.12)

- Drought
- Dust storms
- Poverty
- Displacement

The Okies were determined to accept hardship without showing weakness.

- Drought - 1931
- Crop failure
- Dust storms stripped away topsoil

- People tried to protect themselves from the dust
- They accepted that this is what life is all about
- They continued to work in the fields

- Farmers could no longer make a living and people were starving
- Farms were taken by the banks and people were displaced.

- Proud
- At first they didn't want to take help from the government
- didn't call themselves poor
- felt it was a disgrace to accept charity



<p><b>Body</b> Paragraph 3:</p>	<p>What challenges did the Okies face once they arrived in California?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A surplus of people drove wages down</li> <li>• Okies slept in tents and shacks</li> <li>• Okies lived in squalor</li> <li>• Californians were hostile to the Okies</li> <li>• They did whatever it took to survive.</li> <li>• They stayed hopeful.</li> <li>• They drew strength from one another.</li> <li>• They welcomed hard work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p>	<p>Summarize your thinking.</p>	
	<p>Apply this thinking to the present day.</p>	
<p><b>References:</b></p>	<p>PBS. (2007). American experience: Surviving the dust bowl [Video file]. <a href="http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/dustbowl/player/">http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/dustbowl/player/</a></p>	<p>Stanley, J. (1992). Children of the dust bowl: The true story of the school at Weedpatch Camp. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.</p>

## **Day 2-4: Draft: Body Paragraphs**

**Lesson Goals:** Continue to plan a piece of writing using the *Quadrant Chart*. Plan the second body paragraph and the conclusion.

**Materials:**

Note Taking Sheet (Filled out from 6.2 Read-Aloud Unit)  
*Transition Word List*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will continue to plan their expository writing piece. Today they will be drafting 3 body paragraphs.
2. *Draft:* Model drafting the body paragraphs of your expository writing piece. Demonstrate how to:
  - Use transition words to start body paragraphs.
  - Introduce the big idea.
  - Support the big idea with reasons and examples.
  - Model using transition words (see transition word list).

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to draft body paragraphs 2 and 3. Then, give time for partners to share their writing plan and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my writing?
- What might I do to improve it?



# TRANSITION WORD LIST

First,	Second,	Third,	In Conclusion,
First of all, To begin with, Initially, Foremost, In the year,	Additionally, Also, Furthermore, Another, Equally Important, In addition, Next, At the same time, Along with, Moreover, Furthermore, On the other hand, Conversely,	Last, Lastly, Finally, Soon after, As time passed, In spite of, In contrast to, Alternatively, Above all,	In summary, To summarize, In the end, As you can see, It is clear, Clearly, It is true, Without a doubt, Undoubtedly, Unquestionably,

## **Day 5: Draft: Conclusion**

**Lesson Goals:** Draft the conclusion.

**Materials:**

Note Taking Sheet (Filled out from 6.2 Read-Aloud Unit)

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be planning the conclusion of their expository writing. When writing an expository writing piece, the conclusion will summarize the key points of the piece of writing and may also include a personal response or opinion or a link to modern day events.
2. *Plan:* Model summarizing the key points in the first part of the conclusion paragraph.

*Example:*

A mass exodus from the Southern Plains to California was a result of the geographic and economic challenges the Okies faced during the time of the Great Depression. However, when the Okies arrived in California, they continued to face many hardships. A surplus of people in California drove wages down. “Most Okie laborers couldn’t find work for even a nickel a day” (Stanley, p. 24). Okies were forced to sleep in tents and shacks. They lived in squalor. As if that wasn’t bad enough, the Californians were hostile to the Okies. They called them names and shouted, “Okie, go home” (Stanley, p. 38). The Okies did whatever it took to survive. They welcomed hard work and worked for gas and food. They drew strength from one another and remained hopeful.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to draft a conclusion. Then, give time for partners to share their writing plan and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my writing?
- What might I do to improve it?

## **Day 6: Revise: Strong Words & Causal Language**

**Lesson Goals:** Revise a piece of writing to include strong words & causal language.

**Materials:**

*Strong Word List*

*Causal Language List*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be revising their expository essays to make them interesting to the reader. Today you will be adding strong words and causal language to your essays. Causal language is language that connects one event to another.
2. *Revise:* Model rereading your writing and adding strong words and causal language (*See lists*).

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to revise their writing to include strong language and causal language. Then, give time for partners to share their writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my writing?
- What might I do to improve my writing?

## STRONG WORD LIST

Some examples of strong words from the book *Children of the Dust Bowl*:

- Memorable
- Self-sufficient
- Determined
- Passionate
- Proud
- Important
- Proved
- Preserved
- Achieved
- Humanized
- Encouraged
- Admired
- Volunteered
- Questioned
- Influenced
- Refused
- Justice
- Courage
- Despair
- Protest
- Led
- Inspired
- Joined
- Employed
- Demanded change
- Struggled
- Hardship
- Profited
- United
- Incredible
- Desperate
- Miraculous
- Overcame
- Symbolized

#### CAUSAL LANGUAGE LIST

- Therefore
- Before
- Because
- However
- Despite
- So
- Because of this
- Due to
- As a result
- Consequently
- So that
- This led to
- In spite of
- \_\_\_\_\_ caused
- \_\_\_\_\_ was a result of



## Day 7: Revise: Include quotes to support the main ideas

**Lesson Goals:** Reread a piece of writing and add powerful quotes from the text to support the main ideas.

**Materials:**

Note Taking Sheet (Filled out from 6.2 Read-Aloud Unit)  
*Children of the Dust Bowl*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be revising their piece of writing to include quotes from the text that support the main ideas.
2. *Model* finding and adding quotes to at least two of the body paragraphs. The quotes should be powerful and support the main ideas.
3. *Model* the use of quotation marks and page references.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to their revise their writing by adding powerful quotes. Then, give time for partners to share their writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my writing?
- What might I do to improve my writing?

## **Day 8: Edit: Capitalize Proper Nouns**

**Lesson Goals:** Reread a piece of writing and make edits to capitalize proper nouns.

**Materials:**

*Proper Nouns Sheet*

**Instructional Procedures:**

4. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be editing their piece of writing to capitalize proper nouns.
5. *Discuss* the *Proper Nouns Sheet* and practice fixing the proper nouns on the sheet.
6. *Model* finding proper nouns in your own writing and correction capitalization errors.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to their edit their writing for capitals. Then, give time for partners to share their writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my writing?
- What might I do to improve my writing?

## PROPER NOUNS SHEET

A **proper noun** names a person, place, or thing. A proper noun begins with a capital letter.

### **Proper Nouns (Person):**

- Leo Hart
- Dorothea Lange
- John Steinbeck
- Jerry Stanley
- American
- Okies

*Example:* Dorothea Lange was a leading American documentary photographer and photojournalist.

### **Proper Nouns (Place):**

- United States
- U. S.
- Oklahoma
- Texas
- Arkansas
- Missouri
- California
- Panhandle
- Dust Bowl
- Midwest
- Southern Plains
- Great Plains

*Example:* In the 1930's, farmers from the Midwestern Dust Bowl states, especially Oklahoma and Arkansas, began to move to California.

### **Proper Nouns (Things/Movements):**

- Black Tuesday
- Great Depression
- Covid-19 Pandemic

*Example:* The Great Depression was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world, lasting from 1929 – 1939.

**Practice Editing:** Circle the letters that should be capitalized in each sentence, then write the sentence correctly. Remember to capitalize the first word in a sentence and proper nouns.

1. Thousands of families were forced to leave the dust bowl at the height of the Great Depression in the early and mid-1930's. Many of these displaced people joined the parade of those headed west to California in search of work.
2. Thousands of families were forced to leave the Dust Bowl at the height of the Great Depression in the early and mid-1930's. Many of these displaced people joined the parade of those headed west to california in search of work.
3. Thousands of families were forced to leave the Dust Bowl at the height of the great depression in the early and mid-1930's. Many of these displaced people joined the parade of those headed west to California in search of work.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Day 9: Edit and Revise**

**Lesson Goals:** Reread a piece of writing and make edits and revisions.

**Materials:**

*Editing and Revision Checklist*

**Instructional Procedures:**

3. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be editing and revising their persuasive writing pieces to make them easy to read as well as convincing.
4. *Edit:* Model rereading your writing and marking edits as you go:
  - Capitals
  - Punctuation
  - Spelling
  - ParagraphingAs you make editing marks, discuss the changes you will make and how they will help the reader understand the piece of writing better. Give students time to reread their writing and record editing marks.
5. *Revise:* Model rereading your writing and marking revisions as you go:
  - Complete sentences
  - Transition words
  - Persuasive/strong language (See list)
  - Details and elaboration to help the reader visualize
  - Key vocabulary

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to their edit and revise their writing. Then, give time for partners to share their writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my writing?
- What might I do to improve my writing?



## Editing Checklist:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sentences start with a capital letter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used capital letters for proper nouns.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have punctuation at the end of each sentence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I checked my words for spelling.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I indented paragraphs.

## Revision Checklist:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I started with an introduction that is clear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ended with a conclusion that is clear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used transition words at the beginning of paragraphs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used language to show how one event may have caused another event.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sentences make sense.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sentences stay focused on the topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I added details and elaboration that are important to the topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used key vocabulary.

## **Day 10: Publish: Title & Illustration/Cover/Banner**

**Lesson Goals:** Publish a piece of writing by choosing a title, then making an illustration, cover, or banner.

**Materials:**

*Art materials or illustration software.*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will be writing a title for their essay and creating an illustration, cover, or banner for their writing. Share tips for writing a good title:
  - It should provide the main idea.
  - It should be relatively short.
  - It should get the reader interested.
  - It should put a picture in the reader's mind.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to create a title and illustration, cover, or banner for their essay. Then, give time for partners to share their illustrations and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my illustration?
- What might I do to improve my illustration?

## **Day 11-15: Publish & Share**

**Lesson Goals:** Publish a piece of writing.

### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be preparing their piece of writing for others to read. This is called publishing.
2. *Discuss* how writing will be published—handwritten, typed, or other. Let them know when and how their essays will be shared with the class.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to publish their writing and share their writing with an audience.


Ideas for sharing:

- read essays aloud to classmates,
- read essays aloud to another class,
- make essays available for others to read (in the classroom, library, hallway bulletin board or other); and
- take essays home to share with family.

An **author's chair** is a fun classroom tradition. It is a decorated chair in which an author sits to share his/her writing. Teachers can paint a wooden chair or have each new class decorate a pillowcase to go over the back of a chair. This quickly transform a standard classroom chair into something special for young authors.

## Checklist for Assessing an Expository Essay

<b>Cover/Illustration/ Banner</b> _____/4	_____ Has a title that is short. _____ The title puts a picture in the reader's mind. <hr/> _____ Cover/illustration/banner introduces the main idea. _____ Cover/illustration/banner gets the reader interested.
<b>Introduction Paragraph</b> _____/3	_____ The introduction includes a thesis statement that answers the prompt. _____ The introduction presents two main ideas. _____ The introduction is written clearly to grab the reader.
<b>Body Paragraphs</b> _____/6	<b>Body Paragraph 1</b> _____ Introduces one main idea. _____ Provides important details/reasons/examples to support the main idea. _____ Provides enough detail to adequately support the main idea. <hr/> <b>Body Paragraph 2</b> _____ Introduces one main idea. _____ Provides important details/reasons/examples to support the main idea. _____ Provides enough detail to adequately support the main idea.
<b>Conclusion</b> _____/2	_____ The conclusion restates the answer to the prompt. _____ The conclusion includes a personal response or opinion.
<b>Craft and Structure</b> _____/3	_____ Paragraphs are well organized. _____ Paragraphs include transition words. _____ Strong language is used.
<b>Revision and Editing</b> _____/5	_____ Writing is edited for spelling. _____ Writing is edited for grammar. _____ Writing is edited for punctuation. _____ Writing shows evidence of revision. _____ Published writing is polished.
<b>Collaboration &amp; Effort</b> _____/4	_____ Worked well with a partner. _____ Respectfully gave feedback to a partner. _____ Respectfully received feedback from a partner. _____ Showed good effort and persistence.
<b>Total:</b> _____/27	<b>Comments:</b>



# **The Largest Migration in U. S. History, 1935 - 1940**

What was the largest migration in U. S. history? Between 1935 and 1940 one million people moved from the Panhandle to California. Geographic factors and economic factors led to this large movement of people. Drought and severe dust storms in the Panhandle made farming impossible. Farmers and their families suffered from poverty and displacement. Despite these challenges, the Okies were determined to accept hardship without showing weakness. Instead of giving up, the Okies remained hopeful and worked hard to change their fate.

In 1931 it stopped raining in the Panhandle. The crops began withering in the fields. Then, the winds came and stripped away all of the topsoil making farming impossible. What was once abundant farmland now was a barren wasteland. Despite these geographic challenges, farmers continued to work in the fields. They believed that the rain would come. But the drought continued from 1931 to 1940. People tried to protect themselves from the mean dust clouds. They taped the cracks around doors and windows, slept with washcloths over their faces, and wore dust masks to school. Every morning the house had to be cleaned and children had to clean the dust out of the animals' noses. They accepted that this was what life was all about, and continued to work hard to survive.

The drought and dust storms caused economic hardship for the people living in the Panhandle. Farmers could no longer make a living growing and selling crops. The drought and dust storms had made farming impossible. Most farmers had borrowed money from the bank for their farms, and now they could not pay the bank. "When a farmer couldn't pay the bank, a tractor was sent to knock down his farmhouse as a way of forcing him to leave the land" (Stanley, p. 10). Thousands of farmers were displaced. In spite of these economic challenges, the Okies remained proud. They didn't want to take help from the government because they felt it was a disgrace to accept charity. They didn't call themselves poor. They remained hopeful that they could make a better life for themselves in California.



A mass exodus from the Southern Plains to California was a result of the geographic and economic challenges the Okies faced during the time of the Great Depression. However, when the Okies arrived in California, they continued to face many hardships. A surplus of people in California drove wages down. “Most Okie laborers couldn’t find work for even a nickel a day” (Stanley, p. 24). Okies were forced to sleep in tents and shacks. They lived in squalor. As if that wasn’t bad enough, the Californians were hostile to the Okies. They called them names and shouted, “Okie, go home” (Stanley, p. 38). The Okies did whatever it took to survive. They welcomed hard work and worked for gas and food. They drew strength from one another and remained hopeful.

The Okies endured many hardships as a result of the drought and dust storms in the Panhandle. Despite these hardships, they remained hopeful that they could make a better life for themselves and their children. They worked hard, and accepted their circumstance with dignity. I am glad Dorothea Lange took so many pictures to help us remember these people and the hardships they endured. Learning about history helps us make better choices today. I think it is important to take care of the land and not over plow the fields. I also think it is important to remember that everyone has the opportunity to change their fate through hard work and determination. I believe this attitude of strength can be an inspiration to those experiencing hardship today during the COVID-19 pandemic.