

Dear Parents,

Please have your child complete one reading and one writing activity a day from this packet during Spring Break in order to better prepare them for the upcoming STAAR exams. The completion of this packet is optional but students who complete this packet will receive a special surprise when they come back to class so please initial by the assignments so that your child may receive this treat. This packet will also be made available on our website:

www.learningexplorers.weebly.com. Your child will also benefit from playing the educational games that you may find under the reading and writing links of our website as well. Thank you for all that you for your children and please contact me if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Ms. Ahlhorn

sahlhorn@harmonytx.org

Assignment Log

Daily Assignments

Parent Signature

Monday

Reading Assignment #1

Writing Practice Prompt #1

Tuesday

Reading Assignment #1

Writing Practice Prompt #1

Wednesday

Reading Assignment #1

Writing Practice Prompt #1

Thursday

Reading Assignment #1

Writing Practice Prompt #1

Friday

Reading Assignment #1

Writing Practice Prompt #1

Text 9 Who was Sequoyah?

Sequoyah

Imagine a man who cannot read or write. Now imagine that same man creating a brand new alphabet from scratch. It sounds next to impossible, doesn't it? Yet that is exactly what one man did—a man named Sequoyah.

Born around 1770 in Tennessee, Sequoyah was a Cherokee. Like other Native Americans of that time, he could neither read nor write. He couldn't help noticing, though, how white people wrote to one another on sheets of paper. They often used these "talking leaves," as some Native Americans called them, to communicate.

Back then, the Cherokee had no way to write down words in their own language. Sequoyah believed it was important for the Cherokee to have a system of writing. So, in 1809, he set out to create an alphabet that the Cherokee could use to do just that.

Sequoyah started by drawing pictures, with each one representing a different word or idea. He soon realized that writing sentences using pictures would be much too difficult. There were too many words. No one would ever be able to remember that many pictures.

Sequoyah decided to try a different approach. He began to develop symbols to stand for the sounds, or syllables, that made up words. Twelve years later, he completed a system of writing with 86 different symbols. Each one stood for a different syllable in the Cherokee language. The symbols could easily be put together to form words. Soon thousands of Cherokee were able to read and write in their own language.

Sequoyah's work did not end there, however. He helped to establish a print shop and began publishing a bilingual newspaper in both Cherokee and English. The shop also printed books translated from English into Cherokee. In later years, Sequoyah also became a political leader among the Cherokee.



Sequoyah died in 1843, but many Cherokee of today still use the alphabet he invented. Thanks to him, the Cherokee now have a written history that will never be forgotten. In honor of his achievements, Sequoyah's name was given to the giant redwood trees of California and the Sequoia National Park. The name of Sequoyah will never be forgotten either.

1. Sequoyah is best remembered for —

- Ⓐ not being able to read or write.
- Ⓑ being raised as a Cherokee.
- Ⓒ drawing pictures to represent words or ideas.
- Ⓓ inventing a written language for the Cherokee.

2. White people used “talking leaves” to communicate. What were “talking leaves”?

3. Which did Sequoyah do just after he completed the set of symbols for the Cherokee language?

- Ⓕ He drew pictures to represent words and ideas.
- Ⓖ He began growing giant redwood trees.
- Ⓗ He helped to start a printing press and a newspaper.
- Ⓙ He became a political leader.

4. Give one reason why Sequoyah's invention was important to the Cherokee.

5. What did the people of the United States do to honor Sequoyah?



Text 10 What is this Harry Potter book about?

The World of Harry Potter

How would you like to wake up one morning and discover that you're really a wizard? That is what happens to Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, a novel written by J.K. Rowling.

Harry, an orphan, has spent most of his ten years living with his mean relatives, the Dursleys. His Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia treat him like dirt. Their son Dudley is a big bully who picks on Harry every chance he gets.

Harry sleeps in a tiny closet under the stairs and wishes that someone someday would come take him away. But that hasn't happened yet. Harry has all but given up hope that it ever will.

A few days before Harry's eleventh birthday, strange letters begin arriving. They are addressed to Harry. His aunt and uncle,

though, won't let him read them—that is, until a giant named Hagrid delivers one in person. That's when Harry learns that he is a wizard. He has just been accepted as a student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Just like that, Harry Potter goes from being a nobody to being a famous wizard. Who would have guessed? Not only that, but Harry also discovers that his parents didn't die in a car crash after all. They were done in by an evil wizard, a wizard so powerful that everyone is afraid even to say his name: Voldemort.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is a beautifully written fantasy. If you love action, you won't be disappointed. It is very funny and imaginative, and it will keep you reading long past your bedtime.



- 1. In this book, Harry Potter finds out that he is —**
 - (A) an orphan.
 - (B) a giant.
 - (C) an author.
 - (D) a wizard.
- 2. How does the author of this book review feel about *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*? How can you tell?**

Text 11 On May 17, Franny got quite a scare. Read this page from her journal to find out what happened.

Franny's Journal

May 17

I had the scare of my life today. When I stopped by Mrs. Nolan's house, she asked if I would mind taking her dog Buster out for a walk. Are you kidding? A few minutes later, Buster and I were jogging happily toward the park.

We were almost there when this enormous black dog suddenly appeared from out of nowhere. Before I could react, the giant dog attacked Buster and tried to sink its teeth into Buster's neck. I just stood there frozen, unable to move. The next thing I knew, both dogs were rolling around on the ground, snarling and growling and biting each other. It was just awful. I was too scared even to cry out for help.

Thank goodness someone showed up just then. A boy about my age grabbed the black dog's collar and pulled him off Buster. The black beast was his. He said he was really, really sorry. His dog had yanked the leash right out of his hand and managed to get away. It wouldn't happen again.

I was still shaking when I got back to Mrs. Nolan's house. Poor Buster was limping. One ear was torn and he was bleeding in several places. Mrs. Nolan took one look at us and gasped. I helped her load Buster into the car, and we drove right over to the animal hospital.

Buster was beaten up pretty badly, but the vet says he should be fine in a few days. I'm not so sure about me, though. I still feel it was my fault that Buster got hurt. Mrs. Nolan says, no, no, of course not, there was nothing I could do. But her kind words didn't make me feel any better.

- 1. On the way to the park, Buster —**
- (A) escaped from Mrs. Nolan. (C) was attacked by another dog.
(B) attacked someone else's dog. (D) bit another dog's owner.

- 2. Who do you think was really to blame for Buster getting hurt? Tell why you think so.**

- 3. How did Franny feel about what happened to Buster?**



Text 12 Will the Everglades be lost forever?

A Park in Danger



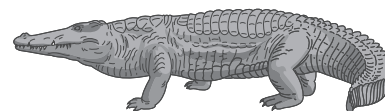
Everglades National Park is the most endangered national park in America. The purpose of making a national park is to protect the plants and animals that live there. But things that happen outside the park also affect the life within it.

Everglades National Park is part of a much larger area known as the Everglades. At one time, water flowed freely in the Everglades. During the rainy season, water would fill the Kissimmee River. Then it flowed into Lake Okeechobee. Once the lake became full, water spilled over onto the flatland. From there a shallow sheet of water moved slowly down the Florida Peninsula. Then it emptied into Florida Bay. This shallow sheet of water was the Everglades River. It was only a few inches deep in some spots. But it was up to 50 miles wide and over 100 miles long.

The Everglades are home to many plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Today, some of these plants and animals are in danger of disappearing forever.



The main reason is that the Everglades is no longer a free-flowing river. Canals have been built to drain most of the shallow river. People have also built a dam to hold back water from Lake Okeechobee. Most of the water from the Everglades is trapped in manmade lakes. Cutting off the flow of water into Everglades National Park has done more harm than good. Now it threatens the wildlife in the park.



Water pollution is another reason some plants and animals are disappearing. Years ago, large areas of the Everglades were drained and turned into farmland. Today the fertilizers used on crops are polluting the water. The “river of grass” is slowly disappearing. The tall sawgrass that once grew in the Everglades River is being replaced by cattails. Many other kinds of plants are disappearing. Animals that depend on these plants for food no longer have anything to eat.

The problems facing Everglades National Park are very serious. But there is still hope. Work is already underway to save the Everglades. The federal government, the state of Florida, and several other groups are all working together to try to undo the damage. But can they do it? Can they save the Everglades before it is too late?

1. What is another good title for this article?

- (A) “Saving the Everglades” (C) “Following the River”
(B) “Rare Plants and Animals” (D) “Canals, Dams, and Lakes”

2. What is the main source of problems in the Everglades?

- (F) The rainy season is too short.
(G) There are too many plants and animals.
(H) Water is no longer allowed to flow freely.
(J) Water spills out of Lake Okeechobee.

3. Give an example of how things that happen outside the Everglades National Park affect the plants and animals within it.

4. How do you think the author of this article feels about the ways people have changed the Everglades? Tell why you think so.

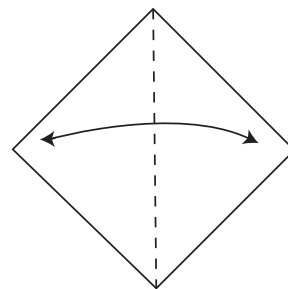


Text 13 What is origami?

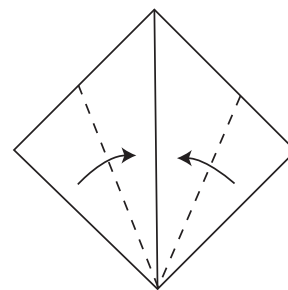
How to Make a Swan

If you have ever folded a piece of paper to make an airplane, you were practicing the ancient Japanese art of origami. The word *origami* comes from two Japanese words: *ori*, which means “to fold,” and *kami*, which means “paper.” In origami, a single sheet of paper is folded in different ways to create different shapes, such as animals or flowers. The nice thing about origami is that you can do it anywhere. There is no cutting, gluing, or drawing. Follow the directions below to learn how to make a beautiful swan. All you need to get started is one square sheet of paper.

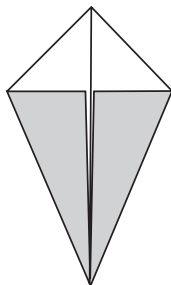
Step 1. Look at the picture. Place your paper exactly the same way in front of you. Fold the paper in half as shown, then unfold it. (The dotted line shows where to fold the paper.)



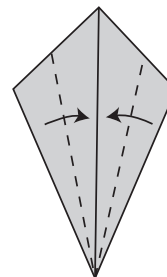
Step 2. Carefully fold the lower edges toward the center of the paper as shown. Make sure the edges meet in the middle. If you fold the paper really well, there won't be a big space between the edges. Make sure the edges do not overlap or rest on top of each other. This could cause parts of your swan sculpture to lock together so that it rips.



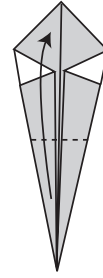
Step 3. Your paper should now look like this. (The gray shading means the back of the paper is showing.) Turn the paper over.



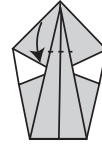
Step 4. Fold the paper as shown below.



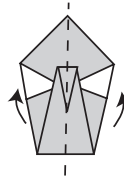
Step 5. To make the swan's neck, fold the bottom point up.



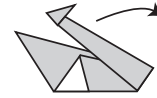
Step 6. Fold down the head. You can change what the swan looks like by changing the length of the neck or of the head.



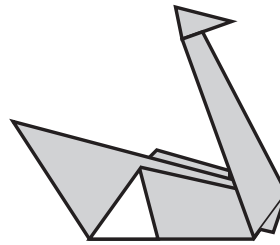
Step 7. Fold the swan in half, as shown.



Step 8. Grab the swan by its neck and pull the paper up. Keep pulling until it looks right to you. Then squeeze the paper at the base of the swan's neck to crease it.



Congratulations! You've just turned a flat piece of paper into a beautiful swan!



- 1. What is *origami*?**
 (A) a type of swan
 (B) an old Japanese person
 (C) the art of folding paper
 (D) a special kind of paper
- 2. How can you tell where to fold the paper even if the directions don't say?**

- 3. What should you do next after you make the swan's neck?**
 (F) Unfold the paper.
 (G) Turn the paper over.
 (H) Fold the bottom point up.
 (J) Fold down the head.
- 4. What should you do last, and why do you think it is necessary?**



Text 14 What does it take to become a hero?

A Hero for the World

When baseball player Sammy Sosa steps up to the plate, he hits home runs, and lots of them.

Born in 1968 in the Dominican Republic, Sammy Sosa learned early the value of hard work. When Sosa was only seven, his father died, leaving the family extremely poor. Everyone pitched in to help support the family. Sammy shined shoes every day and gave every penny he earned to his mother.

Young Sosa was so busy working, he did not have much time to play. Every once in a while, though, he would join some of the other neighborhood boys in a game of baseball. Too poor to own real equipment, the boys used tree branches or scraps of wood for bats and milk cartons for baseball gloves. The baseball was a piece of cloth wrapped with tape.

When he was fourteen, Sosa got to play on a real baseball team in his hometown. It was the first time he'd ever played using a real glove. He worked hard, and he had a lot of natural talent. When he hit the ball, he hit it hard.

Shortly after Sosa turned sixteen, he was noticed by a scout for the Texas Rangers. The Rangers offered him a contract to play baseball in the United States. Sosa signed the contract on July 30, 1985, becoming a professional baseball player at age sixteen.

Sosa was not an instant success. He still had a lot to learn about the game of baseball. Even though he could hit a fastball hard for a home run, he struck out a lot. Then he also started making more mistakes in the field.

Finally, in 1989, the Rangers traded Sosa to the Chicago White Sox. The White Sox were excited about having him. This helped restore Sosa's confidence, and he began to play well again. Unfortunately, his success did not last. Part of Sosa's problem was that he was trying too hard. He was thinking too much. He ended up making more and more mistakes. In 1992, the White Sox traded Sosa to the Chicago Cubs.

The Cubs believed Sosa could become a great player. They began to work with him to improve his batting. Sosa worked harder than ever before. Soon he was hitting more and more home runs, and he continued to improve. By 1998, he had become baseball's best all-around player. He was voted the National League's Most Valuable Player that year.



On the playing field or off, Sammy Sosa is, indeed, a hero for the world. In 1997, he created the Sammy Sosa Foundation to help people less fortunate than himself. "I want to be known as a good person more than a baseball player," Sosa said. He has donated money to worthy causes in both the Dominican Republic and in Chicago. When Hurricane Georges hit the Dominican Republic in 1998, Sosa arranged to have food, blankets, and other supplies sent there. Sosa's foundation also raised \$700,000 to help his country.

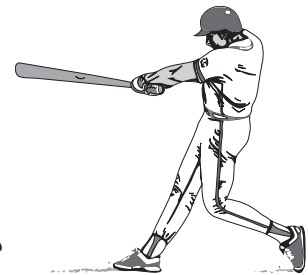
For his outstanding service to the community, Sosa received the Roberto Clemente Award in 1998. Mrs. Vera Clemente was present, and she had this to say about Sosa: "He's not just a good baseball player, but a great human being." These words most likely meant more to Sosa than any award he received that year.

- 1. Which of these events happened first?**
 - (A) The Texas Rangers traded Sosa to the White Sox.
 - (B) Sosa played on a baseball team in the Dominican Republic.
 - (C) Sosa signed a contract to play baseball in the United States.
 - (D) A scout for the Texas Rangers noticed Sosa.

- 2. What is the most important thing in the world for Sammy Sosa?**
 - (F) being a good baseball player
 - (G) living in the United States
 - (H) helping others
 - (J) being voted the Most Valuable Player

- 3. Why was Sosa most likely traded by the Rangers?**

- 4. In what way is Sammy Sosa a "hero for the world"? Give one or two examples.**



Tips for Writing Practice

Expository

- Remember to look for the word EXPLAIN in the prompt.
- Always answer the prompt.
- Use your E for brainstorming.
- List at least three reasons why.
- DON'T tell a story!

Personal Narrative

- Remember to look for the phrase TELL A STORY.
- Always answer the prompt.
- Write about ONE moment in time.
- Use dialogue in your story.

What can I use for both types of prompts?

- Use similes (Her grin was as big as the Cheshire cat.)
- Use metaphors (The streets were a furnace, I could feel the piping hot tar under my feet.)
- Use personification (The wind whistled a merry tune in the air.)
- Use alliteration (The bubbly, babbling, brook broke free from the banks and rushed over the land.)
- Remember to use capitalization and punctuation.
- Never use vanilla words!
- Look for accidental repetition.

Writing Checklists

Prompt Number One

- I have a short but exciting introduction.
- Most of my paper is all about the action.
- I ended my paper with a short conclusion that told the reader what I was writing about.
- I explained my reasons to the reader.
- I answered the prompt with my paper.
- I use proper punctuation, capitalization and spelling.
- I indented my paragraphs.
- I did not skip lines and I wrote to the end of the page.
- I use neat handwriting.

Prompt Number Two

- I have a short but exciting introduction.
- Most of my paper is all about the action.
- I ended my paper with a short conclusion that told the reader what I was writing about.
- I explained my reasons to the reader.
- I answered the prompt with my paper.
- I use proper punctuation, capitalization and spelling.
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Prompt Number Three

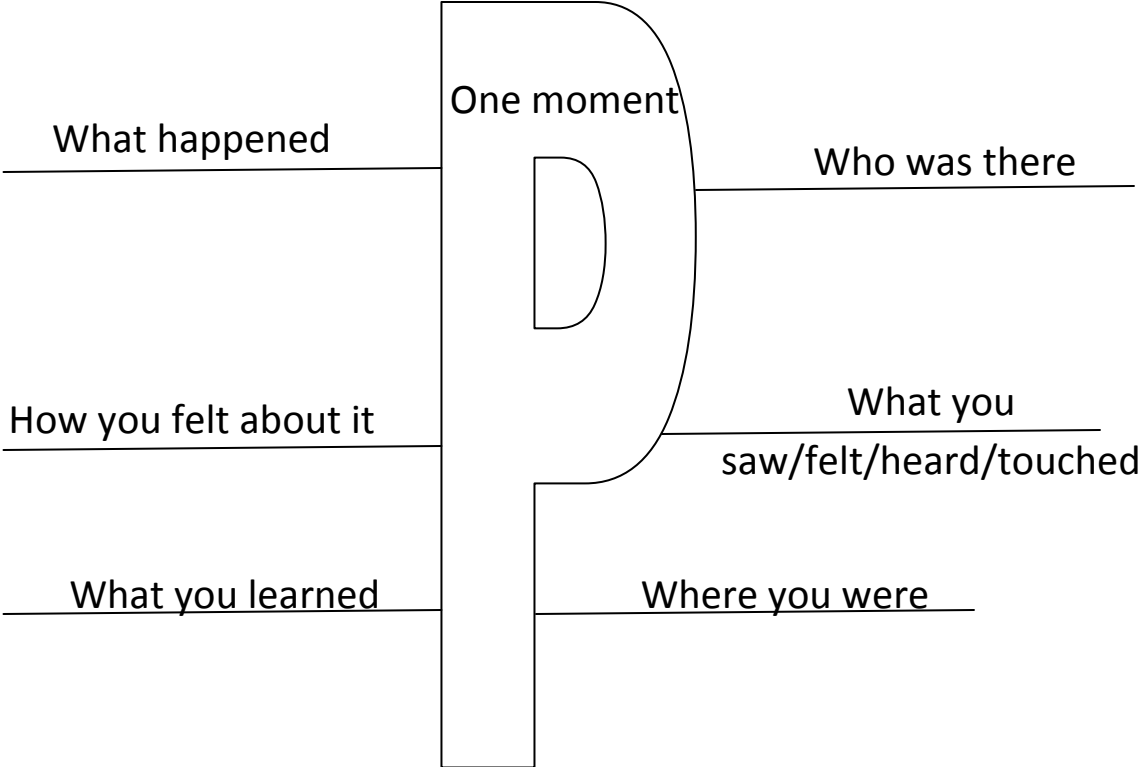
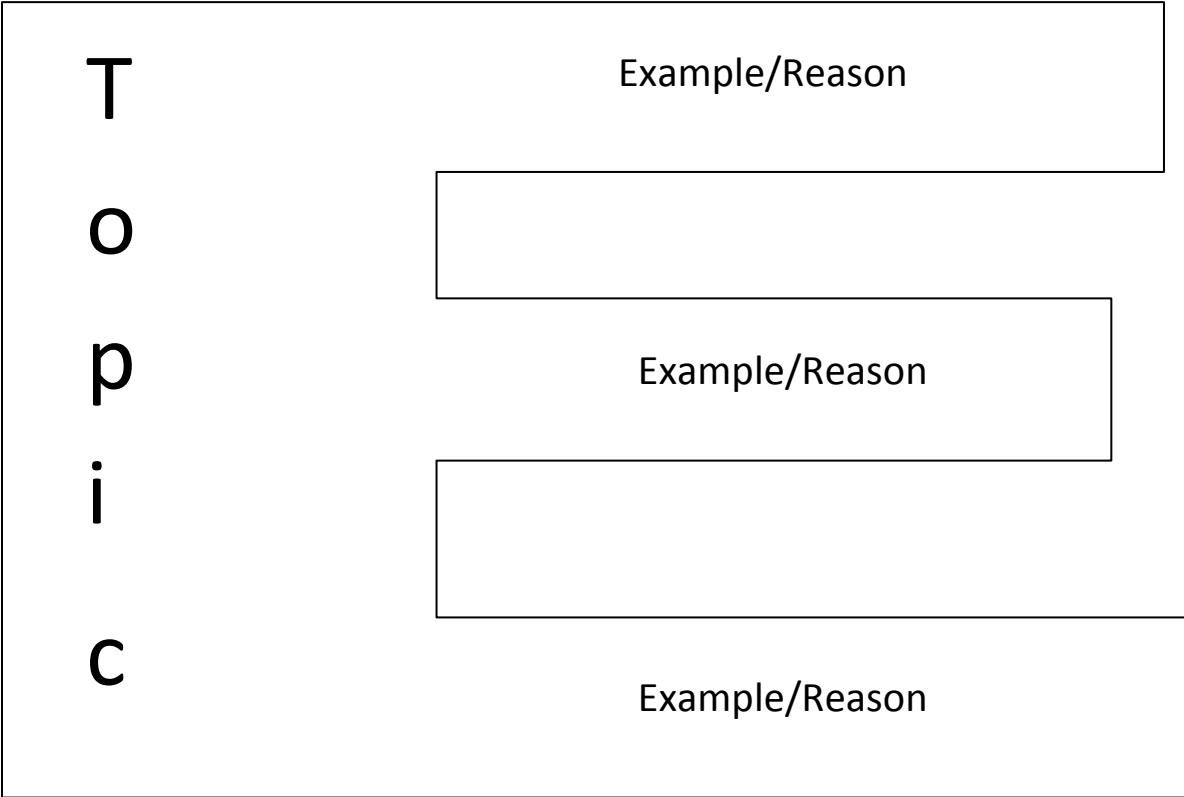
- I have a short but exciting introduction.
- Most of my paper is all about the action.
- I ended my paper with a short conclusion that told the reader what I was writing about.
- I explained my reasons to the reader.
- I answered the prompt with my paper.
- I use proper punctuation, capitalization and spelling.
- I indented my paragraphs.
- I did not skip lines and I wrote to the end of the page.
- I use neat handwriting.

Prompt Number Four

- I have a short but exciting introduction.
- Most of my paper is all about the action.
- I ended my paper with a short conclusion that told the reader what I was writing about.
- I told a story to my reader about ONE moment in time.
- I answered the prompt with my paper.
- I use proper punctuation, capitalization and spelling.
- I indented my paragraphs.
- I did not skip lines and I wrote to the end of the page.
- I use neat handwriting.

Models of Brainstorming Graphic Organizers

Use this graphic organizer when the prompt tells you to EXPLAIN.



Name: _____

Practice STAAR Writing Prompt (1)

Read the directions below, use the white space to brainstorm for your writing. When you are finished, write your paper on the lined page on the back.

Read: "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for life."

Think: about what you like to teach someone how to do.

Write: Write to explain how you would do a task of your choice.

Be sure to-

- Clearly state your central idea
- Organize your writing
- Develop your writing in detail
- Chose your words carefully
- Use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and sentences

Name: _____

Practice STAAR Writing Prompt (2)

Read the directions below, use the white space to brainstorm for your writing. When you are finished, write your paper on the lined page on the back.

Read: Friends are an important part of our lives.

Think: about what kinds of activities you like to do when you are with your best friend.

Write: Write to explain what you like to do with your best friend.

Be sure to-

- Clearly state your central idea
- Organize your writing
- Develop your writing in detail
- Chose your words carefully
- Use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and sentences

Name: _____

Practice STAAR Writing Prompt (3)

Read the directions below, use the white space to brainstorm for your writing. When you are finished, write your paper on the lined page on the back.

Read: "Home is where the heart is."

Think: about what room you like to spend your time in when you come home.

Write: Choose your favorite room in your home. Name the room and explain why it is your favorite.

Be sure to-

- Clearly state your central idea
- Organize your writing
- Develop your writing in detail
- Chose your words carefully
- Use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and sentences

Name: _____

Practice STAAR Writing Prompt (4)

Read the directions below, use the white space to brainstorm for your writing. When you are finished, write your paper on the lined page on the back.

Read: "Learning is the food that feeds a hungry mind."

Think: about a time when you learned something.

Write: Tell a story about a time when you learned something new.

Be sure to-

- Clearly state your central idea
- Organize your writing
- Develop your writing in detail
- Chose your words carefully
- Use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and sentences

Name: _____

Practice STAAR Writing Prompt (5)

Read the directions below, use the white space to brainstorm for your writing. When you are finished, write your paper on the lined page on the back.

Read: "The hardest thing to admit is when you have done something wrong."

Think: about a time when you didn't do the right thing.

Write: Tell a story about a time when you did something that you shouldn't have.

Be sure to-

- Clearly state your central idea
- Organize your writing
- Develop your writing in detail
- Chose your words carefully
- Use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and sentences