A.5. CURRICULUM SAMPLE – Sixth Grade Writing

Grade Level	Content Area	Course Title	Unit Title
Grade 6	**Writing**	**N/A**	**Take Note: How to choose and use a writing topic**

Length of Unit	Time of Year Taught	Expected Prior Knowledge
6 Lessons over 8 Days	**2nd Quarter**	Every student should understand and use all concepts and skills from the previous grade levels with regard to Writing according to Common Core State Standards. Students should be trained in the basic use of Thinking Maps. Students will have some background knowledge about Ancient Rome as provided by instruction from 3rd grade Core Knowledge, and previous 6th grade lessons.

Unit Description

This unit is a compilation of lessons that instruct students in strategies to choose and narrow a writing topic. In this unit, students will learn how to effectively organize information and observations in a usable format for later use in creating a writing piece. This unit would be used prior to the expectation of completing a writing piece. Essential Questions: How do authors decide what to write about? What is an effective way to take notes? How do authors choose, narrow, and organize a topic? Enduring Understanding: Authors observe the world around them, take notes, and organize their ideas to craft an effective nonfiction piece. Students will organize notes for a specified purpose, and use background knowledge and research to choose an appropriate topic.

Common Core Standards	**6.W.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. a. Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. c. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. e. Establish and maintain a formal style. f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.
Summative Assessment	Students will be assessed on a rubric based on 5 days of entries in their writer's notebook. The entries will compose a body of work that shows a complete picture of each student's understanding of the concept. Students must achieve an 80% to show mastery of the concept.
Assessment Scoring	Assessment will be graded on a six traits rubric. Students will be graded on all 6 traits. Each trait is worth a total of 5 points. The assessment is worth a total of 30 points. Students must score 24/30 to achieve an 80%. 80% = Mastery

Materials/ Resources Needed	Writer's Notebook, Video: *Ancient Rome Struggles for Power* (Discovery Channel-available from Discovery Streaming), outline for note taking, books on Ancient Rome, Internet access, *Crab Moon* by Ruth Horowitz or *Hello Ocean* by Pam Munoz Ryan, chart paper

	Lesson 1	**Lesson 2**	**Lesson 3**	**Lesson 4**	**Lesson 5**	**Lesson 6**
Lesson Instruction	**Day 1** Explain to students that when it is time to write a non-fiction text, they must first find a place to begin. The best place to begin is by identifying their prior knowledge. Ask students to imagine they are writing a report about the Roman Republic. Have students get out their Writer's Notebook. Instruct students to take 3 minutes and write a list of everything they know about the Roman Republic. Encourage students to simply write fragments or phrases, not complete sentences to make the best use of their time. Stop students after 3 minutes. Have them get	**Day 2** Instruct students that after a topic is chosen, they must determine how they are going to interest their reader. An author chooses the topic because it interests them, and they need to find the most interesting facts to use in their work. Provide students access to the Internet and books on Ancient Rome from the public, school, or classroom library. Model for students how to scan the books and Internet for appropriate information. Tell students to find and record the most	**Day 3** Remind students that one of the six traits of writing is organization. Tell them that it is important that writing is well organized so it is easy for the reader to understand. Tell students to take a look at their chosen topics from yesterday. Have students ask three "big" questions about their topic that they think are interesting and can be answered through research. For example, What could I buy at the Roman Forum? What entertainment was found at the Roman Forum? Where was the Roman Forum located and why?	**Day 4** Read a portion of a text about Rome to students. Choose a non-fiction text that is very factual, but a bit dry. Then, share an equally informative book written with sensory description and in a fun way. Ask students which text they like better and why. Have a discussion about the two texts. Then, Inform students that even in non-fiction writing, they must clearly identify and describe their topic. Authors do this obviously in fiction writing, but it is also important so that readers can	**Day 5** Remind students about the importance of the introduction in a writing piece. Every piece must have an effective hook to get the reader interested. Share with students a variety of non-fiction texts and discuss the different introductions that are used. Evaluate the effectiveness of these introductions and make a list of ideas for introductions on chart paper. Now, have students think about their topic. Have them write 3 possible introductions (hooks) for their piece. Model this to students prior to having them do it. Have students get	**Day 6, 7, and 8** Tell students that today they will take their organized information and create their draft. Model for students how to take their introductions from their writer's notebooks and put them in the correct place on their paper. Then, show them how to organize their three four squares to put their piece together. Finally, show them that they will put their conclusion at the very end. Provide students

	into groups of 3. Instruct students to take turns reading their lists aloud to the group. If a student hears something they know is a fact, but didn't include, he or she should add it to their page. Review with students the strategy of outlining to take notes. This will be done from a brief 2-minute video on Rome. Lead students in a discussion of what notes were taken and how items were determined to be included. Inform students that not everyone will have exactly the same notes because individuals may place importance on different facts. Teacher will provide a pre-made outline to students so that students can fill in necessary information while watching a video. This outline will be pasted into the writer's notebook. The outline	fascinating facts into a list in their notebook. After researching, have students make a list of three possible writing topics based on the facts they gathered. Have students take a few minutes to discuss their possible topics with a partner. After the discussion, have students ask their partner which topic they should write about. Partners should help each other based on how interesting or exciting the topic seemed and how much information had been gathered. Tell students to choose a final topic to continue forward with.	Provide students time to research their three questions. Students should answer these questions in their writer's notebooks. Now, invite students to organize their information into 3 four square organizers. First, show them to put a topic sentence in the center. Then, instruct them to organize their facts in the next three boxes. Tell them to leave the final box blank.	understand and relate to a non-fiction topic. Read the story Crab Moon by Ruth Horowitz or Hello Ocean by Pam Munoz Ryan. These books have non-fiction components and great description and imagery. As a class, brainstorm the places where the author uses description with senses to enhance the story. Ask students what their five senses are. Write correct student responses on the board. Have students copy the five senses into their writer's notebooks in a list. Tell students to consider their research and information they have gathered. Instruct students to write multiple sensory	into groups of 4. While in their groups of 4, students will evaluate each other's introductions, so students will get feedback from 3 of their peers. Now, instruct students to take the feedback and make a final decision about which introduction to use. Tell students that our final piece to making out writing great is adding transitions. Work with students to brainstorm possible transitions. Make a list on chart paper so students can refer back to it. Next, Show students sample foursquare organizers created by the teacher. Show students how to go to each box in the organizer and add transitional words in the upper left hand corner. Tell them that	time to complete the draft. Over the next 2 days, students will be provided the opportunity to revise and edit their drafts based on a standard six traits rubric. They can conference with the teacher if necessary. Students will then create a final draft that is ready to turn in.

	will follow the ideas set forth in the explicit modeling. A video about Rome will be played for the students. After the video, facilitate a discussion of the note taking process.			descriptions in their writer's notebooks. Use the forum example to model expectations. Write a few sensory descriptions for students about the forum to get them on the right foot. Make sure students are clear that this is important preparation to use in a final writing piece.	a transition word isn't always needed, but that it does help writing flow. Provide students time to add transitional words to their four square.	

	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
Lesson Instruction	**Day 1** Students will identify prior knowledge by writing for 3 minutes in their writer's notebook about the assigned topic of the Roman Republic. Students will share their knowledge with a group and accept ideas from others as necessary. Students will participate in the discussion of the teacher's note taking model. Students will take notes on the provided outline while watching a video on the topic being studied (Rome). Students will evaluate their note taking at the conclusion of the lesson. What went well? What can be improved upon?	**Day 2** Students will conduct research using the Internet and print resources. Students will use their sources to find interesting facts. Students will record these facts into their notebooks. Students will narrow their facts into possible writing topics and discuss these options with a partner.	**Day 3** Students will show understanding of review of the trait of organization. Students will ask questions about a topic to guide research and understanding. Students will conduct research in books and on the Internet to broaden their knowledge of their topic. Students will fill in four square organizers with a topic sentence and factual information.	**Day 4** Students will participate in a discussion of two different texts on Ancient Rome and determine which is more effective in educating a reader. Students will actively listen to the reading of the story. Students will assist in the identification and brainstorming of the author's use of senses and description. Students will participate in a class discussion of the five senses. Students will create a list of the five senses in their writer's notebook. They will add to this list by using their five senses to describe their Ancient Roman topic.	**Day 5** Students will listen to the reading of non-fiction introductions, evaluate those introductions, and make a list of ways to start a non-fiction piece. Students will write three possible hooks for their writing piece. They will then evaluate each other's introductions. Students will choose the best introduction to start their piece. Students will work as a class to make a list of transitional words and phrases on chart paper. Students will add transitions to their four square papers.	**Day 6, 7, 8** Students will participate in discussion as the teacher models how to put together the draft. Students will create their drafts by organizing their work from previous lessons. Students will revise and edit their work based on expectations from a six traits rubric. Students will complete and turn in a final copy.

Grade 6 Writing Assessment and Rubric

	IDEAS	ORGANIZATION	VOICE	WORD CHOICE	SENTENCE FLUENCY	CONVENTIONS
5	*Clear and focused paper holds the reader's attention * Ideas are fresh and original *Details are quality and go beyond the obvious and predictable *Ideas show insight and understanding of what is important	*Organization enhances the central idea and compels the reader through the text *Introduction and conclusion engage the reader and focus attention *Pacing, support, and transitions are controlled, logical, and effective	*Writer is individual, compelling, and engaging *Person behind the words is honest and sincere *Strong commitment to topic is clear *Tone adds flavor and texture *Reader wants to share and talk about this piece *Many moments of surprise and delight	*Words are powerful and engaging, specific and accurate *Language is natural and effective * Writer has carefully chosen the precise word for the right spot *Striking words and phrases catch the reader's eye	*Writing flows with rhythm and cadence *Purposeful and varied sentence structure enhances meaning *Writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning *Dialogue and fragments, if used, sound natural	*Conventions are used effectively to enhance readability *Only minor "touch-up" is needed to publish *Conventions are used for stylistic effect *Paragraphing is effecting *Spelling of difficult words is usually correct
4	*Topic is narrow and manageable *Paper is clear and focused *Details are relevant and provide important information * Writer shows involvement with the topic	*Order moves the reader easily through the text *Effective introduction and conclusion *Sequencing and details are logical and effective *Transitions work	*Writer reveals personality and attitudes *Reader senses the person behind the words *Strong involvement with topic is evident *Some surprise and delight	*Writing is energetic with lively verbs and precise nouns and modifiers *Words and phrases create pictures *Language is effective, not overdone	*Sentences are well built and varied in structure *Writing has rhythm and flows naturally	*Conventions are generally correct and contribute to clarity *Piece is close to being ready to publish *Paragraphing is sound *Spelling is usually correct
3	*Development is general and may be unfocused * Topic is recognizable but theme is not clear	*Order moves the reader without confusion *Introduction and conclusion are present *Sequence is logical but	*Writer is sincere but not fully involved. *Earnest and pleasant, with occasional delight *Voice is expressed	*Language lacks energy and precision *Words are adequate but without flair and originality	*Writing has pleasant, steady beat *Sentences are usually grammatical but not well crafted	*Conventions are handled inconsistently *Paragraphing is awkward

	*More general observations than specific details *Ideas are reasonably clear there's no strong sense of purpose	"programmed" *Transitions and pacing are inconsistent *Organization doesn't always support main idea	inconsistently *Writer discards personality in favor of safety	*Occasional colorful language *Familiar words and phrases communicate but don't engage	*Some occasional variety in sentence structure	*Some errors are distracting but not serious *Spelling inconsistent *Moderate editing would fix most errors
2	*Topic is yet undefined and development is basic *More information is needed for support *Ideas are not detailed enough to show understanding	* Attempts at introduction and conclusion are recognizable *Connections are fuzzy *Sometimes the sequencing takes away from the content	*Writing is neither unique nor distinctive *Reads as though it could have been written by almost anybody *One or two moments of voice, but mostly generalities and vague language	*Language is only functional *Words are generally used correctly *Attempts at original language seem like thesaurus overload *Jargon and cliches are present	*More mechanical than fluid *Sentences are routine and unvaried *Writing is inconsistent with some awkward phrasing	*Conventions distort meaning *Many errors distract from readability *Difficult words often misspelled *Extensive editing required for publication *Paragraphing is attempted
1	*No clear sense of purpose or topic *Reader must infer meaning *Information and details are limited and unclear	*No clear sense of direction *Order seems random *Connections are missing *No real introduction or conclusion *Reader is confused	*Writer is indifferent and uninvolved from topic and/or audience *Writing is lifeless and mechanical *Writing is functional and monotonous	*Language is vague and vocabulary is limited *Redundancy and incorrect word use distract the reader	*Sentences are choppy, incomplete, awkward, and unvaried *Even with editing, there would be no flow	*Errors repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read *Poor conventions are noticeable *Paragraphing is haphazard or missing

Day 3- Note-taking Outline for Rome video
Ancient Rome: Struggles for Power

1. The Republic of Rome

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

2. Rome and Slavery

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

3. Under Caesar's Rule

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

4. Octavian Leads

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

6. Nero and the Beginning and the End

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

7. Rome: Period of Struggle

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.