

SMART

Year 5 writing exemplars



Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Introduction

These exemplars and the accompanying feedback were all written using the year-level prompts for assessment window 1. The scores for each exemplar were produced by the Vantage scoring system used by SMART.

The exemplars, scores, and accompanying feedback can be used to support teachers to:

- mark any pieces of writing that SMART cannot e.g. pieces that are shorter than 100 words
- confirm or change the AI-assisted scoring for students' pieces of writing.

Note that these writing samples and the accompanying feedback have been produced with the assistance of AI. They will be updated later in the year, to incorporate information from the scaling and equating processes after assessment window 1. These processes will convert raw scores into progress descriptors for each year-level, which will make more explicit how each exemplar aligns with curriculum expectations.

Year 5 — Favourite Book or Movie

Year 5 writing progress marker

By the end of Year 5, students who are **proficient** in writing, can:

- correctly spell most words they use, including homophones and contractions
- apply spelling rules when adding suffixes
- plan and write with a clear audience and purpose in mind, choosing the most appropriate text type for their writing
- produce multi-paragraph texts across a range of genres
- write non-fiction that includes an introductory paragraph, paragraphs that develop ideas, and a concluding paragraph
- write narratives that include an orientation, describe a sequence of events, and have a resolution.

Year 5 prompt

You have been asked to write an article about a favourite book or movie for a school magazine. Before you begin to write, think about what you liked best about the book or movie. Try to **persuade** magazine readers to read the book or watch the movie. Make sure you do not just retell the story.

Write to persuade your reader that:

- the characters are interesting
- the story is exciting
- the book or film is special.

Think about:

- your introduction
- persuading your reader to read the book or watch the film
- including some exciting details
- your conclusion.

Feedback for Score 5 and 6 Exemplar, Year 5

Audience and Purpose [6/6]

This is a thorough and insightful response. The article is written clearly for a school magazine audience of peers with consistent and appropriate register throughout. The position — read this book — is established in the opening paragraph and maintained through all five paragraphs. The response analyses the narrative structure (the multi-strand past-and-present weaving), theme (fairness, justice, friendship), and the book's effect on the reader's worldview. Every story detail is framed as evidence for a persuasive claim about why the book is worth reading.

Content Development/Elaboration [6/6]

There are three elaborated reasons across four body paragraphs: dramatic and emotional moments (with two specific examples from the text — the Warden's purpose and Stanley's family pattern); suspense and action (the past-present weaving, the Zero decision sequence); and friendship, courage, and justice (the survival and social navigation, the final choice). The conclusion frames the book's impact on the reader's thinking.

Why you should read *Holes* by Louis Sachar

Holes, written by Louis Sachar, is a book filled with dramatic moments, action-packed scenes, and deeply surprising twists. It tells the story of Stanley Yelnats, a boy who is wrongly convicted of a crime and sent to a camp in the desert where boys are forced to dig holes all day. Fighting against bad luck, an unfair system, and a mysterious history, Sachar writes about Stanley's experience of surviving Camp Green Lake and uncovering the secrets buried in its dried-up lakebed. This book is remarkable, and I believe you will feel exactly the same way once you read it.

Holes includes both dramatic and emotional moments that will keep you turning pages long past your bedtime. One example of such drama is when Stanley realises that the holes he is digging are not random punishment at all — the Warden is searching for something buried there more than a hundred years ago. Another example of the emotional depth in this book occurs whenever Stanley begins to understand the pattern of bad luck that has followed his family for generations. Each time you think you understand what is happening, the story reveals another layer. And when everything finally connects in the last few chapters, the payoff is one of the most satisfying moments I have ever experienced as a reader.

Throughout the book, Sachar weaves in a story from the past alongside the story in the present, building suspense at every turn. In one sequence, Stanley discovers a clue buried in the dirt and immediately realises it is connected to the old story he has been told about his great-great-grandfather. As he tries to piece it all together, you find yourself reading faster and faster, desperate to know what it all means. Then, when Stanley makes a decision to risk everything to help his friend Zero, there is a moment where you genuinely do not know how it will end. Reading about Stanley making that choice had me at the very edge of my seat, unable to stop.

Holes is not only suspenseful and dramatic, but full of friendship, courage, and justice as well. Although life is deeply unfair to Stanley, there is never a dull moment in his story. First, he must survive the physical demands of camp with almost no food and no water. Later, he has to navigate the complicated social world of the other boys, each of whom has their own story. And finally, he has to decide whether to act on what he knows, even at great personal risk. Most books for people our age do not trust their readers enough to handle all of that at once. *Holes* does it brilliantly.

In conclusion, *Holes* is one of the finest books written for readers our age. It draws you in with drama, suspense, and action, and it leaves you thinking about fairness, friendship, and the way the past can shape the present in ways you never expected. It is one of the greatest books I have ever read, and I am confident I speak for many others who have read it too. This book will make you think differently about luck, about justice, and about what it means to be a true friend. You may not realise how much it will affect you until you reach the last page, and then you will want to start it all over again.

Structure [5/6]

The response has an engaging introduction that establishes the book and the position, three elaborated body paragraphs each with a clear persuasive claim and specific supporting examples, and a strong conclusion that leaves the reader with something to think about. Transitional language is varied ('One example,' 'Another example,' 'Throughout the book,' 'In one sequence,' 'In conclusion').

Language Use, Choice, and Style [6/6]

The language is precise, engaging, and confident. The voice is consistent and authoritative throughout. Varied sentence structures include complex, compound, and short emphatic sentences. Persuasive language includes direct reader address ('you find yourself reading faster'), superlatives used purposefully ('one of the most satisfying moments'), and a rhetorical question implied by the conclusion.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [6/6]

Near-perfect accuracy is sustained throughout the response. Grammar is correct throughout. The em dash is used correctly for parenthetical emphasis. All words are spelled correctly. No errors interfere with communication.

Feedback for Score 5 Exemplar, Year 5

Audience and Purpose [5/6]

Clearly written for a school magazine peer audience. Position established in the hook and maintained throughout. Zero plot retelling: every detail is framed as evidence for a persuasive claim. The response analyses narrative construction (multi-strand structure) and theme (justice, inherited luck). Direct challenge to the reader in the conclusion is sophisticated and audience-aware.

Content Development/Elaboration [5/6]

Three fully elaborated reasons: character (why Stanley compels rather than what happens to him, ending with the courage argument); narrative construction (puzzle metaphor for the three-strand plot, reward of careful reading); theme (justice, inheritance, friendship, changed worldview). Final paragraph is a direct call to action. Every claim supported by specific reasoning.

Why you absolutely have to read Holes

Have you ever finished a book and immediately wanted to start it again from the beginning? That is exactly what Holes by Louis Sachar does to you. It is one of the cleverest, most surprising, and most deeply satisfying books ever written for people our age, and I am here to tell you exactly why you need to read it as soon as possible.

The first thing that makes Holes extraordinary is its central character, Stanley Yelnats. Stanley is not a hero who begins the story being brave and brilliant. He is ordinary, unlucky, and easy to overlook. That is precisely what makes him so compelling. When bad things happen to Stanley, you feel it personally because he feels genuinely real. His quiet determination to keep going despite everything is more inspiring than any superhero story, because it is the kind of courage that actual human beings have to find in real life. By the time you reach the final pages, you will be cheering for him with everything you have.

The second thing that makes this book exceptional is the way Louis Sachar has constructed the story. On the surface, Holes seems to be about boys digging holes in the desert. But it is actually three stories happening at different points in history, all woven together so that every tiny detail from the beginning of the book turns out to matter enormously by the end. Reading Holes is like doing a puzzle where you do not know what the final picture is until the very last piece clicks into place. That feeling of everything suddenly making sense is one of the most satisfying experiences a reader can have, and Holes delivers it perfectly.

The third reason is what the book is really about underneath the surface. Holes is a story about justice, about inherited bad luck, about friendship, and about whether a person can break free from a curse that has followed their family for generations. These are not small themes. After reading this book, I found myself thinking differently about fairness, about how the past shapes the present, and about what it really means to be a good friend. Books that change the way you see the world are rare and precious. Holes is one of them.

Some people say they do not enjoy reading. I challenge you: read the first chapter of Holes, just one chapter, and see if you can stop. I am confident you will not be able to. Find a copy this weekend. You will thank yourself later.

Structure [5/6]

Cohesive and unified. Rhetorical question hook, three body paragraphs each with a clear persuasive claim and supporting analysis, and strong concluding challenge. Transitional language varied and purposeful.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [5/6]

Precise, engaging, and confident. Rhetorical devices include question opener, direct address, a mock challenge close, and emphatic short sentences for rhythm. Sentence variety is strong throughout. Voice is distinctive and authoritative.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [5/6]

Grammar, punctuation and spelling all correct.

Feedback for Score 4 Exemplar, Year 5

Audience and Purpose [4/6]

The article clearly understands that the audience is school magazine readers and that the purpose is to persuade them to watch a film, not simply to summarise it. The recommendation is clear from the title and opening, and the response keeps that persuasive focus all the way to the conclusion. The writer also handles the prompt requirement well by directly addressing characters, story, and what makes the film special. Sentences are varied, well formed, and used confidently to support the persuasive purpose.

Content Development/Elaboration [4/6]

The support is strong because it explains why the film works instead of retelling the plot. The writer develops character by discussing Paikea's determination and the grandfather's complexity, and then explains excitement in terms of emotional stakes rather than action. The final paragraph clearly identifies what makes the film memorable and meaningful. Sentences extend each reason thoughtfully and make the overall argument convincing.

Why Whale Rider is a film you should definitely watch

If you want to watch a film that is powerful, emotional, and different from many others, you should watch Whale Rider. It is not special because it is loud or full of action. It is special because the characters feel real, the story keeps you wanting to know what will happen, and the message stays with you after the film ends.

One of the best things about this film is the characters. Paikea is a strong main character because she is brave, calm, and determined. Even when people doubt her, she keeps trying. That makes you want her to succeed. Her grandfather is also interesting because he is strict and proud, but he is not a simple villain. You can tell he cares deeply about his family and traditions, which makes the story more emotional and complicated.

The story is exciting because there is always something important at stake. You are not waiting for explosions or a chase scene. You are waiting to see whether Paikea will be recognised and whether the people around her will change. That kind of excitement feels deeper because it makes you care. The film is also special because it is about family, leadership, and identity, so it feels meaningful as well as interesting.

If school magazine readers want a film that has strong characters, an exciting story, and something important to say, Whale Rider is a great choice. It is the kind of movie you remember after it is over, and that is why I think you should watch it.

Structure [4/6]

The article is clearly and effectively structured. It begins with a strong recommendation and overview, then moves through characters, story, and special qualities before ending with a complete conclusion. Each paragraph has a clear job to do, and the sequence closely matches the demands of the task. The title also strengthens the article form. The ending sounds finished and purposeful, not abrupt. Sentences connect smoothly and help the ideas build logically from start to finish.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [4/6]

The language is precise, engaging, and well controlled for Year 5. Words such as “determined,” “recognised,” “complicated,” and “meaningful” lift the quality without making the piece sound too old. The writer uses a magazine-like style that feels accessible but still thoughtful. The tone is consistent and persuasive, and the voice sounds confident without becoming exaggerated. Sentences are well structured and varied in a way that keeps the article lively.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [4/6]

The response demonstrates effective control of conventions for this year-level. Grammar is secure, punctuation is well managed, and spelling supports smooth reading throughout. Paragraphing is clear and helps the article read smoothly. Sentence boundaries are strong, including in longer sentences. Overall, the piece looks polished and easy to read. Sentences are correctly structured and support clear communication throughout.

Feedback for Score 3 Exemplar, Year 5

Audience and Purpose [3/6]

The article maintains a clear recommendation and generally suits a school magazine audience. The writer stays focused on persuading readers to watch the film and does address the required areas of characters, story, and what makes the film special. The purpose is clear, though the persuasion is more straightforward than needed to get a higher score. The conclusion helps make the piece feel complete. Most sentences are correctly structured and support the message.

Content Development/Elaboration [3/6]

The writer includes relevant content about Paikea, the grandfather, and the emotional and meaningful side of the story. These are appropriate persuasive points for this year-level. However, the support is not deeply extended, and some ideas stay broad rather than becoming specific. The response is more competent than vivid. Sentences provide some development, although the elaboration remains fairly straightforward.

Why I think you should watch Whale Rider

I think school magazine readers should watch Whale Rider. It is a very good film because the characters are interesting, the story is exciting, and it feels different from many other movies.

Paikea is an interesting character because she is strong and keeps trying. That makes people want her to succeed. Her grandfather is also important because he makes the story harder and more emotional. This helps make the film more interesting.

The story is exciting because there are problems to solve and you want to know what will happen in the end. The film is special because it is not only about action. It is also about family and leadership, which makes it more meaningful.

I think Whale Rider is a film people should watch because it is enjoyable and has something important to say. It is a good choice for readers who want a movie that is both interesting and serious.

Structure [3/6]

The piece is generally well organised. It has a clear opening, body paragraphs that focus on key reasons, and a proper conclusion. The order of ideas makes sense and the heading helps the response feel more article-like. However, the structure is more functional than especially cohesive or skilful. The transitions are simple, and the response feels more like grouped points than a smoothly developed article.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [3/6]

The language is appropriate and easy to follow. The vocabulary is suitable for Year 5 and supports the task, but it is not especially distinctive. The tone remains appropriate for school readers and does not become too informal. The writer shows some control of sentence variety, though several sentences are similarly shaped. The style is competent rather than especially engaging.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [3/6]

Conventions are controlled competently. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are secure enough that the message remains clear. Paragraphing is appropriate and supports readability. There are no major control problems that interfere with meaning. Most sentences are correctly formed, with only minor weaknesses.

Feedback for Score 2 Exemplar, Year 5

Audience and Purpose [2/6]

The response does establish a position and does attempt to persuade school magazine readers, so it is recognisably on task. The writer knows what they want readers to do and says it directly. However, the control of purpose is weak and the writing often becomes loose and unclear rather than a carefully shaped article. The ending helps the response feel complete, but the persuasion remains basic. The frequent control issues interfere with clear communication.

Content Development/Elaboration [2/6]

There are relevant ideas here: the main girl is brave, the film has family issues, it is not all action, and it stays in your mind. These points keep the response connected to the task. However, the development is uneven and harder to follow because spelling, wording, and sentence control interfere with clarity. Some phrases are awkward, such as “intresting for watch,” and some ideas are only partly expressed. The support is partial rather than strong, and the reader has to work to understand the argument.

Watch Whale Rider

I think you shud watch Whale Rider because it is a good moovie and it has good people in it and it is exciting and the main girl is brave and she keeps trying and that makes it intresting for watch. I liked it because she dosent stop and there is family stuff and that makes it more important then just some loud movie and I think that is why people might like it.

The movie is special because it is about more then one thing and it has family problims in it to. It is not all action and some people maybe like that less but I still think it is realy good and people shud watch it for the school magizine because it has meaning and is a good chose if you want something you rememba after.

Structure [2/6]

This response shows an attempt at paragraphing. The first paragraph introduces the recommendation and some reasons, and the second adds more about why the film is special. However, the organisation is still weak because the internal flow of each paragraph is loose and hard to track. Several ideas run together without clear shaping. The heading helps the article form, but the overall structure remains basic and only partly effective.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [2/6]

The language shows a basic attempt to persuade, but the word choice and sentence control are limited. There are noticeable spelling mistakes such as “shud,” “moovie,” “intresting,” “dosent,” “problims,” “realy,” “magizine,” “chose,” and “rememba,” and there are awkward or unclear phrases throughout. These problems interfere with smooth communication. The tone remains school-appropriate, but the voice is weak and not carefully shaped for the audience.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [2/6]

Errors are frequent enough to interfere with clear communication, but not so severe that the message becomes impossible to follow. Sentence boundaries are weak, punctuation is limited, spelling mistakes are noticeable throughout, and grammar is inconsistent. The reader can still work out the main point, but not easily or smoothly.

Feedback for Score 1 Exemplar, Year 5

Audience and Purpose [1/6]

The response only partly addresses the task. It suggests that the writer liked the film and seems to recommend it, but the position is not clearly or strongly established or maintained as a shaped article for readers. The writing feels more like a stream of thoughts than a controlled persuasive article for a school magazine. The ending is weak. Communication of purpose is limited and incomplete.

Content Development/Elaboration [1/6]

A few relevant ideas appear, such as the girl being brave, the family problems, the film not being boring, and the story mattering. However, these ideas are only touched on briefly and are not properly developed. Some parts are vague or uncertain, such as “i dont know all of it,” which weakens the response even more. The content feels scattered and preference-based rather than like a built argument. The reader can see bits of relevance, but the writing does not shape them into a clear case.

whale rider is my favrit movie because the girl is brave and she keeps going and there is family stuff and it is not boring like some movies and i think it is a good one for the mag because people like movies and this one has whales and people and sad parts and that makes it bigger and better and i seen it and liked it alot and thats why im writing this because movies that are just loud are not as good and this one is more deep and there is old people and family problums and maybe leaders and i dont know all of it but it was good and you should watch it maybe because it is one i rember and it has things in it that matter and the story keeps going and that is what i think about whale rider for the school one

Structure [1/6]

This response does not use paragraphing. It reads as one long stream of writing, and the ideas blur together without clear organisation. There is no real shaping into introduction, body, and conclusion. The lack of structure significantly weakens clarity and makes the piece hard to follow as a proper article.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [1/6]

The language is simple, repetitive, and weakly controlled. There are noticeable spelling and word choice issues such as “favrit,” “problums,” “rember,” “alot,” and “deep,” and there are also places where uncertainty weakens the writing. The tone is inconsistent and does not sound carefully shaped for magazine readers. The run-on style makes the voice feel unstructured and underdeveloped. Overall, the language control is very limited.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [1/6]

Errors significantly interfere with communication. There are major sentence-boundary problems, very limited punctuation, inconsistent capitalisation, spelling problems, and weak grammar throughout. The reader can still work out parts of the meaning, but it takes effort, and some parts remain unclear.