



## NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

“National Defender-Inspired Research Paragraph”

**Contributor:** Jacqueline K. Beard **Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

### 1. Identify the standards to be addressed:

Iowa Writing Standards: **Production and Distribution of writing:**

W.4.4, W.5.4, and W. 6.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.4.5 & W.5.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

Iowa Writing Standards: **Research to Build Present Knowledge**

W.4.7, W.5.7, and W.6.10 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of the topic.

Iowa Writing Standards: **Range of Writing**

W.4.10, W.5.10, and W.6.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Iowa Speaking and Listening Standards: **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

SL.4.4 & SL.5.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Iowa Social Studies, History standards: **Justify Causation & Arguments**

SS.4.24 Develop a claim about the past and cite evidence to support it.

### 2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:

I use this lesson weekly with special education students in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.

I use the *DAR National Defender* online magazine to find my historic date by finding the date that coincides with the current week. In that way, the students also get a mini-math lesson to figure out how many years ago the historic event happened.

I purposefully look for topics that are child-friendly, or at least child recognizable. Sometimes, I use the *National Defender* articles as an additional support for the topic of the week. (i.e. K9 Veterans' Day). If I have trouble finding a date/event that I feel is relevant for the students, I look in the archived *National Defender* issues on the DAR Website.

### 3. **Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:**

Once the topics are selected, I start my reference book search. I use the Area Education Agency lending library heavily. I also use the school library and eBay.

- I collect an assortment of children's books (including board book) on a wide variety of reading levels. This provides differentiation and helps everyone feel successful.
- Generic graphic organizers that cover Who, What, When, Where, Why to help organize thoughts.
- Technology may be used for final paragraphs, or even for additional research.
- Special "final copy" paper with a clip-art graphic of the topic and lines to write on, however it could be just plain paper. The kids seem inspired by the special paper.

### 4. **Introduction of the topic:**

When I taught this lesson for the first time, I told my students they were anonymous reporters (special education is confidential) we were covering the Boston Massacre, and were going to write articles and make a display in the hallway. I have used several different introductions, I played a bit of the Star-Spangled Banner on my computer, and I showed Susan B. Anthony dollar coins. Occasionally the introduction to the lesson is as simple as just laying out the assortment of books. The students enjoy this far more than I ever expected.

But, the topics are now posted at least a month in advance. The students want to know what they are going to write about. A new display goes up weekly.

### 5. **Procedure for instruction:**

Provide introduction

Provide graphic organizers

Provide non-fiction books of various reading levels

Provide time (I use 3 different 30-minute time slots over the period of a week)

(Students are encouraged to read, or have read to them, at least two different books, and possibly more.)

Provide guidance to the students to pick out relevant important details, not minor details for the paragraph. Provide guidance for a strong opening sentence, with detail-rich supporting sentences and a final closing sentence. Provide assistance for creating a rough a draft, leave a blank line between lines for writing for easier editing. In my room, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students must write at least 4 sentences, 5<sup>th</sup> grade students write 5 sentences, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students write 6 sentences. Sometimes I have to remind students that it is a research paragraph, not a research book report.

In my room, students even help with peer editing by giving ideas for topic sentences or closing sentences.

Students check in with teacher/adults in room, for help with spelling, organization of the paragraph, punctuation, etc.

Then the students use special paper with a clip-art heading for that week's topic for the final copy that is graded.

By working on the topic over the course of a week, the students have a better chance of retaining the historic information as well, even though this is technically a writing lesson.

6. **Lesson closure:**

Students are then able to read their paragraphs to their peers to work on their public speaking skills. Four to six sentences take very little time to read and it builds speaking confidence.

The student then turns in the graphic organizer, rough draft, and the final copy. A photo copy of the final copy is made on colored paper that goes in the hall for that weeks' display. This has inspired a pride in writing that I did not expect.

7. **Assessment of Understanding:**

I use a different writing rubric for each grade level. The rubrics I use grade organization, punctuation, complexity of sentences, spelling, legibility of writing, etc. (All of which were provided to me and are not my original work, therefore are not included here.) I also use comments from the students as the progress goes regarding their increased knowledge of the various topics. I remain watchful as the process goes on to see if the students are accurate on the historic details, and can have conversations with each other on the topic.