

English Language Arts

Grades 6-8

Home Learning Unit 2

“Becoming Dog”

▶ Reading

- ▶ Preview the passage with the Let’s Focus activities
- ▶ Preview Key Passage Vocabulary
- ▶ Use the Direction Words Reference Sheet to support your work
- ▶ Read and reread the excerpt “Becoming Dog” and the passage “The Power of the Dog” as needed and annotate in ways that make sense to you as a reader
- ▶ Complete the accompanying worksheets

▶ Writing:

- ▶ Paragraph describing the narrator of “Becoming Dog”
- ▶ Compare and contrast essay using evidence from both texts
- ▶ Use the Six Traits Writing Rubric provided to guide and evaluate your writing.

Let's Focus: "Becoming Dog," an excerpt from *Winterdance*

Content Focus
transformation

Type of Text
informational—memoir

Author's Name _____

Author's Purpose _____

Big Ideas

Consider the following Big Idea questions. Write your answer for each question.

Is real transformation easy? Explain.

What are the costs of earning membership in a group? What are the benefits?

Informational Text Preview Checklist: "Becoming Dog" on pages 3–6.

- Title: What clue does it provide about the passage?
- Pictures: What additional information is added here?
- Margin Information: What vocabulary is important to understand this story?

Enduring Understandings

After reading the text . . .

Key Passage Vocabulary: "Becoming Dog"

Read each word. Write the word in column 3. Then, circle a number to rate your knowledge of the word.

Vocabulary	Part of Speech	Write the Word	Knowledge Rating
radically	(adv)		0 1 2 3
kennel	(n)		0 1 2 3
alter	(v)		0 1 2 3
humidity	(n)		0 1 2 3
brilliant	(adj)		0 1 2 3
putrid	(adj)		0 1 2 3
decent	(adj)		0 1 2 3
serendipity	(n)		0 1 2 3
harmonize	(v)		0 1 2 3
understatement	(n)		0 1 2 3
gargoyle	(n)		0 1 2 3

Critical Understandings: Direction Words

Prompt	How to Respond	Model
If the prompt asks you to . . .	The response requires you to . . .	For example . . .
Analyze	break down and evaluate or draw conclusions about the information	Analyze the development of the text's central idea.
Assess	decide on the value, impact, or accuracy	Assess the level of pressure in an arranged marriage.
Compare	state the similarities between two or more things	Compare novels and dramas.
Contrast	state the difference between two or more things	Contrast a biography with an autobiography.
Create	make or produce something	Create a timeline of events.
Define	tell or write the meaning or definition	Define the unknown word using context clues.
Delineate	show or list evidence, claims, ideas, reasons, or events	Delineate the evidence in the text.
Describe	state detailed information about a topic	Describe the relationship between the plot and character development.
Determine	find out, verify, decide	Determine the main idea.
Distinguish	recognize or explain the differences	Distinguish between facts and opinions.
Evaluate	think carefully to make a judgment; form a critical opinion of	Evaluate the ANC's plan for change.
Explain	express understanding of an idea or concept	Explain how the author develops the narrator's point of view.
Identify	say or write what it is	Identify the character's motive.
Infer	provide a logical answer using evidence and prior knowledge	Use information from the text to infer the value of education.
Interpret	make sense of or assign meaning to something	Interpret the quote to confirm your understanding.
Paraphrase	say or write it using different words	Paraphrase the main idea.
Report	Tell or write about a topic	Report the main events of the setting.
Summarize	tell the most important ideas or concepts	Summarize the key details of the passage.
Tell	say or write specific information	Tell the date that the poem was written.
Use	apply information or a procedure	Use text features to identify the topic.

Six Traits of Writing: Basic

Ideas and Development	Organization	Voice and Audience Awareness	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Language Conventions
<p>4 Focuses on the topic. Main idea (topic sentence) is clear and well supported with details and elaboration (examples, evidence, and explanations).</p>	<p>Topic sentence clearly states main idea. Ideas are clear and logically organized. Concludes sentence.</p>	<p>The words have a strong sense of person and purpose. Brings topic to life.</p>	<p>Words are specific to the content, accurate, and vivid. Word choice enhances meaning and the reader's enjoyment.</p>	<p>Writes complete sentences and varies sentence structure.</p>	<p>There are no grammar errors. There are few or no errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.</p>
<p>3 Mostly focuses on the topic. Sentences supporting the main idea (topic sentence) may be general rather than detailed and specific.</p>	<p>Topic sentence states main idea. Organization mostly clear and logical. May contain concluding sentence.</p>	<p>The words have some sense of person and purpose.</p>	<p>Words are correctly used but may be somewhat general and unspecific.</p>	<p>Writes complete sentences and attempts to use expanded sentences.</p>	<p>There are no major grammar errors. There are few errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.</p>
<p>2 Main idea (topic sentence) is unclear and/or lacks sufficient support.</p>	<p>Structure may not be entirely clear or logical. Paragraph may seem more like a list and/or be hard to follow.</p>	<p>The words have little sense of person and purpose.</p>	<p>Words may be used inaccurately or repetitively.</p>	<p>Writes mostly simple and/or awkwardly constructed sentences. May include some run-ons and fragments.</p>	<p>There are a few grammar errors. There are a few errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.</p>
<p>1 Does not address prompt and/or lacks a topic sentence. Supporting details are absent or do not relate to topic.</p>	<p>No evident structure. Lack of organization seriously interferes with meaning.</p>	<p>The words have no sense of person or purpose. No sense of audience.</p>	<p>Extremely limited range of words. Restricted vocabulary impedes message.</p>	<p>Numerous run-ons and/or fragments interfere with meaning.</p>	<p>There are many grammar and/or spelling errors. There are many errors in capitalization and punctuation.</p>



“from
Becoming Dog”
 by Gary Paulsen

I had camped with the dogs many times, and they had come to understand it as a way of life. First they were tied to trees, then I lit a fire, fed them, then uncurled the bag in the sled or on foam pads or
 5 in the fall on a pile of leaves, and we all slept until morning, and it was daylight when we would go back to work.

This was **radically** different.

This was the **kennel**. I had never slept here before.
 10 When they were in kennel—where each dog was on a chain and had its own house—I always went to the house and they went to their houses and we all slept until the next time we would see each other. **1**

This time I didn't go away and it **altered** the way
 15 they saw me, felt about me, thought of me and my actions, and changed the way I thought as well—started me thinking right.

Started me thinking in terms of dog and not human. **2**

20 It was a clear night; stars splattered across the sky in the brightness that can only come from the cold taking the **humidity** out of the air. **Brilliant** spots of light that seemed just over head high.

radically
 thoroughly; almost completely

kennel
 an enclosed area or place where dogs are housed

alter
 to change

humidity
 moisture in the air or atmosphere

brilliant
 very bright

1 How is the kennel set up?

2 What is different about “this time”?

putrid

rotten and foul-smelling

3 What do Paulsen and all the dogs have in common?

decent

good enough; satisfactory

serendipity

the discovery of something pleasant that you weren't expecting

4 Is Devil happy to have Paulsen's company? How can you tell?

harmonize

to blend sounds or other elements in a pleasing way

I considered where to sleep. The dogs whimpered a bit and when it became clear that I wasn't going to feed or pet them they settled and sat and watched me. They were, to the last dog, **putrid**. Luckily it didn't get to me because I reeked as well—I honestly didn't think I would ever be able to smell anything other than skunk again—and I moved through them looking for a place to put the bag down. 3

I settled next to Devil. There was no particular reason for it, other than the fact that the ground was level there, flat, and it seemed like a **decent** place to sleep. I put the foam pad down and the bag on top of it and shucked my coveralls and shoepacs and slid in. Next to me I arranged footgear and I poured a cup of tea from the thermos and propped up on one elbow to sip tea and look at the sky and the kennel, life, everything. 40

Devil was sitting directly in front of me, staring at me.

"Hi." It was just **serendipity**, a silliness, but he jumped like I'd screamed at him.

45 And his tail wagged.

It was the first time I'd seen his tail wag since he'd come to us and I smiled.

"How are you?" 1

Another wag. What the hell, I thought, he's being friendly. I reached out to pet him. The tail stopped wagging instantly and he growled, soft thunder, and I pulled my hand back. Another dog—I couldn't tell who—answered the growl and then a third and somebody (I thought Cookie) started a small song, just a night song, and they all joined in. I leaned my head back and joined, **harmonizing** the best I could—though still not as well as most of them could do it—and they didn't stop but kept singing and I kept singing with them for three or four minutes. 60



Whereupon they all stopped, suddenly, and caught me with a note hanging. I felt foolish and looked at Devil, who was still sitting there, watching me.

“I didn’t know you were going to stop.” **5**

65 He wagged his tail, cocked his head, and looked at my face.

“I don’t know things yet.” An **understatement** that. “You guys will have to teach me . . . ”

70 And I realized when I said it that I meant it. What I needed to learn only the dogs could teach me, and I’m not sure if it was then or later in the night when I awakened once to see them all still sitting, staring at me, that I decided what I had to do.

75 I had to sleep in the kennel. I had to be with the dogs all the time, learn from them all the time, know them all the time. More than sleep, I had to *live* in the kennel.

I had to in some way become a dog. **8**

80 And in some strange way it had to come from Devil; he was the key. If I could understand him, get him to know and accept me, I would be on the way, or at least started.

85 That day I dozed some and worked on the rig and gear and that night we ran again. Not long—or as Ruth put it, just a “two-skunker” run—and when we came back to the kennel and I put the dogs away and went for my gear I carried it all to Devil’s circle and moved in.

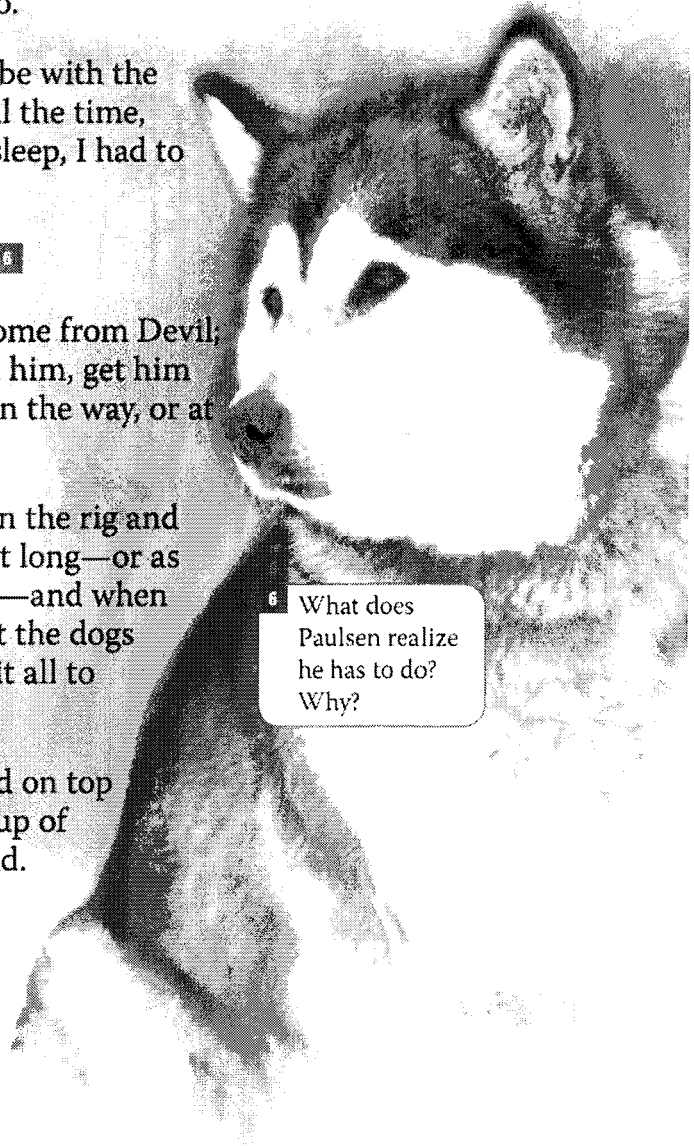
90 He immediately growled and climbed on top of his house. Ruth came out with a cup of tea and watched me, shaking her head.

5 Why does Paulsen feel “foolish” when the dogs stop singing?

understatement

a comment that describes something as less than it really is

6 What does Paulsen realize he has to do? Why?



gargoyle

a carved figure of a human or animal with unique or strange features

7 How does Devil respond to Paulsen's camping out with him?

8 What does Ruth's attitude seem to be?

"You're going to sleep with Devil?"

I placed my foam pad on the ground and the sleeping bag on top of it. Devil growled again.

95 "By morning we're going to be old friends," I said—
understating a bit. Actually, by morning he had
pulled the foam pad out from beneath me and
shredded it and opened the whole bottom of my
down bag and spread feathers over his entire circle.

100 But I didn't know that then. 7

Ruth stared at me for a moment, then shook her head and went back into the house and I lay back to sleep, Devil sitting on his house like a **gargoyle**, visions of Iditarods dancing through my head. 8



Nouns: Multiple Functions

Sort the underlined nouns in the following sentences according to their function. Write them in the proper column in the chart.

Examples:

The grill was hot.

I dropped the vegetables in the pan.

They sizzled in the oil.

It was a great sound.

1. I added chicken to the pan.
2. The dogs sniffed the scent of frying food.
3. These were smells they weren't familiar with.
4. Boris approached me bravely.
5. He gave a little whine and nuzzled his snout on my knee.
6. The other pups watched to see what would happen.
7. I smiled at Boris and scratched him between the ears.
8. "Human food is not for dogs," I told my friend.
9. "But this is a special day," I added.
10. I added some extra morsels to the pan for my hungry friends.

Subject Noun	Direct Object	Predicate Noun	Object of the Preposition
grill	vegetables	sound	oil

Conjunctions

Complete the following sentences with the correct conjunction. Determine whether the sentence has a compound subject, compound predicate, or compound object. Circle the correct answer.

Example: Paulsen and Devil settled down for the night.
 (Compound Subject) Compound Predicate Compound Object

- Paulsen put the foam down _____ unrolled his bag.
Compound Subject Compound Predicate Compound Object
- Either tea _____ coffee was in his thermos.
Compound Subject Compound Predicate Compound Object
- He could either go to sleep _____ have a cup of tea.
Compound Subject Compound Predicate Compound Object
- He gazed around at the kennel _____ the sky.
Compound Subject Compound Predicate Compound Object
- He spoke to Devil _____ reached out to pet him.
Compound Subject Compound Predicate Compound Object
- He couldn't tell if Devil was an enemy _____ a friend.
Compound Subject Compound Predicate Compound Object

Write a sentence containing the element listed.

- (Compound Subject) _____

- (Compound Predicate) _____

- (Compound Object) _____

Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns

Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns	
Singular	myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself
Plural	yourselves, ourselves, themselves

Examples:

Paulsen gave himself plenty of time to “become dog.”

Reflexive Pronoun

Intensive Pronoun

Ruth herself thinks her husband is crazy.

Reflexive Pronoun

Intensive Pronoun

Complete the following sentences with the correct reflexive or intensive pronoun. Determine if the pronoun you used is a reflexive or intensive pronoun. Circle the correct answer.

- After surviving the first night, Paulsen gave _____ a pat on the back.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun
- The kennel _____ was not such a bad place to sleep.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun
- The dogs _____ were still confused.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun
- They had taken _____ as far from Paulsen as they could.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun
- Ruth fixed _____ some coffee and headed outside.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun
- “We are about to fix _____ some breakfast,” Paulsen told her.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun
- “Would you _____ like to join us?” he asked his wife.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun
- She responded that she was making _____ some pancakes—indoors.
Reflexive Pronoun Intensive Pronoun

Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns (*cont.*)

Write a sentence containing the element listed.

1. (Reflexive Pronoun) _____

2. (Intensive Pronoun) _____

Masterpiece Sentences: Stages 1–6

Choose one of the Stage 1 sentences and complete the chart for the remaining stages to write a masterpiece sentence.

Stage 1 Sentences:

- Paulsen arranged his pad and bag.
- He and Devil sat.
- Devil jumped and growled.

Stage	Process	Questions to Answer	Sentence
Stage 1: Prepare Your Canvas	Choose a noun for the subject. Choose a verb for the predicate. Add a direct object if it is needed.	Who did it? Did what? To what?	
Stage 2: Paint Your Predicate	Tell more about what happened.	When? Where? How?	
Stage 3: Move Your Predicate Painters	Improve sentence structure by moving painters.		
Stage 4: Paint Your Subject	Tell more about the subject.	Which one? What kind? How many?	
Stage 5: Paint Your Words	Select words or phrases in the sentence and replace them with more descriptive words or phrases.		
Stage 6: Finishing Touches	Move sentence parts; check spelling and punctuation.		

Masterpiece Sentences With Compound Elements

Use the following painter questions and information about yourself or the people in the text to create sentences with a variety of structures and elements.

Who?	Did what?	How?	AND	Did what?	To what?	Where?

When?	Who?	AND	Who?	Did what?	Where?

What?	OR	What?	How?	Did what?	To what?

Who?	Will do what?	To what?	How?	OR	Will do what?	To what?	How?

Where?	What kind?	Who?	Did what?	To what?	AND	To what?	When?

Quick Write in Response to Reading

Write a paragraph describing Gary Paulsen, the narrator of "Becoming Dog." Identify three character traits and include evidence from the text to support the selected traits. Begin the paragraph with a Number Topic Sentence.

Let's Focus: "The Power of the Dog"

Content Focus
love of an animal

Type of Text
poem

Author's Name _____

Author's Purpose _____

Big Ideas

Consider the following Big Idea questions. Write your answer for each question.

Why do humans love their pets so deeply?

Is it better to love and lose, or not to love at all?

Literary Text Preview Checklist: "The Power of the Dog" on pages 22 and 23.

- Title: What clue does it provide about the text?
- Pictures: What additional information is provided visually?
- Margin Information: What vocabulary is important to understanding this text?

Enduring Understandings

After reading the text . . .

Key Passage Vocabulary: "The Power of the Dog"

Read each word. Write the word in column 3. Then, circle a number to rate your knowledge of the word.

Vocabulary	Part of Speech	Write the Word	Knowledge Rating
natural	(adj)		0 1 2 3
arrange	(v)		0 1 2 3
unflinching	(adj)		0 1 2 3
worship	(n)		0 1 2 3
permit	(v)		0 1 2 3
prescription	(n)		0 1 2 3
lethal	(adj)		0 1 2 3
will	(n)		0 1 2 3
compound	(adj)		0 1 2 3
debt	(n)		0 1 2 3

"The Power of the Dog"

by Rudyard Kipling

natural

happening on its own without help from humans or machines

arrange

to plan for something to happen

unflinching

steady and unwavering

worship

the practice of showing respect or devotion to something

permit

to grant; to allow

prescription

recommendation by an authority

lethal

deadly

1 What does the poet warn his readers against?

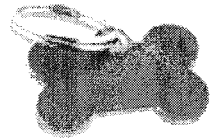
2 When you buy a pup, what do you buy?

3 When will you first learn that you've "given your heart to a dog to tear"?

There is sorrow enough in the **natural** way
 From men and women to fill our day;
 And when we are certain of sorrow in store,
 Why do we always **arrange** for more?
 5 Brothers and Sisters, I bid you beware
 Of giving your heart to a dog to tear. **1**

Buy a pup and your money will buy
 Love **unflinching** that cannot lie—
 Perfect passion and **worship** fed
 10 By a kick in the ribs or a pat on the head.
 Nevertheless it is hardly fair
 To risk your heart for a dog to tear. **2**

When the fourteen years which Nature **permits**
 Are closing in asthma, or tumour, or fits,
 15 And the vet's unspoken **prescription** runs
 To **lethal** chambers or loaded guns,
 Then you will find—it's your own affair—
 But . . . you've given your heart for a dog to tear. **3**



- When the body that lived at your single **will**,
 20 With its whimper of welcome, is stilled (how still!);
 When the spirit that answered your every mood
 Is gone—wherever it goes—for good,
 You will discover how much you care,
 And will give your heart for the dog to tear. **4**
- 25 We've sorrow enough in the natural way,
 When it comes to burying Christian clay.
 Our loves are not given, but only lent,
 At **compound** interest of cent per cent.
 Though it is not always the case, I believe,
 30 That the longer we've kept 'em, the more do we grieve;
 For, when **debts** are payable, right or wrong,
 A short-time loan is as bad as a long—
 So why in Heaven (before we are there)
 Should we give our hearts to a dog to tear? **5**

will

determination;
 resolve

compound

additional

debt

something owed

4 What happens
 to the dog in
 this stanza?

5 When we love
 a dog, what are
 we asking for?



Critical Understandings

Respond to each prompt using complete sentences. Refer to the chart on page 15 to determine how to respond to each prompt.

- 1. Paraphrase the first stanza.

- 2. Describe the rhyme pattern in stanzas 1–4.

- 3. Determine the theme of the poem.

- 4. Delineate the reasons the poet gives to support the theme.

Passage Comprehension

Read the excerpt from *Winterdance* titled “Becoming Dog.” Respond to each prompt using complete sentences. Refer to the chart on page 15 to determine how to respond to each prompt. Provide text evidence when requested.

1. Contrast Paulsen’s earlier routine when camping with the dogs and his new routine in the kennel with the dogs.

2. Describe the setting on the first night Paulsen spends in the kennel.

3. Explain why Paulsen decides to sleep near Devil.

4. Interpret Paulsen’s “singing” with the dogs, and the way the “song” ends. What does each event mean?

Text Evidence: _____

Passage Comprehension (cont.)

5. Infer what kind of relationship Paulsen and Devil had before this episode.

Text Evidence: _____

6. Infer what the dogs were thinking when Paulsen moved into the kennel.

Text Evidence: _____

7. Explain why Paulsen moved into the kennel to begin with.

Prepare to Write: Compare and Contrast Essay

Organize Information

Compare and contrast the information in both texts.

How is the bond between humans and dogs portrayed?

Does each author consider human-dog valuable or not and why?

What do the authors agree on?

A Venn diagram consisting of two overlapping circles. The left circle is labeled "Becoming Dog" and the right circle is labeled "The Power of the Dog". The overlapping area in the center is labeled "Both". Each of the three regions (left, center, and right) contains ten horizontal lines for writing.

Prepare to Write: Compare and Contrast Essay

Write a Concluding Sentence

Develop a concluding sentence by restating the topic sentence (claim). Choose a word from the chart below to start your sentence. Use a comma to separate the word or phrase from the rest of the sentence.

Develop a concluding sentence by restating the topic sentence. Choose a word from the chart below to start your sentence. Use a comma to separate the word or phrase from the rest of the sentence.

Concluding Words and Phrases				
as a result	consequently	finally	in closing	in conclusion
in summary	in the end	so	therefore	thus

Part E. Use Transition Words to Illustrate and Compare

Use transition words in writing to help you move from one idea to the next.

Illustrate				
for example	for instance	as an illustration	in particular	as an example
Compare/Change Direction				
in contrast	although	instead	however	on the contrary

