ISTEP+
Grade 6 Writing

Seagoing Cowboy

Practice Set 1
Directions

Read the article “A Cowboy Who Rode the Waves.” Then answer the questions.

A Cowboy Who Rode the Waves

by Peggy Reif Miller

Luke Bomberger crossed the Atlantic Ocean 16 times and the Pacific Ocean twice to help people affected by World War II.

1 Luke Bomberger had no idea that his life would change soon after his high-school graduation. He was working two part-time jobs in a grocery store and a bank when his friend Don Reist invited him to go to Europe on a cattle boat. Luke couldn’t say no. He knew it was an opportunity of a lifetime.

2 It was 1945, World War II was over in Europe, and many countries were left in ruins. To help these countries recover their food supplies, animals, and more, 44 nations joined together to form UNRRA (the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). UNRRA hired “Seagoing Cowboys” to take care of the horses, young cows, and mules that were shipped overseas. Luke and Don signed up.

Heading Overseas

3 In August 1945, they received their orders to report to New Orleans. “We arrived August 14,” Luke says, “the day the Pacific war ended.” They got their seaman’s papers and boarded the SS Charles W. Wooster, headed for Greece—with a cargo of 335 horses plus enough hay and oats to feed them.

4 Luke turned 18 before arriving in Greece, which meant he could be drafted for military service. “When my draft board learned that I was on a cattle-boat trip, they told me to just keep doing that for my service.” By the time he was discharged in 1947, Luke had made nine trips—the most of any Seagoing Cowboy.
5 “The cattle-boat trips were an unbelievable opportunity for a small-town boy,” he says. “Besides helping people, I had the side benefit of seeing Europe and China. But seeing the Acropolis in Greece was special,” he says. “So was taking a gondola ride in Venice, Italy, a city with streets of water.” Luke also toured an excavated castle in Crete and marveled at the Panama Canal on his way to China.

**Traveling the High Seas**

6 It took about two weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean from the eastern coast of the United States and a month to get to China. Caring for the animals during the crossings kept Luke busy. They had to be fed and watered two or three times a day. Bales of hay and bags of oats had to be pulled up from the lower holds of the ship. Stalls had to be cleaned.

7 Helping out on his aunt Katie’s farm as a boy had prepared Luke for hard work, but not for the dangers at sea. On his second trip, Luke served as night watchman. His job was to check on all the animals every hour. One rainy night, after making his hourly report to the captain, he slid down a slippery ladder on his backside. Luke’s heart raced as he shot feet first toward an opening on the side of the ship. A small strip of metal along the edge stopped his slide, keeping him from flying overboard into the dark Atlantic. He was happy to be alive. But he couldn’t work for a couple of days because of cracked ribs.

8 Luke also found time to have fun on board, especially on return trips after the animals had been unloaded. The cowboys played baseball and volleyball games in the empty holds where animals had been housed. Table-tennis tournaments, fencing, boxing, reading, whittling, and games also helped pass the time.

9 But being a Seagoing Cowboy was much more than an adventure for Luke Bomberger. It opened up the world to him. “I’m grateful for the opportunity,” he says. “It made me more aware of people of other countries and their needs.” And that awareness stayed with him, leading his family to host a number of international students and exchange visitors for many years.
You have just read the article, “A Cowboy Who Rode the Waves.” Luke’s participation in the Seagoing Cowboys program allowed him to experience adventures and visit many unique places. Using information from the article, write an argument from Luke’s point of view convincing others to participate in the Seagoing Cowboys program.

Be sure to include

- reasons to join the program
- details from the article to support Luke’s claims
- an introduction, a body, and a conclusion to 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 thought about your career? I didn't either before I found out about the Seagoing Cowboys. When I heard of this, I didn't know what it was! But when I found out more information about the Seagoing Cowboys, I knew it was the right career for me.

What I've learned about the Seagoing Cowboys is that they help save lives. Sure, there's other jobs that save lives too, like police officers, firefighters, but at this job you can bring animals, food, and other supplies to places all over the world.

In this program you can learn more about different states, cities, towns, and even countries. When I went to Venice, Italy, I discovered that they have streets of water. I got to go on a gondola ride.

Joining the Seagoing Cowboys is also a great way to meet more people. People from forty-four nations have joined the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). So there is plenty of new people you can meet.
and exchange students for many years.

But joining the Seagoing Cowboys isn’t all about spending every second of every day working! You can also have fun when you’re on sea too. For example, me and my friends always play different kinds of games.

There are risks too when you’re on the water. Like one time I had to stop working for a few days because I cracked my ribs falling.

These are all of the things why you should join the Seagoing Cowboys.
"Whoever thought I would go to Greece with my best friend?" I asked my friend, Don Reist. "I know, it's the opportunity of a lifetime. I'm glad we signed up, like." "Same here," I replied. "We should go board the ship, don't you think?" Don nodded his head. "Which one is it?" There was about 100 boats lined up in a row. "It says on our Seaman passes to board ship number 17 which is way down the dock. We're never going to make it in time," I explained worriedly to Don. "Quit worrying," Don replies as he picks up his big brown duffel bag. "We'll make it in time."

"On our way we should stop to see my cousin, he's 17 and is considering joining the UNRAA." I explain to him, "We won't have time. The ship leaves in 2 hours!" He yells fiercely into my ear. "He lives down the street from where our ship S.S. Charles W. Wooster is loaded at." I calmly explain to Don, hoping he'll calm down and have passerby's stop giving us weird looks. "Alright, fine. But we're making this quick." Don finally agrees with me.
Don finally agrees with me.

"Down the street nese and turn into the dark alley." I describe to the taxi driver. Don has a disgusted look on his face by the time we reach my cousin Alex's and his uncle's house.

When we arrive I give the taxi driver the $20 bill and he gives me 28 cents back. "You have to get out the passengers side door," the Taxi Driver tells us. "The other side is broken." Don gets out first and then me.

Once we have our luggage, Don explains that, "We have 1 hour and 50 minutes left. And then I say patiently, "We'll be back in time I promise."

Inside of Alex's house he leads us to his living room. The outside of his house looked so clean but the inside, well not so much. Alex's clothes were raggedy and torn and honestly I felt bad for him. "So I heard you want to join the UNRRA," Don tells Alex. "Yeah, just afraid I'll get hurt or fired," I can't stop myself from interrupting him. "When I was there the
only time I was hurt was when it was slippery, and I almost went over board into the dark Atlantic. 

"That's what I'm afraid of."

"Don't focus on the bad things. There are some perks. Besides helping people you can see Europe and China. Also, the Acropolis in Greece. And once in Venice, Italy, I took a gondola ride, and the streets were filled with water." I tell Alex, "It's really fun." Dan agrees with me. "That sounds like fun, but now don't underestimate him." And after you unload the cattle, the stalls are empty, so we have sports on there instead. We played baseball and volleyball. In addition, we played table tennis, fencing, reading, writing, bowling, whistling and card games. "That sounds like fun too." Alex answers. "I think I'll join next year.

So in conclusion, Alex ends up going for 30 trips—the most anyone has ever done. He beat me with my record of 9. And Don and I retired at the age of 14."
While there might be aspects of higher and lower score points, this response is holistically a 5. It represents a solid performance and fully accomplishes the task. Ideas and Content: Development includes in-depth information and supporting facts and details that fully develop the topic. The response does include some superfluous information that does not serve the plot (such as the taxi’s broken door and the shabby state of Alex’s clothes and living room), but the narrative incorporates most, if not all, of the relevant information from the passage. Organization: Development progresses in an order that mostly enhances meaning. Dialogue, when used, moves along in a matter that progresses ideas; transitions do the same. Style: The response demonstrates use of writers’ techniques such as expository dialogue and immersive description of setting. Voice: Rather than speaking as Luke trying to persuade the reader, the student has cleverly framed the task as a narrative in which Luke tries to persuade another character; this certainly shows awareness of audience and appropriateness to task.

This response includes a few errors, but they do not impede the flow of communication. For the most part, errors occur when the student is attempting more advanced conventions. Writing has very few or no errors in capitalization, grammar/usage or paragraphing, and is largely devoid of run-on sentences and sentence fragments. Spelling and punctuation errors appear occasionally, but they are too few and too minor to impair the reader. Not that constructing dialogue is a higher-level writing technique and can therefore absorb more errors.
If I start talking about a career of tending cows and other animals while riding a ship to China, that probably isn’t your best interest. Yet, I need to tell you, it is so much more than trying to put a cow to sleep. Trust me it is.

I was a seventeen-year-old town boy when the war was finally over. Two years later in 1947, I wasn’t a nineteen-year-old town boy who spent two years aboard several ships; I was a nineteen-year-old boy whom seen much more. Not only the Panama Canal and Gondola in Venice, Italy, but the countries and its people... their culture, their needs... I’ve seen all of them. And they gave me something precious to me now: awareness and appreciation.

The opportunity opened up a whole new world for me. After my service was over, I and my family hosted a number of international exchange for many years. I was glad that I was able to keep exploring new views and ideas, even at my own home — and I guess it’s all because of my experience being the Seagoing Cowboy.

Now, being a Seagoing Cowboy, you must be ready for huge adventures... and perhaps huge dangers. A storm could hit the ship anytime (well... if you’re in the Pacific, yes), and even if it wasn’t the storm, one wrong step on the ladder and you’re overboard into deep, dark sea. Let me tell you, once I did ship, and fell overboard, if a tiny strip of metal hadn’t stopped me. But oh, I was never so appreciative of the state of being alive... and of course, the kindness of my shipmates who took care of my broken ribs.
And the people of the ship (whom I spent most of my two years together with) are so much fun! With fellow Seagoing Cowboys I could, for example: baseball, volleyball, table-tennis, air-boxing, or fencing, or whistling, and all sorts of silly and serious gaming. Without them, most of my ship ride possibly wouldn’t have been worth it as much.

The Seagoing Cowboy program gave so much to me, I can’t count the gratefulness. So… are you ready for some hard work? I thought so. Become a Cowboy now!

Writing - 5 pts
This response represents a solid performance and fully accomplishes the task. Ideas and Content: The response presents a unifying theme without going off on tangents. Development thoroughly explains aspects/events of the passage without relying on direct quotes [Now, being a Seagoing Cowboy, you must be ready for huge adventures…and perhaps huge dangers. A storm could hit the ship anytime (well…if you’re in the Pacific, yes), and even if it wasn’t the storm, one wrong step on the ladder and you’re overboard]. Organization: The ideas progress in an order that enhances the meaning of the response, with smooth, effective transitions (I need to tell you, Not only, And they gave me, Now, Let me tell you, But oh, Without them). Style: The fluent writing includes vocabulary to make explanations detailed (And they gave me something precious to me now: awareness and appreciation). Voice: This response maintains a tone appropriate to its purpose. In particular, the response excels at the task of speaking from Luke’s point of view, instead of merely providing an account of what happened during the experience.

Language Conventions - 3 pts
The response contains occasional errors, but they do not obscure the meaning of the response. Many grammar and usage errors appear (tending cows, whom seen much more, a number of international exchange for many years, I can’t count the gratefulness). The response frequently makes incorrect/improper use of ellipses in places where commas or semicolons would be appropriate. Sentence fragments appear, mostly as a result of sentences beginning with “And.”
Well I really feel like I should give you all a warning about how great of an opportunity (a chance) you're missing here, really because it's a great career. This is really a good job or you can even say this is a perfect job to be in. If you don't have a job right now you might as well just want to join this job, this is your chance. You probably don't know how much of a great future is waiting here or you don't know about the lifetime experience in here for you. In this warning I will be giving a lot of examples about a person who actually existed and had some fun with all of this great experiences throughout the warning.

One of the reasons why this is a great chance for you is because you visit many different places around the world. Like I said that I would use a person as an example that person's name is Luke Bomberger, he visited many places such as Europe, China, Greece, Acropolis in Greece, gondola ride in Venice, Italy, streets of water, excavated castle in Crete, and marveled Panama Canal. You have to truly accept this is a great chance for you. You don't want to miss a great chance like this. But you have to wait up for the air because I have to describe why this is fun. Why this is fun is there is probably no other job than this job where you can tour this many places.
Another reason is you have great feelings about yourself because you work hard to help others. That's an important thing in life because after all since we're all humans we need to help each other. You will have a great satisfaction in your heart that your helping. That's a very sweet and great feeling that everyone should get. You will enjoy that feeling.

Another reason is many and most of the jobs will need you to graduate college. But for this job is you just need to graduate high school. A benefit for you is that you get money for 3 extra years. Also you get 3 extra years of fun! You don't even have to think about it.

A very good reason is if you like to ride ships for a long time this is a great job for you. Since you're crossing the ocean it will take months for you. You can have fun riding a ship for a long time. Well at least Jake had some fun. You need to try this if your a fan in riding ships for a long time. In fact you should do it for it.

Another reason is if you like animals this is a great chance for you. Especially if you like horses. This your type of job then. You get to feed them and spend most of your time with them. You are typically getting paid for fun.
Another reason is playing games. You can just sit and play games after your done dropping the animals off. That’s obviously because you don’t have animals to take care of. You can play games such as baseball, volleyball, table tennis and many other games. It’s just way too fun. All you have to do is just play on the return time.

Now that I’ve told you all the adventures you will meet and how easy a seeing cowboys job is you have to decide. My choice would be to join. But since your life is going to change you might want to think.

**Writing - 4 pts** While there might be aspects of higher or lower score points, this response is holistically a 4. It accomplishes the task. Ideas and Content: The response stays mostly focused on the idea of the great opportunity in front of you, the reader. (Well, I really feel like I should give you all a warning about how great of an opportunity (a chance) your missing here, really because it’s a great career; One of the reasons this is a great chance for you is because you visit many different places around the world). Organization: The response presents a meaningful whole with an introduction, body, and an effective conclusion. However, the introduction is flawed in that it is repetitive and describes how and why the job is great without having actually identified the job. Style: The writing is very list-like in places, impeding fluency (places such as Europe China, Greece, Acropolis in Greece, gondola ride in Venice, Italy, streets of water). Voice: The response demonstrates some sense of audience by reading like an advertisement.

**Language Conventions - 4 pts** This response contains a few errors, but they do not impair the flow of communication. Some sentences have grammar or word usage errors (after your done; all the adventures you will meet), but not enough to overshadow what’s been done correctly.
Luke’s life changed after he went over seas to help countries. He thought it was an amazing opportunity. Luke knew that after the war, there was going to be a mess and they needed help.

It would be an amazing adventure. Going all over the world to help the nation. But the best part is seeing all the amazing places. For example, Acropolis in Greece, or taking a gondola ride in Venice, Italy, a city with streets of water. But you know it is not all just about the sightseeing. It’s also about helping the affected towns and people. Helping and taking care of horses, cows, and mules will keep you busy. It is hard work. Sometimes you’ll get hurt, but just knowing your helping somebody will make you feel better.

When the cowboys are done, get to enjoy games. They get to play baseball, and volleyball games and table-tennis tournaments, fencing, boxing, reading to help pass time. You wouldn’t want to miss this opportunity. Luke said, "it was much more than adventure for
It opened up the world. "It would be like a big vacation, going around the world. It made Luke notice the people in other countries and aware of their needs. So, if you had this opportunity would you take it, because I know I would."

**Writing - 4 pts** While there might be aspects of higher and lower score points, this response is holistically a 4. It accomplishes the task. Ideas and Content: The writing stays mostly focused on the main idea of what a great adventure and opportunity Luke experienced after he went overseas to help countries. Sufficient information with supporting facts and details develop the topic (When the cowboys are done unloading the all the animals, they get to enjoy games. They get to play baseball, and volleyball games and table-tennis tournaments, fencing, boxing, reading to help pass time). Organization: The response presents a meaningful whole with a beginning, a middle, and an end, despite an occasional lapse (e.g., a blended conclusion). Transitions between sentences and paragraphs enhance the meaning of the text (But the best part, But you know, When the cowboys are done). Voice: The response demonstrates some sense of audience, with the tone subtly transitioning from informative to persuasive.

**Language Conventions - 4 pts** This response contains a few errors, but they do not impede the flow of communication. For the most part, errors occur when the student is attempting more advanced conventions. Sentences have few or no grammar or word usage errors (knowing your helping is an example of an incorrect homophone, but on the other hand: note the correct use of affected). The writing has no run-on sentences.
When Luke got home from his trip, he decided to go to the military. When Luke was in the military, he only got to see his friends and family about twice a month. Luke and his friend and his family still spent time together, but it wouldn't be the same. They didn't get a whole lot of time to spend time with each other.

Luke likes the military but the one thing he hates is not being able to see his friends or his family as often. Luke has been in the military for two years now. Luke wanted to go to the army, but he would miss his friends and family. Luke never did go to the army while living with his family anyway.

Later, Luke was living on his own. He went to the army. His friend went two. They were on the same team and helped each other out. Luke and his friend had fun in the navy. But the only thing they miss were their families. Luke and his friend came home and stayed home. Luke went to his house.
He was so happy because him and his friend had a "Welcome back" party.

**Writing - 3 pts** While some aspects of the score might be higher or lower, this response is holistically a 3. It minimally accomplishes the task. Idea and Content: Here, the student has written a narrative. Although this was not the task the prompt indicated, it is not considered off-task or off-topic because it includes some elements from the passage (the character’s name, the wartime/military setting). Organization: Progression is generally coherent, but some irregularities cause some awkwardness; here, the writing restates the idea of missing one’s friends and family over and over in various forms, and the ending feels abrupt or unfinished. Higher-scoring narrative responses will include some dialogue and/or some sort of conflict resolution. Style: The writing is generally fluent, though sentences are mostly simple. Voice: The narrative style is not appropriate to purpose, and more specifically doesn’t work in this instance. However, it does not take away from what else the student has done correctly.

**Language Conventions - 4 pts** This response contains occasional errors, but they do not obscure the meaning of the response. There is no need to reread portions to comprehend the student’s intended meaning. Many necessary commas are omitted. Some grammar and usage errors appear (His friend went two; there families). The writing repeatedly changes from past tense to present tense and back again.
If you like any of the things, I'm going to let you know. Would love this job. If you like caring for animals or cleaning the cages or even feeding them, this is your job. Also, you probably want to hang out with the animals. I don't think you cause we've all seen a piglet before. And you aren't the only one there. There are millions of people out there that love animals. You aren't the only one.

Second, you play games to pass time, man. That sounds fun. I mean, who doesn't like volleyball or baseball, or boxing. Overall, it sounds really fun. I mean, gosh, animals and games. OK, back to what we were discussing. If you like any of these sports, this is for you.

Finally, we have traveling. Traveling is the best part about this whole thing. You could go anywhere like Paris or Greece. It's kind of random but still fun! In the story, Luke traveled to places in two years. That is amazing.
So to end it off i think if you like any of these things you should really try it.

Writing - 3 pts

This response minimally accomplishes the task. Ideas and Content: The writing attempts a main idea and some focus is maintained. Although some facets of the topic are explored, development is minimal in that few details are provided that would flesh out these facets (Second you play games to pass the time man. That sounds fun. I mean who doesn’t like volleyball or baseball, or boxing. Overall it sounds really fun i mean gosh). Organization: The response includes a clearly discernible introduction, short body, and conclusion, with rudimentary transitions between paragraphs. Style: The writing demonstrates some control over vocabulary. Although the writing contains mostly simple sentences, the student does attempt more varied sentence patterns. Voice: The response demonstrates some sense of audience by reading like an advertisement.

Language Conventions - 3 pts

This response contains occasional errors, but they do not obscure the meaning of the response. There is no need to reread portions to comprehend the student’s intended meaning. Some words have capitalization errors (we have Traveling, i). Necessary commas or semicolons are omitted in several places, resulting in some run-on or awkward sentences. Some spelling errors appear (probabley, Finnaly).
you should join the seagoing cowboys.
if you like going to new places then
join the seagoing cowboys. if you like
helping animal this is the program
for you. if you like to be on
boats join the seagoing cowboys. If
you like all of these things i just
named of the seagoing cowboys
this program is just for you.

Writing - 2 pts
While there may be elements of higher and lower scores, this
response is holistically a 2. It partially accomplishes the task. Idea and Content: The response attempts a main idea, but includes few facts and details to develop it. Most support comes from a list of vague ideas (like helping animal; like to be on boats; see many different places). More specific details are required for a higher score. Organization: The response attempts a minimal level of organization, with a simple topic sentence (you should join the Seagoing cowboys), very brief list-like body, and concluding sentence, all in one paragraph. Style: The support’s presentation is repetitive and predictable. Voice: The response does demonstrate a sense of audience by reading like an advertisement, but not well enough to compensate for its other shortcomings.

Language Conventions - 2 pts
There are errors that cause the reader to pause and reread portions of the text. Compound sentences lack necessary commas. The response contains multiple capitalization errors (you should join, i).
You should be a seagoing cowboy because it seems fun. Because you get to play volleyball, baseball, and games. You get time to read which sounds fun to me. You get to check on the animals you get to do all kinds of cool and fun stuff. My personal favorite is you get to be a hard worker.

**Writing - 2 pts** This response partially accomplishes the task. Ideas and Content: The response explores a single facet of the topic and provides minimal, list-like development. Organization: The response is just a body of ideas, lacking a discernible beginning or ending. Style: The response demonstrates minimal word usage, most notably repeating the word, “fun.”

**Language Conventions - 1 pt** The errors present are serious and numerous. The response contains a number of spelling and capitalization errors (you Shold, semes, favorite; to Be). Two of the responses three sentences are run-ons due to a lack of punctuation.
I took about two weke to cross the atlantic but a day that young should stay home with is his famaly. It is hard.

In August 1945 they received their orders to repond to New Orleans. We arrived August 14 the war ended and most of the homes were balmaged.

Writing - 1 pt
While there may be elements of a higher score, this response is holistically a 1. It fails to accomplish the task. Ideas and Content: The response makes it different to discern a main idea. The response includes details from the main passage, but does so in a way that lacks purpose. Organization: Any connection between the two presented paragraphs is difficult to determine. Style: With the brief response being mostly copied text, it is difficult to discern any sense of style or voice.

Language Conventions - 1 pt
The errors present are serious, numerous, and cause the reader to struggle to read the response. The response contains numerous spelling and capitalization errors (atlantic, Famaily, baimged).