

We invite teachers to show these ‘sparklers’ before, during, or after their own seventh graders write to the same practice prompt.

### A Seventh Grade Nevada “Sparkler”

A *sparkler* is not a perfect piece of writing, but it “shines” in small ways that all students can both identify and discuss. When students analyze *sparkling* techniques used by other student writers, they are more likely to try these techniques in their own drafts.

Brian, a Nevada seventh grader, prepared for his state writing examination by composing and revising the following piece of expository writing eight months before taking his actual test. This was the third of three practice prompts Brian’s teacher assigned him.

Read the prompt carefully. Then read Brian’s response. Be prepared to talk about where his writing techniques *sparkle* as well as where he might make the writing even better if he wrote just one more draft.

**Brian’s Practice Prompt:** A rainy day doesn't have to be bad. Some people like rainy days. Explain how to turn a rainy day into a good day.



#### Brian’s writing: “Don’t Be Bored”

“Pitter, patter, pitter, patter.” As the rain falls, most people start to have a bad day. Some, though, know the secrets to having a good day. After extensive research, I have come up with three proven methods on how to have a good rainy day. One of which is to play board games. Another is to read a good book. Lastly, you could go to a friend’s house.

The first way would be to play board games. One of the many out there is Scrabble. This particular board game requires brain power, distracting you from the depressing rain outside. Another type of board game is a puzzle. Puzzles can take quite a while. This is a great use of time.

Another way to distract you from the rain outside is to read. Reading can make a rainy day seem less glummy. It can also take your mind off of the rain.

The final way to turn a rainy day inside out is to go to a friend’s house. There is so much you can do at a friend’s house. It also makes a rainy day less boring.

Many people think that a rainy day is boring. Well, that’s not true when you know the secrets. Just keep your mind open to ideas, and you will never be bored on a rainy day again.

**An interactive task for other seventh graders:** Brian’s writing sparkles with the traits of **voice** and **organization**. Thinking about organization, look at how his introduction sets up his second, third, and fourth paragraphs, and note how his conclusion does so much more than simply re-state the topic. Then thinking about voice, locate three places where Brian inserts his personality with word choice or a unique approach.

**Your challenge:** Can you borrow an organization technique or a voice technique from Brian’s writing and add it to your own draft when you write to the rainy day prompt?

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Shannon, a Nevada seventh grader, prepared for her state writing examination by composing and revising the following piece of expository writing eight months before taking her actual test. This was the third of three practice prompts Shannon’s teacher assigned her.

Read the prompt carefully. Then read Shannon’s response. Be prepared to talk about where her writing techniques *sparkle* as well as where she might make the writing even better if she wrote just one more draft.

**Shannon’s Practice Prompt:** A rainy day doesn't have to be bad. Some people like rainy days. Explain how to turn a rainy day into a good day.

**Shannon’s writing:** “In the Rain!”



There are so many fun things to do on a rainy day, but my favorite is playing football. The rain makes the grass slippery, making the game more challenging. Just the way I like it.

I like playing in the rain because it’s funny when somebody slips on the wet grass and falls. It is easier to slip and fall on grass, and the grass cushions your fall. You may just get muddy and wet! Even tackling people in the rain gets harder. Trying to tackle someone in the rain is hard because you’re both soaking wet, and it’s harder to run.

I like it when your friends play on your team, and they don’t play against you. I mean who wants to tackle a friend all wet? Playing with your friends in the pouring rain makes you feel tough, just like a real football player. It’s not as fun when you play against people who don’t like football. It’s much more fun when you play against people who enjoy football.

There may be a lot of fun things to do on a rainy day, but I’d choose football!

**An interactive task for other seventh graders:** Shannon “sparkles” with **idea development** and **voice** in this piece of writing. Find two or three specific details Shannon includes in her explanation, as well as two or three general details; by balancing general ideas with specific details, Shannon improves her chances of getting a better idea development score on her test. Now find two techniques Shannon uses to make her writing—forgive our pun—not seem dry; by inserting her personality and using a variety of sentence beginnings, Shannon’s voice comes across as strong in this sample.

**Your challenge:** Can you borrow an idea development technique or a voice technique from Shannon’s writing and add it to your own draft when you write to the rainy day prompt?

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Madison, a Nevada seventh grader, prepared for her state writing examination by composing and revising the following piece of expository writing eight months before taking her actual test. This was the third of three practice prompts Madison’s teacher assigned her.

Read the prompt carefully. Then read Madison’s response. Be prepared to talk about where her writing techniques *sparkle* as well as where she might make the writing even better if she wrote just one more draft.

**Madison’s Practice Prompt:** A rainy day doesn't have to be bad. Some people like rainy days. Explain how to turn a rainy day into a good day.

**Madison’s writing:** “Rainy Day”



You wake up in the morning: stretch your arms, your legs, you yawn. You look out your window to find that it’s raining outside. You think to yourself that there’s nothing to do on a rainy day, but then as you climb out of bed and think, you notice that it doesn’t have to be a boring day, no... Instead you quickly get to your closet open the doors, and pull out your rain clothes and gear.

Actually, if you think about it, there are a lot of things to do on a rainy day. Well, first, if you’re all bundled up, you can go outside and just turn in circles as you let the rain fall onto your jacket and bounce onto your face. Also you can get an umbrella, go outside and do silly tricks. Another thing you could do is get your family together and have a game day, or just sit on the couch with a bowl of popcorn and watch a movie. I mean, not all rainy days have to be spent outside.

Why? Why would you do this? Well, I think that you do it for the fun of it, you know? You do it just because you’re bored. Also when it’s a rainy day, you can’t just lay around all day doing nothing. You have to get out or stay in with the family. For me, I do silly, crazy stuff on rainy days, because I am the type of person who loves rainy days. I love to do stuff in the, rain just for the fun of it. Rain is my favorite thing that comes from the sky.

At the end of the day, you fall down on your bed exhausted from all the fun you had in the rain. You think to yourself how much fun you can have on rainy days, and how much you can’t wait for another.

**An interactive task for other seventh graders:** Madison takes a big risk here, beginning and ending with narrative (story-telling) writing techniques for what should be an expository writing task; fortunately for her, she makes sure she spends the majority of her time explaining her ideas, not simply describing the rainy day like she’s telling a story. Focus on the explanations she provides in the middle paragraphs. Find two or three places where she adds memorable and specific details to deepen an explanation. It does help your score to include details in your writing, as long as you’re sure you’re using them as part of your explanation. Be careful not to over-narrate.

**Your challenge:** Look at the memorable details you included in your response to the prompt. Are they part of story-telling, or are they part of an explanation? Have a friend check to make sure.