

Children's Article Portfolio: Grading Rubric and Task Sheet

Task (100 points): Write one 700–800-word feature article for *Cobblestone Magazine* on your assigned topic. Find an exciting angle so that 9–14-year-old readers will be interested and engaged in your approach (also make sure your angle is appropriate for 9–14-year-old readers). Include a thorough bibliography to establish your ethos. Your final paper should be designed and formatted in color with at least two modes in addition to the text. I will evaluate (grade) your article based on the following criteria:

Focus

- The writer chooses an angle for the article that is both appropriate and meaningful for 9–14-year-old readers.
- The article demonstrates the writer's awareness of his/her rhetorical situation.
- The writer supports claims in the article with appropriate and convincing evidence.
- The writer's voice is effective in terms of his/her purpose and audience.

Organization

- The title is clever and indicates the subject of the essay.
- The introduction grabs the reader with an interesting quotation, statistic, fact, anecdote, etc. and then effectively sets up the paper's theme/focus.
- The body of the essay is unified and coherent.
- The conclusion grabs the reader with a new insight and produces a strong, supporting finish for the argument.
- Additionally, the writer uses text and at least two other modes (like images, tables, or symbols) to create a convincing, clear ensemble that is both unified and coherent.
- The writer uses principles of design effectively (such as contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity; color and font; balance, emphasis, narration, point of view, proportion, and unity)
- Overall, the writer uses the chosen format appropriately and to its full potential.

Word Choice and Sentence Fluency

- The writer's vocabulary is appropriate for the subject and audience, demonstrating a mastery of terms associated with the issue at hand.
- The diction is clear, concise, and precise.
- Sentence length and structure are varied, giving an easy, flowing rhythm.
- Sentences avoid vague, wordy, or obscure construction.

Conventions

- Punctuation, grammar, spelling, and usage adhere to the highest standards of edited American English.

Children's Article Portfolio: Activity Packet

Children's Article Activity 1: Group Research Assignment (30–40 min.)

In class, you will be divided into teams that will research past nonfiction feature articles published in *Cobblestone*. Each team will closely examine a different year. Divide your year, and delegate assignments. Each individual should come to class prepared to collaborate with his or her group during an in-class assignment.

Each individual should come to class with a copy/printout/download of his/her favorite feature article, and notes from at least two other articles and be prepared to discuss the overall issue:

- What commonalities did you find among the best articles (consider tone, clarity, details, relevance, focus, flow, etc.).
- What do you think the editors at *Cobblestone* expect to see in a publishable article?
- What might “turn off” the editor from publishing an article?
- Why did you choose these essays as the best ones you read?

Show your group excerpts or passages in these articles that support your responses to the above questions.

* Turn in a few typed sentences with your portfolio explaining your participation in your group and whether all members of your group participated.

(Remember: mark it Activity 1.)

Children's Article Activity 2: Brainstorming (20–30 min.)

Your success with publishing an article or winning an essay contest often depends on the originality of your angle. Thus, this activity asks you to first, explore the possible angles you could go with your topic, and second, brainstorm those angles that seem most intriguing. **Step 1:** spend 10–15 minutes becoming acquainted with your topic through a casual Internet search. **Step 2:** Spend 10–20 minutes filling a page with ideas. Brainstorm unusual, interesting, and intriguing angles to your topic (i.e., instead of “the history of Edgar Allan Poe,” perhaps “how Poe’s haunted childhood showed up in his fiction A,B. and C”). Consider angles that would interest children, ages 9–14 (i.e., “literary bullies: Poe”).

* Bring this page to class to use and then keep it to turn in with your portfolio.

Remember, when brainstorming, rarely is your first idea your best idea. Thus, try to amass as many ideas as you can so that you can choose the best idea. Also, avoid broad topics when brainstorming. Brainstorm narrow angles and you'll write more lively, interesting prose.

Children's Article Activity 3: Zero Draft (1 hour)

After reviewing Trimble's idea of a zero draft, and after some preliminary research, vomit a zero draft of your *Cobblestone* article. Remember, although this is a zero draft, to be worthwhile, this draft should include all your ideas—not just a few. You should be able to take this draft and organize/polish it into a good solid first draft.

Children's Article Activity 4: Draft One (2 hours)

Write a **full-draft** of your article including a clever title and your bibliography. This draft should be in **COLOR** and fully formatted! **You must bring 2 hard copies** to class to receive credit!

Children's Article Activity 5: In class editorial response (30 minutes)

Instructions will be given in class.

Children's Article Activity 6: Final Draft and Portfolio (2 hours)

- **BEFORE CLASS:** Email a PDF or PowerPoint version of your article to Elizabeth for our slideshow.
- **AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS** (that means on the dot—all late comers will be asked to mark their portfolios as “late”): Turn in Final Draft (color) of Children's article along with well-marked hard copies of Activities 1–5 (meaning—each activity says “Activity 1,” etc., on the top, so I don't need to guess). Put all materials—stapled and marked as appropriate—into a basic pocket folder—do not use a difficult-access portfolio. Do not forget the bibliography!