ISTEP+
Grade 7 Writing

The Game

Anchor Set
The Game: Excerpt from *Children of the River*

by Linda Crew

The following is an excerpt from Linda Crew’s novel *Children of the River*, a story about Sundara, a 17-year-old Cambodian refugee living in Oregon with her extended family. In this excerpt, Sundara is at a football game with a friend, Kelly. They are watching Cathy Gates, one of the cheerleaders, and Jonathan McKinnon, one of the football players.

Soon the players were smashing into each other, the men in the striped shirts were blowing whistles and tossing handkerchiefs. Unfortunately, the strange game didn’t seem any clearer to Sundara here than it did on television. There must be more to it than she understood. Otherwise, why would the Americans get so excited? At school the crowds parted in respect when two or three of the players in their letter jackets came swaggering down the middle of the hall. But why were football players such heroes?

And Cathy Gates . . . Sundara found herself staring at the girl. She was fascinated with her face, which looked as if it turned on and off with a switch. One instant she’d be standing there with her hip cocked, one elbow cradled in her other hand as she bit her thumb, watching the players on the field. Then something would happen in the game and—click—her face would light up with a big smile as she whirled to face the crowd, clapping and prancing, her brown hair bouncing.

Most of all, Sundara envied Cathy’s mystifying knack for knowing when Jonathan and his teammates had done something worth cheering about. She always knew whether to chant “Go! Go! Go!” or “Push ‘em back, push ‘em back, waaaay back!”
When Sundara tried to get Kelly to explain about these things, Kelly just sai
the main idea was trying to get the ball to one end of the field or the other.
This wasn’t much help. Sundara could hardly ever see where the ball was! S
frustrating, hearing Jonathan’s name over the loudspeaker, yet never being
able to tell him from the others.

But finally there came a moment when she did see the football. It was arcin
high, and the crowd rose as one in a long, tense moan of anticipation.
“Aaaahhh” . . . She saw the orange figure running, arms outstretched.

“Come on, McKinnon!” Kelly yelled.

The ball spiraled downward. Jonathan McKinnon leapt, plucked it in midair, e
hit the ground running. A deafening cheer rose as he dashed between the
white posts.

Sundara found herself on her feet, jumping and clapping with the crowd. Sh
did not understand the game, but she understood speed, she understood
grace. She understood why everyone thought Jonathan McKinnon was
wonderful.

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You have read “The Game,” about a girl who is experiencing a new culture
Using details from the excerpt, write an essay explaining how the author
develops Sundara’s character as she responds to the football game,
including what she has learned by the end of the game.

Be sure to include

• an explanation of how the author develops Sundara’s character
• what Sundara has learned by the end of the game
• an introduction, a body, and a conclusion for your essay

Use the following Prewriting/Planning page to help you plan your
writing. Then write your final draft on the lined pages.
Have you ever gone to a new school, moved to a different neighborhood, or even joined a club where you didn’t know anyone? For most people, it’s really difficult to make new friends and start over. But in Linda Crew’s book, *Children of the River*, the character Sundara is not only exposed to new people and surroundings, but a whole new culture.

From the excerpt, *The Game*, that I have read, Sundara is having difficulty wrapping her head around the idea of an American game. In this game, an odd shaped small ball is held by a person and they run down an enormous field trying not to be tackled, and if they don’t run, they throw it to someone else who will run. This game is called football. Sundara’s entire school seems to orbit around the thought of football. The football players are worshiped like gods in the halls, and everyone seems to go crazy if they win a game. All of this madness over a sport is all new to Sundara. She is a refugee from Cambodia where sports were the least of their problems.

In the small excerpt, you actually learn a lot about Sundara. At the beginning, she is so confused on why the game football is such a big deal, but curious to find the excitement behind everyone’s spirit. As the story goes on, Sundara tries to pay more attention to the cheerleaders, wondering how they know what to say or when to cheer. She tries to ask a friend...
her questions, but it just confuses and frustrates her even more. Towards the end, Sundara still doesn’t understand football, but she can see the athletic ability and potential contained in the players and finds herself clapping and cheering right along with everybody else.

Even though everything around Sundara is completely new, she found a way to fit in and have fun doing it. Understanding football is probably only one of the many challenges Sundara will face in her new world, but at least now she can say she’s overcome one of them. In Linda Crew’s book, Children of the River, Sundara may only be a character, but she faced some very real problems problems probably happening today.

**Writing - 6 pts**  
This response represents an exceptional performance and fully accomplishes the task with distinctive quality. The unifying theme of a girl moving into a new culture where she is challenged to learn about the importance of football in that culture is fully developed using essential details from the story as well as insightful commentary (She is a refugee from Cambodia where sports were the least of their worries; Understanding football is probably only one of the many challenges Sundara will face). The writing demonstrates a strong sense of audience and employs effective voice, which keeps the reader engaged throughout. The response includes precise word choice (odd-shaped ball) and effective use of figurative language (entire school seems to orbit around the thought of football; players are worshiped like gods) which spark the reader's imagination.

**Language Conventions - 4 pts**  
The response contains a few errors of the first-draft variety, but they do not impair the flow of the response or compromise the writing style.
"Sundara and the Game"

Throughout this excerpt, the author showed many ways of Sundara developing her character as she watched the football game. The author did this by starting the excerpt explaining Sundara's confusion for football. Then it went on saying how Sundara became aware of how other people were acting and started asking her friends questions about the point of the game and how to play. After, Sundara noticed herself getting really into the game and realized she was cheering along with everyone else.

At the start of this passage, Linda Crew, the author, explained how Sundara went to a football game with some of her friends. She then went on talking about how watching it live was not much cooler than watching it on a television, and how Sundara thought that there was something she wasn't understanding about the game. Sundara just couldn't figure out what was so special about the game and why football players were treated with so much respect. She really
just didn’t understand the point of the game and wasn’t enjoying watching it. Towards the middle of the prompt, the author started showing us how Sundara was trying to understand the game. She told us that Sundara was observing other people and how they were reacting to the game. For example, Sundara was watching a girl named Cathy Gates, and was aware of when she was cheering and when she was frustrated. Not only did she notice when she was cheering, she also noticed what Cathy was saying. This fascinated Sundara, because Cathy Gates was really into the game and definitely knew what was going on.

Another way that the author showed us how Sundara was trying to learn the game was that she told us that Sundara was asking her friends questions to help her better understand the football game. When her friends gave her answers that were very general and vague, Sundara’s character developed. It developed in a way that she was trying to get answers, but no one was helping, so she had to figure
than out herself by just watching the field and trying to put the game together, piece by piece.

Finally the author showed Sundara’s character growing as she responded to the game was by making her enjoy the game as she knew it. Since she could not get “real” answers about the game, she was forced to watch the field even closer to try to self-answer her own questions. After all of her frustrations of not understanding the game, there came a moment when she saw the ball in mid-air and saw Jonathan McKinnon catch it and run. At that moment, Sundara found herself cheering in the crowd, even though she was not one-hundred percent sure she knew what was happening on the field. When she found herself enjoying the game, she understood why McKinnon was considered such a hero at her school. This grew Sundara’s character because she realized that you do not have to fully understand...
the game to enjoy it, you just have to
be aware of the little things that make
it football.
Overall, there were many ways throughout
this passage that Sundara's character
grew. It went from not understanding
the game and not liking it, to trying
to understand the game and becoming
frustrated about not understanding
it. Then, it went to better understanding
the game and in loving it. This all showed
that you do not have to fully understand
some thing to like it. I think that if Sundara
realized this from the story, she would have enjoyed herself a lot more.

**Writing - 6 pts**
Completely focused on the task throughout, this response presents a unifying theme (Sundara overcoming her frustration and gaining some understanding of the football game). The main idea (Sundara developing her character as she watched the football game) is fully developed through recounting events from the passage and how the events impacted Sundara. Although somewhat formulaic in organization, strong transitional phrases (At the start of the passage, she then went on, For example, Not only did she notice, Another way the author showed, Finally, At that moment) progress supporting details in a way that enhances overall meaning. The response exhibits varied sentence patterns, including complex sentences (When she found herself enjoying the game, she understood why McKinnon was considered such a hero at her school).

**Language Conventions - 4 pts**
The response is free of capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and word usage errors. Occasional spelling errors appear, but overall meaning remains clear.
At the beginning of the story, Sundara does not understand how football is played. She asks her friends to explain the game to her, but their explanations didn't help a lot. But she still kept trying to figure out how it was played.

This is one way that the author develops her character. It shows that she is determined and curious. It shows she is curious because she wants to figure out how the game is played. It shows she is determined because even though she doesn't understand how it's played, she keeps trying to learn it. In the story she is also jealous about Cathy Gates, and her knowledge about the game saying, "Most of all, Sundara envied Cathy's mystifying knack for knowing when Jonathan and his teammates had done something worth cheering about. She is also very confused about what is happening during the game, even
with Kelly's help. Kelly told Sundara that the main idea of football was to "one end of the field or the other." The only problem was that Sundara could never see where the ball was. In paragraph five, she finally saw the quarterback throw the ball to Jonathan McKinnon, which he ran for a touchdown.

In this short amount of time, Sundara learns that football requires a great amount of skill including speed and grace. She still did not understand the game but she accepted the game and the great amount of skill it requires to play it. She also knows that Jonathan McKinnon has a lot of skill.

In this story, the author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the game. The author shows she is determined by how much she wants to learn the game. She shows
she is curious by wanting to know the game. She is accepting because even though she doesn’t understand the game, she enjoys it. The author used all of these things to develop her character.

**Writing - 5 pts** This response fully accomplishes the task and stays focused on the main topic. Development thoroughly explains events of the passage without being overly reliant upon direct quotes. Varied sentence patterns and complex sentences enhance the fluency of the response. Organization falters in places (see the paragraph about Sundara’s curiosity, determination, jealousy of Cathy Bates, and Kelly’s help). Some redundant phrases are included (football requires a great amount of skill), and word choice is less than dynamic. However, it’s the thorough development that stands out in this response.

**Language Conventions - 4 pts** The response contains a few errors that do not impair overall meaning. Generally, these errors occur when the student is attempting more advanced conventions such as direct quotes of the text.
Sundara and the Football Game

"Soon the players were smashing into each other, the men in the striped shirts were blowing whistles and tossing handkerchiefs." This quote from Children of the river shows you that Sundara is at a football game. Even though Sundara does not understand this game, from paying attention for most of the game, she understands it more at the end. She ending up learning some things based off what the players and the rest of the crowd were doing.

The author develops Sundara's character by first having her not really understand the football game then towards the end she gets it a little more. Sundara does not know much about football because her culture probably does not have football. She is 17 years old, from Cambodia and right now she lives in Oregon with her extended family. From the story you can tell that Sundara...
is very fascinated with football. Her fascination must have led her to understand it more because she found herself cheering at the end of the game with the crowd.

Sundara learned a lot from the football game. At first, she sat there confused thinking about the game but by the end, she was cheering for the winning team. The text states, "She did not understand the game, but she understood speed, and she understood grace. She understood why everyone thought Jonathon McKinnon was wonderful." This shows that Sundara didn't fully understand football but she understood it more than she did before the game.

Everyone acted different in the game. Sundara was confused but finally understood it a little. Kelly cheered when she was supposed to and sat down when she was not supposed to cheer. Cathy was nervous at one point and bit her nails then stood up and cheered. And last but not least, Jonathon
Mckinnon was playing really good and was determined to win which he ended up doing. This shows that a lot of people were really into the game and had similar but different reactions.

In conclusion, Sundara did not understand the game at first but slowly started to and she learned a lot by paying attention and watching other people’s reactions. The next time you’re at a game, if you pay attention to the game and everyone’s reactions, you might understand it a little bit more at a time.

Writing - 5 pts
Representing a solid performance, this response fully accomplishes the task. Focused throughout, the response articulately conveys Sundara’s initial confusion with football giving way to growing understanding over the course of the game. Development includes unique, in-depth information (Sundara does not know much about football because her culture probably does not have football) typically not seen in other responses. An effective introduction, and detailed body, and a “lessons learned” concluding statement demonstrate meaningful organization. The writing is fluent despite ordinary word choices and heavy reliance on simple sentence structure.

Language Conventions - 4 pts
This response contains a few errors, but they do not impair the flow of communication. Omission of necessary commas is the only consistent error in the response.
Football is a well known and played sport. Football came from a sport called rugby. The author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the football game by saying what she thought of the game at the beginning and at the end and what she had learned about the game.

Firstly, the author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the football game by stating what Sundara thought at the beginning of the story. At the beginning of the story, Sundara didn't know what they were doing. Sundara also didn't know why people got out of the way of people in better jackets. That is one way the author develops Sundara's character.

Secondly, the author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the football game by stating what Sundara thought at the end of the story. At the end of the story, Sundara finally knew what the point of football was about. Sundara also found out why everybody love football and its players. That is another way the author develops Sundara's character.
Finally the author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the football game by stating what Sundara learns about the game. Sundara first learns that football requires speed. Sundara then learns that football requires grace. That is the last way the author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the football game.

In conclusion, the author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the football game by saying what she learned and what she thought of the game at the beginning and end of the story. These are how the author develops her character to me.

**Writing - 4 pts** Through examination of various ways the author developed Sundara's character, this response accomplishes the writing task. Mostly focused on the topic and task, an adequate overview of the story's main events is presented (Sundara didn't know why people got out of the way of people in letter jackets; Sundara also found out why everybody love football; Sundara first learns that football requires speed . . . then learns that football requires grace), but overall development lacks specific detail. Organization is logical, but formulaic - basic transitions (Firstly, Secondly, Finally) introduce new subtopics. The writing style demonstrates control of vocabulary, but is hindered by redundant phrases and sentences. Sentence structure is adequate and somewhat varied.

**Language Conventions - 4 pts** Although a few errors in conventions are present, mainly regarding spelling and word usage (a well know; rugbe; requiers), they do not impair the flow of communication.
Have you recently moved to a new city?
In this essay I will explain how the author develops Sundara's character as she responds to the football game.

The author makes the first paragraph seem so fast to Sundara. She does not understand why Americans get so excited over a sport. The author makes Sundara seem quite and shy. Sundara just observes people in the crowd. Sundara notices a cheerleader, named Cathy Gates. The author makes Cathy seem like a switch, turning on and off. One instant she'd be standing there with her hip cocked, one elbow cradled in her other hand as she bit her thumb, watching the players on the field. Then something would happen in the game—click—her face would light up with a big smile as she whirled to face the crowd.

Sundara asked Kelly what the point of the game was. Kelly said, "The main idea is to get the ball to the other side of the field."

This wasn't much help because Sundara couldn't even see the ball. The author changes this by Sundara seeing the ball in the air. Sundara could
tell that this was a big moment because everyone jump up cheering as loud as they could. Sundara thought about the idea to stand. She felt her feet do it. Sundara jumped to her feet with the crowd clapping. She did not understand the game, but she understood game, she understand feelings. She understood why everyone thought Jonathan McKinnon was wonderful.

The author made Sundara shy and clueless about American culture. She did not understand the concept of football. At the football game, Sundara wondered why a crowd of people enjoyed football so much. By the end of the story, Sundara had her answers. She understood the point of football.

Do you not know about the culture in your new city? What can you do to find out more about it?
This article is about a girl named Sundara who is trying to find the real meaning of football. The first thing she thinks about football is throwing a ball across the field. That is what she thinks the meaning of football is. But let's get to the real part here.

The meaning of football is making a goal. Another meaning is working with you team together. Another meaning is scoring for your team and having each other's backs by working together. Football is an exciting sport. Football is played during spring, winter, and summer. Sundara has learned that football is more than throwing a ball across the field till it gets to the end.

Sundara is a smart girl. Sundara doesn't know about sports much. She is a girl that is confused.

Writing - 3 pts: This response demonstrates minimal accomplishment of the task by stating an opinion of "The meaning of football", something Sundara is trying to figure out. Although the response is somewhat focused on the stated topic, the supporting ideas presented are listed, lack connection, and do not explore exactly how Sundara figured out the meaning of football. The response includes a discernible introduction, middle, and conclusion, but progression of ideas is somewhat unclear. Vocabulary is generally controlled, but the over-reliance upon simple sentences causes an ordinary and repetitive composition.

Language Conventions - 3 pts: The response contains occasional errors in grammar and word usage (she thanks about football; working with you team together), they do not impede the flow of communication.
In the article "The Game" the author develops Sundara's character by showing us how Sundara learns about football. At first Sundara has no idea about the game or when to cheer. She uses her friend Cathy because she knows a lot about football and when to cheer. Sundara also doesn’t understand what’s so important about Jonathan McKinnon. She understood he was a player but she could never pick him out of the players on the field.

By the end of the game Sundara still didn’t fully understand the game. She did know that you had to get a football from one end to another. She also knew that speed and grace where both used and useful in the game of football. Most of all she now knew why everyone liked Jonathan McKinnon.

In conclusion Sundara still doesn’t fully know about football. It will probably still be confusing to her but at least she knows a little about football.

Writing - 3 pts

This response minimally accomplishes the writing task through an attempt at developing a main idea (how Sundara learns about football) and developing that idea with details from the story (She uses her friend Cathy because she knows a lot about football and when to cheer). The details presented (to get a football from one end to another; speed and grace where both used and useful; now knew why everyone liked Jonathan McKinnon) support the main idea, but are presented in a list-like format with minimal exploration. The response includes a beginning, middle, and end; however the introduction is weak. Basic transitions demonstrate an attempt at progressing ideas. Writing style and vocabulary are controlled, but ordinary and repetitive.

Language Conventions - 3 pts

Occasional errors are present with regard to word usage, spelling, and omitted punctuation, but these errors do not obscure the overall meaning of the response.
Sundara is trying to understand how football works and she is having a really hard time trying but now she is starting to find out how it works and towards the middle of the game she one of the cheerleaders teaches her how football works but she she still don't understand but towards the end of the game one of the football players was the game and she knows how it works.

**Writing - 2 pts** This response partially accomplishes the writing task. A main idea is stated (Sundara is trying to understand how football works and she is having a Really hard time), but lacks clarity, while the supporting details provided lack focus. With no discernible introduction or conclusion, the progression of ideas is repetitive (how it works; how football works; knows how it works) and tends toward rambling.

**Language Conventions - 2 pts** Sentences run-on, and contain frequent errors in grammar and word usage (She one of the cheerleaders; but She she still don't understand), which cause the reader to pause and reread portions of the response.
Sundara does not understand what is the big about football. Why do Americans like football or make way for the football players in the hallway.

Sundara still does not understand the game, but she understands the grace and the speed of catching the ball. Then running down the field to make a touchdown.

As said in the beginning, Sundara still does not understand football.

Writing - 2 pts: The response only partially accomplishes the task as it attempts a main idea (Sundara does not understand what is the big about football), but missing words cause incoherence. Some details from the story are presented (she understands the grace and the speed of catching the ball. Then running down the field), but they are not developed and random, thus, not clearly connected to the main idea. The response attempts a minimal level of organization with a brief introduction and one-sentence conclusion. The brief writing sample demonstrates some fluency, but it is repetitive.

Language Conventions - 2 pts: Frequent errors in spelling and fragmented sentences cause the reader to stop and reread parts of the text to fully comprehend.
She doesn't know he went but her friend helps her understand football at the beginning. She did not know what to do because she did not know what football means.

**Writing - 2 pts** Although there is an attempt to address the task, this response is too brief to convey any meaning or display organization. With no development, the single idea appears unfinished. The response fails to accomplish the task and receives a 1.

**Language Conventions - 2 pts** Though errors are not extensive, the brevity of the response does not allow the student to demonstrate control of language conventions. This combined with spelling and capitalization errors makes the response a 1.
At the beginning of this story, Sundara didn't understand football. She is watching the football players and not understanding why they enjoy this.

**Writing - 1 pt** This response fails to accomplish the writing task. A beginning attempt is made at identifying a main idea (Sundara didn't understand football. She is watching the football players and not understanding why they enjoy this), but the idea is not developed or supported with details from the story. With no further explanation given, the response lacks focus and overall, is too brief.

**Language Conventions - 1 pt** Errors in language conventions (spelling and punctuation) are plentiful, especially considering the brevity of the response.