



THE WRITING ACADEMY®, LLC



Module 1

Understanding and Upgrading Thinking Levels in
WHY and HOW Responses

Grade 5 • Cluster 1

Low Stamina • SCR

Tackling TEKS • Reading & Writing

5.11(A)(i) • 5.12(B)(i) • 5.11(C)(i) • 5.11(C)(ii)

★ Meet Our Week!

Week 1 · Low Stamina · Cluster 1 (SCR)

★ Daily Deck

I Will...

- I will read closely, listen actively, discuss my reasoning, write independently, reflect on my growth, and explain my thinking to others.
- I will move a response up one thinking level at a time instead of just making it longer.
- I will use stronger citation stems and explanation words to show precise thinking.
- I will connect my responses to historical, cultural, and environmental setting.

I Can...

- I can upgrade an SCR response by choosing precise language that shows deeper, clearer thinking.
- I can identify the thinking level of a response by the words it uses.
- I can write a WHY response as a complex sentence using a subordinating word such as because.
- I can write a relational HOW response as a simple sentence using a preposition such as through or by.

★ Today We Will Look For

Opening

★ Daily Deck

Words

Thinking Level

Words that reveal a thinking level

WHY

because

A WHY response usually uses a complex sentence with because.

HOW

through or by

A relational HOW response usually uses a simple sentence with through or by.

Setting

Historical, Cultural, Environmental

Historical, cultural, and environmental setting can shape the ideas a writer explains.

Precise language, not length, shows depth.

★ Stronger Thinking or Weaker Thinking?

Day 1 · Gather

★ Daily Deck

Prompt: Why did colonists protest British laws?

Response A

The colonists protested because they were taxed. The text says, “It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials...” This shows they were upset.

Response B

The colonists protested British laws because they were taxed without representation and believed the treatment was unfair. According to the text, “They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice...” This suggests the colonists wanted fairness and a say in decisions that affected them.

Which response shows stronger thinking and why? Point to the exact words that prove your decision.

★ From Tension to Revolution

Day 1 · Gather · Passage 1 · TRACKS Evidence

★ Daily Deck

From Tension to Revolution Informational/historical passage

[1] Before the American Revolution, the thirteen colonies were part of Great Britain, a superpower at the time. Many colonists considered themselves loyal to the king. However, this began to change after the French and Indian War. Although Great Britain gained land, it also gained significant debt. To recover money, Parliament placed new taxes on the colonies.

[2] One of these laws was the Stamp Act. It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials such as newspapers and legal documents. Colonists strongly opposed this law because they had no representatives in Parliament. They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice, which led to the phrase “taxation without representation.”

[3] Tensions continued to rise. In 1770, the Boston Massacre occurred when British soldiers fired into a crowd of colonists, killing several people. This event increased anger and distrust toward British authority. A few years later, the Tea Act was passed, leading to the Boston Tea Party. After the Tea Act was passed, trouble was brewing in the colonies. During this protest, colonists dumped tea into Boston Harbor. Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty helped organize resistance and spread ideas.

[4] In response, Great Britain passed the Intolerable Acts, which punished the colonies and limited their rights. Instead of ending the conflict, these actions brought the colonies closer together. The colonists learned that there is strength in numbers.

[5] Over time, many colonists wanted to remove British control. The American Revolution became a fight for independence, leading to the Declaration of Independence and the creation of a new nation.

T Time **R** Reactions **A** Actions **C** Character, Concept, Creature **K** Key Knowledge **S** Scenery / Setting





The Ocean Lesson

Day 1 · Gather · Passage 2 · Environmental Setting

★ Daily Deck

The Ocean Lesson Fiction passage

[1] Nyla stood quietly on the beach as dozens of sea turtles began to hatch from the sand. One by one, they broke through their shells and started moving toward the ocean.

[2] “How do they know where to go?” Nyla asked.

[3] “They don’t need to be taught,” her guide explained. “It’s an instinct. They are born with that behavior.”

[4] Nyla watched closely. The turtles moved slowly but with determination. Even though birds circled above and the sand was uneven, most continued toward the water. Their instinct guided them through the transition from sand to ocean, increasing their chances of survival during a dangerous moment.

[5] The guide smiled and said, “Slow and steady wins the race.”

[6] Later that day, Nyla visited a marine biology exhibit at an aquarium. She stopped in front of a large tank where a group of orcas swam together in coordinated patterns. A trainer explained how they hunt in the wild.

[7] “Orcas rely on learned behavior,” he said. “Young orcas observe older members of their group. Over time, they learn strategies and practice working together.”

[8] The trainer smiled and said, “These orcas are a whale of a team.”

[9] Nyla noticed how the orcas stayed close and moved as a team. Their actions seemed planned and purposeful.

[10] “So they have to learn how to survive?” Nyla asked.

[11] “Yes,” the trainer replied. “Their success depends on learning and cooperation.”

[12] Nyla thought about what she had seen. The turtles relied on instinct to act quickly without guidance. The orcas relied on learning and teamwork over time. Both types of behavior helped animals survive in their environments, even though they developed in different ways.

T Time

R Reactions

A Actions

C Character, Concept, Creature

K Key Knowledge

S Scenery / Setting

“The Ocean Lesson” shows turtles using instinct and orcas using learned behavior and teamwork in their environments.



★ Dot the Tricky Words

Day 1 · Gather

★ Daily Deck

D

Dot

Place a small dot above any word you are not sure about yet.

O

Discover

Discover the meaning as we learn together through our lessons.

T

Drop

Erase the dot once you know what the word means.

A little dot above a word means: “I’m not sure about this word yet.”
Words to DOT: Parliament · representation · resistance · instinct · coordinated

Dot the word. Discover the meaning. Drop the dot.

★ The Five Thinking Levels

Day 1 · Reveal

★ Daily Deck

Level 1

Foundational

The text says... /
This shows...

Level 2

Emergent

According to the
text... / This
suggests...

Level 3

Visible

The text indicates... /
This demonstrates...

Level 4

Independent

The text
establishes... / This
pattern strengthens
the inference...

Level 5

Reflective

The evidence
converges... /
Ultimately, this
reframes...

The explanation is not just longer. It is sharper, clearer, and more connected.

★ Level-Up Language Ladder

Day 1 · Reveal (cont.)

★ Daily Deck

Words = Thinking Level

Basic says · shows · tells

Stronger suggests · indicates · demonstrates ·
establishes · synthesizes

Watch Me!

Original (Level 2 to 3): “According to the text, ‘They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice...’ This suggests the colonists were upset.”

Upgraded (Level 3): The text indicates that “They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice...” This demonstrates that the colonists believed British rule was unjust.

★ Level Up Showdown

Day 2 · Attempt · Partner Game

★ Daily Deck

Passages: “From Tension to Revolution” & “The Ocean Lesson”

How to Play

- 1** Spin to land on a level from 1 to 5.
Check: Say the level aloud.
- 2** Draw a task card and read the response.
Check: Use the exact words on the card.
- 3** Identify the level with the Thinking Levels Chart.
Check: Point to the citation stem and explanation.
- 4** Upgrade the response one level higher.
Check: Change the stem and make the explanation more precise.
- 5** Explain what changed in the reasoning.
Check: Do not say only that it is longer.
- 6** Move the marker and record the response.
Check: Record at least two upgrades.

With Your Partner...

Sample Card · Level 1

“The text says, ‘It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials...’ This shows the colonies had taxes.”

level it up

Upgrade · Level 2

“According to the text, ‘It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials...’ This suggests the new law created conflict.”



What Changed

Day 3 · Discuss · Talk It Over

★ Daily Deck

Let's talk about what changed when you upgraded a response.

Which words showed the original level?

What became more specific?

How did the citation stem change?

How did the explanation change?

Remember: “Your vocabulary controls your thinking level. When you move from says to indicates or establishes, your thinking becomes more precise.”





What Makes Thinking Stronger?

Day 3 · Discuss (cont.)

★ Daily Deck

How can writers upgrade WHY and HOW SCR responses so their word choice shows deeper thinking?

**a more precise
citation stem**

**evidence connected
to setting**

**an explanation that
reaches a bigger idea**

Think about: precision · connection · setting · clearer relationships among ideas.



★ Try It On Your Own!

Day 3 · Use (Independent Practice) · Interactive Notebook

WHY

“The colonists protested because they had taxes. The text says, ‘It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials...’ This means they did not like the law.”

HOW

“Setting influences behavior by making people and animals act differently. The text says, ‘They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice...’ and ‘Young orcas observe older members of their group.’ This shows behavior changes.”

MARK

Name the current level, underline the citation stem, circle the explanation words, and explain why the rewritten response is stronger.

Identify the level of each response, then rewrite it one level higher using accurate evidence and a clearer explanation.

Award 🏆

Choose one word, stem, or explanation move that made your response stronger.

- Write “Today I leveled up by changing ___ to ___.”
- Tell a partner one strong word choice.
- Mark the level worked in today.

Give Yourself Credit

“Today I leveled up by changing _____
to _____.”

Name One Change

Give yourself credit for leveling up your thinking.
Name one change that made your response clearer.

Target 🎯

Choose the next thinking level or language habit you want to reach and write one specific action.

- Move from Level 1 to Level 2.
- Move from Level 2 to Level 3.
- Use stronger explanation words.
- Use a better citation stem.
- Connect the response more clearly to setting.
- Use the Thinking Levels Chart every time you write.

Interactive Notebook Reflection

My current thinking level is _____.

My next level goal is _____.

One word I want to start using is

_____.

One question I still have is _____.

★ Turn and Teach

Day 5 · Explain

★ Daily Deck

1

Read

Read one response.

2

Identify

Identify its level.

3

Explain

Explain which words show that level.

4

Upgrade

Upgrade it one level higher.

5

Justify

Explain why the new version is stronger.

Teach a partner how to identify the current level of a response, upgrade one feature, and justify why the new version is stronger.



Explain and Educate

Day 5 · Educate · Partner Teach-Back

★ Daily Deck

Sentence Stems

- “This response is at Level ___ because it uses the words ___.”
- “I can upgrade it by changing ___ to ___.”
- “The new version is stronger because ___.”
- “This response connects to setting by ___.”

Listen For

- Exact words
- Stronger citation stems
- Clearer explanation
- Connection to historical, cultural, or environmental setting

Content vocabulary: suggests · indicates · demonstrates · establishes · instinct · representation · coordinated





Exit Ticket

★ Daily Deck

Day 5 · Educate & Explain to Others

Read each response. Name its thinking level, point to the exact words that reveal it, and rewrite it one level higher using accurate evidence and a clearer explanation.

Response 1: The text says, ‘It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials...’ This shows the colonies had taxes.

Response 2: The author says, ‘They are born with that behavior.’ This means turtles use instinct.

- 1. Level check. Name the level of each response.**
- 2. Constructed response. Rewrite each response one level higher. Underline the citation stem and circle the explanation words.**
- 3. Circle the explanation words.**
- 4. Explain the upgrade. Tell why your new wording shows deeper thinking. Total Score: _____ / 12**



★ Build It Together

Small-Group Support · Intervention: Name the Thinking

★ Daily Deck

Match the Quote to the Idea

a new tax

“It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials...”

unfair treatment

“They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice...”

instinct

“Their instinct guided them through the transition from sand to ocean...”

learned behavior

“Young orcas observe older members of their group.”

Color-Code the Response.

THESIS (CENTRAL IDEA)

EVIDENCE

EXPLANATION

REFLECTIVE

Build It, Then Upgrade It

Level 1

The text says, “Their instinct guided them through the transition from sand to ocean...” This shows turtles use instinct.

Level 2

According to the text, “Their instinct guided them through the transition from sand to ocean...” This suggests turtles rely on instinct to survive.

Level 3

The text indicates that “Their instinct guided them through the transition from sand to ocean...” This demonstrates that the environmental setting requires immediate action.

Copy one built response and upgrade one word independently.



Multi-Level Response Lab

Enrichment: Connect Across Texts · Write in your notebook

Challenge: Write the same idea at more than one level and justify each word choice.

Choose a prompt: Why did colonists protest British laws? or How does setting influence behavior in both passages?

Write a Level 2 response.
Use “According to the text”
and “This suggests.”

Rewrite at Level 3. Use
“The text indicates that”
and “This demonstrates
that.”

Rewrite at Level 4 or 5. Use
“The text establishes that”
and “This pattern
strengthens the inference
that,” or synthesize and
reframe ideas when the
evidence supports it.



★ My Progress Tracker

This tracker is for YOU! As you read and write this week, look at each skill. If you can do it all by yourself, color in the box that matches how you feel. Be honest, this helps you see how much you are growing!

I Can...	Not yet	Getting set	I can do it
Name the thinking level of a response.	Not yet	Getting set	I can do it
Point to the exact words that show the level.	Not yet	Getting set	I can do it
Upgrade a citation stem and explanation one level higher.	Not yet	Getting set	I can do it
Match a complex sentence to a WHY response.	Not yet	Getting set	I can do it
Match a preposition to a relational HOW response.	Not yet	Getting set	I can do it

★ Citizenship Connection

★ Explain how setting shapes the ideas a writer supports.

“From Tension to Revolution” shows how taxes, laws, protests, and punishment increased anger and brought colonies closer together. “The Ocean Lesson” shows turtles using instinct and orcas using learned behavior and teamwork in their environments.

Reflect & Discuss

How does setting shape the ideas we explain in a response?

Low Exemplar

Prompt: Why did colonists protest British laws?

LOW Level 1

“The colonists protested because they were taxed. The text says, ‘It required colonists to pay taxes on printed materials...’ This shows they were upset.”

What the student did successfully: The response answers the question and includes one piece of text evidence.

What is missing: The citation stem and explanation remain at a foundational level and name a feeling only.

Why it falls at this level: The words says and shows restate the detail without explaining the effect of the taxes.

Exact next instructional step: Upgrade the stem to According to the text and the explanation to This suggests, then explain the effect of the taxes.

Medium Exemplar

Prompt: Why did colonists protest British laws?

MEDIUM Level 2-3

“According to the text, ‘They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice...’ This suggests the colonists were upset about the taxes.”

What the student did successfully: The response uses a stronger citation stem and a clearer explanation that begins to connect evidence to an idea.

What is missing: The explanation still names a feeling instead of the larger effect the evidence points toward.

Why it falls at this level: The words According to and suggests move beyond a restatement, but the reasoning remains limited.

Exact next instructional step: Move to The text indicates that and This demonstrates that, then explain that the colonists believed British rule was unjust.

High Exemplar

Prompt: Why did colonists protest British laws?

HIGH Level 4

“The colonists protested British laws because they were taxed without representation and believed the treatment was unfair. The text establishes that ‘They argued that it was unfair to be taxed without a voice...’ This pattern strengthens the inference that unfair taxation pushed the colonies toward organized resistance.”

Why it works: A complex WHY sentence, a precise citation stem, and an explanation that names a pattern and connects the evidence to the historical setting show deeper, clearer thinking.

★ **This is our target!**