

ILLUSTRATING THE WRITING STANDARD

‘A Conversation’

By the end of year 6, students are required to create a variety of texts in order to think about, record, and communicate experiences, ideas, and information across the curriculum. To meet the standard, students draw on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for writing described in the Literacy Learning Progressions for students at this level.

The difference in the standard for year 6 [as compared with year 5] is the students’ increased **accuracy** and **fluency** in writing a variety of texts across the curriculum, their **level of control** and **independence** in selecting writing processes and strategies, and the range of texts they write. In particular, by the end of year 6, students will be required to **write more complex texts** than students in year 5 and to **be more effective in selecting different strategies** for different writing purposes. (Reading and Writing Standards, page 31)

The students in a year 5 and 6 class are involved in a social sciences inquiry into the different ways people remember and record the past. The focus of this inquiry is locating and finding primary and secondary sources of information about selected explorers. Through stories, diaries, and letters, the students draw conclusions about what may be fact and what may be fiction. As a result of their reading and inquiry, a group of students chose to present the factual information that they had identified in the form of a fictional conversation between two explorers, James Cook and Christopher Columbus.

*The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the writing demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.*

Transcript: ‘A Conversation’

“Ahoj there Captin Cook. You have arrived at last”, said Christopher Columbus.

“Hello Christopher Columbus. Its nice to meet you. I hear you had a very successful journey” said Captin Cook “I learnt so much.”

“Ah yes. Where I sailed to. Well first I sailed to Australius and next to New Zealand and I also studied Venus to find them,” said Captin Cook.

“Well I sailed to the Indies for four times in the Nina and the Pinta and it only took me 2 and a half months.”

“Well my voyage took me three whole years!” said Captin Cook.

“Ahoj there Captin Cook. You have arrived at last!” said Christopher Columbus.  
 “Hello Christopher Columbus. Its nice to meet you. I hear you had a very successful journey” said Captin Cook “I learnt so much.”  
 “Where did you sail to Captin Cook?” asked Christopher Columbus.  
 “Ah yes. Where I sailed to Well first I sailed to Australius and next to New Zealand and I also studied Venus to find them,” said Captin Cook.  
 “Well I sailed to the Indies for four times in the Nina and the Pinta and it only took me 2 and a half months.”  
 “Well my voyage took me three whole years!” said Captin Cook.  
 “Now said Christopher Columbus “That was a long time. But you did tell me my dear friend what did you survive on?” asked Captin Cook.  
 “I survived on fresh food said Christopher Columbus.  
 “Like what?” asked Christopher Columbus.  
 “Chicken, meat with salt on, and cabbage” said Captin Cook.

“What did your men think of the cabbage” chuckled Christopher Columbus.  
 “They hated it” laughed Captin Cook.  
 “But they would have to eat it or else” smiled Captin Cook.  
 “Or else what?” said Christopher Columbus with an evil grin.  
 “I’d flogg them” said Captin Cook.  
 “Christopher Columbus” laughed.  
 “Well good bye Captin Cook” said Captin Cook.  
 “Yes good bye and I hope we meet again” said Christopher Columbus.

“I sadly survived on none freash food” said Christopher Columbus sadly.

I feel sorry for you my dear friend but I did survived on freash food said Captin Cook proudly

“Like what?” asked Christopher Columbus.

“Chicken’s, meat with salt on, and cabbage” said Captin Cook.

“What did your men think of the cabbage” chuckled Christopher Columbus.

“They hated it” laughed Captin Cook.

“But they would have to eat it or else” smiled Captin Cook.

“Or else what?” said Christopher Columbus with an evil grin.

“I’d flogg them” said Captin Cook.

The student begins by introducing the two men (James Cook and Christopher Columbus) in a register expected of two seafarers greeting each other (“Ahoj there”). A tone of respect is maintained as the differences between the two men are conveyed.

The student provides the reader with initial background information about the voyages of these two men: for example, Cook has been to both Australia and New Zealand, has “studied Venus”, and was away for three years, whereas Christopher Columbus took two and a half months to reach the Indies and sailed on the *Nina* and the *Pinta*. This choice of information positions the two men for the rest of the conversation.

With one or two exceptions, the student uses capital letters, question marks, and exclamation marks correctly. The student also uses speech marks, commas for lists, full stops, and apostrophes for contractions correctly most of the time. There are errors in some topic words (“Captin”, “freash”, “sadley”).

Sentences vary in their beginnings, structures, lengths, and level of formality. (Formal language is used to introduce and conclude, with informal conversation in the body of the text.) Sentences are generally grammatically correct, although there are some inaccuracies (“I did survived”, “I sadly survived on none freash food”).

The student understands that the purpose of the writing is to both inform and entertain their audience. His choice of colloquial language and the use of humour are evidence of this, for example, “chuckled”, “smiled”, “with an evil grin”. He conveys information that is relevant to the task with details that generally support the main idea – for example, the details about the fresh or preserved meat and cabbage refer to an important factor in James Cook’s successful explorations of the Pacific. The student chose this as a key piece of information for the focus of this conversation.

This sophisticated portrayal of an imaginary conversation between these two well-known explorers, the choice of key content, and the decision to record this information in conversation demonstrates that the student is meeting the writing demands of the curriculum at level 3, as expected by the end of year 6.