

Grade 6 Reading Standards

Grade 6 Reading Standards for Literature [RL]

The following standards offer a focus for instruction each year and help ensure that students gain adequate exposure to a range of texts and tasks. Rigor is also infused through the requirement that students read increasingly complex texts through the grades. *Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.*

Key Ideas and Details

1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate. (See grade 6 Writing Standard 8 for more on quoting and paraphrasing.)
2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of a text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
3. Describe how the plot of a particular story, poem, or drama unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

For example, students read *Black Ships Before Troy*, *Rosemary Sutcliff's retelling of Homer's Iliad*. As they read, they keep journals in which they keep track of the plot and relationships among characters and their motivations, and they make illustrations of scenes in the epic. They discuss the characteristics of a hero in classical Greek literature and write essays about a character of their choice, arguing whether or not the character is a hero. (RL.6.1, RL.6.3, W.6.1)

Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices, including those that create repeated sounds and rhythms in poetry, on meaning, tone (i.e., author's attitude toward subject or audience), or mood (i.e., emotional atmosphere). (See grade 6 Language Standards 4–6 on applying knowledge of vocabulary to reading.)
5. Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.
6. Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to that of listening to or viewing the same text.
8. (Not applicable. For expectations regarding themes in literary texts, see RL.2.)
9. Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems, historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Independently and proficiently read and comprehend literary texts representing a variety of genres, cultures, and perspectives and exhibiting complexity appropriate for at least grade 6. (See [more on qualitative and quantitative dimensions of text complexity](#).)

Grade 6 Reading Standards for Informational Text [RI]

Key Ideas and Details

1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate. (See grade 6 Writing Standard 8 for more on quoting and paraphrasing.)

2. Determine a text’s central idea(s) and how particular details help convey the idea(s); provide a summary of a text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
3. Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; explain how word choice affects meaning and tone. (See grade 6 Language Standards 4–6 on applying knowledge of vocabulary to reading.)
5. Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, section, or text feature (e.g., heading) fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.
6. Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, maps) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
8. Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
9. Compare and contrast one author’s presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Independently and proficiently read and comprehend literary nonfiction representing a variety of genres, cultures, and perspectives and exhibiting complexity appropriate for at least grade 6. (See [more on qualitative and quantitative dimensions of text complexity](#).)

Grade 6 Writing Standards [W]

The following standards for grades 6–12 offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources. *Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.* The expected growth in student writing ability is reflected both in the standards themselves and in the collection of annotated student writing samples in [Appendix C of the Common Core State Standards](#) and the [Massachusetts Writing Standards in Action Project](#).

Text Types and Purposes

Note: The intent of Writing Standards 1–3 is to ensure flexibility, not rigidity, in student writing. Many effective pieces of writing blend elements of more than one text type in service of a single purpose: for example, an argument may rely on anecdotal evidence, a short story may function to explain some phenomenon, or a literary analysis may use explication to develop an argument. In addition, each of the three types of writing is itself a broad category encompassing a variety of texts: for example, narrative poems, short stories, and memoirs represent three distinct forms of narrative writing. Finally, although the bulk of writing assigned in school should address the purposes described below, other forms of writing—for example, personal reflections in prose or poem form, scripts of dramas or interviews—should have a place in the classroom as well. To develop flexibility and nuance in their own writing, students need to engage with a wide range of complex model texts (see Reading Literature Standard 10 and Reading Informational Text Standard 10) and study authors who have written successfully across genres (see [Appendix B: A Literary Heritage](#)).

1. Write arguments (e.g., essays, letters to the editor, advocacy speeches) to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
 - a. Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly in paragraphs and sections.
 - b. Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
 - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
 - d. Establish and maintain a style appropriate to audience and purpose (e.g., formal for academic writing).
 - e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

Persuasive letters offer two sixth grade writers the opportunity to express their opinions in thoughtful arguments posted on [Massachusetts Writing Standards in Action](#). “Dear Mr. Sandler” makes a plea to the producer to stop showing actors enjoying smoking in films for teenagers because doing so sets a bad example (W.6.1, W.6.4, W.6.9, L.6.1, L.6.3, RI.6.1, RI.6.7, and SL.6.2). In “Dear Mr. Spinelli,” another student writes to author Jerry Spinelli about the theme of triumphing over racism and homelessness in the book Maniac Magee (W.6.1, W.6.2, W.6.4, W.6.9, RL.6.1, RL.6.2, L.6.2, L.6.3, L.6.5). This letter was written as part of the “Letters about Literature” project of the Massachusetts Center for the Book and the Library of Congress.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts (e.g., essays, oral reports, biographical feature articles) 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 in paragraphs and sections, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include text features (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 style appropriate to audience and purpose (e.g., formal for academic writing).
 - f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

After reading both historical fiction and nonfiction sources about the Salem witch trials, a student blends informational and narrative writing to present an individual character’s actions and to explain the larger meaning of beliefs about guilt and innocence in seventeenth-century Salem. See the [Massachusetts Writing Standards in Action](#) example, “The Salem Witch Trials.” (W.6.2, W.6.3, W.6.4, W.6.8, W.6.9, RI.6.1, L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, L.6.5, L.6.6)

3. Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured sequences.
 - a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another
 - d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, figurative and sensory language, and techniques such as personification (e.g., “the fog crept in”) to convey experiences or events.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Two compositions on [Massachusetts Writing Standards in Action](#) show the versatility of narrative. In the poem, “Sailing,” a student describes the exhilaration and peace of being at sea on a sailboat, using

sensory images to convey the magic of this personal experience. (W.6.3, W.6.4, W.6.10, L.6.3, L.6.5). “Feelings of Fall” is a prose narrative organized around a conflict that takes place between a girl and her grandfather over raking leaves in chilly November. It shows how a science lesson on the seasons gives the girl not only an awareness of nature, but also an awareness of her own feelings. (W.6.3, L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3)

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in Standards 1–3 above.)
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
 - a. Demonstrate command of standard English conventions (as described in Language Standards 1–3 up to and including grade 6).
 - b. Demonstrate the ability to select accurate vocabulary (as described in Language Standards 4–6 up to and including grade 6).
6. Use technology, including current web-based communication platforms, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.
8. When conducting research, gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research, applying one or more grade 6 standards for Reading Literature or Reading Informational Text as needed.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Grade 6 Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

The following standards for grades 6–12 offer a focus for instruction in each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. *Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.*

Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 6 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
 - a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion. (See grade 6 Reading Literature Standard 1 and Reading Informational Text Standard 1 for specific expectations regarding the use of textual evidence.)
 - b. Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

- c. Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.
 - d. Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.
2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
 3. Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate vocabulary, eye contact, volume, and pronunciation. (See grade 6 Language Standards 4–6 for specific expectations regarding vocabulary.)
5. Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 6 Language Standards 1 and 3 for specific expectations.)

Grade 6 Language Standards [L]

The following standards for grades 6–12 offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades. For example, though conventions of pronoun usage may receive the most attention in grade 7, more nuanced discussions of pronouns should develop throughout the upper grades as students continue to analyze speakers’ and authors’ choices of words, work toward precision in speaking and writing, and more.

Conventions of Standard English

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking; retain and further develop language skills learned in previous grades. (See grade 6 Writing Standard 5 and Speaking and Listening Standard 6 on strengthening writing and presentations by applying knowledge of conventions.)
Sentence Structure, Variety, and Meaning
 - a. Use simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to communicate ideas clearly and to add variety to writing.
 - b. Explain the function of phrases and clauses in general, how phrases and clauses differ, and how their use conveys a particular meaning in a specific written or spoken sentence.
 - c. Place or rearrange phrases and clauses within a sentence, recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers.¹⁵
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
 - a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.¹⁵
 - b. Spell correctly, recognizing that some words have commonly accepted variations (e.g., donut/doughnut).

Knowledge of Language

3. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

¹⁵ These skills are particularly likely to require continued attention in higher grades as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated writing and speaking. See the table in the Grades 6–12 resource section in this Framework.

- a. Maintain appropriate consistency in style and tone while varying sentence patterns for meaning and audience interest.¹⁶
- b. Recognize variations from standard or formal English in writing and speaking, determine their appropriateness for the intended purpose and audience, and make changes as necessary.¹⁶

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- 4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 6 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
 - a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

For example, students consider the number of meanings the word “light” can have and write sentences to demonstrate how context and placement determines what words mean. Some of their sentences:

Her dress was light purple.

I’m going to light the candles.

The play was a light comedy.

The children can stay outside as long as it’s light; when it gets dark, they have to come into the house.

The blanket was light as a feather.

- b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., *audience, auditory, audible*).
 - c. Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.
 - d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- 5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
 - a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.
 - b. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., cause/effect, part/whole, item/category) to better understand each of the words.
 - c. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., *stingy, scrimping, economical, un wasteful, thrifty*).
- 6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; independently research words and gather vocabulary knowledge. (See grade 6 Reading Literature Standard 4 and Reading Informational Text Standard 4 on applying knowledge of vocabulary to reading; see grade 6 Writing Standard 5 and Speaking and Listening Standard 4 on strengthening writing and presentations by applying knowledge of vocabulary.)

¹⁶ These skills are particularly likely to require continued attention in higher grades as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated writing and speaking. See the table in the Grades 6–12 resource section in this Framework.