PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- Close Reading of Complex Texts
- Writing from Sources:
  Argument, Literary Analysis, Research Simulation
- Performance Assessment Practice
Approaching Performance Assessments with Confidence

By Carol Jago

In order to get good at anything, you need to practice. Whether the goal is to improve your jump shot, level up in a video game, or make the cut in band tryouts, success requires repeated practice on the court, computer, and field. The same is true of reading and writing. The only way to get good at them is by reading and writing.

Malcolm Gladwell estimates in his book Outliers that mastering a skill requires about 10,000 hours of dedicated practice. He argues that individuals who are outstanding in their field have one thing in common—many, many hours of working at it. Gladwell claims that success is less dependent on innate talent than it is on practice. Now I’m pretty sure that I could put in 10,000 hours at a ballet studio and still be a terrible dancer, but I agree with Gladwell that, “Practice isn’t the thing you do once you’re good. It’s the thing you do that makes you good.”

Not just any kind of practice will help you master a skill, though. Effective practice needs to focus on improvement. That is why this series of reading and writing tasks begins with a model of the kind of reading and writing you are working towards, then takes you through practice exercises, and finally invites you to perform the skills you have practiced.

Once through the cycle is only the beginning. You will want to repeat the process many times over until close reading, supporting claims with evidence, and crafting a compelling essay is something you approach with confidence. Notice that I didn’t say “with ease.” I wish it were otherwise, but in my experience as a teacher and as an author, writing well is never easy.

The work is worth the effort. Like a star walking out on the stage, you put your trust in the hours you’ve invested in practice to result in thundering applause. To our work together!
Unit 1 Argumentative Essay

Big Issues

STEP 1 ANALYZE THE MODEL
Should high school start an hour later?

Read Source Materials

INFORMATIONAL ARTICLE
from Sleep Deprivation in Teenagers
Medical Journal Today 4

INFORMATIONAL ARTICLE
from School Start Time and Sleep
National Sleep Foundation 5

STUDENT MODEL
We Need Our Sleep!
Jon Attridge 6

STEP 2 PRACTICE THE TASK
Should a business have the right to ban teenagers?

Read Source Materials

NEWSPAPER AD
Munchy’s Promise 10

BUSINESS ANALYSIS
Munchy’s Patrons, July and October
Munchy’s Monthly Sales, July–October Hector Ramirez 11

STUDENT BLOG
Munchy’s Bans Students!
Sylvia Donnolly 12

NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL
A Smart Idea Can Save a Business
Francine Lipsky 13

Write an Argumentative Essay
Should a business have the right to ban teenagers? 16
STEP 3 PERFORM THE TASK

Should the minimum driving age be raised?

Read Source Materials

INFORMATIONAL ARTICLE
Traffic Safety Facts
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 22

INFORMATIONAL ARTICLE
Teenage Driving Laws May Just Delay Deadly Crashes
Anahad O’Connor 26

Write an Argumentative Essay

Should the minimum driving age be raised? 31

Unit 2 Informative Essay

Great Adaptations

STEP 1 ANALYZE THE MODEL

How have birds and lizards adapted to their environments?

Read Source Materials

INFORMATIONAL ARTICLE
Don’t Start Without a Plan 36

STUDENT MODEL
Two Water Birds: The Albatross and the Cormorant
Luis Medina 38

STUDENT MODEL
Winged Lizards
Jenna O’Leary 40
STEP 2 PRACTICE THE TASK

What adaptations allow deep-sea creatures to survive in extreme environments? Why do they need these adaptations?

Read Source Materials

DATABASE
Giant Squid (Architeuthis dux) 44

SCIENCE ARTICLE
Zombie Worms Drill Whale Bones with Acid Martha Ennis 45

FIELD NOTES
Trip into Blackness Arthur Jonssen 46

INFORMATIVE TEXT
Deep-Sea Vents Amy Bliss 47

Write an Informative Essay

What adaptations allow deep-sea creatures to survive in extreme environments? Why do they need these adaptations? 50

STEP 3 PERFORM THE TASK

How have Australian animals adapted to their environment?

Read Source Materials

INFORMATIVE ESSAY
Australian Fauna Deirdre Manning 56

INFORMATIVE ESSAY
New to Australia Aidan Semmler 60

Write an Informative Essay

How have Australian animals adapted to their environment? 63
Unit 3 Literary Analysis

Inspirations

STEP 1 ANALYZE THE MODEL
What inspires us to grow and change?

Read Source Materials

BIography
William Stafford: The Poet and His Craft
Andy Cabrera 68

Poem
Fifteen
William Stafford 69

Student Model
Growing Up: Theme and Style in Stafford’s “Fifteen”
Jennifer Ricardo 70

STEP 2 PRACTICE THE TASK
How can real events inspire poetry?

Read Source Materials

Biography
Walt Whitman
Mark Botha 74

Poem
The Artilleryman’s Vision
Walt Whitman 76

Letter
Letter to His Mother
Walt Whitman 78

Write a Literary Analysis
Compare and contrast Whitman’s depictions of Civil War experiences in “The Artilleryman’s Vision” and in a letter to his mother. 82

STEP 3 PERFORM THE TASK
How can inspiration sustain us in difficult times?

Read Source Materials

Poem
If—
Rudyard Kipling 88

Memoir
Kipling and I
Jesús Colón 90

Write a Literary Analysis
Write a literary analysis that examines the universal themes in Kipling’s poem “If—” and Colón’s memoir “Kipling and I.” 95
Unit 4 Mixed Practice
On Your Own

TASK 1 ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY
RESEARCH SIMULATION

Read Source Materials

NEWS REPORT
Sugary Drinks over 16-Ounces Banned in New York City, Board of Health Votes
Ryan Jaslow 103

Anchor Text
COLUMN
Food Politics
Marion Nestle 105

NEWS REPORT
Should the Government Regulate What We Eat?
Bert Glass 108

Write an Argumentative Essay 111

TASK 2 INFORMATIVE ESSAY
RESEARCH SIMULATION

Read Source Materials

Anchor Text
BIOGRAPHY
Suleiman the Magnificent
Jane Simmons 117

NEWSREPORT ARTICLE
Nelson Mandela Inaugurated President of South Africa
Matt Darvill 120

SUMMARY
Accomplishments of Queen Elizabeth I
Amit Carter 122

Write an Informative Essay 124

TASK 3 LITERARY ANALYSIS

Read Source Materials

BIOGRAPHY
Edgar Allan Poe
Lynn Malle 129

POEM
The Raven
Edgar Allan Poe 131

ESSAY
Poe’s Process: Writing “The Raven”
Suzie LaGreca 135

Write a Literary Analysis 140