in2books®

literacy guide

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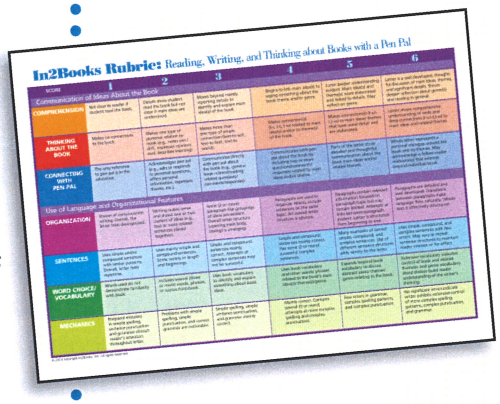
The In2Books Rubric



A rubric is an assessment tool that identifies students' levels of proficiency in a piece of work. The In2Books Rubric is specifically designed to evaluate students' letters to their pen pals. Systematic evaluation of authentic student work like this is especially valuable because it allows teachers and school administrators to:

- conduct authentic assessment outside of a "high-stakes" test setting;
- determine on a regular basis what strategies and skills a student has achieved and what instructional steps should be taken to help the student progress;
- maintain longitudinal assessment information across the grades for each student;
- communicate expectations to students and families;
- create a common learning and teaching vocabulary; and
- identify instructional areas that may require reinforcement or a different approach.

The most effective teachers look closely at student work and base their next steps for teaching on each student's needs. The In2Books Rubric allows teachers to see those next steps laid out in a continuum of development on each of seven characteristics of writing, critical thinking, and reading comprehension. You can use the rubric to "assess for teaching," determining what is next for each student in your classroom and your class as a whole in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and communicating through writing. By looking at the information provided from assessing students' letters with the rubric, you can target mini-lessons, tailor writing conferences, and focus book activities on the areas that each student needs most to make progress in literacy achievement.

This guide introduces you to the In2Books Rubric and to two In2Books Student Checklists derived from it that set clear, high expectations in a non-threatening way and help your students become partners in their own learning.

"...assessment should have an instructional purpose, not simply an evaluative or administrative one."

— National Writing Project and Carl Nagin (2003)

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Major Features

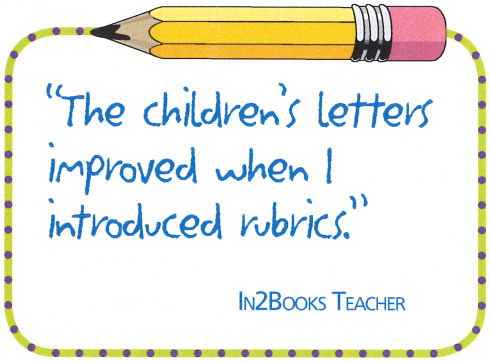
The major features of the newly revised In2Books Rubric are described in this section. Veteran In2Books teachers may notice substantial changes in this year's rubric. These revisions are based on extensive development work conducted during the past year that involved input from national assessment experts and teachers.

1. One Rubric for Grades 2–5

In2Books uses a single rubric to cover grades 2–5 because students develop their literacy skills at different times. One rubric for all the grade levels provides a developmental continuum that accommodates the range of students, from second graders who struggle with comprehension and writing, to "typically achieving" children at each grade level, and to older students with highly developed literacy skills. Another important advantage of one continuous rubric is that it creates a common vocabulary for teacher-to-teacher communication from year to year and creates a writing portfolio for In2Books students, making it more specific and more useful for individualizing instruction and monitoring the literacy achievement of individual students.

2. Six-Point Scale

The In2Books Rubric measures student achievement in reading, writing, and thinking by scoring the following characteristics: comprehension, thinking about the book, connecting with the pen pal, organization, sentences, word choice/vocabulary, and mechanics on a 1 to 6 scale. To understand the developmental progression outlined in the rubric, think of a score of 6 as the achievement level of the best writers when they finish fifth grade, and scores of 1 and 2 as the level of many students at the beginning of second grade.



Even though some school districts use standards and rubrics with four categories, after much deliberation we have settled on six points for the In2Books Rubric because of the wide range of age and literacy levels of students across grades 2–5. This extended six-point scale makes it possible to provide specific instructional guidance to students as they evolve from novice to stronger readers, writers, and thinkers.

The six-point scale applied to seven characteristics of student performance means that you can pinpoint where students need help. The rubric lets you see where your students are in relation to each aspect and where they should be able to progress to when they are given more assistance. A major benefit of the six developmental points is that they help you identify "next-step teaching" for each student.

3. Expected Scores at Different Grade Levels

A question teachers often ask is how "well" their students are doing when they obtain a specific score on the rubric. The score is assigned to a piece of work independent of grade level, but its interpretation depends on the student's grade. The following table gives a general guide to score bands for students in grades two through five. The lower scores in the band indicate beginning points and the higher scores indicate expected scores by the end of the year. However, students in each grade level have achieved scores at each of the levels. That is, some second- and third-grade students are scoring 4s, 5s, and a few 6s, and some fifth-graders are scoring 2s and 3s.

SCORE BANDS

	Scoring Points					
GRADE 2	1	2	3			
GRADE 3		2	3	4		
GRADE 4			3	4	5	
GRADE 5				4	5	6

Examine the table to identify the expected score range for your grade level. Notice that a score of 3 is a good score for a second-grade student, but a score of 3 for a fifth-grade student indicates that supplementary instruction is needed to raise achievement to be within the grade-appropriate performance band (4–6). Thus, this table helps you determine which of your students are performing above, at, or below grade level. You can then plan instructional interventions and lessons accordingly.

The purpose of the rubric is to be able to determine where a student needs instructional support to progress throughout the year. Most students need instructional support to move beyond 3 on the rubric.

4. Characteristics of Reading, Writing, and Thinking Assessed

In each cycle of the In2Books program, a student (a) reads a book, (b) thinks deeply in a variety of ways about what he or she has read, and (c) writes about the book to an adult pen pal in order to build an ongoing intellectual dialogue. The In2Books Rubric provides a systematic way of looking at each student's letter to determine what he/she understands about reading and writing and is able to communicate in the context of writing a letter about a book.

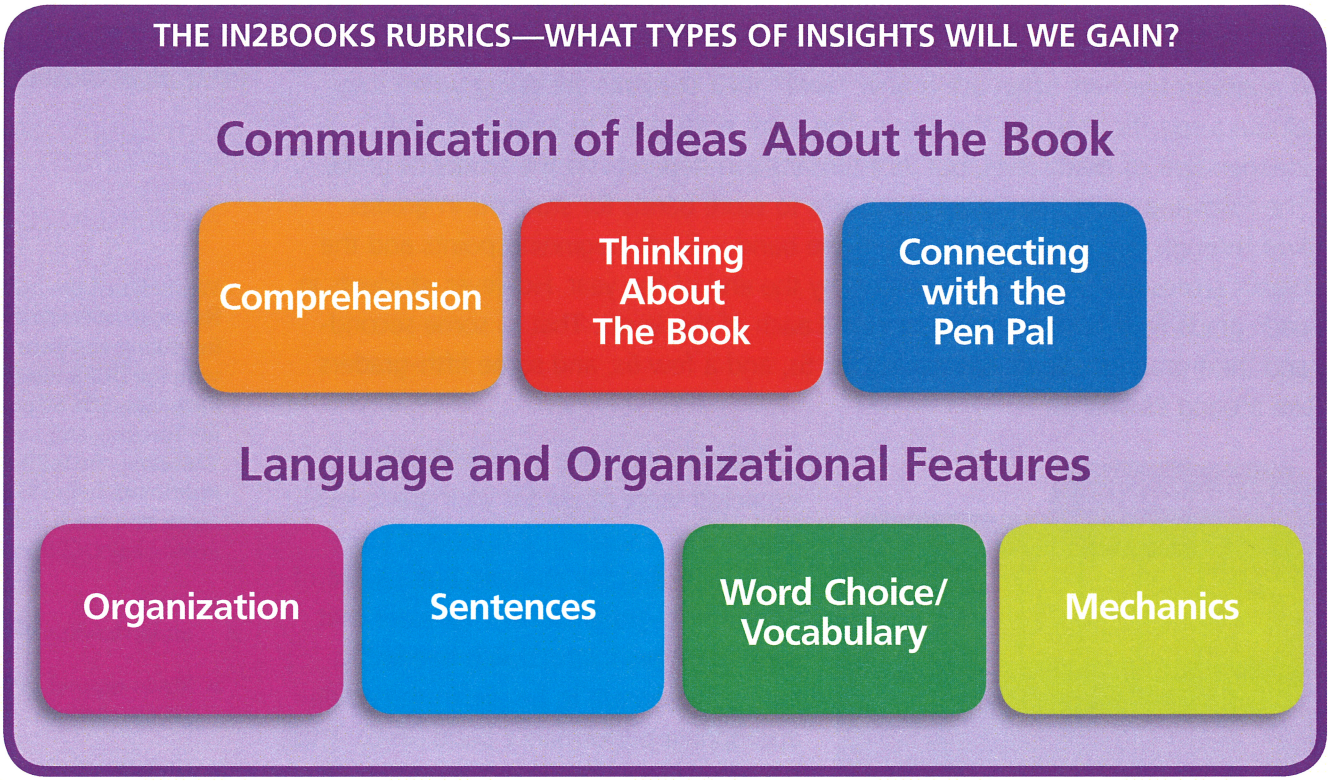
CORRESPONDENCE TO DISTRICT LITERACY REQUIREMENTS

We designed the In2Books Rubric to correlate closely in content and pace with the DCPS Reading/ Language Arts Standards for Teaching and Learning. Therefore, the In2Books Rubric can help DC teachers assess and teach to the following key DCPS standards:

- Displays an understanding of the text.
- Finds support in the text for conclusions.
- Understands how to compare and contrast personal experiences with those in the text.
- Understands how to respond appropriately to questions or comments.
- Develops ideas with a clear plan.
- Edits and revises written work; proofreads for capitals, commas, punctuation, and spelling.
- Demonstrates evolving clarity and complexity in language use.

The In2Books Rubric also correlates closely with the skills tested in standardized tests.

THE IN2BOOKS RUBRICS—WHAT TYPES OF INSIGHTS WILL WE GAIN?



We assess two major dimensions of students' letters, Communication of Ideas about the Book and Language and Organizational Features. The first dimension is **Communication of Ideas about the Book**. Three specific characteristics of reading, writing and thinking are assessed within this dimension:

- **Comprehension of the Book:** the information the student includes about the book's main ideas/themes and important details.
- **Thinking about the Book:** the kinds of connections the student makes to the book.
- **Connecting with the Pen Pal:** the extent to which the student engages in a meaningful dialogue about the book and its themes with the pen pal.

The second major dimension we consider is **Language and Organizational Features**, with four specific characteristics that address the major structural and linguistic demands of letter writing:

- **Organization:** how the student organizes the letter as a whole and in parts by using paragraphs to manage content effectively.
- **Sentences:** how the student uses a variety of sentence structures and lengths to express ideas and feelings effectively.
- **Word Choice/Vocabulary:** how the student uses general vocabulary and book-related vocabulary to express ideas and feelings effectively.
- **Mechanics:** whether the student uses spelling, punctuation, and grammar correctly.

As you examine the rubric, notice that the features of each score point of these seven specific characteristics describe what it takes to move a student to the next level of performance. For example, if a student is at score point 3 on Thinking About the Book, the rubric specifies that the student needs to learn to make meaningful connections that relate to the main ideas or themes of the book in order to advance to score point 4. This information helps you look at individual students' work and create groups for targeted mini-lessons and conferencing that are part of the writing workshop in your classroom.

Learning how to relate each student's assessments with instruction takes time and experience to master, but, once mastered, this ability enables you, instead of standardized tests, to shape instructional decisions in your classroom. Therefore, specific examples of instructional suggestions are provided with the anchor letters in this guide, each In2books genre guide has specific suggestions, and we will devote part of every In2Books professional development session to helping you develop your skill in this area.

In2Books Rubric: Reading, Writing,

SCORE	1	2	3
Communication of Ideas About the Book			
COMPREHENSION	Not clear to reader if student read the book.	Details show student read the book but not clear if main ideas are understood.	Moves beyond merely reporting details to identifying and explaining main idea(s) of the book.
THINKING ABOUT THE BOOK	Makes no connections to the book.	Makes one type of personal connection to book (e.g., t-s, t-t, t-w notes similar/different, expresses opinion/evaluation, describes learning).	Makes more than one type of simple connection (text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world).
CONNECTING WITH PEN PAL	The only reference to pen pal is in the salutation.	Acknowledges pen pal (e.g., asks or responds to personal questions, offers personal information, expresses thanks, etc.).	Communicates directly with pen pal about the book (e.g., general book-related/reading-related questions/ comments/responses).
Use of Language and Organizational Features			
ORGANIZATION	Stream of consciousness writing. Overall, the letter feels disorganized.	Writing makes sense and shows one or two clusters of ideas (e.g., two or more related sentences placed together).	Some (two or more) paragraph-like groupings of ideas are evident. Overall letter structure (opening, main body, closing) is emerging.
SENTENCES	Uses simple and/or compound sentences with similar patterns. Overall, letter feels repetitive.	Uses mainly simple and compound sentences. Some variety in length and beginnings.	Simple and compound sentences mainly correct. Attempts at complex sentences may not be successful.
WORD CHOICE/ VOCABULARY	Words used do not demonstrate familiarity with book.	Includes several (three or more) words, phrases, or names from book.	Uses book vocabulary to identify and explain something about book ideas.
MECHANICS	Frequent mistakes in simple spelling, sentence punctuation and grammar distract reader's attention throughout letter.	Problems with simple spelling, simple punctuation, and correct grammar are noticeable.	Simple spelling, simple sentence punctuation, and grammar mainly correct.

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and Thinking about Books with a Pen Pal

4	5	6
Begins to link main idea(s) to saying something about the book theme and/or genre.	Some deeper understanding evident. Main idea(s) and theme(s) are elaborated and linked to details. May reflect on genre.	Letter is a well developed, thoughtful discussion of main ideas, themes, and significant details. Shows deeper reflection about genre(s) and reading in general.
Makes connection(s) (t-s, t-t, t-w) related to main idea(s) and/or to theme(s) of the book.	Makes connection(s) (t-s, t-t, t-w) to main ideas/ themes that have some detail and are elaborated.	Letter shows comprehensive understanding of wide and deep connections (t-s, t-t, t-w) to main ideas and related themes.
Communicates with pen pal about the book by including two or more questions/comments/ responses related to main ideas and/or theme.	Parts of the letter show detailed and thoughtful communication about the book's main ideas and/or related themes.	Whole letter represents a personal dialogue around the book and its themes. May acknowledge a fellow reader relationship that extends beyond individual book.
Paragraphs are used to organize. Mainly include sentences on the same topic. An overall letter structure is obvious.	Paragraphs contain relevant information focused on paragraph topic but may remain limited. Attempts at links between paragraphs evident. Letter is structured from beginning to end.	Paragraphs are detailed and well developed. Transitions between paragraphs make language flow naturally. Whole text is effectively structured.
Simple and compound sentences mainly correct. Has some (two or more) successful complex sentences.	Many examples of correct simple, compound, and complex sentences. Use of different sentence structures adds variety to the letter.	Uses simple, compound, and complex sentences with few errors. May vary or repeat sentence structures to maintain reader interest or for effect.
Uses book vocabulary and other words/ phrases related to the book's main idea(s)/ theme(s)/genre.	Expands beyond book vocabulary to discuss abstract ideas/ themes/ genre relating to the book.	Extensive vocabulary indicates control of book and related thematic and genre vocabulary. Word choices build reader understanding of the writer's thinking.
Mainly correct. Contains several (three or more) attempts at more complex spelling and complex punctuation.	Few errors in grammar, complex spelling patterns, and complex punctuation.	No significant errors indicate writer exhibits extensive control of more complex spelling patterns, complex punctuation, and grammar.

The Student Checklists

Helping Students Understand and Meet Writing Expectations

It is important for students to understand expectations for performance in their classroom work. Research also shows that when students regularly use reliable and valid guidelines, such as rubrics or checklists, as part of their working process, their reading and writing improve. Tools like these help students internalize the ways good readers and writers approach their work. Therefore, we have adapted the In2Books Rubric to create a How to Write a Great Pen Pal Letter Checklist that your students can use directly.

There are actually two checklists—one for second graders and another for students in grades three through five. We created slightly different checklists because teachers' feedback and previous experience with scoring student letters indicated that the younger students need a more simplified set of expectations. Although the second-grade version is less advanced, both lists help students take ownership of their work. A copy is located inside the front cover of each student's Writer's Notebook.

Introducing the Checklist

Students can use the checklist as a tool to better understand the qualities that make good letters to pen pals. Once students learn what is expected of them and study some examples or models of successful writing, they are much better prepared to generate work of a higher quality. Following are suggestions for getting students in the habit of using the checklists as they write.

Introduce the checklist during your mini-lessons. Devote a mini-lesson or two to discussing the purpose of the checklist and its specific components. Demonstrate to students how a checklist can be a useful tool for talking about and improving their thinking and writing. Explain each of the 10 checklist items and reinforce them with examples of actual writing. Your examples can be taken from this guide or, if you are a returning In2Books teacher, from exemplary letters of past students. Stress that the checklist helps students think about how to say what is in their minds. Throughout the year, discuss the questions students have about the checklist in conferences with you and their peers.

Make the checklist prominent. Post the checklist in your room and periodically remind students that they have their own copy inside the front cover of their Writer's Notebook. Model how to use the checklist in mini-lessons and during your conferences with students. Then ask your students to use the checklist during peer conferences and as a self-check, both when they revise a letter and just before they complete their final copy.

Make the checklist language part of "classroom talk." Invite students to use the checklist when giving feedback and asking questions during conferences with you, when they peer-edit, or when they respond to the writer during Author's Chair sessions. For each of these different learning situations, you will likely first need to model checklist-based feedback to start the conversation. Once students get the hang of it and begin using the criteria and language of the checklist, you will notice them taking greater ownership of the process and improving the quality of their letters.

Teach the revision process by using the checklist with sample pen pal letters. Periodically make overheads or PowerPoint slides of several examples of student letters from another classroom. (You can swap letters with an In2Books colleague in your school, but be sure to keep the letters anonymous.) During workshop time, discuss with your students how they might revise each example to improve the letter's quality. Let the checklist guide the discussion. Go through it point by point and demonstrate how to check the letter against it. You will also need to model how to use feedback to improve writing. Show that adding to or changing parts of the letter is positive and satisfying. Focus on communicating by making comments about how easy the letter is to understand when it has been revised or by noting how a pen pal might like to read certain things. It may also be useful to model the use of the checklist with letters of varying scores that lie within your grade level. For example, if you are in grade five, examine a letter with a score point of 5 and a letter with a score point of 2 so that students can see the difference in quality and understand how the checklist can help them improve their own writing.

Follow the writing process. Teach letter writing as a process and encourage your students to use the checklist at different stages: (1) for planning and drafting, (2) as part of revising, and (3) during the editing phase. By providing students with feedback and time to plan, write, revise, and edit, they begin to value the feedback as an integral part of the process.

Refer to the checklist frequently. Without adequate mention and instruction relating to it, students will see the checklist as someone else's judgment about the quality of their work, not as a personal tool to help them improve their writing.

GRADE 2

Checklist
For a Great Pen Pal Letter

- ☐ **1.** I wrote my own letter, and it's different from everyone else's.
- ☐ **2.** I wrote my letter so that it sounds like I am talking with my pen pal.
- ☐ **3.** I included details from the book in my letter, and I wrote about at least one "big idea" in the book.
- ☐ **4.** I wrote about something important from the book and explained why it was important to me.
- ☐ **5.** I wrote about how the book connects with me or with other books.
- ☐ **6.** I answered my pen pal's questions about me and the book, and I asked my pen pal a question about something in his or her letter.
- ☐ **7.** I used some of the important words from the book in my letter.
- ☐ **8.** I mentioned the book title in my letter and underlined it.
- ☐ **9.** I put paragraphs in my letter, and I followed the friendly letter format.
- ☐ **10.** I checked my letter to make sure my spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct.

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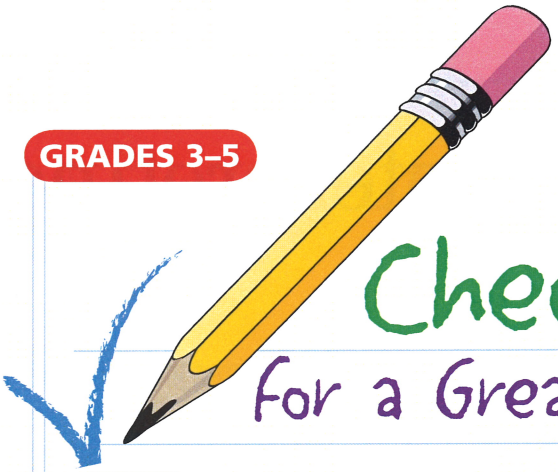
GRADES 3–5



Checklist
For a Great Pen Pal Letter

- ☐ **1.** I wrote my own letter, and it's different from everyone else's.
- ☐ **2.** I wrote my letter in a way that shows my personality and makes my pen pal feel like I am talking with him or her.
- ☐ **3.** I showed that I understood the book because I wrote about the "big ideas" and put in important details from the book that support the ideas.
- ☐ **4.** I shared my ideas about the book by writing about something that interested me and what I learned from the book.
- ☐ **5.** I wrote my letter so that it makes connections between the book and my life, the lives of other people, and/or other books.
- ☐ **6.** I answered my pen pal's questions about me and the book by using important details. I asked my pen pal what he or she thought about the book.
- ☐ **7.** My letter follows the friendly letter format and includes many paragraphs. Each paragraph has its own topic.
- ☐ **8.** I reread my entire letter to make sure everything was in order and that my ideas flowed from beginning to end.
- ☐ **9.** My letter uses important words from the book to explain what the book is about.
- ☐ **10.** I checked my letter to make sure my spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct.

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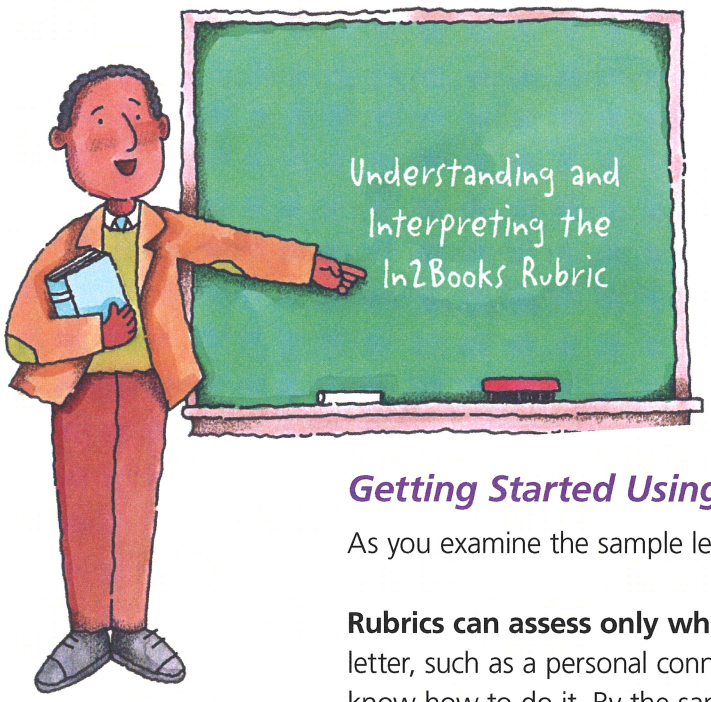
Understanding and Interpreting the In2Books Rubric

A later section (pages 24–47) contains 12 student sample letters that literacy experts and In2Books teachers have scored using the In2Books Rubric. We call them our "anchor" letters because they help teachers and other scorers maintain consistency and precision in the scoring process. We have annotated the letters extensively in order to explain scoring decisions.



Using these letters in conjunction with the rubric, as well as the scoring guidelines and tips on scoring outlined below, will help you understand the type and quality of letter that represents each score point on the rubric's six-point scale for seven features of reading, writing and thinking. These anchor letters will also give you a sense of the range of letter writing that the overall rubric addresses. Using these resources will help you score your own students' work reliably and make sound decisions about instruction.

Getting Started Using the Rubric

As you examine the sample letters, please keep the following two points in mind:

Rubrics can assess only what is there, not what isn't. An omission in a particular letter, such as a personal connection to the book, doesn't mean the student doesn't know how to do it. By the same token, we want to ensure that we assess accurately what a student can do independently, so when scoring with the rubric, we only assess what we can see, not what we think a child may be able to do in other contexts.

A letter won't always have the same score point across the different dimensions or features. Even though the majority of aspects scored on a child's letter may be, say, a 3, it is likely that other dimensions of the letter may be scored as a 2 or a 4 or even some other score point. Remember to read the criterion statements carefully and decide which best describes the student's performance on that aspect.

This section contains guidelines for scoring and for using anchor letters. The first part is organized into subsections that reflect the seven different characteristics of reading, writing and thinking that the rubric measures. The second part includes the twelve anchor letters. As you read each section, examine the anchor letters listed in each section's table. A combination of the In2Books rubric, scoring guidelines, tips on scoring, and anchor letters will help you score correctly and thereby better understand your students' writing.

Work your way through each subsection in this part of the guide to help you become familiar with the rubric's progression and to see letters that are representative of the six score points on the seven rubric characteristics.

When you have finished the sections, you are ready to begin scoring your own students' letters. If you forget what a scale measures or what a particular score point letter looks like, simply return to the guidelines and re-read the areas that need refreshing. Keeping these resources close to you while you score will make your scoring more reliable and quicker.

SCORING GUIDLINES

Before you begin to score:	
1.	Read the student's entire letter first. For this first reading, try to "read through" any invented spellings or obvious mechanics problems so that you focus on the meanings and ideas the student is expressing to the pen pal. Know what the student is saying before you begin to score.
2.	Get a firm sense of the overall rubric (see what is being scored where).
3.	Read the score point statement in each box carefully in the light of the student's letter.
4.	Focus on one feature from the rubric and select the statement at score point 1–6 that best suits this sample. This is your working hypothesis!
5.	Now check the sample carefully for evidence to support your judgment. For example, if the statement is about the characteristics of the sentences used, isolate that. Check the letter for evidence of sentences that are simple and those that are complex, and think about how many of them are correctly structured.
6.	Consider whether there is enough evidence to support your working hypothesis. Look for evidence that supports or contradicts your hypothesis. Re-check your judgment about the score. If you are having trouble deciding between two score points, check again and if you feel the letter lies between two score points, select the lower score point. That way, you will remember to review the concepts in the next higher score points with your student.
7.	Record your decision and move on.

Characteristics of the Rubric

Comprehension

Score Point	Anchor Letters	Page #
1	A	24
2	B	26
3	F	34
4	H	38
5	J	42
6	L	46

When we score the comprehension characteristics of the letter, we look for evidence that the student has read the book and can communicate that understanding. The six score points are designed to capture increasing sophistication in understanding text, as follows:

1. Not clear if student read the book.
2. Gives enough details to show that he or she read the book.
3. Uses details to support and explain the main ideas of the book.
4. Student identifies the main ideas and links them to the theme and/or genre.
5. Some deeper understanding of the book is evident—may also reflect on genre.
6. Well-developed thoughtful discussion of main ideas, themes, and significant details.

Note that the higher scores reward in-depth discussion of details, main ideas, themes, and genre.

The table above identifies the anchor letters that illustrate the various comprehension score points. Read each of the anchor letters carefully in the order presented to understand clearly how each letter represents each comprehension score point.

Thinking About the Book

Score Point	Anchor Letters	Page #
1	A	24
2	B	26
3	G	36
4	H	38
5	K	44
6	J	42

This characteristic of the rubric measures the depth of student thinking about the books and the substance of the writer's connections to the content and themes, including text-to-self connections, text-to-text connections, and text-to-world connections. The Thinking About the Book scale is:

1. Makes no connections.
2. Makes simple connections.
3. Makes more than one simple connection.
4. Makes connections related to the main idea(s) and/or theme(s) of the book.
5. Makes elaborative, detailed connections to the main idea(s) and/or theme(s) of the book.
6. Letter shows comprehensive understanding of wide and deep connections.

The table above identifies the anchor letters that illustrate the various Thinking About the Book score points. Read each of the anchor letters carefully in the order presented to understand clearly how each letter represents each Thinking About the Book score point.

Connecting with the Pen Pal

Score Point	Anchor Letters	Page #
1	E	32
2	C	28
3	B	26
4	K	44
5	L	46
6	J	42

Here we examine the letter to determine the degree to which the student connects with the pen pal in a meaningful way. The score increases as the student writes in a more conversational dialogue with the pen pal about the book and its ideas. The Connecting with the Pen Pal scores are:

1. Connects with the pen pal in a limited way, e.g., through the salutation only.
2. Connects only about personal issues, e.g., "How are your cats?"
3. Communicates directly with the pen pal about details about the book.
4. Direct communication (questions, responses, comments) about main ideas, themes or genre of the book.
5. Letter engages the pen pal in detailed, thoughtful conversation about the main ideas, themes or genre in parts of the letter.
6. The whole letter represents a personal dialogue about the book and its themes.

The table above identifies the anchor letters that illustrate the various Connecting with the Pen Pal score points. Read each of the anchor letters carefully in the order presented to understand clearly how each letter represents each Connecting with the Pen Pal score point.

Organization

Score Point	Anchor Letters	Page #
1	B	26
2	C	28
3	D	30
4	G	36
5	I	40
6	J	42

Two kinds of organization are important to a good letter—local and overall. Local, paragraph-level organization focuses on the degree to which the student "groups" ideas to make paragraphs or paragraph-like groupings. This organization helps the reader make sense of the ideas presented. Overall organization is a characteristic of the entire letter, from beginning to end. Both kinds of organization are taken into account in scoring, but only one score is given for this characteristic. The score point progression moves from local to include overall organization:

1. No real organization or sense of overall structure.
2. Some groupings of ideas but still no overall structure.
3. Some emerging overall structure.
4. Some paragraphs and an obvious overall structure.
5. Paragraphs contain like information, transitions are evident, and there is an overall structure.
6. Paragraphs are detailed and self-contained with good transitions that lead readers through the letter in a satisfying way.

The table above identifies the anchor letters that illustrate the various Organization score points. Read each of the anchor letters carefully in the order presented to understand clearly how each letter represents each Organization score point.

Sentences

Score Point	Anchor Letters	Page #
1	B	26
2	A	24
3	F	35
4	H	38
5	J	42
6	L	46

Analysis of sentences in the In2Books Rubric considers a combination of correct sentence structure and how well the writer uses sentence variation to keep the letter from being repetitive or boring to the reader.

Correct sentences. The scores take into account a writer's control of simple, compound and complex sentence structures. The writer has a good idea of what sentences are as grammatical units. Sentences correctly use the parts of speech—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Variation in sentences. Does the writer use a variety of sentences and adjust lengths and beginnings so that the writing is interesting to readers? A writer may use stylistic fragments or repeat or vary sentence structures for emphasis.

Sorting out sentences. The In2Books Rubric requires you to make judgments about students' control of sentence structures. As students become more expert writers, their control of more complex sentence structure increases, allowing them to express more complex ideas in increasingly sophisticated ways. For this reason, the rubric recognizes that novice writers tend to use simple sentences with similar patterns (score point 1). As they progress, they use some variety (score point 2) and gradually begin to experiment with compound and complex sentences (score points 3 and 4). As their control of

EXAMPLE SENTENCES

Simple sentences

I liked the book, *Cool Crazy Crickets*.
My brother is just like Clay.
I have never been in a club.

Compound sentences

I am like Rosie ***and*** my brother is like Clay.
I read maps ***and*** sometimes I can help my dad with directions.

Complex sentences

Although ***Mufaro's Daughters*** is a Cinderella story, it has some very different parts.
I liked the book because it made me really think about friendships.
I like to use maps when I go out with my family.
If I were an astronaut, I would go to Jupiter.

sentences improves, we expect that writers will demonstrate control of simple, compound and complex sentences and that they will be able to vary their lengths and beginnings to achieve particular effects (score points 5 and 6).

Some definitions and examples follow, to help you accurately identify the structures your students use in their letters:

- A *simple* sentence contains a single independent clause, although it may be long and loaded with information in the form of complex noun and verb groups/phrases. To help you identify simple sentences, it can be useful to start by looking for one complete verb or verb group.
- A *compound* sentence consists of two or more independent clauses joined in an equal relationship with each other. Each clause *can stand alone*, but they are linked in a compound sentence through conjunctions. To identify a compound sentence, you can start by looking for a finite verb or verb group that is connected to another by additive or coordinating conjunctions—and, but, so, or.
- A *complex* sentence consists of a main clause expressing the main message and another dependent clause (or clauses) that elaborates on the message in some way but which *cannot stand on its own* to make a complete thought. Dependent clauses depend on other clauses to help them complete their meaning. Complex sentences are often used to show how ideas are related to each other. To identify a complex sentence, you can start by looking for both finite and non-finite verbs connected in an unequal relationship; one is dependent on or relative to the other or it may be embedded. You can look for relative pronouns (that, which, whom, who) and/or for subordinating conjunctions (if, although, because, since) that show the dependence of one idea on another.

The following summarizes the progression of development for sentences:

1. Uses simple or compound sentences with similar patterns so the letter feels repetitive.
2. Some variety in length and beginnings of sentences.
3. Simple and compound sentences mainly correct. Some attempts at complex sentences that may or may not be correct.
4. Has two or more successful complex sentences.
5. Use of different sentence structures adds variety to the letter.
6. Uses simple, compound, and complex sentences with few errors. May vary or repeat sentence structures to maintain reader's interest or for effect.

The table on page 16 identifies the anchor letters that illustrate the various Sentences score points. Read each of the anchor letters carefully in the order presented to understand clearly how each letter represents each Sentences score point.

Word Choice/Vocabulary

Score Point	Anchor Letters	Page #
1	A	24
2	B	26
3	F	34
4	H	38
5	G	36
6	L	46

This characteristic analyses the words and/or phrases that students use in their letters to convey information about the book or describe and explain the book's main ideas. As students discuss the details, ideas, and themes related to the book, they choose words or phrases from various sources to help them realize their meanings. Two different kinds of vocabulary are considered:

> **Words from the book.** The anchor letters, for example, contain words like the following that appear in the books and represent key ideas: grandma, princess, maps, seeds, germination, civil rights, Revolutionary War, government, president, chrysalis, names of characters, titles.
>
> **Words connected to themes, main ideas or genre, but not necessarily appearing in the book.** Students who wrote the anchor letters also used words that relate to main ideas, themes, or significant details, but these words did not appear in the book: teamwork, cooperate, friendship, happiness, trust, goodness, evil, adventure, courage, discrimination, learning, change, equality, democracy, helping, justice, genre, realistic fiction, biography, folktales.

The following scores summarize the progression of development for word choice/vocabulary:

1. Words used do not demonstrate familiarity with the book.
2. Includes several words, phrases, or names from the book.
3. Uses book vocabulary to identify and explain something about the book's ideas.
4. Uses book vocabulary and other words or phrases related to the book's main ideas, themes, or genre.
5. Expands book vocabulary to discuss abstract ideas and themes beyond the book.
6. Extensive vocabulary use demonstrates control of book and related thematic and genre vocabulary.

The table above identifies the anchor letters that illustrate the various Word Choice/Vocabulary score points. Read each of the anchor letters carefully in the order presented to understand clearly how each letter represents each Word Choice/Vocabulary score point.

Mechanics

Score Point	Anchor Letters	Page #
1	A	24
2	B	26
3	C	28
4	J	42
5	I	40
6	L	46

Three types of skill and knowledge are involved in this characteristic of students' writing competence: grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Describing how students grow in the area of mechanics requires that we pay attention to two dimensions: correctness and complexity. With increasing ability, students not only make fewer spelling and punctuation errors, they also use more complex words and structures.

Therefore, correct use of simple spelling (basic sight words) and punctuation (simple sentences) is awarded a lower score than correct use of more complex patterns and conventions (spelling of multisyllabic words and punctuation of sentences with subordinate clauses). We consider all three aspects of mechanics together in order to decide if mechanics are "mainly correct" (score points 3 and 4), demonstrate "few errors" (score point 5), or exhibit "no significant errors" (score point 6).

Spelling: Standards often refer to basic sight words, common spelling patterns and more complex spelling patterns. For the In2Books Rubric we group them like this:

Simple spelling

Basic sight words

I, me, am, are, have, went, is, etc.

Common spelling patterns

cvc , silent e, vowel pairs, common endings -y, -ly, -ing, -ed, -s

common homonyms, common compound words

Complex spelling

common suffixes (-tion, -sign, -ate, -ous, -ment, -ness, -ful)

multisyllabic words, technical words

Mechanics (continued)

Punctuation: Two levels of punctuation are considered:

Simple punctuation (including sentence punctuation)

The awareness of print conventions signifying the beginning and end of a sentence (capitalize first letter and use "end" punctuation)

Capitalize proper nouns, use commas in lists, use apostrophe for contractions, speech marks

Complex punctuation

Commas for clauses, apostrophes for possession, semicolon, colon, dash

You cannot give a student credit for what you don't see. Check the statements to see what needs to be at each level and how much is necessary for you to make a judgment about assigning a score.

Grammatical errors: Points of grammar for instruction refer to patterns of usage for standard US English, including uses of:

- definite (the) and indefinite articles (a/an);
- plurals missing or misapplied;
- verb tense errors or inconsistencies;
- irregular verb forms (bringed/brought or goed/went);
- pronoun use and reference (him/her/you/they);
- subject-verb agreement (they/he - are/is).

EXAMPLES OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

Definite (the) and indefinite articles (a/an) incorrect A armadillo brought vegetables.
Plurals missing or misapplied one friends. two friend.
Verb tense errors or inconsistencies Tomorrow I will went to church.
Incorrect verb forms used Rosie gaved Clay the horse.
Pronoun use and reference inconsistent Clay played at pirates. It had fun.
Subject-verb agreement incorrect I likes the book.

The following list summarizes the progression of development for mechanics:

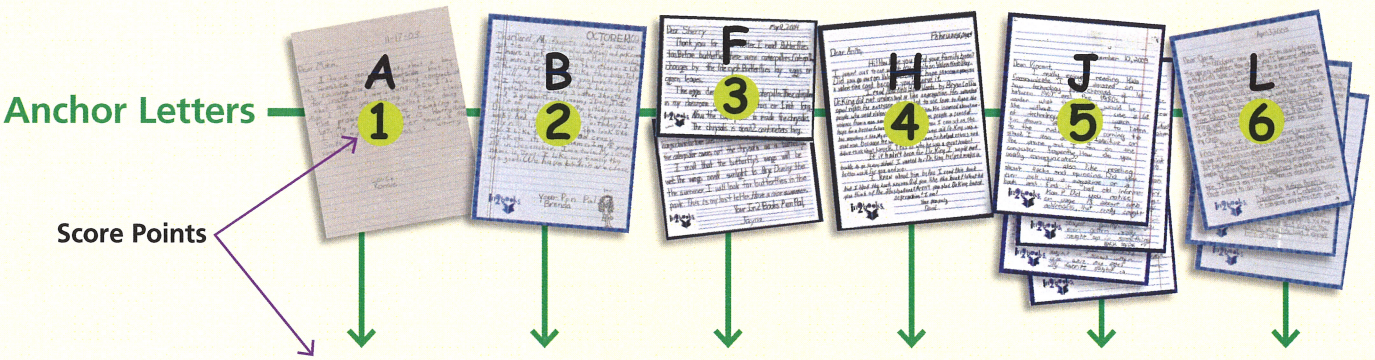
1. Frequent mistakes in simple spelling, simple punctuation, and grammar distract reader's attention throughout letter.
2. Problems with simple spelling, simple punctuation, and grammar are noticeable.
3. Simple spelling, simple punctuation, and grammar mainly correct.
4. Contains several attempts at complex spelling and complex punctuation.
5. Few errors in grammar, complex spelling patterns, and complex punctuation.
6. Student exhibits extensive control of grammar, more complex spelling patterns, and more complex punctuation.

The table on page 19 identifies the anchor letters that illustrate the various mechanics score points. Read each of the anchor letters carefully in the order presented to understand clearly how each letter represents each mechanics score point. The mechanics anchor letters are identified by a yellow-green square at the top of the page.

Using the Anchor Letters to More Fully Understand Each of the Rubric Characteristics

Example

Characteristic: Comprehension



Comprehension—student has read the book and can communicate that understanding	Score Point 1	Score Point 2	Score Point 3	Score Point 4	Score Point 5	Score Point 6
	Not clear if student read the book.	Gives enough details to show that he/she read the book.	Uses details to support and explain the main ideas of the book.	Student identifies the main ideas and links them to the theme and/or genre.	Some deeper understanding of the book evident—may also reflect on genre.	Well-developed thoughtful discussion of main ideas, themes, and significant details.

Understanding the Anchor Letter Pages:

1) In the letters, the names of the students and the pen pals were changed to protect their privacy.
2) The rubric guide is organized to support the in-depth study of each of the seven characteristics of the rubric, comprehension, thinking about the book, relating to the pen pal, organization, sentences, word choice/vocabulary, and mechanics, through explanation and anchor letter examples.
3) Each characteristic of the rubric is color-coded and has a quilt square complement.
4) Each anchor letter is labeled with a letter (Anchor letters A–L) and includes charts that provide basic information about the book and the explanation for each score point.
5) The anchor letters provide examples of each of the score points of each characteristic. Most of the anchor letters are demonstrative of score points of one or more characteristics of the rubric.

Index of Anchor Letters for Characteristics

Characteristic	Index	Index –score, anchor, page location					
Comprehension	Score	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
	Anchor	A	B	F	H	J	L
	Page	p.24	p.26	p.34	p.38	p.42	p.46
Thinking about the book	Score	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
	Anchor	A	B	G	H	K	J
	Page	p.24	p.26	p.36	p.38	p.44	p.42
Connecting with the pen pal	Score	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
	Anchor	E	C	B	K	L	J
	Page	p.32	p.28	p.26	p.44	p.46	p.42
Organization	Score	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
	Anchor	B	C	D	G	I	J
	Page	p.26	p.28	p.30	p.36	p.40	p.42
Sentences	Score	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
	Anchor	B	A	F	H	J	L
	Page	p.26	p.24	p.35	p.38	p.42	p.46
Word choice/vocabulary	Score	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
	Anchor	A	B	F	H	G	L
	Page	p.24	p.26	p.34	p.38	p.36	p.46
Mechanics	Score	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
	Anchor	A	B	C	J	I	L
	Page	p.24	p.26	p.28	p.42	p.40	p.46

Anchor A

Letter Transcription (Word for Word)

11-17-03

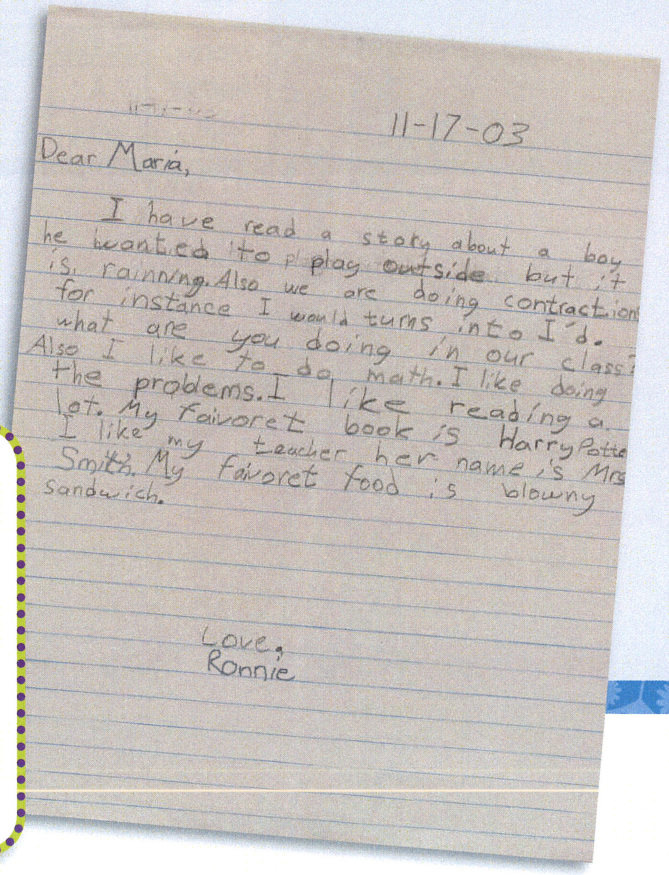
Dear Maria,

I have red a story about a boy he wanted to play outside but it is rainning. Also we are doing contractions for instanse I would turns into I'd.

what are you doing in are class? Also I like to do math. I like doing the problems. I like reading a lot. My faivoret book is Harry Potter.

I like my teacher her name is Mrs. Smith. My faivoret food is blowny sandwich.

Love,
Ronnie


11-17-03
Dear Maria,
I have read a story about a boy he wanted to play outside but it is rainning. Also we are doing contraction for instance I would turns into I'd. what are you doing in our class? Also I like to do math. I like doing the problems. I like reading a lot. My faivoret book is Harry Potte I like my teacher her name is Mrs Smith. My faivoret food is blowny sandwich.
Love,
Ronnie

TEACHING TIPS

Ronnie should be praised for a strong first sentence. He correctly stated the plot of *The Rainy Day Grump*. However, Ronnie needs to learn how to support his statements with details from the book and how to organize his writing. At planning time, Ronnie would benefit from being part of a group that works on using the In2Books three part letter structure and using the In2Books paragraph graphic organizer.

Anchor A

Book	***The Rainy Day Grump*** by Deborah Eaton
Main Characters	Clay and Rosie
Plot	Clay wants to play baseball but it is raining, so he is grumpy. His sister Rosie tries to cheer Clay up in a variety of ways that inspire Clay to figure out a happy solution to his problem.
Cycle	Cycle I—Fiction
Grade	2
Correspondents	Ronnie to Maria

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	1	Ronnie says so little about the book that we are not sure if he actually read it.
Thinking about Book	1	Ronnie makes no connections to the book (text-to-self/text/world) that shows his understanding of it.
Connecting with Pen Pal	1	The one indication that Ronnie is writing to Maria is the salutation (Dear Maria).
Organization	1	Overall this letter feels disorganized. It has no real organizing frame and Ronnie seems to mention things as they occur to him.
Sentences	2	Ronnie uses mainly simple sentences. He does attempt a compound sentence but is unsuccessful. There is some variety, but he uses the same "I like" pattern several times.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	1	The words Ronnie uses do not demonstrate familiarity with the book. He does not name characters, nor use words that indicate he knows details from the story.
Mechanics	1	Frequent mistakes in simple spelling, simple punctuation, and grammar distract reader's attention throughout letter.

Anchor B

LETTER TRANSCRIPTION (WORD FOR WORD)

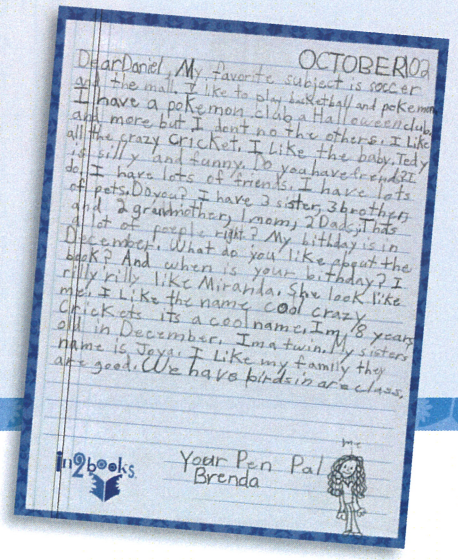
OCTOBER102

Dear Daniel, My favorite subject is soccer and the mall. I like to play basketball and pokemon. I have a pokemon club a Halloween club and more but I dont no the others. I Like all the crazy cricket. I Like the baby. Tedy is silly and funny. Do you have friends? I do. I have lots of friends. I have lots of pets. Do you? I have 3 sister, 3 brother, and 2 grandmother, 1 mom, 2 Dads, Thats a lot of poeple right? My bithday is in December. What do you like about the book? And when is your bithday? I rilly rilly like Miranda. She look like me. I like the name cool crazy Crickets its a cool name. Im 8 years old in December. Im a twin. My sister's name is Java. I like my family they are good. We have birds in are class.

Your Pen Pal,
Brenda

TEACHING TIPS

Brenda should be praised for her conversational tone. She should be encouraged to continue to write as if she were having a friendly chat with her pen pal. Brenda's most pressing needs are to support her statements with substantive details from the book and to learn how to organize her writing. During prewriting activities, Brenda should be taught how to use a concept web to cluster ideas into paragraph groupings.



Anchor B

Book	***The Cool Crazy Crickets*** by David Elliott
Main Characters	Miranda, Phoebe, Marcus, Teddy, baby
Plot	When four friends organize a neighborhood club, they discover the importance of working together to solve problems and make decisions.
Cycle	Cycle I—Fiction
Grade	3
Correspondents	Brenda to Daniel

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	2	Details show Brenda read the book but not that she understands the book's main ideas.
Thinking about Book	2	Brenda points out one similarity (She look like me).
Connecting with Pen Pal	3	Brenda communicates directly with her pen pal about the book. She asks one general question about the book (What do you like about the book?) and asks several personal questions.
Organization	1	Overall this letter feels disorganized. This is stream of consciousness writing; as things pop into Brenda's head, it looks like she pops them on the paper. The letter has little overall structure.
Sentences	1	Uses mainly simple sentences with similar patterns. Letter feels repetitive (60% start with I/My).
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	2	Brenda uses several words from the book (title, Teddy, club, friends, Miranda) but does not use them to explain.
Mechanics	2	There are problems with simple spelling, simple punctuation and correct grammar in this letter. They are noticeable (s/v agree, spelling, punctuation).

Anchor C

LETTER TRANSCRIPTION (WORD FOR WORD)

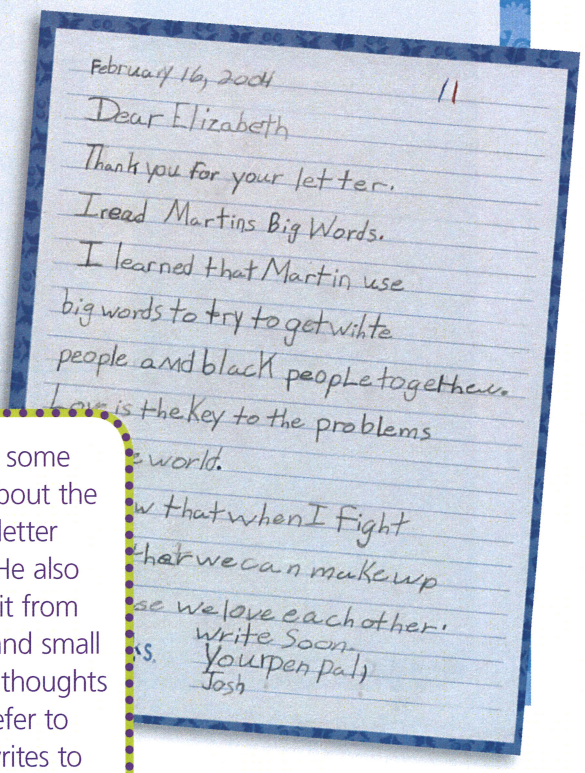
February 16, 2004

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for your letter.
I read Martins Big Words.
I learned that Martin use big words to try to get wihte people and black people together.
Love is the Key to the problems of the world.
I know that when I fight my brother we can make up because we love each other.

Write Soon.

Your Pen Pal,
Josh



TEACHING TIPS

Josh should be praised for demonstrating an understanding of some of the main ideas in the biography. He includes some details about the book but needs to learn how to elaborate more to widen the letter to a real discussion about the book's main ideas and themes. He also has the beginnings of a good t-s connection that would benefit from elaboration. Josh can be helped to do this during teacher-led and small group discussion time. He should be encouraged to record his thoughts about the book in his Writer's Notebook. He should learn to refer to these notes as he drafts his next letter. In this way, when he writes to Elizabeth again, he will have more developed ideas to discuss.

Anchor C

Book	***Martin's Big Words*** by Doreen Rappaport
Main Characters	Martin Luther King, Jr.
Plot	As a child, Martin Luther King, Jr. admired his father's oratory skills and vowed that one day he would "get big words, too." This biography tells the life story of one of the greatest figures of the civil rights movement and how his "big words" inspired and continue to inspire people worldwide.
Cycle	Cycle III—Biography
Grade	3
Correspondents	Josh to Elizabeth

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	3	Josh gives details from the book (Love is the key to the problems of the world <direct quote>) and discusses a main idea of the book (I learned that Martin used big words to try to get white people and black people together.
Thinking about Book	2	He makes a brief text to self connection (brother fighting).
Connecting with Pen Pal	2	Josh acknowledges his pen pal Elizabeth. He greets her, thanks her for her letter and asks her to write soon.
Organization	2	Josh's writing feels organized. Some ideas are clustered together. It is hard to tell if he is using paragraph layout. There are too few sentences to judge if "parts" are organized.
Sentences	4	Josh uses mainly simple sentences. He has two complex sentences. (I learned that Martin... I know that when I fight...).
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	2	Josh uses some words from book to explain ideas (title, black, white, love, problems, world, and words).
Mechanics	3	Simple spelling, simple sentence punctuation, and grammar mainly correct.

Anchor D

Letter Transcription (word for word)

Dear Andrew,

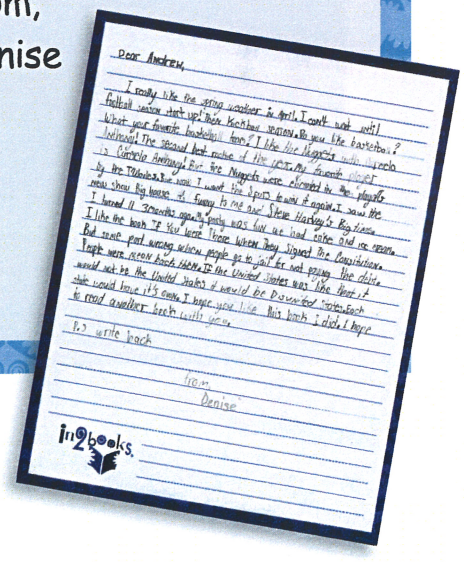
I really like the spring weather in April. I can't wait until football season start up! Then Kickball season. Do you like basketball? What your favorite basketball team? I like the Nuggets with Carmelo Anthony! The second best rookie of the year. My favorite player Carmelo Anthony! But the Nuggets were elimated in the playoffs by the Twolves. But now I want the Spurs to win it again. I saw the new show Big House it's Funny to me and Steve Harvey's Big time. I turned 11 3 months ago. My party was fun we had coke and ice cream. I like the book If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution. But some part wrong when people go to jail for not paying the debt. People were mean back then. If the United Sates was like that it would not be the United States it would be Disunited States. Each state would have it's own. I hope you like this book I did. I hope to read another book with you.

p.s. write back.

from,
Denise

TEACHING TIPS

Denise should be praised for her friendly tone. She includes Andrew in the letter and talks about personal details. However, Denise needs to discuss the book much more. She should be encouraged to take notes while reading. If she participates in small group discussions about the book and its ideas, she will have more information to include in her next letter. In addition, Denise would benefit from using a graphic organizer to help her structure her letter better from beginning to end. Her teacher can help her become more independent by referring her to the Student Checklist.



Anchor D

Book	***If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution*** by Elizabeth Levy
Main Characters	N/A
Plot	This informational text on life at the time of the creation of the Constitution is divided into chapters by subtopic, discussing issues such as the Declaration of Independence, the thirteen colonies and their distinctive needs and issues, the American Revolution, and the writing and ratifying of the Constitution.
Cycle	Cycle II—Social Studies
Grade	5
Correspondents	Denise to Andrew

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	2	Details (people going to jail for not paying debt) show that Denise read the book, but it's not clear that she understood the main ideas.
Thinking about Book	2	Denise makes one simple text-to-world connection where she compares life at that time to life today.
Connecting with Pen Pal	2	Denise asks Andrew some personal questions about basketball. She acknowledges him personally but includes no direct book-related questions or responses.
Organization	3	Parts of her letter show grouped ideas. She uses one big paragraph. An overall structure is emerging. Denise is thinking in paragraph-like groupings, but she is not yet using paragraphs correctly.
Sentences	2	Denise uses mainly simple sentences. She includes one correct complex sentence and one attempt at a complex sentence.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	2	Several words from the book (title, jail, debt) are included, but Denise does not use them to explain book ideas.
Mechanics	2	Errors in grammar are noticeable (subject/verb agreement) and interfere with an easy reading of the letter. However, simple spelling patterns are correct, and simple punctuation is mainly correct.

Anchor E

Letter transcription (word for word)

October 16, 2002

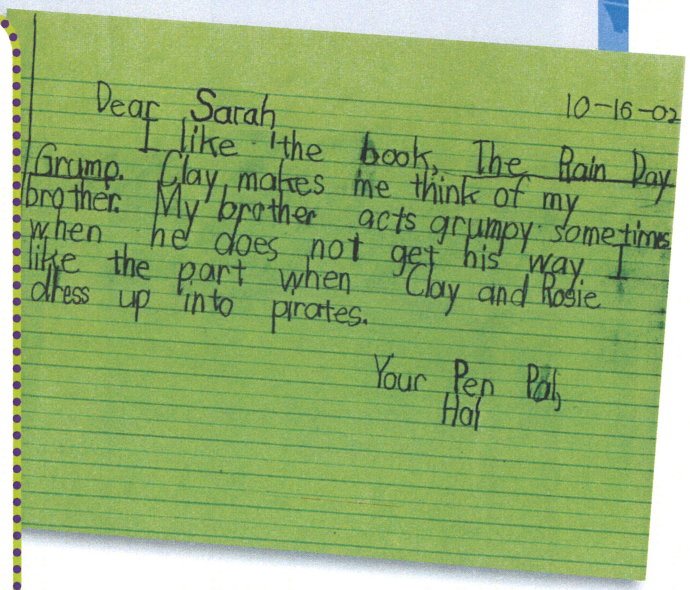
Dear Sarah,

I like the book, The Rain Day Grump. Clay makes me think of my brother. My brother acts grumpy sometimes when he does not get his way. I like the part when Clay and Rosie dress up into pirates.

Your Pen Pal,
Hal

Teaching Tips

Hal is doing very well in several aspects of his writing. He should be praised for his control of sentences, which helps him express his ideas well. He has also done a good job with mechanics. Although he shows that he read the book, he does not engage with the main ideas of the story and does not attempt to connect to Sarah either in a personal way or through the book. It would be helpful for Hal to participate in whole-class and small group discussions about the book, where he is asked to express his opinions about what he has read and is shown how to make more elaborate connections to what he is reading. The results of these discussions should be recorded so that his teacher can model how to incorporate ideas into a plan for writing an effective letter.



Anchor E

Book	***The Rainy Day Grump*** by Deborah Eaton
Main Characters	Clay and Rosie
Plot	Clay wants to play baseball but it is raining, so he is grumpy. His sister Rosie tries to cheer Clay up in a variety of ways that inspire Clay to figure out a happy solution to his problem.
Cycle	Cycle I—Fiction
Grade	2
Correspondents	Hal to Sarah

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	2	Hal mentions details (pirates, grumpy), which show that he read the book.
Thinking about Book	2	Hal points out a simple similarity and makes a text-to-self connection (Clay makes me think of my brother. My brother gets angry when he does not get his way.)
Connecting with Pen Pal	1	The only connection to Sarah is in the salutation-(Dear Sarah).
Organization	2	This writing makes sense and shows the beginnings of some relations among ideas. There are too few sentences to make a judgment about paragraphs and no letter structure is emerging.
Sentences	4	All simple and compound sentences are used correctly. Two complex sentences are used.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	2	Hal includes some words from the book (title, Clay, Rosie, Pirates, grumpy, dress-up), but he is not explaining main ideas or themes with them.
Mechanics	3	Simple spelling patterns, simple punctuation and grammar are mainly correct (note that there are no attempts at complex spellings or punctuation).

Anchor F

Letter transcription (word for word)

May 12, 2004

Dear Sherry,

Thank you for your letter I read Butterflies too. Before butterflies, there were caterpillers. Caterpillers changes by the life cycle. Butterflies lay eggs on green leaves.

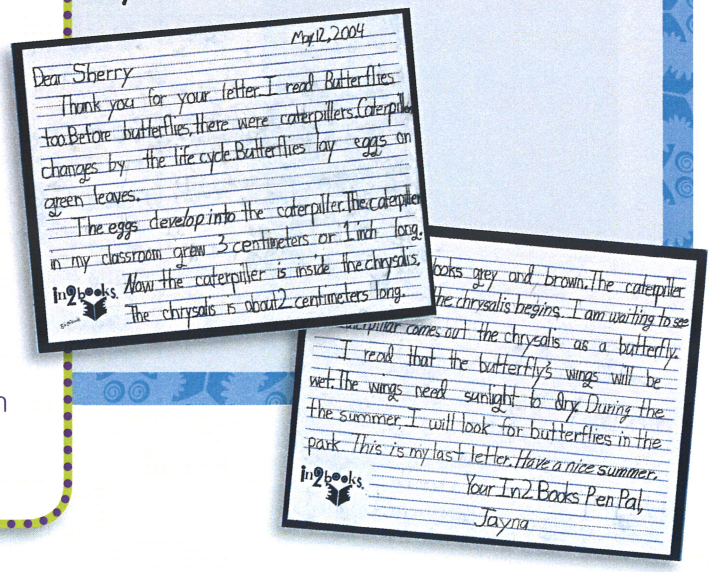
The eggs develop into the caterpiller. The caterpiller in my classroom grew 3 centimeters or 1 inch long.
Now the caterpiller is inside the chrysalis. The chrysalis is about 2 centimeters long. The chrysalis looks grey and brown. The caterpiller hangs down before the chrysalis begins. I am waiting to see the caterpillar comes out the chrysalis as a butterfly.

I read that the butterfly's wings will be wet. The wings need sunlight to dry. During the the summer, I will look for butterflies in the park. This is my last letter. Have a nice summer.

Your In2Books Pen Pal,
Jayna

Teaching Tips

Jayna is writing well in this letter. She should be praised for including many details from the book to support her statements in her letter. She reports them well and shows that she understands the life cycle of the butterfly. As a next step Jayna needs to be encouraged to think about bigger ideas and to move beyond what is in the book to connect to ideas about the genre and the book themes. One way to encourage Jayna to expand her thinking about the text is to ask her to reread the text specifically to find substantive details that help her understand the theme and/or genre. More work on letter organization would also help her write more successfully.



Anchor F

Book	***Butterflies*** by Emily Neye
Main Characters	N/A
Plot	This colorful book describes some of the habitats, physical characteristics and behavior of butterflies. Readers also learn about the life cycle and development of butterflies.
Cycle	Cycle V—Science
Grade	2
Correspondents	Jayna to Sherry

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	3	Jayna identifies the theme of life cycles and explains the stages of a butterfly's life, showing that she is able to identify the main idea of the book and discuss important details.
Thinking about Book	2	She makes two text-to-self connections (class/park).
Connecting with Pen Pal	3	Jayna communicates directly with her pen pal about the book. (I read Butterflies too.)
Organization	3	Parts of Jayna's letter show grouped ideas (she is using paragraph layout but some paragraphs are a bit mixed up). An overall structure is emerging (limited beginning, good middle, and limited end).
Sentences	3	Uses mainly simple sentences. One correct complex sentence and one attempt at a complex sentence.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	3	Jayna uses some words from the book to explain ideas (title, butterflies, leaves, lays, eggs, develop, chrysalis, caterpillar).
Mechanics	3	There are some errors in grammar, but simple spelling patterns are correct and simple punctuation is also mainly correct.

Anchor G

LETTER TRANSCRIPTION (WORD FOR WORD)

October 27, 2003
Washington, DC

Dear Danielle,

How are you? Have you been reading lately? I know I have. We writing to you because we are learning about genre. A genre is a type of book we are reading. Realistic fiction is stories that can be true to life but are mostly from the authors imagination.

The book I'm reading Dave at Night is a interesting book. It is about a boy named Dave. One day when he comes home his father is dead Dave's sister can't keep them because she does not have enough money. Dave has a sister and a brother and a sister. They live in New York city in a apartment. Ida, the sister is 16 years old. His brother is 12 years old. And Dave is 9 years old and Tia is 4.

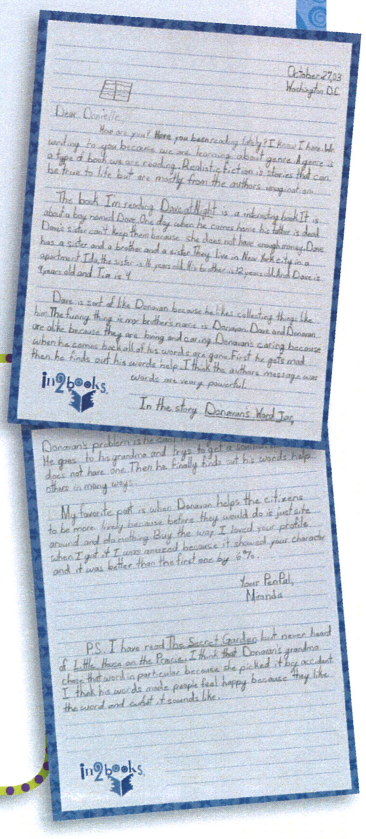
Dave is sort of like Donavan because he likes collecting things like him. The funny thing is my brother's name is Donavan. Dave and Donavan are alike because they are loving and caring. Donavan's caring because when he comes back all of his words are gone. First he gets mad then he finds out his words help. I think the authors message was words are veary powerful.

In the story Donavan's Word Jar, Donavan's problem is he can't fit any more words in his jar. He goes to his grandma and trys to get a soultion but she does not have one. Then he finally finds out his words help others in many ways.

My favorite part is when Donavan helps the citizens to be more lively because before they would do is just site around and do nothing. Buy the way I loved your profile when I got it I was amazed because it showed your character and it was better than the first one by 6%.

Your Pen Pal,
Miranda

p.s. I have read The Secret Garden but never heard of Little House on the Prairie. I think that Donavan's grandma chose that word in particular because she picked it by accident. I think his words made people feel happy because they like the word and what it sounds like.



TEACHING TIPS

Miranda is doing well in this letter. She should be praised for her text-to-text connections and her clear statement of the problem in Donavan's Word Jar. She also gives good details about the plot. Her weakest areas are thinking about the book and connecting to her pen pal. She needs to learn to write about the bigger ideas in the book and support them with substantive details. Even though she writes about genre, she does it in a way that does not connect the ideas specifically with what she has read. Miranda would benefit from participating in discussions focused on identifying themes and linking those themes to details from the book. Another way to encourage Miranda to expand her thinking about the text is to ask her to reread the text specifically to find substantive details that help her support her ideas about the theme and/or genre. She should be asked to self-assess using the Student Checklist to judge whether she has been successful in discussing big ideas related to the book.

Anchor G

Book	***Donavan's Word Jar*** by Monalisa DeGross
Main Characters	Donavan, his sister, his grandmother, the other residents of his grandmother's apartment house
Plot	Donavan collects something very unusual–words. When Donavan accidentally shares his collection, he learns something about how words can affect people.
Cycle	Cycle I—Fiction
Grade	4
Correspondents	Miranda to Danielle

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	5	Miranda shows some deeper understanding of the theme of the book (the power of words) and links this understanding to specific events and details. Reflections on genre are also evident (Realistic fiction is stories that can be true to life but are mostly from the authors' imagination).
Thinking about Book	3	Miranda makes more than one type of connection, text-to-text (Dave is sort of like Donavan because he likes collecting things like him.) and text-to-self (The funny thing is my brother's name is Donavan).
Connecting with Pen Pal	3	She shows that she can communicate with Danielle about the book (she answers questions in her p.s. to the letter and asks general reading-related questions).
Organization	4	Paragraphs are used and contain mainly sentences on the same topic. An overall letter structure is present.
Sentences	5	Many examples of correct simple, compound and complex sentences are present. Use of different structures makes the letter interesting to read.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	5	Miranda expands book vocabulary to discuss theme and genre (author's message, power of words, realistic fiction, author's imagination, and problem).
Mechanics	5	There are several errors in Miranda's grammar and complex spelling patterns. There is little complex punctuation present, but what is there is correct.

Anchor H

Letter transcription (word for word)

February 6, 2004

Dear Anita,

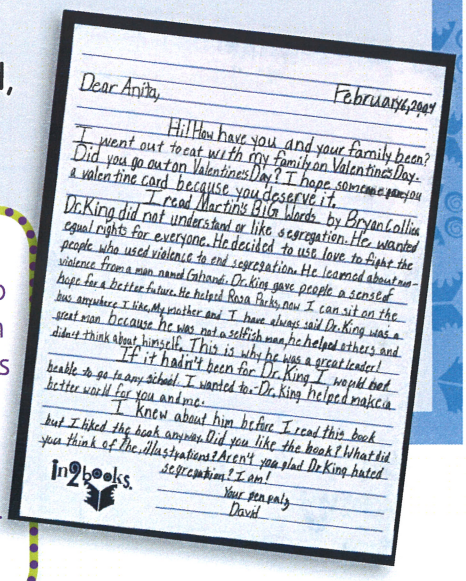
Hi! How have you and your family been? I went out to eat with my family on Valentine's Day. Did you go out on Valentine's Day? I hope someone gave you a valentine card because you deserve it.

I read Martin's Big Words by Bryan Collier. Dr King did not understand or like segregation. He wanted equal rights for everyone. He decided to use love to fight the people who used violence to end segregation. He learned about non-violence from a man named Gandhi. Dr. King gave people a sense of hope for a better future. He helped Rosa Parks, now I can sit on the bus anywhere I like. My Mother and I have always said Dr. King was a great man because he was not a selfish man, he helped others and didn't think about himself. This is why he was a great leader!

If it hadn't been for Dr. King I would not be able to go to any school I wanted to. Dr. King helped make a better world for you and me.

I knew about him before I read this book but liked the book anyway. Did you like the book? What did you think of the illustrations? Aren't you glad Dr. King hated segregation? I am!

Your Pen Pal,
David


Dear Anita, February 6, 2004

Hi! How have you and your family been? I went out to eat with my family on Valentines Day. Did you go out on Valentines Day? I hope someone gave you a valentine card because you deserve it.

I read Martin's Big Words by Bryan Collier. Dr King did not understand or like segregation. He wanted equal rights for everyone. He decided to use love to fight the people who used violence to end segregation. He learned about non-violence from a man named Gahandi. Dr. King gave people a sense of hope for a better future. He helped Rosa Parks, now I can sit on the bus anywhere I like. My mother and I have always said Dr. King was a great man because he was not a selfish man, he helped others and didn't think about himself. This is why he was a great leader!

If it hadn't been for Dr. King I would not be able to go to any school I wanted to. Dr. King helped make a better world for you and me.

I knew about him before I read this book but I liked the book anyway. Did you like the book? What did you think of the illustrations? Aren't you glad Dr King hated segregation? I am!

Your pen paly
David

in2books

TEACHING TIPS

David is working well to connect to the main themes in the book. However, he needs to elaborate on those themes and connect them to substantive details. David needs to think more about engaging Anita in ongoing discussion about the book throughout the letter. His questions to Anita are limited to the beginning and end of his letter. His teacher could model for him a more conversational style for writing. In addition, David needs some practice learning how to punctuate complex sentences. This could be done effectively during a proofreading conference with a mini-lesson and some examples.

Anchor H

Book	***Martin's Big Words*** by Doreen Rappaport
Main Characters	Martin Luther King, Jr.
Plot	As a child, Martin Luther King, Jr. admired his father's oratory skills and vowed that one day he would "get big words, too." This biography tells the life story of one of the greatest figures of the civil rights movement and how his "big words" inspired and continue to inspire people worldwide.
Cycle	Cycle III—Biography
Grade	3
Correspondents	David to Anita

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	4	David identifies the themes of the book and links to details to elaborate and illustrate (non-violence, hope, and segregation).
Thinking about Book	4	David makes two text-to-self connections related to the theme of the book (bus/school).
Connecting with Pen Pal	3	David communicates directly with Anita about the book (several questions in final paragraph).
Organization	4	Paragraphs are used to organize. Sentences within each paragraph are on the same topic. An overall structure is present (begins and ends with questions).
Sentences	4	Simple and compound sentences are mainly correct. (Two run-on sentences are caused by comma errors, but the rest are fine.) Several complex sentences are present.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	4	David uses words from the book and other related words to discuss main ideas/themes (title, segregation, non-violence, Gandhi, sense of hope, Rosa Parks).
Mechanics	3	Simple spelling, simple punctuation and grammar mainly correct. Complex punctuation (commas for clauses) needs work.

Anchor I

LETTER TRANSCRIPTION (WORD FOR WORD)

February 23, 2004

Dear Sandie,

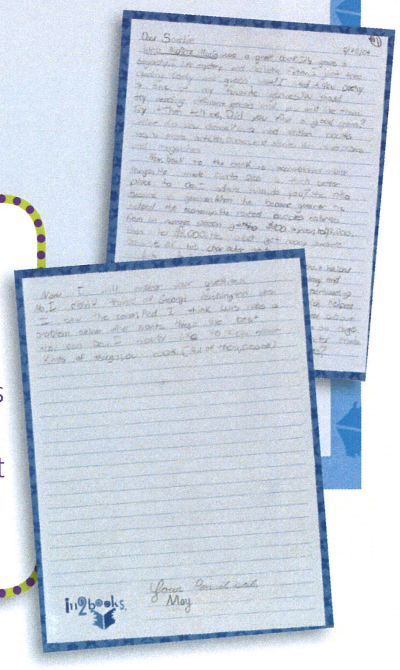
Luis Muñoz Marín was a great book. It's genre is biography. I like mystery and realistic fiction. I just tried reading poetry and guess what? I liked it. Now poetry is one of my favorite genres. You should try reading different genres and you will like them. Try it. Then tell me, Did you find a good genre? What did you choose? Luis had written books too, he wrote articles, poems, and stories for newspapers and magazines.

Now, back to the book. Luis accomplished many things. He made Puerto Rico a much better place to be. I admire him, do you? He also became a governor. When he became governor he helped the economy. He raised peoples salaries from on average person getting $200 a year, to $2,000, then to $8,000. He also got many awards because of his character traits.

Luis had many character traits that helped him achieve his dream. He was very strong and intelligent. He was also very good at persuading people. He also had a lot of energy, which helped him move from place to place. It talked about all his character traits on page 38. Those are some character traits. Did you find any others?

Now I will answer your questions. No, I didn't think of George Washington when I saw the cover. And I think Luis was a problem solver who wants things the best they can be. I would like to know what kinds of things you cook (All of them, please)

Your Pencil Pal,
May



TEACHING TIPS

May is a thoughtful reader and writer. She should be complimented for the ways in which she includes details and reflects on genre of the book she has read. May would benefit from thinking more about the context of what she is reading. By helping May think more deeply and to make more connections to the books she is reading, the quality of conversations taking place in her letters will improve. The best time to do this kind of work is in small group or whole class discussion time where connections (text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world) can be modeled and shared. May would also benefit from trying to increase the variety of her sentences. Her focus should be on exploring how to use varied lengths and structures to increase readers' interest.

Anchor I

Book	***Luis Muñoz Marín***
Main Characters	Luis Muñoz Marín
Plot	This biography tells the story of Luis Muñoz Marín, the first governor of Puerto Rico. Detailed facts, historical photographs, and pictures of modern-day Puerto Rico helps reader understand the major changes brought about by Luis Muñoz Marín's reforms.
Cycle	Cycle III—Biography
Grade	4
Correspondents	May to Sandie

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	5	May knows this book very well. She understands the main ideas and theme related to the role of Luis Muñoz Marín in shaping his country. She also states her understanding that character traits helped him achieve his dreams. Her discussions of main ideas are elaborated as she gives examples and details to support her statements (e.g., how he improved the economy). She reflects briefly on the book genre but not in an in-depth way (see Anchor Letter L).
Thinking about Book	3	May expresses her opinion about the book and her admiration for Luis. She also makes connection between Luis as a writer and her recent experiments with reading different genres. This is a sophisticated link between ideas in the book and her life as a reader.
Connecting with Pen Pal	4	May communicates with Sandie about the book by including questions/comments/responses related to main ideas in the biography (character traits helping to achieve dreams, do you admire him?). She also discusses genre but these are discrete questions rather than a deeper two-way dialogue.
Organization	5	May's paragraphs contain relevant information focused on her paragraph topics but some remain limited. It is good to see that she attempts between-paragraph links (Now back to the book. Now I will answer your questions) to help her reader get a sense of what is coming up. Her letter is structured from beginning to end satisfactorily.
Sentences	4	May demonstrates many examples of correct simple, compound and complex sentences, though at times the overuse of simple sentences and similar structures causes a "choppy" feel (paragraphs one and three).
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	4	May uses words from the book and beyond it to explain main ideas in the book (admire, character traits, salaries, economy, governor).
Mechanics	5	May shows control of simple punctuation. Her spelling is correct, even on more complex spellings (persuade, character, governor, salaries). Errors in apostrophe use are evident (It's genre). Little complex punctuation use is evident, but what is there is mainly correct.

Anchor J

LETTER TRANSCRIPTION (WORD FOR WORD)

December 10, 2003

Dear Vincent,

I really enjoyed reading Kids Communicate. I was amazed on how technology has changed a lot between 1907 and the 1980s. I wonder what the world would be like without technology? I use a lot of technology everyday. I watch t.v. shows and I love to listen to the radio while coming to school. I also am very talkitive on the phone and I am on the computer fequently. How do you usally communicate?

I also like reading about facts and opinoins. Did you ever pick up a magazine or a book and find it had old information? Did you notice on page 13 about web addressess, that really caught my eye. What end of the web adress do you use most? I use .com most and I am good at believing ads and commercials. Do you believe everything you hear? I think I will try to use other addressess now, since I know that they are trying to sell me a product. How accurate would our information be if we didn't seperate fact from opinoin?

What did you think of the Hunter Scott story? I think it sent a big message to kids everywhere that they can make a difference too. My favorite paragraph was "New Evidence." The reason it is my favorite is Hunter Scott hadn't learned that the people in Washington D.C. didn't tell Captain Mcvay III that a Japanese submarine was along its path, he would have stayed guilty. Have you ever gotten really caught up in something that you started researching? If you could pick anybody to learn about who would it be? I would pick Atatürk, founder of modern Turkey, because he did so many great things to help his nation.

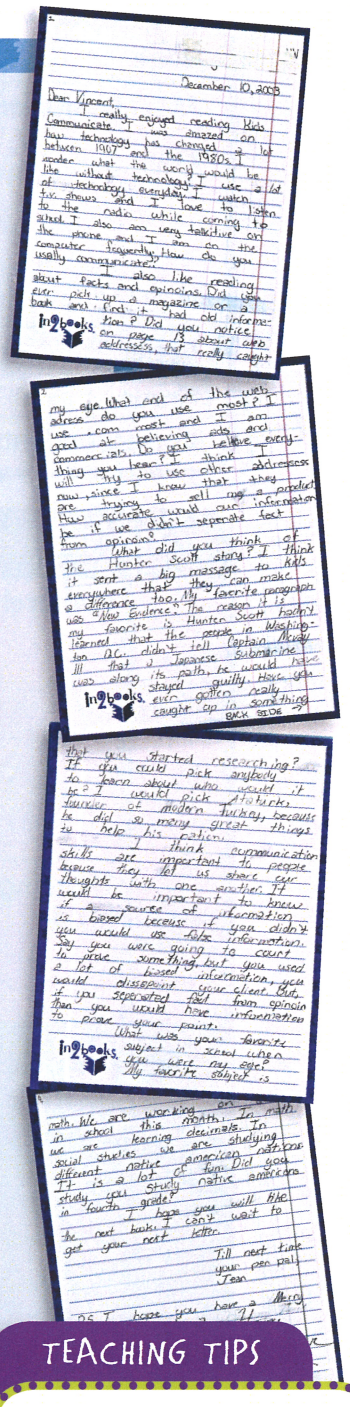
I think communication skills are important to people because they let us share our thoughts with one another. It would be important to know if a source of information is biased because if you didn't you would use false information. Say you were going to court to prove something, but you used a lot of biased information, you would dissapoint your client. But, if you seperated fact from opinoin then you would have information to prove your point.

What was your favorite subject in school when you were my age? My favorite subject is math. We are working on a lot in school this month. In math we are learning decimals. In social studies we are studying different native american nations. It is a lot of fun. Did you study you study native americans in fourth grade?

I hope you will like the next book. I can't wait to get your next letter.

Till next time
Your Pen Pal,
Jean

P.S. I hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



TEACHING TIPS

Jean has written a very well-developed piece. This is a top-level letter for a fourth grade student. She could spend more of her time working through the final stages of proofreading and editing her letters to presentation standard, but otherwise she is an outstanding fourth-grade writer.

Anchor J

Book	***Kids Communicate*** by Ann Rossi
Main Characters	Scott Hunter
Plot	Communicating in the Information Age isn't always easy. Today there are so many sources of information, and tools to communicate this information, that the process can be overwhelming. This book teaches students how to evaluate information in terms of reliability, fact and opinion, and point of view. It also examines when and how to use the latest communication tools.
Cycle	Cycle II—Social Studies
Grade	4
Correspondents	Jean to Vincent

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	5	Jean shows deep understanding of a number of main ideas in the book (the nature of change in communication related to technology/fact vs. opinion/authority of sources/research/function of communication).
Thinking about Book	6	Jean makes several well-articulated connections to the text and its themes (several text-to-self connections related to how she communicates; also, a text-to-world connection related to the founder of Turkey).
Connecting with Pen Pal	6	The whole letter represents an interpersonal dialogue about the book. Throughout this letter, Jean brings her pen pal into the conversation about the book and its themes. She communicates directly with Vincent about the book, asking questions, making statements.
Organization	6	Paragraphs are detailed and well developed. Transitions are used to link and introduce new topics (I also like... What did you think... I think...).
Sentences	5	Jean demonstrates many examples of correct simple, compound and complex sentences.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	6	Extensive control of book vocabulary (technology, communication, Hunter Scott) and words related to theme (fact, opinion, biased, client, court, etc). Word choices build reader understanding of the writer's thinking (I think, for example, amazed, did you notice, caught my eye).
Mechanics	4	Letter contains mainly correct grammar, complex spelling (some errors in multisyllabic words, perhaps indicating carelessness). The letter contains several attempts at complex punctuation (commas for clauses) though only some are correct.

Anchor K

Letter transcription (word for word)

Dear Tanya,

It must have been very interesting in Africa. I'd like to know about that trip. Did you see any interesting sights there? Not that it's a big deal, but in my visual profile, that wasn't the Loch Ness monster, that was a wave.

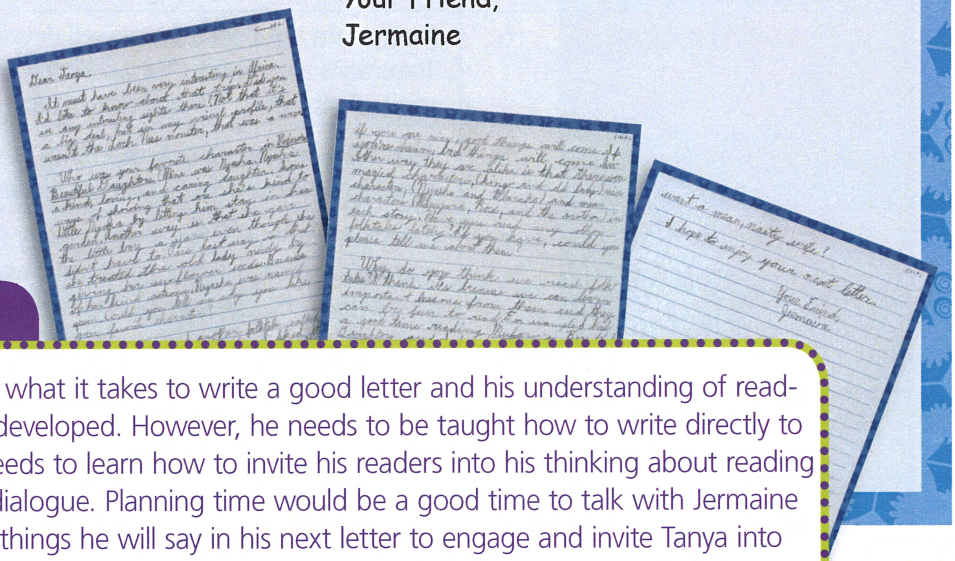
Who was your favorite character in Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters? Mine was Nyasha. Nyash is a kind, loving, and caring daughter. Some ways of showing that are she's kind to little Nyoka by letting him stay in her garden. Another way is that she gave the little boy a yam even though she didn't have to. One last way is that she treated the old lady nicely by giving her sunflower seeds. Because of her kind actions, Nyasha was named queen. Could you tell me why you like your favorite character?

My class read another folktale called The Talking Eggs. I liked it very much. I thought the theme in both stories was that if you are nice, good things will come. If you're mean, bad things will come. Another way they are alike is that there were magical characters, (king and old lady) nice characters, (Nyasha and Blanche) and mean characters (Manyara, Rose, and the mother) in each story. Have you read any other folktales lately? If you have, could you please tell me about them?

Why do you think we read folktales? I think it's because we can learn important lessons from them and they can be fun to read. For example, I had a good time reading Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters and I don't think I'll be giving my mom much sass anymore. I think folktales can be kind of important. They can teach us lessons like the lesson in Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters. One thing I've noticed about folktales is that a lot of them have the same theme as the one in Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters. Last of all, I need to answer your questions. I thought what the king did was fine. After all who'd want a mean, nasty wife?

I hope to enjoy your next letter.

Your Friend,
Jermaine



Teaching Tips

Jermaine has a lot of what it takes to write a good letter and his understanding of reading is obviously well developed. However, he needs to be taught how to write directly to his reader. He also needs to learn how to invite his readers into his thinking about reading through thoughtful dialogue. Planning time would be a good time to talk with Jermaine about what kinds of things he will say in his next letter to engage and invite Tanya into the discussion. He needs to see models of good writing. Buddy conferencing at revision time will also help Jermaine focus and allow him to read other students' work.

Anchor K

Book	***Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*** by John Steptoe
Main Characters	The King, old woman, Mufaro and his daughers, Manyara and Nyasha.
Plot	This is an African folktale about the rewards of kindness. It tells the story of two sisters with very different personalities who vie to be queen of the kingdom.
Cycle	Cycle IV—Folktales
Grade	4
Correspondents	Jermaine to Tanya

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	5	Jermaine writes an interesting letter that raises issues throughout related to main ideas, themes and genre. He shows deep understanding of themes by discussing how themes are similar in books he has read and reflecting on why we read.
Thinking about Book	5	Jermaine makes several connections to main ideas and themes. His connections have some detail but are not fully elaborated (I don't think I'll give my mom sass any more).
Connecting with Pen Pal	4	Apart from connecting with Tanya personally, Jermaine does include several questions about main ideas/themes/genres (Who is your favorite character? Why do you think we read folktales, Have you read any other folktales?). Since the connections are discrete and not in conversational form, it is only score point 4.
Organization	4	Jermaine's letter is organized adequately. He has an obvious structure; beginning, a main body with several paragraphs, and a very brief ending. Most paragraphs are detailed and include ideas mainly on the same topic, but some remain mixed. The fourth paragraph could be divided into two paragraphs and the order of the sentences structured more effectively.
Sentences	5	Jermaine demonstrates many examples of correct simple, compound and complex sentences, which add variety to the letter.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	4	Jermaine uses book vocabulary to discuss main ideas, themes and genre.
Mechanics	6	Jermaine has good control of mechanics in writing. He is punctuating sentences well, and is using more complex punctuation such as commas for clauses. No errors in grammar are obvious and complex spelling is correct.

Anchor L

LETTER TRANSCRIPTION (WORD FOR WORD)

April 3, 2003

Dear Claire,

I'm Patrick, your new pen pal. I am really enjoying the spring weather. How about you? I became interested in the Civil War when I went to a renactment several summers ago. I want to have my Civil War museum in Fredericksburg, Virginia, beetween the two capitols. A D.C. suburb would be too far north, but deeper into Virginia would be too far south. I want have it in the perfect place. This reminds me of Goldilocks and the Three Bears because Goldilocks has to have everything just right. Goldilocks and the Three Bears is a folktale, like the ones we have been reading in my class.

I think we still read folktales because we know how beneficial morals can be. They can help guide us through an event in our life. We also like to sit back and enjoy a folktale because they are very simple to follow. They can be extremely enjoyable.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters is a very good folktale. It has a very clear plot. There is also a good moral that is easy to identify.

Although Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters is a Cinderella story it has some very different parts than some of the European versions. In Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters the King tests Manyara and Nyasha to see how polite and considerate they are, but in other Cinderella stories the king's only criteria is to fit a glass slipper.

The King poses as less fortunate people in Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: a very old woman, a headless man and a poor boy. Why do you think he did this? I think the King wanted to see how the sisters treated everyday people, not just royalty.

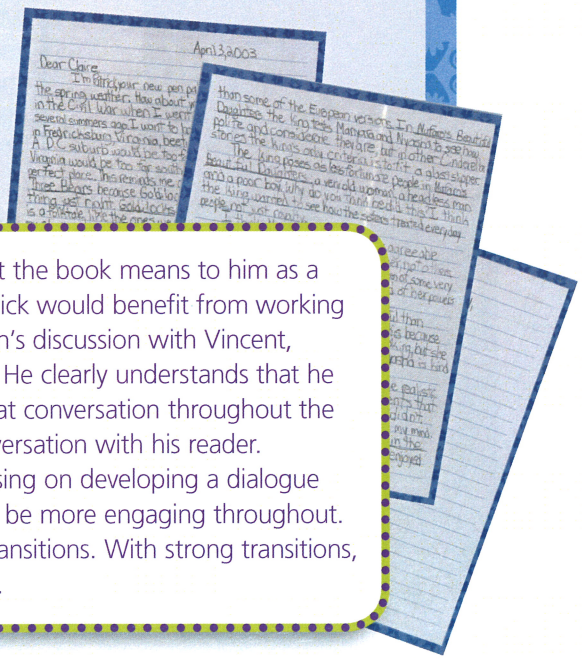
I think Manyara has a very disagreeable personality. Everything has to benefit her, not others. She would probably be more satisfied as the queen of some very rich country, but I think she would get bored of her powers once people accepted her as queen.

The King says that Nyasha is more beautiful than Manyara at his palace. I think the King says this because "pretty is as pretty does." Manyara is good looking, but she doesn't treat others with much respect. Nyasha is kind and pretty.

What genre of book do you like? I like realistc fictions and historical fictions because events that were in the book could have happened, but didn't. It can be hard for me to picture things in my mind. Lately I have read Wind in the Willows and White Fang. I enjoyed both of them.

I can't wait to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Patrick



TEACHING TIPS

Patrick writes a masterful letter to Claire. He is thoughtful about what the book means to him as a reader and reflective about the book's themes, ideas, and genre. Patrick would benefit from working on communicating with his pen pal more conversationally. Unlike Jean's discussion with Vincent, Patrick's conversation with Claire is contained in pockets in the letter. He clearly understands that he should talk directly with her, but he does not manage to integrate that conversation throughout the letter. Patrick should learn how to craft his letter into a two-way conversation with his reader. His teacher could model this as she drafts a letter with the class focusing on developing a dialogue with a pen pal about the book. With such a focus, his next letter will be more engaging throughout. Patrick would also benefit from some guidance at drafting time on transitions. With strong transitions, his letters will flow much more easily and comfortably for his pen pal.

Anchor L

Book	***Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*** by John Steptoe
Main Characters	The King, old woman, Mufaro and his daughers, Manyara and Nyasha.
Plot	This is an African folktale about the rewards of kindness. It tells the story of two sisters with very different personalities who vie to be queen of the kingdom.
Cycle	Cycle IV—Folktales
Grade	4
Correspondents	Patrick to Claire

Characteristic	Score	Explanation
Comprehension	6	Patrick's letter is a well-developed, cohesive discussion of main ideas and themes. He shows deep thinking about the genre.
Thinking about Book	6	Patrick displays comprehensive understandings of wide and deep connections to theme.
Connecting with Pen Pal	5	Parts of the letter show Patrick including his pen pal in thoughtful discussion about the book themes/genre (he asks a question then gives his opinion) and relates his responses to the book.
Organization	5	Paragraphs contain relevant information. Some paragraphs are limited, and Patrick still needs to work on between-paragraph links but the overall letter is structured from beginning to end.
Sentences	6	This letter shows many examples of successful complex sentences.
Word Choice/ Vocabulary	6	Patrick's word choice and vocabulary use indicates extensive control of book and related vocabulary. His word choices build reader understanding of his thinking about the book and related ideas (criteria, European, respect, disagreeable personality).
Mechanics	6	Patrick has few errors and demonstrates extensive control of more complex mechanics (note his correct use of apostrophe and commas for punctuation of clauses, etc).

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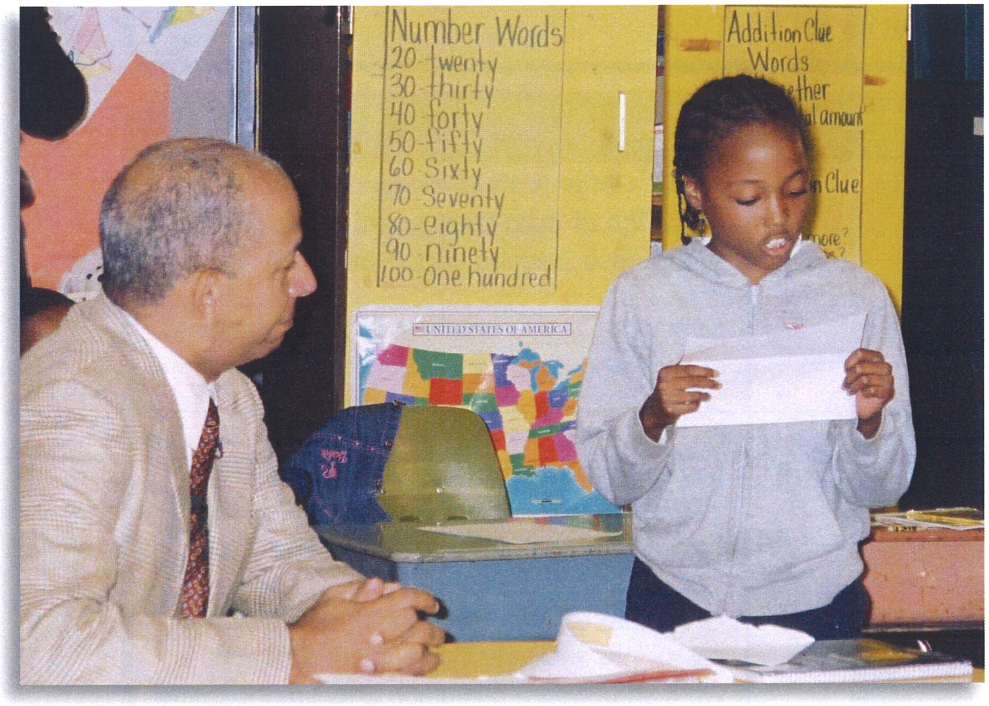
HONORABLE ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS
MAYOR, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Enhancing students' skills and aspirations through books, adult pen pals, and community involvement

Rubric Guide, Lead Authors: William Teale, Katherine Glasswell and Nina Zolt. Designed by Linda Dozier and Nina Zolt. Additional invaluable contributions from the In2Books staff.

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