

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Informational/Explanatory Writing

**Note: When assessing levels 1, 2 and 3 texts, the child needs to be present.*

Level 1	Several unrelated pictures, may be representational, with oral commentary and perhaps approximated letters.
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When given choice of paper, including the opportunity to write in small booklets of three and/or five pages, and when asked to write an informational text that teaches people important information and ideas about a topic, the writer makes a picture or a collection of pictures that may be nonrepresentational. When asked to read his or her piece, the writer provides accompanying oral comments that do not provide information about one unifying topic. When ‘reading’ the text, the writer may or may not name what it is that he or she is writing about. ○ If there are several pictures, each may appear to be freestanding, one from the next. • <i>Awareness of Genre</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer does not seem to have yet developed a sense of genre. The text the writer produces when asked to write an informational text that teaches readers about a topic is apt to be indistinguishable from the sorts of texts the writer produces when asked to write a story, opinion piece, or essay.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount and organization of detail</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The text, which is likely to be one or more pages of pictures, is apt to contain what appears to be a random assortment of pictures, decorations, or marks within a page and across the pages. When the child reads the text aloud or talks about it, the pictures and marks do not appear to be organized into one unifying topic. ○ If encouraged to do so, the writer may return to his or her initial text and revise it, probably by adding more to the drawing. ○ When asked to read the piece, the writer might talk at length about topics or ideas that seem to be unrelated, one from the next, or alternatively the writer may say little about the text (which is probably, pictures). ○ If details are included, they are not apt to convey information about a central topic. For example, a face may include features, a flower, petals, and a house, chimney and windows.
Concept of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child seems to believe that pictures carry meaning because when asked to do so, the child “reads” the text, telling about the items in the picture(s). • Even when asked to “write the words,” the child may not yet produce a written text, even a string of approximated letters.

Meaning/ Significance or Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="597 197 1507 489">• The child may not yet write to communicate a meaning, or any specific content. That is, instead of deciding upon a meaning and then working to capture that on the page, the child may make marks on the page for the sheer pleasure of making marks or of producing a drawing that he or she knows how to make (e.g. of a flower). The writer may decide on a meaning when asked to “read” the text, with the text holding no consistent meaning. The meaning may, in fact, change every time the child “reads” the text.
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Level 2	A collection of representational pictures telling about a single topic.
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When given choice of paper, including the opportunity to write in small booklets of three and/or five pages, and when asked to write an informational text that teaches people important information and ideas about a topic, the writer uses a combination of representational drawings, oral language, and attempts at writing to tell about a topic. When asked to read his or her piece, the child produces oral commentary that accompanies the collection of pictures and pages of text. ○ The pictures and pages in the text are mostly all related to one topic. That is, the pictures and writing attempt to name what the child is writing about, perhaps also naming several parts or kinds of that thing. ○ The text is apt to include very little supporting information or examples. • <i>Focus/cohesiveness of the text</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The text suggests the writer has an early understanding that informational writing involves telling about a topic (e.g. “Dogs,” “Baseball”). • <i>Awareness of Genre</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer has an early sense of genre. The text the writer produces when asked to write an informational text that teaches about a subject is not the same as the text the writer produces when asked to write a story.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount and organization of detail</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer is apt to convey information in a few written sentences although this may instead involve just some labeled drawings, or a sentence on a page and a labeled drawing as well. The sentences may seem as if they are captions (e.g. “This is a dog.”). ○ Often the child “reads” the first page as if it contains one sentence, then “reads” the next page as if it contains the next sentence, while actual writing may still consist of approximated letters. That is, the oral text may be more developed than the written text, and may embellish what the writer has attempted to write. ○ If the writer is nudged to elaborate or to include more content or specifically, more details (or if the writer does so on his or her own), the writer is apt to do this by adding what is most apt to be general content and is usually added to the picture or to the oral text (this is less apt to be conveyed through additional writing). This process of adding more content often continues as a child ‘reads’ the text. That is, each new time the child reads the text, he or she may add more content (which is elaboration of a sort).

	<p>Sometimes this added information will feel as if the writer is explaining some added fact to the person reading/listening to the text, as when a writer might say, “See that? It is his...And here is his...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With guidance and support from adults, the writer responds to questions and suggestions from peers and adds details to strengthen writing as needed. For example, if asked, “If you wanted to make this the best piece you ever written, what might you do?” the writer is apt to respond that more content (or even details) could be added. The writer shows that he or she knows that additional information, and specifically, detailed information can strengthen the text.”
Concept of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The text will include at least approximated written words. These will probably include labels on the drawings and words written in invented spelling underneath the drawings. • The child’s approximated writing suggests he or she recognizes that writing is different than drawing—the approximated writing shows the child grasps the reoccurring, linear, letter-like nature of writing. • The child will probably grasp the directionality of written English (left-to-right, top-to-bottom). • The child seems to believe that his or her approximated letters carry meaning because at least when nudged to do so, the child ‘reads’ the writing, and does not simply talk about the pictures.
Meaning/ Significance or Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child understands that written texts convey meaning. He or she seems to have decided upon a topic, then draw and write to capture that topic on the page. • The child shows an awareness of the purposes for written language, suggesting it be shared, read aloud, used or otherwise published so as to teach people.

Level 3	A sparse collection of information and/or facts, related to one topic.
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When given choice of paper, including the opportunity to write in small booklets of three and or five pages, and when asked to write an informational text that teaches people important information and ideas about a topic, the writer uses a combination of representational drawings, oral language, and attempts at writing to tell about a topic. ○ The pictures and writings in the text mostly all relate to and tell about the topic the child has chosen. ○ The writer seems to use writing to supply information, teaching others about a particular topic. ○ When asked to read his or her piece, the writer is apt to also provide accompanying oral comments that elaborate on the topic. • <i>Focus/cohesiveness of the text</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The text suggests the writer has an early understanding that informational writing involves telling all-about a topic (e.g. soccer, my family, dogs). • <i>Awareness of Genre</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer has an early sense of genre. The text that the writer produces when asked to write an informational text that teaches about a subject is not the same as the text the writer produces when asked to write a story. The writer ‘reads’ the text using ‘an explaining’ or instructional voice. ○ The way in which the text ‘goes’ suggests that the writer grasps that his or her writing is about a topic, a subject, and that the text should tell ‘stuff’ about the topic. The ‘stuff’ may include anything that comes to the writer’s mind.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount, variety, and selectivity of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer, when given a choice of materials, is apt to choose a several page booklet and the page-divisions supports the writer in compiling a collection of ‘things to say’ related to the topic. ○ On each page (part), the writer conveys something that is at least tangentially related to the topic, usually using the picture and an accompanying sentence (or sometimes two) to convey the information. ○ As in level two, the writer can be nudged to elaborate by adding on more content or by including more information on each page (adding to each part). The writer may do this by adding to the pictures or the oral text but at least with prompting from the teacher, the writer will add this information to the written text as well. ○ The information is apt to come primarily from personal experiences, as in previous levels.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Often the child will say one thing about the topic on each page. It is possible that the writer may elaborate in some instances. ○ While most of the content included in the text is related to the chosen topic, some may not be pertinent, and some may be overly repetitive.
Concept of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The written portion of this text shows a grasp of directionality and a sense of word, with letters generally representing each dominant sound in a word and with spaces between many of the words. • The child can point to words as he or she reads, demonstrating a grasp of one-to-one correspondence.
Meaning/ Significance or Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer is growing toward an understanding that writing can be a way to teach information about a topic to others. The child understands that written texts convey meaning. • The child understands that informational texts can be shared, read aloud, or otherwise published so as to teach people.

Level 4	A collection of information, focused on one topic, some of which has been elaborated upon.
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When asked to write an information text and given a choice of paper, including small booklets of three or five pages, the writer writes and draws to convey information and ideas. ○ The writer produces a text that is much more developed than those produced in Level 3. ○ The text introduces one main topic and provides information, examples, feeling, and facts, at least most of which are related to the central topic. As the text becomes longer and more developed, the writer may include information and ideas that are tangentially related to the main topic. • <i>Focus/cohesiveness of the text</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer may gesture towards a beginning awareness that informational writing usually includes categories. The content of the text may be slotted so that each page of the booklet tells about a different subtopic. This infrastructure may be further extended, with the writing including chapters, each with a different heading. ○ The text suggests that the writer has made an effort to create some sense of closure at the end of the text, perhaps by saying something such as “And that’s all I know,” or “Cats are nice and great and fun,” or “Someday I will get a cat.”
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount, variety, and selectivity of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The information on each page is apt to be conveyed through a picture with three or four accompanying sentences. ○ The information is apt to come primarily from personal experiences, as in previous levels. The writer may, however, draw on information gleaned from hobbies (e.g. soccer) or from knowledge of topics of personal expertise (e.g. the dog pound). ○ The text is more detailed than that which writers produced at earlier levels. Often the writer will tell all-about a subtopic (“Cats eat in the morning and night”) and then the writer will expand on that with more specific information (perhaps telling exactly the kind of food particular cats eat). ○ The writer is not yet apt to include details that convey how something is said and done, or to develop information by using details that show instead of tell (e.g. at this level, it would be typical for a writer to say, “Give your dog lots of food but not too much,” but the writer is unlikely to provide further detail, such as naming the specific kind of food, or telling precise details about how to feed the food to the dog). ○ While most of the information in the text is related to a particular topic, the support information might not be well organized. Some information might seem out of order, some may be overly repetitive.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pictures and accompanying writing will often approximate the appearance of scientific or technical writing (e.g. including diagrams, some specialized vocabulary, and captions). ○ The writer is apt to gesture towards the use of features of nonfiction such as captions, labels, diagrams, lists, cover pages, and subheadings to organize and add detail to his or her piece.
Concept of Writing/Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The text is readable to others. The writer writes with directionality, a sense of word, and a command of enough high frequency words and enough onsets and rimes that readers can generally read the writing. • The writer shows an awareness that readers will read and learn from the text. This sometimes means the writer includes numbers to help readers find their way about the text, captions to illustrations, asides to the reader. • If texts at this level show any signs that the writer is deliberately aiming to not only tell content but also to tell it well, this will be rudimentary. For example, the writer may have added some sound effects or some exclamation marks “to add excitement.” • The writer may seem to be approximating a teaching tone of voice in his or her writing, perhaps even attempting to match the tone or voice used by a published nonfiction text or an adult.
Meaning/Significance or Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer conveys his or her personal interest or expertise in the topic, perhaps by referring to various bits of information (personal experience, facts, and common knowledge included) to teach the reader or demonstrate knowledge about one particular topic.

Level 5	A more developed nonfiction text that follows an expository organized by categories of information to support a topic.
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When asked to write a book that teaches important information and ideas about a topic, the writer chooses a topic on which he or she has some knowledge. ○ If the writer chooses to write in a booklet, the page-divisions often acts as a scaffold, supporting the writer in dividing his or her content into categories, each addressed in a different chapter or on a different page. If the writer writes on sheets of notebook paper, the writer may do less pre-structuring of the text, but the information will still be clustered into chunks of sentences that address a related subtopic. This structure may not be consistent throughout the text. • <i>Focus/Cohesiveness of the text</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer demonstrates an early awareness of expository structure, by organizing information into parts or categories. These may feel as if they’ve been created in a piecemeal ‘what else do I know’ fashion, rather than as the result of the writer reflecting on the topic in order to design a comprehensive pre-decided plan. ○ The writer may have attempted to write an introductory sentence in the beginning, and/or a concluding statement in the end. Neither the introduction nor the conclusion is apt to preview or review the outline of the piece—instead these are apt to bring the reader into the topic and send the reader away from the topic.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount, variety, and selectivity of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer attempts to elaborate. The writer is apt to do this either by including a handful of examples or facts, each summarized into a single sentence, or by writing about a smaller number of facts but elaborating a bit on each, writing several sentences. ○ The writer will draw upon his or her knowledge and experience, and may also draw upon knowledge from other sources such as class work, books, and/or media. It is common for the information in these texts to feel rather homogeneous, as if it all came from the same place, through the same process. ○ The child may be gesturing toward more detailed descriptions, describing how something is done and using details that show instead of tell. Yet, some, or even much of this detail may be unessential to the piece. The piece may have the feeling that the child recorded everything he or she could remember or could find out about a topic without weighing the contribution the details might make to the whole of the piece or to the desired effect. ○ While the supporting information is mostly slotted into categories, the information within categories may appear out of order or overly

	<p>repetitive. (i.e., a book on cats may have a chapter on food but that chapter lurches between wet and dry food, etc.)</p>
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures, charts, diagrams, specialized vocabulary and other features show evidence that the writer is attempting to create a piece of writing that appears scholarly, scientific, or technical even when the topic is fantastical (e.g., all about unicorns) or when the information is flawed or over-generalized (e.g., “All dogs love to eat hot dogs.”). • The writer seems to sense that he or she can deliberately make the piece more interesting to read, and may begin to try out strategies for doing so. One common way that young writers use for doing this is they write with a conversational tone (sometimes misusing or overusing) comments or quips about a fact (e.g., “...and that’s a lot!”), and sometimes addressing the reader directly (i.e., “Don’t you agree?”).
Meaning/ Significance or Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student is apt to write, to share or teach others about his or her personal interest and expertise in the topic, recalling what he or she knows from personal experiences. The writer may, however, embellish this with information from outside sources. One does not sense, however, an effort to research a topic thoroughly. • The writing may appear as if the writer (naively) assumed that the text is authoritative and thorough, although it is for him or her. This intended his or her piece to be all-inclusive, with writing to address all there is to know on (all about) the topic, rather than addressing one piece or one angle of a topic. That is, the writer often shows no awareness that he or she angles it. The writer may title the piece “All-about” or “What you need to know about.”

Level 6	
Structure /Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When asked to write an informational piece that teaches important information and ideas about a topic, the writer organizes related information and examples in groupings, (the parts of medieval castles, the weapons used in medieval times, etc.) categorized by similarities in content. ○ The writer may use devices such as headings or chapters to visually aid in distinguishing the parts. For writers producing level 6 texts, sections are often not parallel in weight, treatment or nature. The writer may spend the bulk of the piece writing about one subtopic and then may address other subtopics only briefly. ○ The writer usually provides a concluding statement or section, often sharing a general feeling about the topic or providing a quick wrap up to the piece, such as, “It’s good they were able to survive!” or “Things were different back then.” ○ The writer may gesture towards also providing an introductory section. The writer may ask the readers a question (“Have you ever wondered...” or “Did you know...” or the writer may seem to be trying to connect the reader to the text with an anecdote or a choice tidbit of information or the writer may be attempting to orient the reader with a generalization about the topic or a preview of the upcoming text. • <i>Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer’s topic choice is apt to be a broad one (i.e. whales, not specifically the sperm whale, and certainly not the lengths the sperm whale goes to in order to find food, circling the globe many times as it migrates). ○ The author may seem to operate under the illusion that he or she has made a text that encompasses the whole topic, although it most likely represents just one slice of it. ○ The writer may choose to write ‘all about animal migration,’ and yet may end up writing only about the monarch butterfly and the sperm whale’s migration, with no attention to migratory patterns of other animals or of animals in general. That is, the writer may not feel an obligation to account for the full topic. There is not yet evidence that, when finished writing the text, the writer has reflected on whether he or she has included adequate information to sufficiently cover the topic. ○ Most of the information included in the text is related to the subject. The writer may also include bits of tangential information. ○ The writer tends to have sorted information so that most of the information is placed within the subsection in which it fits. Within a subsection, the writer either does not include enough information

	<p>that the sequencing of that information is especially important, or if there is a lot of information in any one section, the writer seems unaware that the overall design of the piece can be recreated within each subsection, with the subsections also categorized.</p>
<p>Elaboration/ Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount and variety of Information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is not yet a wide variety in the nature of information included. The writer makes generalized statements about the topic and may include some variety of information such as including a description and a story as well as some facts. The writer is not yet apt to provide a tapestry of varied support material, including quotes, statistics, definitions, and the like, nor to shift between more general and more specific information. Instead, there is often a feeling of homogeneity to much of the information the writer draws upon. ○ The text may include illustrations, a glossary, labeled diagrams and/or text boxes, with the writer seeming to have grasped that these text features be used to add auxiliary information and to provide added explanatory material. • <i>Authority of Information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When writing information texts at this level, the writer’s information often comes predominantly from personal experience and knowledge rather than from secondary resources. This does not mean that the information is known universally—it may instead reflect the writer’s particular expertise. Of course, if students have been assigned to “write research papers,” the information will come from books, references, digital sources, etc., but in this instance, the information tends to be either summarized recounts or verbatim notes. The writer is not apt to have reorganized and transformed the information. ○ If writers have been directed to collect research and to write that research into an information text, then the writer will have done so, but will not be apt to do this in a way that conveys that the writer himself or herself is an authority on the information he or she has collected and combined. Chances are that the information will not have been synthesized, re-organized, digested. • <i>Selectivity of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer will seem to have approached the page with a wealth of information to draw upon (often this will be true because the text addresses a fairly unfocused topic that the writer knows intimately). The text may read as if the writer has attempted to detail nearly everything he or she knows about the topic, fitting this information into chapters or sub-heads as best he or she can. The writer is apt to seem more concerned with citing lots of information than with organizing or interpreting that information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Elaboration</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer has learned to often provide more than one example to make a point. ○ The writer is still thinking mostly in phrases or sentences of thought rather than in larger passages of thought. That is, when the writer goes to supply evidence supporting a main idea or to tell more about a subtopic, the writer tends to put each new piece of information into a one or two sentence sound-bite. It is rare for the writer to stretch some of the information out, writing about complex ideas or extended trains of thought. Usually, the bits that the writer uses to construct his or her text come in chunks that are a sentence or two in length. ○ The writer commonly uses lists (characteristics, examples, facts, etc.) to elaborate on a particular point. That is, there is a sense that the writer piles up approximately similar, related material. ○ The writer may be attempting to write all about a topic that is far bigger than anything the writer could possibly handle in the given amount of time and space. Instead of writing about the sperm whale’s migratory journey, the writer writes about ‘animals’ in general, or ‘migration’ in general. Either way, these topics are broad enough that the writer cannot possibly hope to be comprehensive.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer makes an attempt to use linking words and phrases (e.g. also, another, and, but, then) to connect one piece of information with another within a subsection of the text, which in effect makes each of those sections feel more cohesive, even if the content of the linked sentences does not in fact actually fit together as easily as the linking words seem to suggest. • As mentioned in a prior section of this document, the writer is apt to use paragraphs to indicate related passages of thought. This is not apt to be done flawlessly, but the paragraph structure will suggest the writer is gesturing towards linking related information. • The writer may use authorial asides (“That’s weird!”) The writer probably does this to respond to information (digesting it) or to add thoughts into the information or to relate to the reader, so these asides probably indicate that the writer is intending to do something valuable, but the actual asides used can often be distracting and tangential. • If the writer’s information is angled with ideas or opinions, the stance is fairly black and white, with little nuance. “Skateboarding is the best sport ever!” or “Sharks are very dangerous and scary and do not touch one.” • At points in the text, the writer will seem to have aimed to write with verve. This may result in the asides, previously mentioned, or

	<p>in the use of descriptive details, action words, or direct-address to the reader. This use of craft elements may not, in fact, be especially effective (it often creates a breezy, conversational tone) but the effort to try to balance being informative, organized and also lively is an important step ahead.</p>
<p>Meaning/ Significance or Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pieces at this level are often written in such a way that it seems as if the writer assumes the reader shares an enthusiasm for the topic (or it may seem as if the writer does not invest himself or herself in an effort to gain readers' interest). • If the writer seems to be actively working to support reader engagement, this is apt to result in a catchy lead. Often the writer does not do much beyond using a 'hook' device in the introduction to the reader. • If the writer seems especially oriented towards interesting readers, the writer may make brief interpretive comments (asides, almost) throughout and may write an ending that reflects.

Level 7	
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When asked to write an informational piece that teaches important information and ideas about a topic, the writer introduces a topic and then groups related information and examples into chapters, sections, and/or paragraphs that are organized by similarities in content. ○ As in the previous level, the writer use devices such as headings, chapters, and/or paragraphing to visually aid in distinguishing one part of the text from another and establishing a sense of coherence within parts. The sections covered tend to be more parallel in weight or, if not in weight, in treatment than they were in texts at the previous level, although the writer may still give some ideas a disproportionate amount of coverage. ○ Introduction (SEE PRIOR LEVEL) ○ The writer provides a concluding statement (sometimes this is more than a statement, becoming a section) related to the main ideas or most important information presented. That is, the conclusion of the entire piece does not relate only to the subsection within which it is located, but instead relates to the piece as a whole. • <i>Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer has learned to often provide more than one example to make a point. ○ The writer’s topic choice is apt to be more focused (i.e. rather than whales, the topic is sperm whale). ○ The author may seem to operate under the illusion that he or she has made a text that encompasses the whole topic, although it is not apt to deal with the topic in a comprehensive fashion. ○ When the writer does not cover the main aspects of a topic, the writer is not apt to acknowledge the important areas that have not been covered. ○ Most of the information included in the text is related to the subject. The writer may also include bits of tangential information. ○ The writer tends to have sorted information into subsections of the text. The information within a subsection all tends to be at least loosely related by subtopic. There is a greater sense that information included in a subsection is at least en route to being cohesive, with one piece of supporting information linked together with another at least some of the time, usually through transition words and phrases (i.e., another, for example, also, because). ○ The sections themselves all relate back to the main topic or opinion. That is, if the writer describes the monarch butterflies’ migration in one chapter and the sperm whales’ migration in another chapter, the writer maintains a focus on migration, and may at the end of the text

	<p>synthesize information from the specific animals that migrate and say something about migration in general.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is a tendency at this level for the writers to structure the entire text in a way that moves roughly from more general information about a topic at the beginning of the piece to more narrow, specific information. Eventually writers will repeat this structure within subsections, but that is not necessarily the case yet.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount and variety of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer includes information of varied nature. The writer may include facts, definitions, concrete details, quotes, or other information or examples related to the topic. ○ As was true at the previous level, the text may include illustrations, a glossary, labeled diagrams, or text boxes, as well as charts (which will tend to have been copied from resource material rather than devised by the writer). The writer seems to have grasped that these text features allow the writer to add auxiliary information and explanatory material. • <i>Authority of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Even when writing about topics of personal expertise, some of the information that the writer includes may be domain-specific rather than common knowledge. For example, the writer is apt to use terminology that reflects his or her knowledge of the topic. ○ The writer may draw on some variety of sources of information, including print and media sources and others who know about the topic, but unless the writer has been specifically assigned to write about an academic subject or a research topic, the bulk of the information will come from personal experience. Of course, if students have been assigned to ‘write research papers,’ the information will come from books, references, digital sources, etc., but in this instance, the information tends to be either summarized recounts, or verbatim notes. The writer is not apt to have reorganized and transformed the information. ○ If writers have been directed to collect research and to write that research into an information text, then the writer will have done so to a limited extent. Rather than synthesizing, integrating, and/or reorganizing the new information, the writer will have ‘put it into his or her own words’ and perhaps responded to the information with first reactions or what typically comes across as breezy thoughts. If for example, that is, then the information gleaned from secondary sources is not yet apt to have been synthesized, re-organized, or digested. ○ If the writer draws evidence from texts, he or she is apt to refer to either literary or informational texts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Selectivity of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The author is beginning to show awareness that he or she is addressing just one part of or, one slant on, a bigger topic. ○ There is evidence that the writer has chosen a topic or an aspect of a topic and has made a plan to try to cover the proposed topic at least somewhat comprehensively. ○ If the writer interprets his or her information, advancing a claim, then the writer may select support material that matches that claim, suggesting that the writer has brought some of his or her skills at essay writing into his or her work with informational writing. • <i>Elaboration</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer is still thinking mostly in phrases or sentences of thought rather than in larger passages of thought. That is, when the writer goes to supply evidence supporting a main idea or to tell more about a subtopic, the writer tends to put each new piece of information into a one or two sentence sound bite. It is rare for the writer to stretch some of the information out, writing about complex ideas or extended trains of thought. Usually the bits that the writer uses to construct his or her text come in chunks that are a sentence or two in length. ○ Once the writer introduces a subtopic, the writer produces at least two and often more related pieces of support information to embellish each of those subtopics. ○ There are places in the text where the idea the writer works to convey can't be contained within a single sentence, and is instead communicated through sentences that fit tongue and grove together to convey a more nuanced thought. That is, there are places in the text where the chunks of support information that the writer includes are more extended than usual, and in these instances it seems as if the writer has written in 'passages of thought' instead of 'sentences of thought.' ○ The writer is occasionally reflecting on a kernel of information in a way that connects that specific fact or example to the overall topic (which in turn connects that piece of information to prior text). This gesture towards synthesis and interpretation usually means that after telling a fact, the writer produces a sentence or two about that fact, with the sentences usually relating that new fact to the overall topic and perhaps to a prior fact that is like this one.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer is apt to use linking phrases as well as words (using 'another example', 'in a similar way', 'at the same time', 'on the other hand' etc.) and the writer uses these not only to link one piece of information to another within a subsection (a chapter, for example) but also to link the support material within any one

	<p>subsection to the overall topic or theme of the entire piece. This means the author will use words to synthesize new information with old, or information in one chapter with information in another, saying things such as, “All these examples show that...” “This is one more reason why...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As at the previous level, the writer seems to try to connect with the reader. One way to do this is to speak directly to an audience, addressing the reader as “you.” This may result in a breezy, conversational tone to the piece (“I bet you can’t guess what they did next!”) and may not improve the style of the text, but the intention to connect with a reader is a positive development even if it doesn’t yet translate into more effective writing. • At points in the text, the writer will seem to aim to not only convey information but also to write well. This often means that the writer either aims to be descriptive, or that the writer aims to write with verve. This may result in the use of descriptive details, action words, or direct-address to the reader. The use of craft elements tends to be inconsistent at this stage, often resulting in a few ‘warm spots’ in a text which otherwise shovels out information. Often this results in a catchy lead and a few other well-crafted spots. • The writer appears to select information to include (or not include) and to also decide where to place chosen information. For example, a shocking fact might be included as part of the lead. However, there are also times when the information feels misplaced, or does not get the desired effect.
<p>Meaning/ Significance or Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer often conveys an interest in and enthusiasm for the topic, and seems to hope that the written text will lure readers to be equally interested in the topic.

Level 8	
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When asked to write an informational piece that teaches important information and ideas about a topic, the writer introduces the topic and previews the subtopics or categories that the writer will develop over the course of the text. The writer is apt to use chapter titles, headings and subheadings (A-heads, B-heads, C-heads) to establish the exoskeleton of the text and to help readers discern the main ideas and supporting details, in cohesion of parts. ○ The subtopics or categories that will be developed over the course of the text tend to be parallel (or almost parallel) in nature, one with another. That is, the paper maybe chunked so as to develop each of the major steps immigrants went through as they arrived on US shores. If so, there would not be a category about the design of the Statue of Liberty. ○ Not only the text as a whole, but specific chapters (or other subsections) are apt to contain introductions that seem to be written so as to draw in and orient readers. This suggests that the writer may have a sense of published nonfiction text chapters (sections) in mind and may be attempting to mimic this structure. ○ The writer provides a concluding section that relates to the main idea presented in the piece and not just to the final bits of information being shared just prior to the text’s ending. Often the writer shares a general feeling about the entire topic, restating the organizing structure in the process. • <i>Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer chooses a focused topic that is appropriate for the length of the piece. For example, the writer may choose “the importance of the shortstop position” instead of “baseball.” ○ The writer may focus not only on a more specific topic (shortstop versus all of baseball, but also on an aspect of the topic, or a claim about the topic (the important role played by the short stop). ○ The writer may make an effort to be accountable for covering what the writer believes are the important aspects of the topic. The writer chooses and presents subtopics that add up to being comprehensive and feel at least somewhat equal in weight. For example, when writing about an animal, the writer may have categories such as the habitat, the enemies, the life cycle. ○ The pieces of information in each subsection of the text are linked together, and this occurs not just because they all relate to the same subheading, but also because the writer overtly relates one piece of information with the next, often planning a subsection of the text just as the writer also plans the main text structure. If the pieces of information within a subsection illustrate the variety of ways something

	<p>is done, the writer is apt to select linking phrases such as, ‘Then again,...’ ‘On the other hand,...’ ‘Another way...’ If the pieces of information are linked by time, with one occurring before the next, then the linking words will tend to relate to time. ‘A while later,...’ ‘Not longer after this,...’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The pieces of information in one subsection are sometimes linked back to pieces of information from earlier subsections, using terms such as, ‘Like the..., the.... ‘ or ‘Earlier we learned that...., now we have a second reason...’ ○ Writers shift between generalizations and specifics throughout the text.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount and variety of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As was true for Level 7 texts, texts at this level include a variety of support information including facts about the subject, definitions of important terms, explanations of important ideas, and direct quotations from books or from people regarded as experts. ○ The writer has a variety of sources of information (personal experience, secondary resources). ○ The writer uses text features, as was true for Level 7 texts, as vehicles for including both necessary background information and fascinating but often irrelevant little details. If the writer is writing about the sperm whale and wants to define plankton or to illustrate the size of the whale by comparing it with buses, the writer might include this subordinate but somewhat relevant information through the use of text features. • <i>Authority of Information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some of the information that the writer includes is domain-specific, involving the terminology of the writer’s chosen topic. It is almost as if the writer has noticed that some published nonfiction contains “bold words” or a glossary of terms, and the writer gestures towards using technical language in similar ways to establish his or her expertise. ○ If writers have been directed to collect research and to integrate that research into an information text, the writer will, in specific instances, draw on outside resources rather directly. Chances are that this information will have only slightly, if at all, been synthesized, re-organized, or digested. ○ The writer will make attempts to cite the source for some of this information, either within the text or by including it as an additional page of sources. Because information that has been cited is apt to be written in a very different register than that used for the bulk of the information text, the result may be a text that lurches from one tone and voice to another, somewhat awkwardly. These stark shifts in tone may not enhance the effect of the final text but reflect growing pains. • <i>Selectivity of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The author shows awareness that he or she is addressing one part of (or one slant on) a bigger topic. The author may be more able to articulate his or her slant than he or she could do when writing texts at previous

	<p>levels; the slant may shape the writer’s topic itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The topic of the text often seems to be a claim or an idea as much as a topic, and so not surprisingly, the writer then draws upon his or her knowledge of ways to support claims in order to develop the text. This may mean that the writer supports the claim by providing parallel reasons, for example. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The text shows that the writer has learned that this kind of writing requires elaboration. Throughout the text, there are repeated instances when the writer ‘provides evidence.’ Often the writer provides not just one piece of supporting information, but more than one piece, and there are instances when the writer elaborates on a piece of information. The writer is apt to do this by ‘adding his or her thinking’ to a fact. ○ Texts at this level generally include at least one instance when the writer has used approximately 3-4 sentences to describe something at length or to convey an idea that is complex enough it can’t be shoehorned into one sentence, or to take readers along a logical sequence of thought. This sort of elaboration tends to be spotty, and may not always be done effectively, but the writer demonstrates an awareness of writing in passages of thought, not just sentences of thought, as a goal. ○ The writer attempts to include not just information but information that has been angled with ideas. The writer gestures towards doing this—towards angling the information to advance ideas—mostly by choosing information that is not just related by topic, but that supports the writer’s specific interpretation of (spin on) that topic. The writer chooses to include and even sometimes to develop in more detail the information that makes his or her point, and bypasses other information. For example, if the writer’s point is that the sperm whale’s appetite is so ravenous that this requires the sperm whale to circle the globe many times, the writer may not persevere over the variety of food that the whale eats so much as the quantity of food. ○ An idea or several ideas are woven through several parts of the text, with the writer returning to ideas, sometimes repeating and sometimes building on them, in ways that create a sense of cohesiveness. The information text begins to feel as if parts of it, if not the entire text, are somewhat similar to the work the writer does when writing essays.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer may imbed imagery, anecdotes and/or small scenes to paint a picture in the reader’s mind. These create a clearer image or feeling for the reader, though there may be unevenness in the handling of these across the piece as the whole, with some being far more involved and others quite brief. • The writer often speaks directly to an audience, addressing the reader as “you.” This is often effective in small doses, at the start and end of the piece and in authorial asides, but when the writer maintains this

	<p>conversational tone throughout the text, it often makes the text overly informal and breezy, but the writer’s awareness that a reader will be learning from the text (taking the course this writer is teaching) is admirable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer appears to reach towards the goal of writing well. This means that when it comes to adding information into the piece, the one and only goal is not ‘more.’ Instead, it seems as if the writer is attempting to select ‘powerful’ or ‘intriguing’ information to include. The writer has used colorful language, sensory detail, direct address to the reader, spice questions, etc. • The writer not only chooses pieces of information that will be effective, but also thinks about the placement of those pieces. For example, a shocking fact might be included as part of the lead. • The writer will include domain specific vocabulary.
<p>Meaning/ Significance or Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The text suggests that the writer is attempting to not just tell a lot of information in an organized fashion, but to make an impression on the reader. The writer has done this by attempting to write well (at least in spots) and by advancing an opinion or an idea about the topic. • The writer often seems to imagine that his or her written text will inspire readers to act. The text may end with admonitions to work towards a cause or with suggestions for how to learn more.

Level 9	
Structure/ Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When asked to write an informational piece that teaches important information and ideas about a topic and given the opportunity to draw on secondary sources (while still producing a piece of writing within an hour), the writer chooses a topic on which he or she has some domain-specific knowledge. The writer may have personal experience with the topic or may have studied it, but either way, the writer has some knowledge that is not universally shared. ○ As at the previous level, the writer introduces the topic at the start of the paper. ○ The structure of the text is not hard to discern. The writer may preview the subtopics or categories that will be addressed in the introduction, (“The three basic understandings you require in order to play guitar are...”) or may organize the piece so that the structure is clear early on because of the use of transition or linking words (“In the beginning, many of the Colonists were still loyal to...”) ○ As in texts classified as Level 8 texts, the texts written at this level contain introductions that seem to be written to draw in and orient readers. ○ The subtopics or categories that will be developed over the course of the text are, as at the previous level, almost parallel or parallel in nature. At this level, however, the writer not only groups related information and examples together, but also seems to have deliberately chosen a way to organize and present these subsections. The writer may proceed chronologically, for example, or may organize the categories in order of importance. If writing about immigration, for example, the text may tell about forces that motivated immigrants to come, and that kept them from coming. Alternately, the writer might embed information into a chronological account of one immigrant’s journey. ○ Writers at this level may begin to provide a structure not only to the whole text but to separate sections. For example, each section might begin with an anecdote, move on to the main point, then include some relevant details. ○ The writer provides a concluding section that follows from the information provided. The conclusion often references or works off from the introduction, perhaps repeating or restating introductory material and perhaps also restating information from the subsections. That is, there is a sense that the writer has consciously crafted the beginning and ending so that they highlight what’s most important about this topic.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As at the previous level, the writer chooses a focused topic that is appropriate for the length of the piece. ○ The writer may also at this level provide context for why he/she is choosing to focus on this particular topic or this aspect of a broader topic. For example, in an introductory remark, the writer might state, “There is no one way to sum up the immigrant experience. This article will tell about hardships immigrants faced as they entered through Ellis Island. Others came in other ways, but Ellis Island is important because millions came this way and because we have evidence that tells what happened to people there.” ○ The writer is more successful at this level at choosing and presenting subtopics that add up to being comprehensive and feeling equal in weight. ○ Even more so than at previous levels, the subsections of the text seem to be miniature information pieces. Many subsections have an introductory and a concluding sentence. ○ The writer uses linking words not only to link one piece of information with another but also to link one subsection of the text with another. The linking words tend to match the overarching text structure. That is, if the sections of the text are chronologically ordered, the linking words will tend to show the passage of time. If the structure involves overviews of different kinds, then the linking words might be, ‘Other...’ or ‘Although some are..., others are...’ ○ In a few cases, overt linking may disappear as the writer becomes more skilled at creating chunks that flow naturally. ○ The pieces of information in one subsection are sometimes linked back to pieces of information from earlier subsections, using terms such as, ‘Like the..., the....’ or ‘Earlier we learned that..., now we have a second reason....’ ○ Writers continue, as at the previous level, to shift between generalizations and specifics throughout the text. This feels less clunky and random at this level—the writer uses examples in a more pointed and deliberate fashion, and moves to generalization when it seems important to sum up something important or offer a larger insight.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amount and variety of information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Texts at this level include a variety of support information including, as at previous levels, facts, definitions, explanations, and quotations. ○ Compared to previous levels, here the writer makes more of an attempt to weave source information into their own voice and style and to help the reader contextualize the information inside of the broader topic. One way the writer does this is to offer his/her ideas or thoughts alongside gathered facts, sometimes attempting to analyze the source information a bit (e.g. “This fact might seem surprising, but consider...” or “This goes

	<p>to show how...”).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer may use text features, such as maps, graphs, subheadings, etc., more successfully to supplement the main body of text. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Authority of Information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer includes more domain-specific information, using more precise terminology. The writer is more flexible than at levels 8 or 7 with the use of this vocabulary: he or she employs a variety of ways of teaching the reader the meanings of these terms, such as explanatory sentences, footnotes, glossaries, etc. ○ The writer shows a greater understanding of the necessity to turn to outside sources for authentication and accountability to a topic. The references to these sources are somewhat more integrated into the piece at this level through the use of asides, etc. (see above in Amount and Variety of Information), but there are still places where the source material has been ungracefully included. ○ As at the previous level, the writer attempts to cite source material, but demonstrates a novice understanding of both the conventions and the art of citation. Citations may not be written according to any particular style sheet, and may intrude on the flow of the piece. ○ At this level, when looking at the writer’s citations, it seems clear that the writer has chosen sources based on their credibility: at the basic level determining the difference between information coming from experts (up-to-date published books in the school library, information from a university website) or information that they should be wary of trusting (a “comment” posted on a blog). • <i>Selectivity of information:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More so than at previous levels, the slant that the writer has chosen determines which details are and are not included in the supporting sections. ○ At this level, there is a sense that the writer is including only the most compelling information, or the information that is best documented, to explain and expand on in subordinate sections. • <i>Elaboration</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are even more examples in pieces at this level of the writer providing context or commenting on the evidence or information in each section. ○ As at Level 8, the writers of pieces at this level find at least one place to stretch their commentary into a 3-4-sentence interpretation. These extended passages are more fluent and informative, but there still may be a circular or repetitive feel to the elaboration: “Every legal document that the colonist (sic.) got must have a stamp purchased from the British. The cost of the stamp act was small but the colonists were not mad at the cost they were mad about taxation without representation. The colonists had no say in the taxing by England.”
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is even more evidence of deliberate elaboration of significant sections versus relaying information just to showcase the writer’s knowledge. ○ At this level, there is clear cohesion within each subsection: each part feels like a whole and has an angle or subtopic clearly guiding the details and information within.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer’s use of imagery, anecdotes and/or small scenes to paint a picture in the reader’s mind are more successful at this level: there are smoother transitions between the parts where the writer is “giving information” and the parts where the writer creates a mini-scene or expands on an image. • The writer may begin to use a more formal tone at this level, attempting more often to draw in the reader by describing or relaying information in compelling ways, without an over-reliance on addressing the reader directly. There will still be moments of breaking out of this tone to appeal to the reader, sometimes with powerful effect and sometimes less powerfully. Pieces at this level start to evoke the voice and pacing of a teacher, or a television show. • As at the previous level, Level 9 pieces demonstrate attempts by the writer to write the piece well. Writers may experiment at this level with storytelling as leads to sections or to the whole piece, or with analogies or rhetorical questions to prompt the reader to think through the content. • The writer continues to consider where to place significant information for the greatest effect. The writer may also return to a significant image or piece of information from the introduction in the conclusion.
Meaning/ Significance Or Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer at this level shows a commitment to teaching the reader what is most important and/or interesting about the topic. Through the choice of an angle or a subtopic, and through other authorial choices regarding details and sourcing, the writer shows accountability both to the truth of the topic and to the reader’s learning. • The writer may use more craft to instill a sense of urgency in the reader around the topic, rather than assuming that readers care automatically.