Writing: Lesson 23

Today the students will practice planning for informative/explanatory prompts in response to text they read.

The following passages will be used in this lesson:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alligators at Risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alligator Habitats</td>
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In the previous section of this curriculum, students learned how to plan for expository prompts using the IRC outline. Remind students that expository, explanatory and informative all mean the same thing—to explain or give information. They will still be using an outline to plan, but instead of planning for random prompts, they will be planning for prompts in response to text that they have just read.

For informative writing, we will use an ITC outline to plan for our essay. Instead of reasons (R’s) we will list 3 topics (T’s). This is because for informative writing you will be coming up with 3 topics to inform your reader about (instead of reasons).

Explain to students that for the writing test they will be given 2-4 passages to read that all have a similar topic/theme. After reading the text, they will be given a prompt that directs them to write something about what they just read. That is when they will need to plan their essay and then write a 5 paragraph essay just like they learned in the previous section.

Here are a couple of examples to explain to the students:

- Let’s say you just read three passages on helping out in your community. You are then directed to write to the following prompt: Think about how you can make a difference in your community. Using information from the text, explain what work you would do and tell how this work would make a difference in your community.
- Another example is if you were given two passages about different animal habitats. After reading the passages you were given the following prompt: Write to inform your reader about protecting animal habitats in a community.

As you can see, for both examples your prompt is based on what you just read. Instead of just writing about your favorite animal or special person in your life, you will be writing about information you are given in the text. When planning, you will need to come up with your own 3 topics (T1, T2, and T3) based on the text.
1. Read both passages aloud to class (or you can read one aloud and have them independently read the other).
2. Write this prompt on the board:
   *Write an informative essay to present to your class about alligators. Use information from the passages in your essay.*
3. Using the ITC outline, model planning for this prompt using the outline below

   **When planning for this, remind students that they are not coming up with 3 reasons. They are simply informing/explaining to the reader 3 things about alligators. They can pick any 3 things they want from the passages, but they have to make sure they are BIG (broad) things that they can write a lot about.

**Example Planning**

I Alligators

T1 Species a. American b. Chinese
T2 Type of Reptile a. Cold blooded b. Eggs
T3 Habitats a. Freshwater b. Holes

C Alligators

Some things to discuss while writing this outline (think aloud as you write this):
- My 3 topics are big topics that I can write a lot about. These are all main topics that are discussed in the passages
- My A’s and B’s are details/examples to further discuss my 3 topics

For the next part of this lesson you will use the following passages:

Climates, an Introduction
Climate Zones
4. Read both passages.

5. Write this prompt on the board:
   *Your teacher has asked that you write a paper about climates. Write an explanatory essay about climates. Your essay must be based on ideas and information from the passages.*

6. Using the ITC outline, have students plan for this prompt (5-10 minutes)

   Example:
   
   I Climates
   T1 Factors a. Latitude b. Distance
   T2 Tropical a. Sun b. Habitats
   T3 Dry a. Little rain b. Cacti
   C Climates

7. After they have planned, share planning ideas and compile list of examples and non-examples on the board. Discuss what some good topics are (as well as ones that will not work) and make sure their A and B sentences make sense.

8. Review today’s objective – planning for informative/explanatory prompt. Explain that we are still using the ITC outline, we are just choosing 3 topics based on the text we are provided.
Directions: Plan for the following prompt.

*Write an informative essay to present to your class about alligators. Use information from the passages in your essay.*

I

T1  

a.  

b.  

T2  

a.  

b.  

T3  

a.  

b.  

C
Directions: Plan for the following prompt

Your teacher has asked that you write a paper about climates. Write an explanatory essay about climates. Your essay must be based on ideas and information from the passages.

I  ________________________________

T1  ________________________________  a.  __________
     b.  __________

T2  ________________________________  a.  __________
     b.  __________

T3  ________________________________  a.  __________
     b.  __________

C  ________________________________
Habitats

1. American Alligators can be found in fresh water environments like rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps and marshes. They also like to live in areas that are brackish, which means the water is slightly higher in salt content than fresh water, but not salty like sea water. Alligators tend to stay in marshy areas during breeding season. The wetlands make nest building much easier for the alligators and keeps the temperatures of the nests ideal for incubating their eggs.

2. Adult American Alligators create holes in their swamp habitats. They construct these alligator holes by using their feet, tail, and snout. These holes create areas that help the alligator stay cool during hot weather and it attracts prey. Alligator holes also provide a habitat for other animals during droughts.

3. Other animals found in these types of habitats are amphibians, shellfish, bears and panthers. The types of animals found in these habitats depend on whether the swamp is a freshwater swamp or a saltwater swamp. These animals make this their home since they are able to live in low-oxygenated slow moving waters.
4 Many species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish live and do well in swamp ecosystems. These swamp areas are important because many fish and amphibians lay their eggs in the nearby dry areas. When the eggs hatch, the young crawl into the water.

5 The Everglades National Park, in Florida, is a freshwater swamp, and is home to hundreds of types of birds, many species of reptiles, the Florida black bear, and the Florida panther. Both the American Crocodile and the American Alligator coexist in the Everglades swamp. Florida weather makes this an ideal habitat for the alligator, as well as many other animals.

Types of Reptiles Found in the Everglades:

6 **Turtles:** The most common turtles found in a swamp like habitat are the striped mud turtle, commonly found along trails, the Peninsula Cooter, often found in shark valley, and the Florida red-belly, found in fresh water marshes.

7 **Snakes:** Most of the snakes found in the Everglades National Park are adapted to living in water. The striped crayfish snake is the best swimming snake in Florida, but they are not easy to spot since they spend their time in marsh plants. The brown water snake is seen often
in plain view and sometimes mistaken for the poisonous Florida cottonmouth.

8 **Amphibians:** Amphibians are animals that spend the early part of their life in water using gills to breathe and grow into adults that may live in water, but use lungs to breathe. These include frogs, toads, and salamanders. Most commonly seen in the Florida Everglades are the grass frog, which is the tiniest frog in North American, the pig frog, whose grunt like call can be heard day or night, and the dwarf siren salamander.

9 All of these reptiles have an important role to play in the habitat they live in.
There are two species of known alligators in the world, the American Alligator and the Chinese Alligator. The American Alligator can be found in the wetlands of the Southern United States, in North America. These reptiles have been hunted for many years and at one point, were close to extinction. In order to protect this species, they were listed under the Endangered Species Act, making hunting alligators illegal. Due to the efforts of the Endangered Species Act, the species has made a huge recovery and was taken off the endangered species list in 1987. Since the American Alligator population has repopulated so well, hunting and egg collecting is once again allowed.

On the other hand, the Chinese Alligator is a class one endangered species. The Chinese Alligator can be found in the Sub Tropical regions of China, in low lying areas such as rivers, streams, and marshes. This species of Alligator is classified as critically endangered because it has a decline in population greater than 80% in specific areas of population. The destruction of their habitats comes largely from the conversion of the lands they inhabit being used for agricultural purposes. The Chinese Alligator is very similar to the American Alligator in appearance. However, these reptiles are much smaller.

What are reptiles?

Snakes, turtles, and lizards are reptiles. These animals are cold-blooded; this means their body temperature depends on their environment and their skin is covered with hard scales that serve as protection for the animal. They have to
keep warm by laying in the sun. Since they do not burn too much energy to keep warm they do not have to eat as much food as mammals or other warm blooded animals.

13 Most reptiles lay eggs. Alligators tend to create nests from nearby vegetation to keep their eggs safe. The decomposing vegetation creates the heat needed to keep the eggs incubated. The sex of the baby alligators is determined by the temperature of the nest. If the nest is cooler it will produce a clutch of female hatchlings, if the temperature is above 93 degrees Fahrenheit the eggs will produce male hatchlings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Alligator</th>
<th>Chinese Alligator</th>
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<tr>
<td>• An average adult American alligator's weight and length is 790 lbs. and 13.1 ft.</td>
<td>• Rarely exceeds 6.9 ft in length and usually weighs less than 100 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The largest ever recorded, found in Louisiana, measured 19.2 ft.</td>
<td>• Body is fully armored, even under its belly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adult alligators are black or dark olive-brown with white undersides.</td>
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Source # 1: **Climates, an Introduction**

1. The word climate is used to describe the pattern of weather a specific place has over a long period of time. People who study climate are called climatologists. What do these scientists look for when they study a region’s climate? Some of the things they measure include average rainfall, sunshine, winds, and temperature for the region.

2. Climatologists also look at how each weather condition changes from month to month and year to year in a given region. For example, they look for patterns in the weather to determine if there are cold and hot seasons in the region, or if the temperatures stay pretty much the same all year long.

3. Keeping track of climates is a very important task and there are five big factors that can make climates vary from place to place.

   - **Latitude:** This is the distance of a place north or south from the equator. The closer a region is to the equator, the hotter it is throughout the year. The farther away it is, the colder it is. In regions closer to the equator the summers are shorter and cooler. As you approach the poles, the colder winters become.

   - **Altitude:** This is the height of a place above sea level. Higher elevations are usually colder than lower elevations.

   - **Distance from Oceans and Large Lakes:** Large bodies of water such as oceans and lakes rise and drop in temperature more slowly than land. Water also warms or cools the air above these bodies of water. Due to this, areas near large bodies of water have milder winters and cooler summers.

   - **Mountain Ranges:** Air cannot pass through mountains. Instead, it rises and cools as it travels up the side of a mountain. The cool air causes water in the air to become cold. Then the water

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1. **region:** any large part of the Earth’s surface
2. **equator:** an imaginary line around the middle of the Earth, halfway between the North and South Poles.
falls as rain. All of the rain stays on the same side of the mountain causing the other side of the mountain to be dry and even become a desert.

- **Wind**: Several major belts of wind blow around the earth, six to be exact. They blow from different directions. As they do, they distribute cool air, heat, and moisture to different parts of the world.

4 The world is divided into different climate zones based on similar weather patterns. The weather patterns in a climate zone affect the types of vegetation and animals found there. For example, roses could never survive at the South Pole, which is covered in ice. It is too cold there and penguins could never survive in a region with arid climate. These climate zones tend to have similar animals and vegetation.

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3 vegetation: plant life
4 arid: having little or no rain; too dry or barren to support vegetation
The Earth’s surface is made up of many different climates. Climatologists (scientists who study climates) have organized the climates by grouping the similar ones. Each region is grouped by similar kinds of vegetation, temperature, and precipitation. Here’s a look at some of the major groups.

**Tropical Climates**

Near the equator is the tropical climate zone. Tropical climates get a lot of sunlight and are very warm. Some places often experience heavy rainfall, making this zone very wet and humid. This climate zone makes it perfect for Rainforests. Hot and muggy conditions provide an ideal habitat for several types of plants and animal species such as insects like butterflies and beetles, reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals.

**Dry or Desert Climates**

Zones with dry climates receive very little rain. Usually the average rainfall for an entire year is less than 10 inches. Sometimes it is so hot in a hot desert that when rain does fall, it can evaporate even before it reaches the ground. Hot deserts often receive a lot of sunlight

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5 precipitation: moisture in the form of rain, snow, sleet, ice or hail.
6 habitat: the place where an animal of plant naturally grows
because there are very few clouds or trees to filter the sun’s rays, however, at night deserts can be extremely cold. Very little life survives in the desert. Cacti are one exception. The cactus plant has evolved so that it stores water during periods of drought. The stem of the cactus stores water and allows very little to leave the plant. Some famous deserts include the Sahara in northern Africa and the Mojave in the United States.

**Moderate Climates**

Areas with moderate or temperate climates have winters that are cool and dry and summers that are warm and wet. Neither season in this zone has very hot or very cold temperatures. There are many plants and animal species do very well in these climates. Most of the United States falls into this climate zone.

**Polar Climates**

Have you ever heard of the polar ice caps? The ice caps are found at the North and South poles of the world and are always covered in ice or snow. They are the places with the coldest climates on Earth. These places get less of the sun’s direct warmth because of the tilt of Earth's axis causing it to be dark for six months out of the year. Temperatures are extremely low during winter and precipitation is rare and almost always in the form of snow.

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7 evolved: to gradually develop characteristics that will help a species survive in an environment.
8 drought: prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall; a shortage of water resulting from this