**Subject area/course:** ELA

**Grade level/band:** 4th

**Task source:** New Hampshire Task Bank; Authors: Amy Ashe, Julie Cohen, Paula Cullen-Kent, Shaun Elliott, Marylou Saxton, Margaret Parent, & Stacey Leary

**Best Pets**

**STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Task context**:

Your task is to write an opinion-writing piece on the topic below. Use the space below to brainstorm your ideas before you begin. Write your opinion piece on the lined paper provided.

*There are many reasons people own pets. Dogs and cats are the most popular pets in America today. Some people prefer dogs, while others prefer cats. Imagine your family is deciding between bringing home a dog or a cat. Which is the better pet and why? Think about the reasons you might give to convince your family which pet is best.*

Student Brainstorm Space:

Use the space below or the back of this sheet to create a web, chart, or any other brainstorm graphic you know. Remember to include in your brainstorm/writing the opinion techniques you have learned in class.

1. **Final product**:

Read the two articles given to you by your teacher. One article is on the benefits of owning a dog and the other is an article on the benefits of choosing a cat as a pet. Decide which pet you think is best. After you’ve chosen your best pet, find another source that supports your opinion. Write an opinion piece that states your opinion and explains your thinking. Be sure to use evidence (facts and reasons) from the article your teacher provided, and the article you found, to back up your opinion. Remember, your piece will be read by members of your family so think carefully about the reasons and evidence you choose to include. Be sure to cite your sources!

**Additional Information**

1. **Knowledge and skills you will need to demonstrate on this task:**

*Students will know:*

* How to clearly state their opinion
* How to supply reasons that support their opinion
* How to use conventions of language to convey meaning
* How to make conclusions based on supporting detail

*Students will be able to:*

* State opinions clearly
* Support a point of view with facts and details
* Link opinion and reasons using key words and phrases
* Provide a concluding statement related to the opinion presented

1. **Materials needed:**

In addition to writing materials and paper, you will need to read the two texts about dogs and cats that follow these directions.

1. **Time requirements:**

This task will be completed over the course of eight weeks. Your teacher will provide you with directions about each portion of the task and what you need to do at each step.

1. **Scoring:**

Your work will be scored using the Best Pets Opinion Rubric. You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.

**Why Cats Make Better Pets than Dogs**

Should you get that cute little puppy or a cuddly kitten? Deciding between a cat and a dog can be difficult. However, cats as pets do have some advantages.

**Grooming**

Cats bathe themselves. Most do not even need brushing. Dogs are more likely to need help from their owners in keeping clean.

**Companionship**

Cats enjoy being alone. You can leave them home alone for the day while you go to school. Dogs, however, need company. A dog needs much more of your time.

**Exercise**

Cats and dogs both need daily exercise. However, a cat needs much less exercise than a dog. Most dogs need to be taken for a walk at least twice a day, even in the rain. Your cat will probably be happy to chase a ball in your living room.

**Noise**

Dogs can bark at all hours of the day or night. Cats sleep most of the day and are much quieter. They are unlikely to disturb your neighbors.

**Training**

Dogs need training to live with people. They need to be taught not to jump on people, how to sit and stay, and many other things. You may even need to teach your dog to lie down so you can have some quiet time. Cats can be trained to fetch a ball or walk on a leash, but these lessons are just for fun. You don’t need to train your cat to have a good pet.

Both cats and dogs can be wonderful family pets. Each can be affectionate and playful, but cats are much easier to care for. Maybe a cat is the right pet for you!

*This article was adapted for classroom use from “Reasons Why Cats Make Better Pets than Dogs” by Dee Em, eHow Contributor* [*http://www.ehow.com*](http://www.ehow.com)*. Used by permission of Dee Em, eHow Contributor.*

**Why Dogs Make Good Pets**

Thinking about getting a new pet? One of the most popular pets is a dog. Dog make great pets for many reasons.

**Companions**

Dogs are patient and make great listeners. Many people tell dogs things they can’t tell anyone else. Dogs are great for someone who lives alone or needs company.

**Friends**

Most dogs are curious. They want to meet other people and animals. Owners are likely to meet others while out walking their dogs. Dogs are good conversation starters. They make it easy to meet new people.

**Health**

Dogs can make you healthier. Studies show that dog owners are less likely to get sick. When they do get sick, they get well quicker.

**Safety**

Most dogs will bark if there is danger. Dogs can scare off intruders or warn their owners of fire. Specially trained dogs can also find missing people, sniff out bombs and drugs and help disabled people.

**Exercise**

A dog needs daily exercise. The owner who walks his dog also benefits from this. Daily exercise can help keep you at a healthy weight. It gives you energy. It also strengthens your muscles and bones. Walking and playing with your dog can make you both healthier!

Is a dog the right pet for you? Owning a dog is a big responsibility, but there are mnay benefits. A dog might just be the perfect pet for you!

*This article was adapted for classroom use from “Why Dogs Make Good Pets” by Cecilia McCormick, eHow Contributor* [*http://www.ehow.com*](http://www.ehow.com)*. Used by permission of Cecilia McCormick, eHow Contributor.*