



# OKLAHOMA Education

WRITING/CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE  
ANCHOR PAPER EXEMPLARS  
GRADE 8 NARRATIVE



## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

### Writing Topic:

Write a narrative describing a day in your life as if you were a cowhand on a cattle drive. In your narrative, include specific details about the cattle drive and an explanation about how you helped overcome a challenge on the trail. Be sure to use information from both passages in your narrative.

Before you begin planning and writing your narrative, read the two passages

1. "Round 'em Up and Move 'em Out!"
2. "A Life on the Trail"

### Round 'Em Up and Move 'Em Out!

*Come along boys and listen to my tale,  
I'll tell you of my troubles on the old Chisholm Trail.*

- 1 The young cowhand croons softly as he lounges by the campfire, strumming his guitar. Nearby, other cowhands rest, eating up steaming bowls of red beans with biscuits. A huge herd of cattle, guarded by a watchful night cowhand crew, grazes beside them on the great plain under a sky spattered with stars.
- 2 The cattle drives of the Old West endured for only a short period during the history of the United States, yet their impact on American culture was enormous. Today, cowhands work mainly on ranches and use many of the same skills of cowhands long ago. Whether past or present, cowhands and their adventures have intrigued people around the world.

#### How It All Began

- 3 The first cattle arrived to the western parts of North America from Spain during the 1500s. Initially, people mostly used their hides, tallow,<sup>1</sup> and horns; they did not eat the meat. Native Americans preferred buffalo to beef, and settlers mostly ate pork. Also, there was no good way to preserve the meat and carry it to towns in the East.

---

<sup>1</sup>tallow: beef fat, often used for candles and soaps



- 4 Because there was not a high demand for cattle, wild herds grew rapidly as they roamed the western lands. However, demand grew with the increasing flow of immigrants into the United States. Expanding eastern cities and western “gold rush” settlements needed meat, so westerners began to round up wild cattle. Ranches quickly sprouted up throughout Texas, Oklahoma, and nearby territories. Each ranch marked its cattle with the ranch’s own brand. Enormous herds of cattle were moved thousands of miles, either to eastern cities or west to California.

### **The Golden Age of the Cowboy**

- 5 Cattle drives became popular during the 1850s and peaked during the 1860s. Following the Civil War, many young soldiers returned home needing jobs. Driving cattle proved to be difficult but profitable work.
- 6 Ranch owners would hire trail bosses who would lead cowhand crews on cattle drives. Most crews were racially diverse—whites, African Americans, and Mexicans often worked together. Many African American men migrated to the West after the Civil War and accounted for almost 20% of the men working as cowboys. Mexican cowboys, also known as *vaqueros*, accounted for almost 15% of the cowboys during this time.
- 7 Several ranch owners might use a single crew to herd all the cattle they wanted to sell. A team of about 12–15 cowhands could move 3,000 cattle a distance of approximately 10–20 miles a day. The crew did not push the cattle to walk too quickly, because then the cattle might lose weight and draw a lower price in the marketplace. A cattle drive usually began during the spring and took months to complete.
- 8 The earliest cattle drives from Texas followed the Chisholm Trail, which ran from the Rio Grande through Oklahoma to Central Kansas. It was named after trader Jesse Chisholm, who first followed it.
- 9 Other trails were named after famous trail bosses. One of these was Charles Goodnight, who invented the chuck wagon. This wagon had a fold-out counter that was used for food preparation. The rest of the wagon was lined with built-in storage, which was filled with food, utensils, water, the crew’s bed rolls, and assorted tools. The trail cook could serve meals to the cowhands directly from the wagon. Many cattle drives used Goodnight’s chuck wagon design. Goodnight himself became partners with rancher Oliver Loving. They mapped out the Goodnight-Loving Trail, which traveled through New Mexico and into Colorado.



## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

### The End of an Era

- 10 The last major cattle drive occurred during the early 1870s. Since ranchers had begun buying up land and running barbed wire around their property, herds of cattle could no longer cross these lands. However, as railroads continued to expand, cattle could be taken by rail from Texas to distant markets. Cattle drives became much smaller events designed to simply move cattle to different grazing areas on large ranches.
- 11 The golden age of the cattle drive only lasted about twenty years, but tales of hard-working cowboys still fascinate people today.



### Life on the Trail

1 The dusty trails that cattle drives followed were long and often difficult. Day and night, a handful of people shouldered the responsibility of protecting and moving thousands of cattle. Severe weather, fast-moving rivers, steep cliffs, cattle thieves, rattlesnakes, and stampedes were just a few of the dangers cowhands might encounter along the trail. In order to be successful, the crew needed to be highly organized. Each cowhand-for-hire, also called a “drover,” had a specific role and rode in a specific position during the drive.

#### Trail Boss

2 As the leader, the trail boss was usually the most experienced drover and was in charge of the entire operation, ensuring the safety of both cowhands and cattle. The person in this role could generally be found riding far in front of the herd, scouting for safe trails and sources of fresh water and grass. Although most trail bosses were men, some women owned ranches and ran cattle drives.

#### Point Man

3 After the trail boss, point men were usually the more experienced and respected cowhands on the drive. Point men generally worked in pairs and rode at the front and slightly off to the side of the herd. They kept the lead steer<sup>1</sup> traveling in the correct direction, recognizing that the other cattle would follow the lead steer. They also determined the speed of the drive.

#### Swing Man

4 The left-swing and right-swing men rode about one-third of the way back in the herd. The herd itself did not travel in a pack but walked in a narrow line, and swing men were responsible for keeping the herd in that tight line. They also prevented strays from escaping into the brush.

#### Flank Man

5 Flank men rode in pairs about two-thirds of the way back, one on each side of the herd. Like swing men, they would “cut in” or head off stray cattle. Both swing and flank men were usually moderately experienced cowhands.

---

<sup>1</sup>steer: a type of male cattle



### Drag Rider

- 6 Of all the jobs on the trail, the work of the drag rider was the least desirable. Drag riders rode at the back to ensure that the slower-moving cattle kept up with the herd. Nicknamed “dust-eaters,” drag riders often tied handkerchiefs over their faces to keep the dust kicked up by the cattle out of their noses and mouths. Inexperienced cowhands were usually assigned this job.

### Horse Wrangler

- 7 The drovers who rode alongside the cattle switched their exhausted horses at least a few times a day. It was the horse wrangler’s job to care for the remuda, or spare horses. With up to 100 horses in the remuda, the wrangler’s job was not easy. He rounded them up, enclosed them in rope corrals, and supplied them with grass, water, and corn.

### Cook

- 8 The cook was often the oldest person on the drive, but he also had one of the hardest jobs. He usually awoke at 3 a.m. to begin food preparation, and he cooked three meals a day, often with the dust, rain, wind, or sun beating on him. He might serve foods such as salt pork, biscuits, gravy, beans, and coffee.

### Challenges of the Trail

- 9 Cowhands worked long hours in the dust and heat. The string of cattle might stretch out for a couple of miles, so drovers communicated using hand signals and hat gestures.
- 10 One of the greatest dangers cowhands could face was a stampede, in which hundreds of cattle would begin running in a blind panic. Stampedes were most often caused when a lightning strike frightened the herd into running. Immediately, all the nearby cattle would follow, and the stampede would grow rapidly. Drovers had the difficult job of stopping stampedes before the cattle escaped or charged over a cliff. The possibility of being trampled forced cowhands to utilize all their horse-handling experience.
- 11 At night, the night crew, also called night hawks, watched over the cattle while the day crew slept on blanket rolls under the open sky. Most cowhands did not even have tarps to cover themselves during rainstorms. The cowhands might get injured, sunburned, bitten by insects, or dehydrated. Still, many relished the freedom of their jobs and the ability to use their skills.
- 12 Each member of the cattle drive had a special job based on his experience and skills. Regardless of their roles, cowhands recognized that they must work together to keep the cattle safe.



# WRITING/CONSTRUCTED REPOSENSE RUBRIC

OSTP Grade 8 Holistic Writing Rubric



Score	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is well-suited for the audience and task/purpose and the writing maintains a clear focus; ideas are fully developed. For an argumentative response, at least one counterclaim is present.</li> <li>• Organization is strong and sustained, creating unity and coherence; contains an engaging introduction, an effective conclusion that follows logically, and smooth, effective transitions that contribute to logical sequencing.</li> <li>• Word choice is varied and conveys meaning; language is effective and connects to the audience.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is clear and correct, and the writing demonstrates a rich variety of structures, types, and lengths; any errors are minor.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates appropriate control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are minor and do not affect readability.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is adequate for the audience and task/purpose and the writing has an evident focus; ideas are somewhat developed.</li> <li>• Organization is adequate, creating some unity and coherence; introduction and conclusion are appropriate, and sequencing is logical with limited transitions.</li> <li>• Word choice is general and includes some variety; language is adequate and attempts to connect to the audience.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is correct and the writing demonstrates an adequate variety of structures, types, and lengths; errors may be present but do not interfere with fluency.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates adequate control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are noticeable but do not significantly affect readability.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is inconsistent for the audience and task/purpose and the writing has an unclear focus; ideas are minimally developed and may be listed.</li> <li>• Organization lacks clarity, demonstrating weak unity and coherence; introduction and conclusion are ineffective, there is little or random sequencing, and transitions are limited.</li> <li>• Word choice lacks precision and variety; language may be inappropriate, ineffective, simplistic, or vague.</li> <li>• Sentence structure lacks control and the writing demonstrates limited variety of structures, types, and lengths; errors interfere with fluency.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates limited control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are distracting and may interfere with readability.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is irrelevant for the audience and task/purpose and the writing has a confusing focus; ideas are repetitive or lack development.</li> <li>• Organization lacks logical direction; there is no evidence of unity or coherence.</li> <li>• Word choice is extremely limited or inaccurate; language fails to communicate meaning. The writing may be too short to demonstrate variety.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is inappropriate and the writing demonstrates no variety of structures, types, and lengths; errors interfere with fluency. The writing may be too short to demonstrate control of sentence structures.</li> <li>• The writing demonstrates minimal control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are numerous and impede readability.</li> </ul>

Responses receive a score designation of “unscorable” and a performance level of "Below Standard" if they meet any of the following conditions:

- restatement of the task (prompt) or a refusal
- in a language other than English
- illegible, incomprehensible, or otherwise indecipherable
- about a topic different from the assigned task



WRITING/CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE  
HOLISTIC ANCHOR PAPER  
EXEMPLARS

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

### Writing Topic:

Write a narrative describing a day in your life as if you were a cowhand on a cattle drive. In your narrative, include specific details about the cattle drive and an explanation about how you helped overcome a challenge on the trail. Be sure to use information from both passages in your narrative.

It was in 1857 when it happened. I was just starting as a cowhand, specifically a drag rider. I was the lowest on the totem pole. The others called me "Dirt Eater". They didn't really like me, but soon enough they forgot!  
"Keep up, Dirt Eater!" the Port Man said.

I was on my first cattle drive. So I guess making fun of the new guy was "cool" to them. I stopped and said "Shouldn't we rest? It's pitch black out here!" Of course this provoked the Trailboss.

"Shut up, what's-his-face. It's not like the big, bad, boogie man will get us." I keep galloping on my brown quarter horse like nothing happened.

We just crossed the border line into Oklahoma from Texas an hour or two before, when the Trailboss finally eases up. "Alright. Rest here. You get an hour, then back in the saddles!" he

hisses. Of course I sit by myself, but then I hear a noise. "Do I hear a growl?" I asked myself.

I ran to the other cowhands to tell them we should leave. "Partners, sorry for saying we should stop. I didn't think about the dangers of the night critters." They had snappy replies, "Oh, is the new kid scared? Maybe he just isn't cut out for cattle drivin'." Not even a second after that reply, the mountain lion came into view. I knew I was right. The shocked looks on their faces were priceless.

"Calmly catch fire on one of the sticks, please!" I said as we all "stood" up. The wild cat was hissing and growling. Just as soon as the stick of fire was put in my hand, the Mountain cat pounced. Everyone ran but the trail boss and I. I stayed because I was going to ward off the cat. The trail boss stayed because he was underneath the clenching paws of the lion.

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

"Ah! Get him off me! Now! Please!" I hear the trailboss call. I think "I didn't even know his name... I'm sure he has a family. I can't leave him like this."

"Whoosh, whoosh" the flames scream as they slice the air. I hear the lion's stress call, a call of pain, or anger, or horror. WHOOSH! I'm almost knocked backward from the wind of the lion running past me into the woods.

Silence plays its' horrible song for a few minutes. "I'm alright.", the trail boss declares, "But you. The Dirt Eater... Why did you save me? I've been nothing but rude to you. Why?" I had already asked myself the same question when I replied "I didn't even know your name."

Score Point 4 ID: 1571614766

The narrative maintains a clear focus and ideas are fully developed. Dialogue and descriptive details are effectively used to develop the setting, characters, and events ("Keep up Dirt Eater!" the Point Man said, "I keep galloping on my brown quarterhorse . . .," "The trail boss stayed because he was underneath the clenching paws of the lion"). The writing conveys strong coherence throughout its length; the introduction engages, event sequence is natural, transitions signal shifts in time and setting, and the conclusion brings a successful ending to the encounter with the mountain lion. Word choice conveys meaning; language is effective and connects to the audience ("Whoosh, whoosh" the flames scream as they slice the air").

Sentence structure is varied and controlled; any errors are minor. The writing demonstrates appropriate control of grammar, usage, and mechanics for the length and complexity of the narrative; any errors do not detract.

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

## Writing Topic:

Write a narrative describing a day in your life as if you were a cowhand on a cattle drive. In your narrative, include specific details about the cattle drive and an explanation about how you helped overcome a challenge on the trail. Be sure to use information from both passages in your narrative.

It was one hot spring day. I had just come back from the war. I needed a job to keep my family alive! I told my wife "honey I'm going out, to look for a job. As I went through building after building I couldn't find a job, so I took a rest. When I was walking home, I came across this farm named "El Gran Rancho". The name caught my eyes. I walked in, there was this old man sitting next to a horse. I asked him "Sir you need any help, I'm looking for a job" he said "Maybe you can be a partner", he told me he was about to go on a cattle drive. I was kinda scared. But you know I had to do it, it was for my family! He assigned me as a working man. I was a bit happy I found the job.

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

As I went walking home back, with a smile on my face. I came to side my house and I told my wife "Sweetie guess what" she said "Oh my god, Don't Tell me you didn't find a job" I said "No, I found one of the greatest jobs ever. She ran towards me and hugged me. I know she was proud of me. It was already night and I was nervous for the big day I got ahead of me. I couldn't sleep. although I did drift off to sleep.

As I woke up, all nervous. I got ready for my big day. I went to the farm but guy gave me a list of what I needed. I told him if he could hold on cause I had to go get some things I needed. I ran as fast as I could. I found the nearest store, I got all the stuff I needed and headed back. I knew I was ready for this. The boss began gathering the cows. Right then I knew the best journey of my life was about to begin.

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

That was pretty chilly, so I decided to put on  
 my leather jacket. My dad had given it to us as a  
 memory of him. Later that night the Thunder  
 stream began. The Boss said "lets stop there or  
 be trouble if we keep going". A "vaquero" said  
 "everything is gonna be ok, lets keep going". The Boss  
 said no. So we stopped on this river. I was  
 scared, I thought something bad was gonna happen.  
 At the night went through, nothing happened. It  
 was morning and the birds were chirping. The boss  
 scream out "EVERY ONE COME HERE!!"  
 We saw that one of the flank-men was dead.  
 That had slowed us down, because we couldn't  
 take him with us, so we had to dig a hole  
 for him. A few weeks had past and I thought  
 we were never gonna make it. A few days  
 go back. We come across this river and  
 we stopped to rest. I immediately took off my  
 clothes and got my swim cap and sponge and  
 got in the water. The water was not that

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

cold it was pretty warm. We spent the  
 whole day there. Next morning we walked  
 a few miles and got there. I was  
 happy I made Alivo. They took us  
 back on this fancy wagon. For a second  
 I thought we had to go back walking the way  
 we made it back home. Safe and alive.  
 My wife was happy to see me!

Score Point 3 ID: 1572476613

The content is adequately developed for the audience and purpose. The narrative has an evident focus on the events occurring before and on the cattle drive. Descriptive details and dialogue generally describe the characters and events ("Later that night the thunder storm began. The boss said 'lets stop theres going be trouble if we keep going.'"). The narrative has adequate unity and coherence, the introduction interests and orients the reader, and event sequence is logical and appropriate with transitions that signal shifts in time and settings. Word choice is general and domain specific; there is some lack of precision and little figurative language or word nuances. Sentence structure is limited in type, and the writing demonstrates rudimentary control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are noticeable, but development and organization outweigh any flaws in the punctuation of dialogue.

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

## Writing Topic:

Write a narrative describing a day in your life as if you were a cowhand on a cattle drive. In your narrative, include specific details about the cattle drive and an explanation about how you helped overcome a challenge on the trail. Be sure to use information from both passages in your narrative.

I am a trail boss, or you can say I am the leader of everything. I got this position because I am the most experienced drover. I am mostly at the front of the herd during a cattle drive. I also make sure the cowhands and cattle are safe.

Me and my cowhands are going on a cattle drive. It is the early 1860s and we have a plan. The trail boss which is me I have to go find fresh sources

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

of water and food. I will use this to feed the cattle. It will help me and the cowhands survive also.

There is many dangers when going on this cattle drive. It is so hot and dusty that it feels like the sun is baking you. One danger we face every cattle drive we do is having a stampede. A stampede is where hundreds of cattle start running in a blind panic. We could get ran over by one of the cattle.

We have a cook. He or she is very hard working. They get up at 3 a.m. to begin cooking. The cooker has to cook in the rain,

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

dust, wind or the sun might be beating on them. They mainly cook salt pork, biscuits, gravy, beans, and coffee.

We have to work in bad conditions. We face many dangers when doing a cattle drive. The cooks work very hard to prepare us meals all day long. I am a trail boss. I love my job because I love to take control like I do when being a trail boss.

Score Point 2 ID: 1572126221

Content is inconsistent for the task. The writing has an unclear focus; characters and setting are minimally developed, and details are closely reliant on the text ("I am the most experienced drover," "It is so hot and dusty that it feels like the sun is baking you"). There is no attempt at dialogue. The writing demonstrates inconsistent unity and coherence; the introduction establishes the narrator but with no events to sequence, or conclusion. Transitions are ineffective; the storyline becomes a retelling. Language lacks precision and variety; it is domain specific but does little to connect with the audience. There is limited variety of sentence structures and little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Punctuation is misplaced and grammatical errors are noticeable.

## Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

## Writing Topic:

Write a narrative describing a day in your life as if you were a cowhand on a cattle drive. In your narrative, include specific details about the cattle drive and an explanation about how you helped overcome a challenge on the trail. Be sure to use information from both passages in your narrative.

IT'S A WARM, CLOUDY  
 DAY. THE CATTLE DRIVE  
 IS ABOUT TO ARRIVE.  
 SITTING BY THE CAMPFIRE  
 WAITING FOR THE COOK  
 TO PREPARE SOMETHING  
 TO EAT. HE AWOKES AT  
 3 A.M.. HE IS THE OLDEST  
 MAN WITH US. HE  
 PREPARES THREE MEALS  
 A DAY. HE HAS THE  
 HARDEST JOB.

WE'RE ABOUT TO HIT

Grade 8 WRITING Section 2

the road. Get on the  
dusty trails that cattle  
drives follow. They were  
long and often difficult.

Score Point 1 ID: 1572472893

The response has a minimal focus on the task. The content is insufficient; the story is not developed, details are listed in random order, and descriptive elements associated with narrative writing are inconsistent (no use of dialogue) or minimally described ("warm, cloudy day"). The response shows little evidence of organization; a minimal introduction establishes setting, and there is no conclusion. Word choice is extremely inadequate; evidence of descriptive language is insufficient, and there is an overall failure to connect with an audience. The writing demonstrates no variety of sentence structure; sentences are simple and correct. Based on the length and complexity of the response, it is difficult to assess the writer's ability to sustain control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.