

Introduction

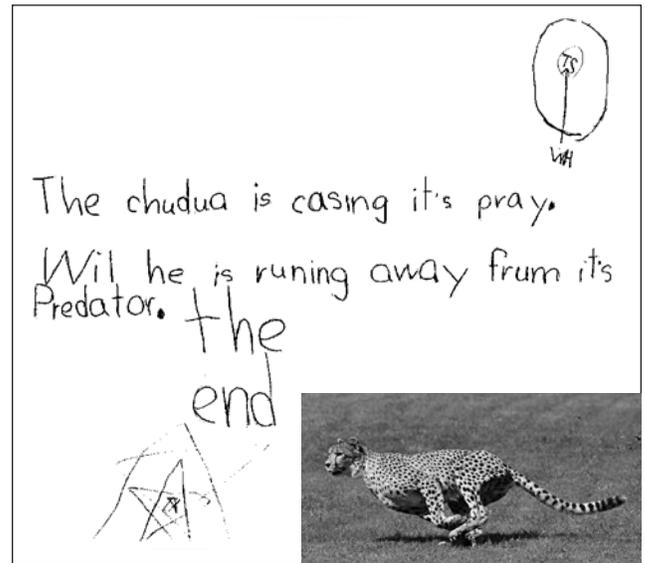
If you think about it, almost everything we write throughout our lives is expository—writing to inform, explain, describe, propose, amuse, remind, direct, teach, and persuade. Students need to master the expository genre for academic success and, subsequently, job success.

In working toward this mastery they need to hear and analyze models of good expository writing. Yet, when we read to children we tend to choose stories. We overuse and misuse the term *story*. We refer to young children's writing as *story*, as in, "Bring your *story* to Author's Chair." "Read your *story* to me." "Tell me about your *story*."

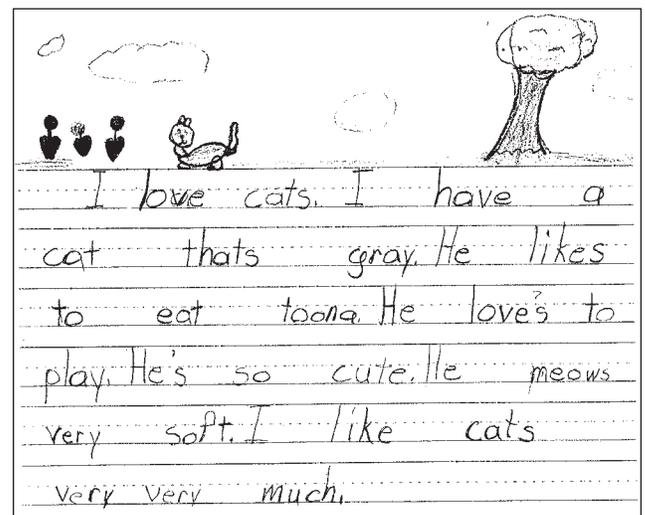
We do this regardless of whether the writing is a story. For example, a typical first grader's piece—*I love my dog. He plays with me. He licks my face and it feels soft.*—is not a story; it is an informational expository piece.

We ask students to write stories in response to the stories we read to them. We even ask them to write stories in response to science and social studies text and study. Such responses should not be stories; they should be expository writing that includes description, information, comparison, and opinion.

Ironically, the natural writing mode of primary-grade writers is expository. They love to tell what they know and how they feel. And in fact, few children, until mid to late first grade, are able to put events in a time sequence, which is the basic requirement of story writing.



Grade 1



Grade 1

Supporting Children’s Natural Writing Mode

We need to support and nurture our young writers’ natural writing mode by reading them lively, graceful, informational texts and by teaching them appropriate techniques to use as they write about what they know and feel.

This book will show you how to use Capstone nonfiction mentor texts to help you teach and model grade-appropriate informational writing skills, meeting both Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. The nonfiction texts chosen are an effective aid in this regard because, in addition to their informational content, they provide examples of the craft techniques young writers can apply to their own nonfiction writing.

More About Expository Writing

Writing about facts and describing objects, scenes, and processes is the simplest expository form. From there, the genre progresses to the more abstract task of writing about ideas and opinions, i.e., essay.

Piaget tells us that children in the early elementary grades, ages 5 to 10, are in the concrete-operational stage. Around the age of 10 they begin to move into the abstract or formal thinking stage, although many do not make that move until several years later. Thus, writing about facts or information—describing and explaining—is the expository writing that elementary students are capable of and thrive on. It is exactly the kind of writing you will find in Capstone mentor texts.