**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**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

1. **Task overview**:

This is an opinion writing prompt and rubric for fourth grade students. Students will read two articles. One article outlines why a dog is better than a cat. The other article outlines why cats are better than dogs. Students will read the articles, choose a side, and write a response.

1. **Aligned standards:**
2. **Primary Common Core State Standards**

CCSS Writing 4.1 (1a, 1b, 1c, 1d)

1. Introduce a topic, stating opinion and creating organizational structure
2. Provide reasons
3. Use linking words (i.e. therefore, because, since)
4. Concluding sentence or section
5. **Secondary Common Core State Standards (optional)**

CCSS Writing 4.4, 4.5, 4.9, 4.10

1. **Critical abilities**

**Research:** Conduct research projects to answer a question. Gather relevant information

from multiple sources. Assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience.

**Communication in Many Forms:** Use oral and written communication skills to learn,

evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as

needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

**Interpersonal Interaction and Collaboration:** Develop the ability to work with others

and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations.

1. **Other standards**

*New Hampshire Competencies*

Writing Arguments Competency: Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and critique texts or topics and support claims and reasoning with sufficient evidence for intended purpose and audience.

1. **Time/schedule requirements:**

This task may take place over the course of approximately eight weeks, depending on how each portion of the task is scheduled and how much time can be devoted to the task each week. See teacher directions for a sample plan/schedule.

1. **Materials/resources:**

A variety of resources may be needed for teaching opinion writing, including modeling, examples from children’s literature, professional resources, and lessons gleaned from the Internet. For the assessment itself, these two resources could be used:

* *“Reasons Why Cats Make Better Pets than Dogs” by Dee Em, eHow Contributor* [*http://www.ehow.com*](http://www.ehow.com);
* “Why Dogs Make Good Pets, and Why Cats Make Good Pets”, by Cecilia McCormick, eHow contributor [*http://www.ehow.com*](http://www.ehow.com)

1. **Prior knowledge:**
2. **Connection to curriculum:**

This assessment task was designed with the intention of implementing it mid-year.

1. **Teacher instructions:**

**Teacher directions**

* Introduce the task and timeline. (1 day)
* Have students read and discuss the two articles. (1-2 days)
* Have students work in small groups to create opinion posters. (1-2 days)
* Have students each locate an additional source to support their opinion. (1 day)
* Have students complete the outline individually with their ideas. (1 day)
* Review and give formative feedback on outlines.
* Have students complete a first draft.
* Collect and give formative feedback on drafts. (Non-graded samples can be used for class discussions about style, technique and conventions)
* Collect final draft.

**Sample Unit**

* Week 1: Read the articles, discuss, formulate individual opinions. Differentiate between facts and opinions.
* Week 2: Teach how to provide reasons, facts, and details to support your opinion using the articles provided and those the students locate. Students work in small groups to create a poster that conveys which pet is best and includes text and images to support the opinion.
* Week 3: Assist students in locating additional sources to support their opinions. Begin brainstorming and composing rough drafts.
* Week 4: Revising rough draft with one specific focus for each lesson such as:
  + Using evidence from the text to support opinions
  + Linking opinions and reasons using words and phrases
  + Concluding statement/paragraph related to the opinion
  + Grade level conventions

1. **Student support:**

Accommodations will be given according to the IEP’s in the classroom. Samples include:

* more time
* reading aloud of the two articles (we are not assessing the reading ability, but the ability to write)

Also, there are formative assessment pieces leading up to the final product that will allow all students to receive support:

* Outline provided within the task
* 1 draft of the writing
* Drafts and subsequent revisions will reinforce the iterative process of writing (as needed)

1. **Extensions or variations:**

Other grade levels could use this same task, but with a modified prompt and rubric as appropriate for that grade level.

1. **Scoring:**

Student work can be scored using the Best Pets Opinion Rubric.