

WRITE ON!

STRONG LEADS

GRADES 4-5

STRENGTHEN YOUR LEAD
A strong lead grabs the reader's attention and lets them know what your piece is about.

LEAD TYPE	WHAT IT DOES	EXAMPLE
Question	Ask something that makes the reader stop and think.	What would happen if every drop of clean water on Earth disappeared tomorrow?
Bold Statement	State a strong opinion or claim right away. Show confidence.	Every school in America should be required to have a recycling program.
Surprising Fact	Share a fact the reader probably does not know. Create curiosity.	Less than 1% of all the water on Earth is freshwater that humans can actually use.
Scene-Setting	Paint a picture so the reader can see or feel the moment.	The riverbank is covered in plastic bottles and crumpled bags. A single fish flops belly-up near the shore.

STRENGTHEN YOUR LEAD REVISION RUBRIC

The Lungs of the Planet
Date: _____
Name: _____
Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and choose the lead you think is stronger, then explain why.

I am going to tell you about forests. Forests are many things to learn about forests. Forests cover the land on Earth. They are home to many animals. Trees in forests produce oxygen that people and animals need. Forests also absorb carbon dioxide, which helps reduce global warming. Forests provide wood for building and paper. Recreation, like hiking and camping, is popular in forests. Forests are being developed at an increasing rate. When forests are homes, and the air becomes harder to breathe. Scientists are studying what happens to plants and animals when forests are destroyed.

WRITE YOUR REVISED LEAD:

Lead type used: ☐ Question ☐ Bold Statement ☐ Surprising Fact ☐ Scene-Setting

Paper In Schools
Date: _____
Name: _____
Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and choose the lead you think is stronger, then explain why.

I think that schools should recycle paper. There are many reasons why I believe this. Recycling one ton of paper saves seventeen trees and more than 3,000 gallons of water, which shows how much a single decision can matter. When paper is thrown away instead of recycled, it ends up packed into a landfill where it can take for longer to break down than most people realize. Schools use more paper than almost any other institution, which means they also have more opportunity to make recycling count.

Lead 1 (Question): How much paper does your school throw away every single day? Most of it goes straight to a landfill instead of a recycling bin. Recycling paper is one of the simplest steps a school can take, and the difference it makes is bigger than most people think.

Lead 2 (Bold Statement): Every sheet of paper a school throws away is a wasted opportunity. Schools have the power to model good habits for their students, and starting a paper recycling program is one of the easiest ways to do it.

Lead 3 (Surprising Fact): An average school uses 2,000 sheets of paper per day... that's over 350,000 sheets per year! Paper recycling should not be an option in schools, it's a simple way to make a big impact.

Lead 4 (Scene-Setting): Picture the empty recycling bin at the end of your hallway while the trash can next to it overflows with crumpled worksheets. That happens in schools every single day. A paper recycling program would not just reduce waste. It would change the habits of an entire school.

Which lead do you think is strongest? Lead ____ Explain: _____

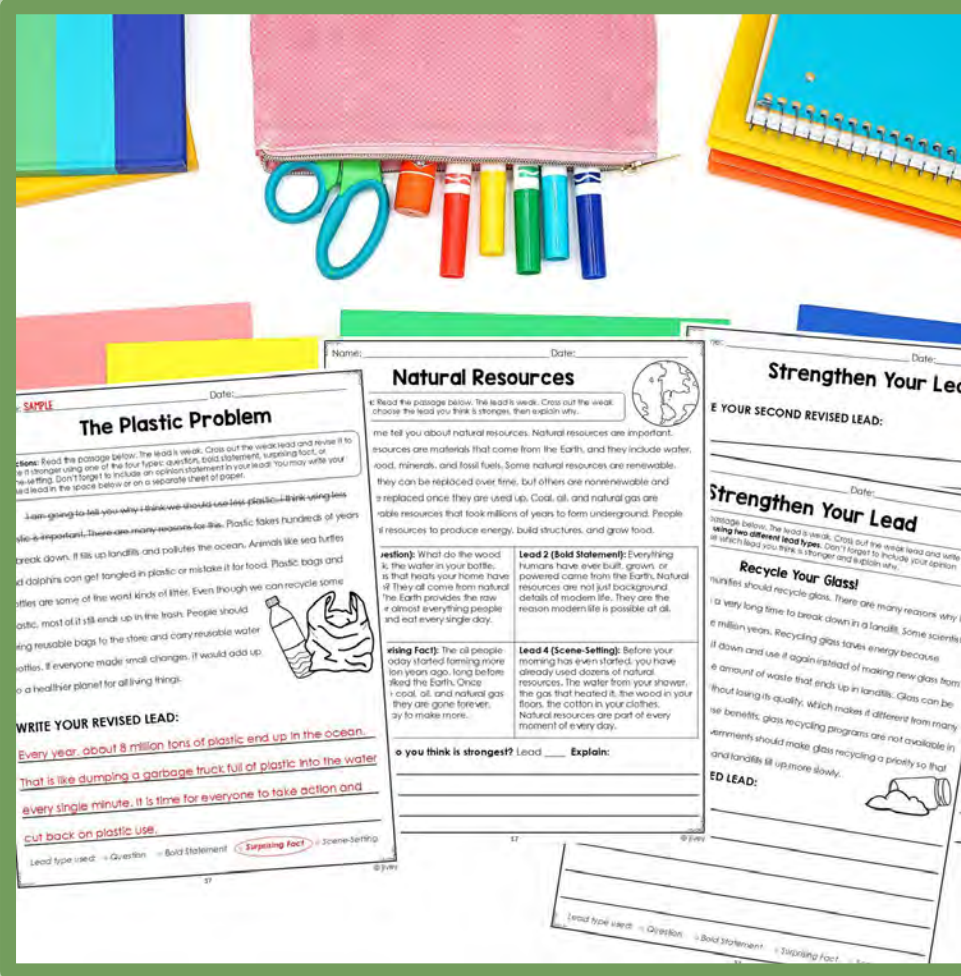
Model-Based Revision Practice
For Informative & Opinion Writing Genres



TEACHING REVISION

Revision is one of the hardest writing skills to teach because “make it better” is not a strategy. Students need to know what to look for, what to change, and what a stronger version actually looks like. Research on writing instruction is clear: students revise more effectively when they are taught specific, named strategies with **models and guided practice**. Analyzing a model helps students recognize what skilled writers do.

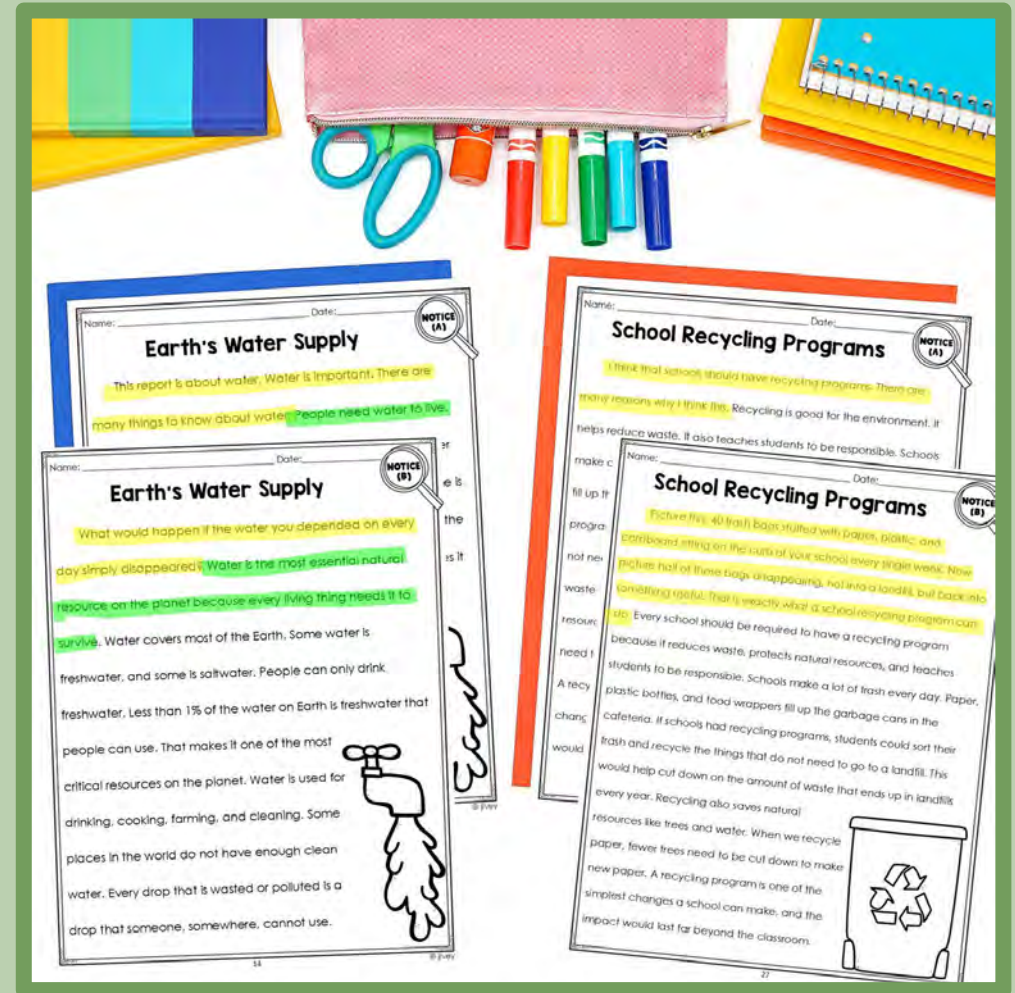
WHY USE THIS RESOURCE?



This resource teaches students to **revise weak leads** using one of four named types: **question, bold statement, surprising fact, and scene-setting**. Students first study the difference between a weak and a strong lead in model passages, then practice writing their own across three scaffolded activities. The goal is not to produce one correct lead. It is to help students understand that there are multiple strong ways to open a piece of writing, and that choosing deliberately is part of the craft.

INFORMATIVE & OPINION

This resource covers the revision strategy in both **informational** and **opinion** writing. The lead works differently in each genre, and students need to see and practice that difference. An informational lead draws the reader in with curiosity about facts and ideas. An opinion lead pulls the reader toward a point of view. Practicing the skill in both genres separately is recommended.



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Each genre section begins with a **Notice activity**. Students see two versions of the same passage side by side: Notice (A) with a weak, formulaic lead, and Notice (B) with a strong one. The body of both passages is identical. Only the lead changes. This is intentional. Keeping the body the same lets students focus on exactly one thing: what the writer changed, and why it works better.

Exploration Phase

This lesson will enable students to notice and compare the difference between a weak lead and a strong lead in two versions of the same passage. This helps students recognize what a strong lead looks like and analyze what makes it effective.

Application Phase

Move from exploration to application, where students use what they've learned. This resource includes activities for students to write TWO different leads for the same passage using different lead types, then evaluate which is stronger and explain why. This builds decision-making skills, not just writing skills. Use these ideas to extend application:

Lead Swap: Students trade their two leads with a partner. Each partner reads both leads and picks the one they think is stronger, then explains their reasoning. Compare: Did the writer and the reader agree?

Lead Gallery Walk: Post student-written leads around the room (without names). Students walk around with sticky notes and mark leads they would want to keep reading. Discuss patterns in what made certain leads effective.

Lead Revision in Current Drafts: Have students go back to a draft they have already written and revise only the lead. They should try at least two different lead types before choosing one.

EXPLORE STRONG LEADS IN INFORMATIONAL WRITING

Display or provide students with *Earth's Water Supply*- Notice (A) and (B).

Read through passage A with the class. Ask students to share what they notice about the passage. Remind students that a lead is the first thing the reader sees, so it needs to grab the reader's attention and let them know what your piece is about. Now, read through passage B - what changed from passage A? What does this new lead do that the old one did not?

Using the poster, determine what type of lead was used. Discuss the changes:

Lead type used in Passage B: Question.

The revised lead opens with a question that puts the reader in the middle of the problem before any facts are presented. Instead of "This report is about water. Water is important," the reader is immediately asked to consider what life without reliable water would look like.

The three short, choppy sentences that all say essentially the same thing were combined and sharpened into one: "Water is the most essential natural resource on the planet because every living thing needs it to survive." The meaning is the same, but the writing is more specific.

Notice that the body of both passages is the same. The only difference is the lead. This shows how much a strong opening can change the way a reader experiences a piece of writing.

Encourage students to think about how strong leads engage the reader from the start and introduce the writing piece. Allow more practice by moving onto the Application Activities. Remind students that informational writing explains, describes, or reports. It does not persuade or tell readers what they should do or think. When writing leads, stick to the facts. If your statement can be verified, it's not a belief. It's a fact!

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

STRONG LEADS APPLICATION ACTIVITIES:

Activity 1: Choose a Lead

Students read a passage and evaluate four pre-written leads, one of each type. All four are genuinely strong. Students choose the one they think is strongest and explain their reasoning. The goal is not finding one right answer. It is building the habit of reading leads critically and naming what makes one more effective than another.

Activity 2: Write Two Leads and Choose One

Students write two leads for the same passage using two different lead types, then compare them and explain which is stronger. This is where evaluation becomes production.

Activity 3: Revise With a Strong Lead

Students cross out a weak lead and use what they've learned to write one strong replacement.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

INFORMATIVE
APPLICATION:
Three activities
per genre move
students from
exploration to
independence.

Name: **SAMPLE** Date: _____

Natural Resources

Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and choose the lead you think is stronger, then explain why.

Let me tell you about natural resources. Natural resources are important. Natural resources are materials that come from the Earth, and they include water, air, soil, wood, minerals, and fossil fuels. Some natural resources are renewable, meaning they can be replaced over time, but others are nonrenewable and cannot be replaced once they are used up. Coal, oil, and natural gas are nonrenewable resources that took millions of years to form underground. People use natural resources to produce energy, build structures, and grow food.

Lead 1 (Question): What do the wood in your desk, the water in your bottle, and the corn that you made have in common? They all come from natural resources. The earth provides these materials for almost everything people use, build, and eat every single day.	Lead 2 is the strongest because it makes a big claim right away: even though we have a lot of power, we cannot make everything, not just one or two examples, making the topic feel very significant.
Lead 3 (Surprising Fact): The world people used to live on was different than 300 million years ago. Long ago, dinosaurs walked the Earth. Once resources like coal, oil, and natural gas are used up, they are gone forever. There is no way to make more.	Lead 4 (Scene-Setting): Before you know it, you will be using resources. The water from your shower, the gas that heated it, the wood in your floors, the cotton in your clothes. Natural resources are part of every moment of your day.

Which lead do you think is strongest? (SAMPLE ANSWER IN BOX ABOVE)
Accept reasonable answers. The explanation should identify something specific about what the lead does, not just say "It sounded good" or "It was interesting."

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Name: **SAMPLE** Date: _____

Strengthen Your Lead

Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and write **TWO different revised leads** using two different lead types. Make sure to stick to the facts! Then choose which lead you think is stronger and explain why.

What Lives Below
Do you know about soil? Soil is important. There are many interesting facts about soil. Soil is made up of tiny pieces of rock, dead plants, and living organisms. It takes a long time to make, and it is one of the most important things that grow food and get nutrients from water as it seeps in. Earthworms and other mix it into it. It can take a very long time to form, changes, and grows. It takes over 50 years to make a single inch of soil. It is the most important thing people never think about.

Strengthen Your Lead
WRITE YOUR SECOND REVISED LEAD:
The thin layer of soil beneath your feet supports every farm, every forest, and every ecosystem on the planet. It is one of the most important natural resources on Earth, and most people never give it a thought.

Lead type used: Question **Bold Statement** = Surprising Fact = Scene-Setting

Which lead is stronger? Explain your thinking:
The second lead is stronger because it tells the reader exactly how important soil is before they read a single fact. It works by making you feel the scale of something you already take for granted.

Accept reasonable answers. Students may prefer either lead as long as their explanation connects to what the lead does and why it is stronger.

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Name: **SAMPLE** Date: _____

The Lungs of the Planet

Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and revise it to make it stronger using one of the four types: question, bold statement, surprising fact, or scene-setting. Don't forget to stick to the facts in your lead! You may write your revised lead in the space below or on a separate sheet of paper.

There are many things to learn about forests. Forests cover about 31% of the land on Earth. They are home to many animals and plants. Forests produce oxygen that people and animals breathe. Forests also absorb carbon dioxide, which helps reduce pollution in the air. The trees in forests provide wood for building and paper. People also use forests for recreation like hiking and camping. Forests are being cut down for farming and other uses. When forests disappear, the air becomes harder to breathe. Scientists around the world are studying what happens to plants and animals when forests disappear.

Strengthen Your Lead
WRITE YOUR REVISED LEAD:
Every two seconds, an area of forest the size of a football field is cut down somewhere on Earth. That means by the time you finish reading this sentence, another patch of forest will be gone.

Lead type used: Question **Bold Statement** **Surprising Fact** = Scene-Setting

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-ANSWER KEYS & SAMPLES PROVIDED-

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

OPINION
APPLICATION:
Three activities
per genre move
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Name: SAMPLE Date: _____

Paper In Schools

Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and choose the lead you think is stronger, then explain why.

I think that schools should recycle paper. There are many reasons why I believe this. Recycling one ton of paper saves seventeen trees and more than 3,000 gallons of water, which shows how much a single decision can matter. When paper is thrown away instead of recycled, it ends up packed into a landfill where it can take a longer time to break down. Then most people think schools should recycle paper that is not just any other thing, which means they also have the opportunity to make recycling count.

Lead 1 (Question): How much paper does your school throw away every single day? And if it is, how much of it is recycled? Recycling paper is one of the simplest steps a school can take, and the difference it makes is bigger than most people think.	Lead 2 (Bold Statement): Every sheet of paper a school throws away is a waste. So many schools have the power to do so much better for the students, and using paper recycling program is one of the easiest ways to do it.
Lead 3 (Scene-Setting): Pick up the empty paper in your classroom. So, halfway through the school year, you see the problem and agree with how to solve it very quickly.	Lead 4 (Scene-Setting): Pick up the empty paper in your classroom. So, halfway through the school year, you see the problem and agree with how to solve it very quickly.

Which lead do you think is strongest? (SAMPLE ANSWER IN BOX) Lead 2

Accept reasonable answers. The explanation should identify something specific about what the lead does, not just say "It sounded good" or "It was interesting."

Name: SAMPLE Date: _____

Strengthen Your Lead

Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and write TWO different revised leads using two different lead types. Don't forget to include your opinion statement. Then choose which lead you think is stronger and explain why.

I think that communities should recycle glass. There are many reasons why I believe this. Glass takes a very long time to break down in a landfill. Some scientists say that it takes a million years to recycle. But the general business manufacturers can scratch. If also red recycled over and over again. It is every community. fewer resources are used.

WRITE YOUR REVISI

Imagine Iossir

be sitting in a

re filling up glass

glass to make

Lead type used: ☐ Question ☒ Bold Statement ☐ Surprising Fact ☐ Scene-Setting

Which lead is stronger? Explain your thinking:

The first lead is stronger because it uses the word 'Imagine' to put the reader inside the problem before any facts are given.

The second lead states a fact, but the first lead makes the reader feel it.

Accept reasonable answers. Students may prefer either lead as long as they explain why they chose it.

Name: SAMPLE Date: _____

The Plastic Problem

Directions: Read the passage below. The lead is weak. Cross out the weak lead and revise it to make it stronger using one of the four types: question, bold statement, surprising fact, or scene-setting. Don't forget to include an opinion statement in your lead. You may write your revised lead in the space below or on a separate sheet of paper.

Plastic is important. There are many reasons for this. Plastic takes hundreds of years to break down. It fills up landfills and pollutes the ocean. Animals like sea turtles can get caught in plastic or mistaking it for food. Plastic bottles are some of the worst kinds of litter. Even though we can recycle some plastic, most of it still ends up in the trash. People should bring reusable bags to the store and carry reusable water bottles. It is our responsibility to make changes. It would be a healthier planet for all living things.

WRITE YOUR REVISED LEAD:

Every year about 8 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean.

That is like dumping a garbage truck full of plastic into the water every single minute. It is time for everyone to take action and cut back on plastic use.

Lead type used: ☐ Question ☐ Bold Statement ☒ Surprising Fact ☐ Scene-Setting

-ANSWER KEYS & SAMPLES PROVIDED-

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

BEFORE YOU

BEFORE YOU PUBLISH...

✓ CHECK YOUR LEAD!

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- ☐ Does my lead grab the reader's attention?
- ☐ Does my lead tell the reader what the piece is about?
- ☐ Does my lead connect to the content of the piece?
- ☐ Did I use language specific to the topic of my piece?

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Bold Statement	State a strong opinion or claim right away. Show confidence.	Every school in America should be required to have a recycling program.
Surprising Fact	Share a fact the reader probably does not know. Create curiosity.	Less than 1% of all fish on Earth is freshwater. Humans can actually use it.
Scene-Setting	Paint a picture so the reader can see or feel the moment.	The riverbank is covered in plastic bottles and crumpled bags. A single fish floats belly-up near the shore.

STRENGTHEN YOUR LEAD REVISION RUBRIC

CRITERIA	3 - STRONG	2 - DEVELOPING	1 - BEGINNING
Grabs the Reader's Attention	The lead immediately draws the reader in using a question, bold statement, surprising fact, or scene-setting detail. The reader wants to keep reading.	The lead attempts to engage the reader but is somewhat generic or predictable. It partially draws the reader in.	The lead is formulaic (e.g., "I am going to tell you about...") and does not engage the reader.
Establishes a Clear Focus	The lead clearly signals what the piece is about. The reader knows the topic and the direction after reading the first 1-3 sentences.	The lead gives some sense of the topic but the focus is vague or unclear.	The lead does not establish a focus. The reader does not know what the piece will be about.
Uses Specific Language	The lead uses precise, vivid words. No filler phrases like "many things" or "very interesting." Every word contributes to meaning.	The lead includes some specific language but also relies on vague or general words.	The lead relies heavily on vague words ("interesting," "a lot," "many things") and filler phrases.
Connects to the Body	The lead flows naturally into the body of the piece. The transition from lead to first supporting point is smooth and logical.	The lead connects to the body but the transition feels abrupt or slightly disconnected.	The lead feels separate from the rest of the piece. There is no clear connection between the opening and what follows.

Scoring Guide
10-12: Your lead is strong. It grabs the reader, establishes a clear focus, uses specific language, and smoothly connects to the body.
7-9: Your lead is developing. One or two areas need improvement. Try a different lead type, use more specific language, and connecting your lead to the rest of the piece.
4-6: Your lead needs significant revision. Try a different lead type, use more specific language, and connecting your lead to the rest of the piece.

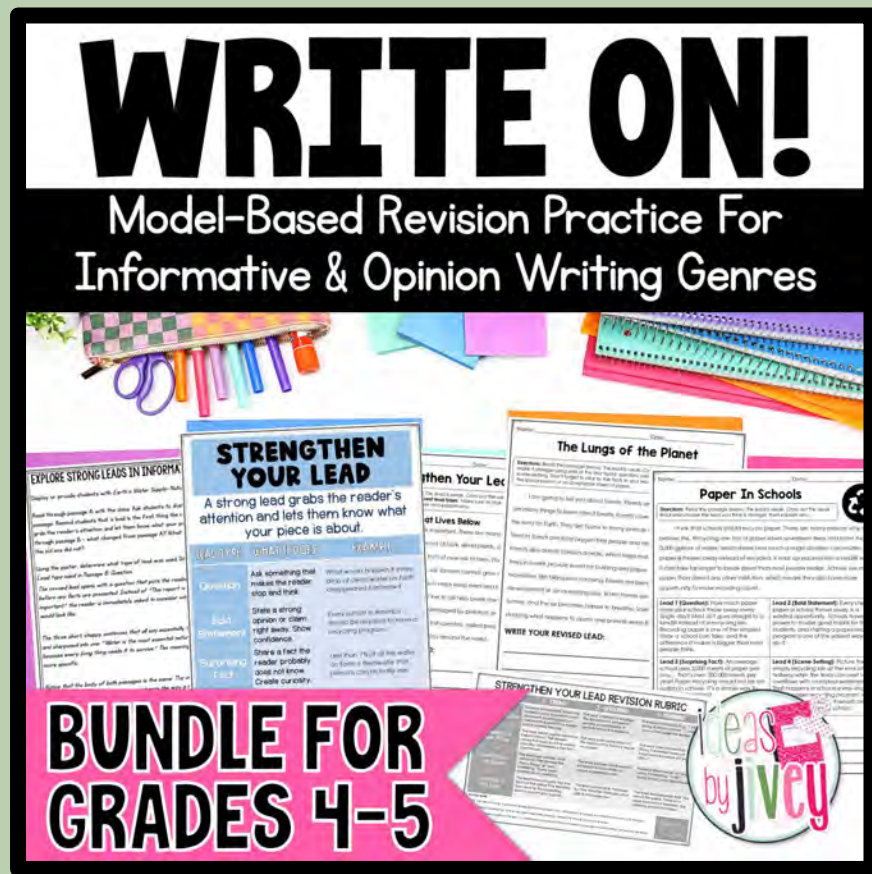
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TOOLS AND CLASSROOM SUPPORT

SAVE WITH THE BUNDLE!



SKILLS COVERED IN THE BUNDLE:

- Strengthen Your Lead
- Write a Conclusion That Does More Than Repeat
- Support It with Proof
- Explain Your Evidence (The “So What?” Sentence)
- Use Transitions That Match Your Structure
- Replace Vague Words with Specific Ones
- Vary Your Sentence Beginnings
- Cut the Clutter