



AREA V REGIONAL SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS

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Writing to Sources

Informative
Explanatory
Tasks

Middle-High
School

Literacy Design Collaborative Template Tasks

Purpose:

Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) tasks translate the common core literacy standards into what we ask students to do and how we know they can do it. They take the standards from the page into action in the classroom. Template tasks are fill-in-the-blank shells built off of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). They primarily are used to create high-quality student assignments that develop reading and writing skills in the context of learning science, history, literature or some other element of the middle or high school curriculum. Practitioners adapt template tasks for use in specific classes by filling in the kinds of texts to be read, writing to be produced and content to be addressed. Template tasks can also be used to create shorter classroom assessments that complement larger assignments.

LDC has created a prototype set of template tasks that connect the experiences of reading, writing, and thinking as established by the CCSS. The initial collection focuses on argumentation, informational/explanatory and narrative writing in response to reading single or multiple texts. Template tasks require students to:

1. *Read texts* as specified by the CCSS;
2. *Write products* as specified by the CCSS; and
3. *Apply common core literacy standards to content* with a focus on ELA, social studies, and/or science.

Tasks Differentiated:

How can the rigor levels of tasks be varied?

By changing choices (as described below), practitioners can adjust the rigor level in four major ways:

1. **By selecting the level of difficulty within a template task.** LCD template tasks include levels that allow practitioners to vary the type of demands of students to manage and complete the task. Individual tasks can be made simple or complex by varying the task demand, with up to three tiers of possibilities:
 - Level 1 (L1) refers to the most fundamental level of difficulty and narrows the task to those skills in reading, writing and critical thinking that are essential for the task. Often more than one version of L1 is given to allow for choice.
 - Level 2 (L2) refers to a next-step-up skill or cognitive demand such as managing more than one point of view or multiple processes.
 - Level 3 (L3) adds additional demand to the task in which student writers are asked to make connections and use background knowledge to reflect implications beyond the specific topic.

Some tasks have only one level. Others have two or three levels. For leveled tasks, teachers can choose to teach level 1 (L1) alone or add demands to the prompt by including Level 2 (L2) and/or Level 3 (L3).

2. **By choice of reading materials.** The rigor level of a task also can be adjusted by varying text type and complexity, as well as by the number and length of text students are asked to read. Reading demands are tethered to difficulty levels that are being established by the CCSS through its text complexity specifications. Currently, common core exemplars and systems such as Lexile scores set the demand levels.
3. **By type of writing demand.** Demand levels for academic writing will be established as common core exemplars are produced and assessment systems are developed. The type of writing demand can be varied as part of a larger instructional strategy that includes scaffolding and student engagement.

Literacy Design Collaborative Task Development Basics

This one-page organizer summarizes how LDC teaching tasks are created.

1. Choose Your Template Task

Your template task can:

- Be argumentation, informational or explanatory, or narrative.
- Use an essential question or an “after researching” task.
- Call for students to develop a definition, a description, a procedural-sequential piece, a synthesis, an analysis, a comparison, an evaluation, a problem-solving piece, or a discussion of cause and effect.

2. Choose Your Topic

Your choice should:

- Address a major issue in your discipline (big enough to be a good investment of 2 to 4 weeks of class time).
- Fit the state and local standards for which you are responsible.
- Make sense as a subject to teach during the weeks you are planning to schedule this task.

5. Create Your Teaching Task

Your prompt should:

- Use the exact wording of the template.
- Use your topic, reading texts, and writing text choices to fill in the blanks and brackets.
- Be both challenging and feasible for students, with a balance of reading demands and writing demands that works well for the intended grade and content.
- Require sustained writing and effective use of ideas and evidence from the reading texts.
- Be built out for students by adding introductory background statement and ending with extension if applicable.

3. Choose Texts Students Will Read

Your choices should:

- Address your topic.
 - Be short enough to allow close reading and careful analysis.
 - Use and develop academic understanding and vocabulary.
 - Where possible, include models of the kind of text students will be writing.
- Or, you can specify a topic and assign students to research the issue to select texts that address the issue.

4. Choose Texts Students Will Write

Your choice should:

- Be a good fit for your topic, template task, and students.
- Where possible, resemble writing students may need to do in adult life (for example, make an argument in a letter to the editor, or explain a process in a memo to a colleague.)

Potential Text Types (or Genre) That Can be Inserted into Template Task Prompts

Suggestions For:

Literature	Informational Text	Written Products	Stylistic Devices
fiction	nonfiction	essay	metaphor
adventure stories	text books	review	simile
historical fiction	academic texts	article	personification
mysteries	articles	editorial	imagery
fantasy	journal	speech	apostrophe
science fiction	newspaper	proposal	symbol
realistic fiction	magazine articles	report	allegory
allegories	Scientific/historical sources	article	motif
parodies	primary source documents	lab report	paradox
satire	guides/manuals	manual	tone
graphic novels	scientific articles/documents	narrative	
dramas	technical/business articles	account	
one-act & multiple-act plays	technical/business documents	biography	
poetry	political articles/documents	play/script	
narrative poems	speeches		
lyrical poems	narratives	Content	Techniques
free verse poems	reference books	topic	suspense
sonnets	encyclopedias	issue	time frames
odes	dictionaries	theme	dialogue
ballads	thesauruses	concept	description
epics	atlases		first-person
folk literature	almanacs		narration
myths	guides		persuasion
fables	how-to books		subjective
fairy tales	video		
legends	digital text		
folktales	graphical information		
tall tales			

Task 11 Template: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that defines _____ (term or concept) and explains _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from your research. L2 What _____ (conclusions or implications) can you draw?

Task 11 ELA Example: After researching articles on modernism in American literature, write a report that defines “modernism” and explains its impact on contemporary arts. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 11 Social Studies Example: After researching articles and political documents on government lobbyists, write a report that defines “lobbying” and explains who and what lobbyists are and the role they play in our political system. Support your discussion with evidence from your research. L2 What conclusions can you draw?

Task 11 Science Example: After researching scientific articles on magnetism, write a report that defines “magnetism” and explains its role in the planetary system. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 12 Template: [Insert question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write a/an _____ (essay, report, or substitute) that defines _____ (term or concept) and explains _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). L2 What _____ (conclusions or implications) can you draw?

Task 12 ELA Example: What is a “metaphor”? After reading *The House on Mango Street* and drawing from other works you’ve read this year, write an essay that defines “metaphor” and explains how authors use it to enhance their writing. Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

Task 12 Social Studies Example: What did the authors of the American Constitution mean by “rights”? After reading the Bill of Rights, write an essay that defines “rights” and explains “rights” as the authors use it in this foundational document. Support your discussion with evidence from the text. L2 What implications can you draw?

Task 12 Science Example: Can “talent” be learned? After reading scientific sources, write an essay that defines “innate abilities” and explains its relevance to “talent.” Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

Task 13 Template: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that describes _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 13 Social Studies Example: After researching government and historical documents on the electoral college, write an article for your local newspaper that describes the historical significance of the electoral college. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 13 Science Example: After researching cooking guides and articles on “kitchen chemistry,” write a manual for the general public that describes in detail how to use common products to solve an everyday problem such as cleaning fresh produce. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 14 Template: [Insert question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write a/an _____ (essay, report, or substitute) that describes _____ (content) and addresses the question. Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).

Task 14 ELA Example: How does Esperanza deal with her challenges as an immigrant to the United States? After reading *Esperanza Rising*, write an essay that describes her challenges and addresses the question. Support your discussion with evidence from the text.

Task 14 Social Studies Example: In what ways did the era of the cowboy (mid to late 1800s) influence American culture? After reading historical documents, write an essay that describes the iconic American cowboy and addresses the question. Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

Task 14 Science Example: How do physical traits serve living things? After reading a book about butterflies, write an article that describes the features of three butterfly types and addresses the question. Support your discussion with evidence from the text.

Task 15 Template: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that relates how _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 15 Social Studies Example: After researching historical documents, documentaries, and maps on the westward travels of the Donner-Reed party, write a report that relates how the Donner-Reed party survived its ordeal during the winter of 1846-47. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 15 Science Example: After researching how-to guides on safety issues in a science lab, write a manual that relates how to safely conduct a flame test. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 16 Template: [Insert question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that relates how _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).

Task 16 Social Studies Example: What is the process for passing a bill in the Congress? After reading political documents and articles on how Congress makes laws, write an article for the general public that relates how a bill is developed and the process it takes to get it to the floor of the Congress. Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

Task 16 Science Example: Can the brain become smarter or is intelligence fixed? After reading articles on learning and the brain, write an article for your peers that relates how the brain develops over time from birth to twenty-five years. Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

Task 17 Science Example: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), developing a hypothesis, and conducting an experiment examining _____ (content), write a laboratory report that explains your procedures and results and confirms or rejects your hypothesis. What conclusion(s) can you draw?

Task 17 Science Example: After researching articles on wind power, developing a hypothesis, and conducting an experiment examining how wind power translates into useable energy, write a laboratory report that explains your procedures and results and confirms or rejects your hypothesis. What conclusion can you draw?

Task 18 Template: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that explains _____ (content). What conclusion or implications can you draw? Cite at least _____ (#) sources, pointing out key elements from each source. L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. Optional: Include _____ (e.g., bibliography).

Task 18 Social Studies Example: After researching past and present news articles, photographs, and maps on your community, write a report that explains how changes over the years have influenced your neighborhood. What conclusion or implications can you draw? Cite at least three sources, pointing out key elements from each source. In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. Include a bibliography of sources.

Task 18 Science Example: After researching scientific documents on the issue of water contamination, write a report that explains the causes and the effects of contamination. What conclusion or implications can you draw? Cite at least four sources, pointing out key elements from each source. Include a bibliography of your sources.

Task 19 Template: [Insert question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write a/an _____ (essay or substitute) that explains _____ (content). What conclusion or implications can you draw? Cite at least _____ (#) sources, pointing out key elements from each source. L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. Optional: Include _____ (e.g., bibliography).

Task 19 ELA Example: How do authors use relationships to develop storylines? After reading *The Outsiders* by A.J. Hinton and other works that explore the theme of conflict, write an essay that explains how relationships among characters create conflict in a storyline or plot. What conclusion or implications can you draw? Cite at least two sources, pointing out key elements from each source. Include a bibliography.

Task 19 Social Studies Example: What makes a speech compelling? After reading speeches from allied leaders during WWII, write an essay that explains the compelling themes of each leader and how they differed on specific issues relevant to their position and country. What conclusion or implications can you draw? Cite at least four sources, pointing out key elements from each source. Include a bibliography.

Task 19 Science Example: How does technology advance progress? After reading selections from scientific and historical documents and viewing videos on space travel, write an essay that explains the role of technologies that led to the first successful landing on the moon. What conclusion or implications can you draw? Cite at least six sources, pointing out key elements from each source. Include a bibliography.

Task 20 Template: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that analyzes _____ (content), providing evidence to clarify your analysis. What _____ (conclusions or implications) can you draw? L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. Optional: Include _____ (e.g., bibliography).

Task 20 Science/Social Studies Example: After researching articles on population growth in your region, write a report that analyzes the impact of such growth on water supplies, providing evidence to clarify your analysis. What implications can you draw? Include a bibliography.

Task 20 Science/Mathematics Example: After researching scientific documents and textbooks on the physics of speed, write an article that analyzes the factors that would help you win a remote-control car racing contest, providing evidence to clarify your analysis. What conclusion can you draw? L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. Include a bibliography.

Task 21 Template: [Insert question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write a/an _____ (report, essay or substitutes) that addresses the question and analyzes _____ (content), providing examples to clarify your analysis. What conclusions or implications can you draw? L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. Optional: Include _____ (e.g., bibliography).

Task 21 ELA Example: What is “magical realism”? After reading “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings,” write an essay that addresses the question and analyzes the main features of magical realism, providing examples to clarify your analysis. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Include a bibliography of your sources.

Task 21 Social Studies Example: What do the artifacts found at archaeological sites tell us about a civilization? After reading articles on and viewing photographs of ancient Roman sites and artifacts, write an essay that addresses the question and analyzes the main features of this civilization based on the artifacts found at various archaeological sites, providing examples to clarify your analysis. What conclusions or implications can you draw? L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. Include a bibliography of your sources.

Task 21 Science Example: Why is the idea of absolute motion or rest misleading? After reading articles on the physics of motion, write an essay that addresses the question and analyzes the issue as raised by Copernicus and Galileo, providing examples to clarify your analysis. What conclusions or implications can your draw? L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. Include a bibliography of your sources.

Task 22 Template: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that compares _____ (content). L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions.

Task 22 Social Studies Example: After researching historical sources on the ancient communities of Egypt and the Americas, write a feature article for your student magazine that compares the architecture of each culture.

Task 22 Science Example: After researching scientific sources on the effects of play on the brain, write a report that compares the neurological effects of playing video games versus non-video game playing.

Task 23 Template: [Insert question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write a/an _____ (essay, report, or substitute) that compares _____ (content). L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions.

Task 23 ELA Example: How do poets use grammar to convey meaning? After reading poems by Emily Dickinson and e.e. cummings, write an essay that compares how each poet uses grammar to create meaning.

Task 23 Social Studies: How did the French and the American Revolutions contribute to transformations in Europe and the world? After reading historical documents, write an essay that compares how each revolution contributed to future world political and social structures.

Task 23 Science Example: What are the effects of climate change? After reading at least four scientific articles on changes in climate conditions, write a report that compares how each author explains changes in climate at work today.

Task 24 Template: After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that examines causes of _____ (content) and explains effects _____ (content). What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 24 Social Studies Example: After researching historical sources on America's love of the automobile, write a report that examines causes of the expansion of the automobile in America and explains effects on America's culture. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 24 Science Example: After researching maps and historical sources on land use in South America, write a report that examines causes of deforestation in the Amazon and explains effects on populations and vegetation in the region. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Task 25 Template: [Insert question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts) on _____ (content), write a _____ (report or substitute) that examines the cause(s) of _____ (content) and explains the effect(s) _____ (content). What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

Task 25 Social Studies Example: What ramifications does debt have for individuals and the larger public? After reading articles and data on the current credit crisis, write an article that examines the causes of debt and explains the effect of individual debt on the larger economy. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

Task 25 Science Example: How can energy be changed from one form into another? After reading scientific sources on energy transformation, write a report that examines the causes of energy transformation and explains the effects when energy is transformed. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

How are LDC teaching tasks scored?

LDC Rubrics:

The LDC rubrics are aligned to the common core standards and address argumentation, informational/explanatory and narrative products. The LDC rubrics are holistic, written to describe demands (do this) and qualities (how well). The score a student receives is an informed professional representation of the skills and qualities described in the rubric based on the grade and curriculum continuum. As data, the LDC score provides feedback on these skills students still need to develop, pointing to the teaching that should follow and they type of learning the student should engage in. A score of *meets expectations* or better tells students that they have demonstrated the qualities of thinking and use of skills to warrant that score for the teaching task. If not, the student receives a not yet and works with the teacher to improve the work until it meets expectations.

The Scoring Process:

Where possible, student work should be scored by practitioners in pairs or in small groups. Practitioners can refer to the CCSS grade-by-grade standards if they need further description for what is highlighted in the rubric. The process includes:

- Collecting and identifying student work using some notation system that identifies student grade levels and class, but not individual students.
- Scoring in pairs or small groups in which differences in scores are discussed.
- Agreeing on and providing one score. Practitioners might note on the rubric where there are weaknesses and strengths or where students need to work more diligently; the notation would be used to confer with students.
- Collecting scores in a matrix to identify how many scores are at each level. Teams should discuss what the classroom, student groups and individual student data indicate about learning progress and what students need next. Questions to consider:
 - *Do students need to repeat the task, with other texts and content?
 - *Are they ready to move to a higher Level 2 or 3?
 - *Are they ready to move to another type of module? Do they need some interim teaching on specific skills before they engage in another module?
- Select a small number of paper that pose interesting questions for instruction.
- Collect sample papers to serve as exemplars for future scoring.

Practitioners can also add specific content criteria. Ultimately, though, the student receives one score. This sends the message that content and skills work together to demonstrate understanding and adherence to the teaching task.

Making Scoring Matter:

Common scoring with rubrics is one of the most powerful activities for building consensus about the meaning of achievement for both teachers and students. A score is not an exact measurement, nor is a rubric an exact description of performance, although a good rubric describes as well as words can the most salient skills and qualities relevant to a task. Because scoring is inexact even with a high quality rubric, it requires experience and collaboration to arrive at decisions. As practitioners gain more confidence in their scoring, the score gains more and more meaning and accuracy. As a result, scoring provides critical classroom-based data to inform the next steps teachers and students must take to improve literacy skills.

Scoring Rubric for Informative Explanatory Template Tasks

Scoring Elements	Not Yet		Approaches Expectations		Meets Expectations		Advanced	
	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	
Focus	Attempts to address prompt, but lacks focus or is off-task.		Addresses prompt appropriately, but with a weak or uneven focus.		Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus.		Addresses all aspects of prompt appropriately and maintains a strongly developed focus.	
Controlling Idea	Attempts to establish a controlling idea, but lacks a clear purpose.		Establishes a controlling idea with a general purpose.		Establishes a controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.		Establishes a strong controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.	
Reading/ Research	Attempts to present information in response to the prompt, but lacks connections or relevance to the purpose of the prompt. (L2) Does not address the credibility of sources as prompted.		Presents information from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt with minor lapses in accuracy or completeness. (L2) Begins to address the credibility of sources when prompted.		Presents information from reading materials relevant to the prompt with accuracy and sufficient detail. (L2) Addresses the credibility of sources when prompted.		Accurately presents information relevant to all parts of the prompt with effective selection of sources and details from reading materials. (L2) Addresses the credibility of sources and identifies salient sources when prompted.	
Development	Attempts to provide details in response to the prompt, including retelling, but lacks sufficient development or relevancy. (L2) Implication is missing, irrelevant, or illogical. (L3) Gap/unanswered question is missing or irrelevant.		Presents appropriate details to support the focus and controlling idea. (L2) Briefly notes a relevant implication or (L3) a relevant gap/unanswered question.		Presents appropriate and sufficient details to support the focus and controlling idea. (L2) Explains relevant and plausible implications, and (L3) a relevant gap/unanswered question.		Presents thorough and detailed information to strongly support the focus and controlling idea. (L2) Thoroughly discusses relevant and salient implications or consequences, and (L3) one or more significant gaps/unanswered questions.	
Organization	Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks control of structure.		Uses an appropriate organizational structure to address the specific requirements of the prompt, with some lapses in coherence or awkward use of the organizational structure.		Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address specific requirements of the prompt.		Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific prompt.	
Conventions	Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions, but lacks cohesion and control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Sources are used without citation.		Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources.		Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Cites sources using appropriate format with only minor errors.		Demonstrates and maintains a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone consistently appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Consistently cites sources using appropriate format.	
Content Understanding	Attempts to include disciplinary content in explanations, but understanding of content is weak; content is irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate.		Briefly notes disciplinary content relevant to the prompt; shows basic or uneven understanding of content; minor errors in explanation.		Accurately presents disciplinary content relevant to the prompt with sufficient explanations that demonstrate understanding.		Integrates relevant and accurate disciplinary content that demonstrate in-depth understanding.	