

Mrs. Haines' first graders worked hard on their **organization** and **word choice** when they drafted, revised, and edited their *Three-Meal Weather* stories. Read both these stories. Talk to a partner about where you think Jack and Megan showed their best **organization** and **word choice** skills.



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### Cloudy with a Chance of Candy

by Jack, first grade writer

Once upon a time there lay a town of Candytown. Here the clouds are made of cotton candy, grass is made of licorice and all the houses are made of all kinds of candy.

For breakfast they ate mints, for lunch they ate M&M's and for dinner they ate donuts and swallowed that down with hot chocolate.

But the weather came out bad. The next day at breakfast, ice cream flooded the town. At lunch, an earthquake came in and left behind chocolate milk shakes. At dinner, a tsunami of hot chocolate flooded the town!

Everyday the weather was terrible. Lakes flooded, tornadoes came and all kinds of things happened. So Candytown had to be abandoned. No one came back to see what happened again.



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### Cloudy with a Chance of Strawberries

by Megan, first grade writer

In the town of Food, clouds are made of cotton candy and the sun is made of lemons. It does not rain raindrops. Food falls from the sky three times a day!

For breakfast, there is a tornado of great donuts that are deep fried and sticky pancakes with gooey syrup. Bagels with icy water fall from the sky in an ice storm. I love breakfast! Breakfast is my favorite meal of the day.

For lunch, there is a thunderstorm of delicious macaroni with milk and curly chicken noodle soup, and fresh ripe strawberries. Yummy! I love strawberries!

For dinner, there is a snowstorm of skinny spaghetti with parmesan cheese and a salad with ranch dressing and small vegetables and milk. Mmmmmm! So yummy!

We invite teachers to showcase these 'sparklers' before, during, or after their own fourth graders write to the same practice prompt.

### A Fourth 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 talk about *sparkling* techniques used by other student writers, they are more likely to try these techniques in their own drafts.

Beau, a Nevada fourth grader, prepared for his state writing examination by composing and revising the following piece of narrative writing eighth months before having to take his test as a fifth grader. This was the second of three practice prompts Beau’s fourth grade teacher assigned him.

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

**Beau’s Practice Prompt:** *There are many amazing people, things, places, and events in our world. Tell a story about one of them.*



#### **Beau’s writing:** “The Hike”

When I was in Zion National park, I had a blast. Angels Landing was where I was going. It is one of the most difficult hikes in the national park. It also has an amazing view.

My dad, A.J., and myself started our way up the trail. So far so good. We got to our first switchback. A switchback is a part of a trail that does a zigzag. I couldn’t believe how many people were coming down the trail! We turned and headed up the trail some more. There I saw six switchbacks one after another.

When I got to the top and looked down, I knew I didn’t want to do that again. I turned and followed my dad. There I saw the beginning of a chain. I couldn’t believe the sight. In front of me it was six feet wide a death drop on each side. This is what the hike was famous for. I started my way up. Luckily there was that chain to hold onto while going up.

When I got to the top and looked around, it was unbelievable. There where three really amazing sights. One way was a green valley with a glistening river wriggling through it. Another was a waterfall, the water vanishing before it reached the bottom. The last was where sandstone walls were opening to a green valley.

When my dad said time to go, it was hard to go.

**An interactive task for other fourth graders:** Beau does some interesting things with *idea development* in this piece of writing. In that next to last paragraph, he includes his best collection of memorable and specific details. Compare that paragraph’s details to the rest of his writing. How might Beau revise his paper’s other details to be as good as the set in the next to last paragraph?

**Challenge:** Look at your draft. Are your details equally strong throughout your entire narrative, or do they cluster together in one small part of your writing? How can you spread your details out more?



## Mexico Trip

by Justin S., fifth grade writer

My dad and I went to Mexico for summer vacation. What were we doing in Mexico? Good question. My dad would not tell me.

When we pulled up to this place, I went cold. It was definitely not a mansion. It was not even a medium-sized house! We got out of the car. When we got in the house as tiny as a mouse hole, my jaw dropped immediately. There were no living plants, no lights, no clean walls or countertops and .....NO TELEVISION! I felt a tear in my eye.

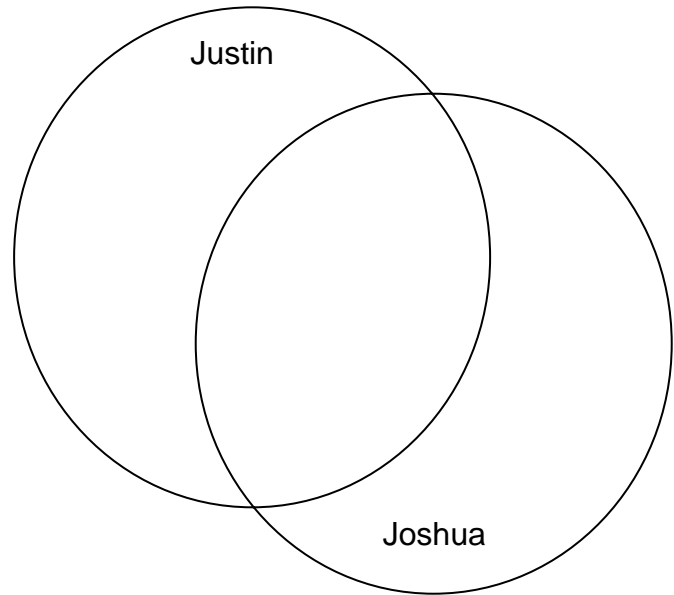
The beds were made out of pure stone. The toilets....you don't want to know. All of the nonliving plants were pure black. I finally blinked and tears came pouring out. My dad took me out on a hike to let me cool down, but it didn't work. I suffered in that cave my dad called a house for a month.

### What's **voice** in writing?

It might be:

- Humor or sarcasm
- Point-of-view
- Passion or emotion
- Mood or tone
- Persuasive techniques
- Other stylistic writing techniques

**Talk with a writing partner.** Compare and contrast the **voice** techniques used by Justin and Joshua in their two different setting descriptions. Use this Venn diagram to record your ideas about how Justin and Joshua used similar and different **voice** techniques.



## The Mars Rover

by Joshua M., fifth grade writer

This planet has never been stepped on or known to have any life. No working probe has reached this world. Almost no one knew anything of the Red Planet until now.

If you were on Mars in the year of 2003, you could look up into the atmosphere and see an object parachuting down to you, even though nothing lives on Mars. The object was a space rover wrapped in a mechanical ball. When it unfolded, NASA had to direct it down the ramp. There was a big problem. The rover was too big and it wasn't facing the ramp. Finally, it made it down safe.

This was one small roll for the rover but one big step for mankind.



## My Room

by Brandon K., eleventh grade

I enter my room. No silence here. It is an area void of any order or neatness. I know only by faith that the floor is even there, hidden beneath mounds of dirty and clean clothes. The walls, invisible under posters and pictures, souvenirs and snapshots, haven't seen the light of day in years.

I take a step further in, being careful to avoid what could be

hiding under the mounds of stuff that buries my floor. The stereo is booming beside my bed, which is unmade. This is a room of beautiful disorder. All four walls are one big collage.



## Abandoned House

by Bridget V., eleventh grade

Dark and unlively, here it stands. It was once full of life, but now only sorrow lurks around every corner.

The smell of a home cooked dinner is no more. Laughter of small children has faded away. No light brightens the rooms. And the fresh flowers that bloomed with life have shriveled up and died.

This house has no life...at least not anymore.

The floors creaked with one step. Dust lies everywhere. Cobwebs settle in the corners of the rooms. The furniture has been covered up to not be seen at all. Silver candle holders have droplets of wax covering all over until finally settling on the wooden surface.

You think you hear the happy laughter of children, but all you see is an empty hall leading to empty rooms.

All that stands in this house are the fresh tears and blackness of a broken heart.



## Raven's Hollow

by Ben C., eleventh grade

Forgotten away behind ancient black iron gates near a rocky ocean shore lies the small village that has come to be known as Raven's Hollow. Here, you will not find the laughter of children, nor the song of a morning bird in the bright sun, or the noises of livestock scampering through the streets. There are no church bells tolling, no people working, and no newborn babes crying for their mother's protection.

Here you will only find the deathly shrill of a black raven before it takes up its flight. The echo of empty inns and homes, the crash of window shutters in disrepair, the tasks of former residents left undone or untouched. A thick suffocating fog fills the silent forest bordering the forest's edge and waits for the next of tourists to wander into its dark history. Forgotten away behind ancient black iron gates near a rocky ocean shore lies the small village that has come to be known as Raven's Hollow.



What's **Voice**? It might be:

- Humor
- Passion
- Persuasion
- Devices that add style
- Emotion
- Mood & Tone
- Point-of-view

**Your Olympic-Committee Task:**

1. Read all three pieces carefully;
2. Award a gold, silver, and bronze medal for **Voice**, and gold, silver, and bronze medal for **Sentence Fluency**.
3. Compare your medals choices with others, discussing any differences of opinions.

What's **Sentence Fluency**? Perhaps:

- Varied Sentence Lengths
- Varied Sentence Beginnings
- Rhythm
- Flow of words
- Natural-sounding use of transitions