



# **TEACHER GUIDE**

## **INFORMATIVE UNIT:**

**Grade 7 or 8 – Our Unique Place**

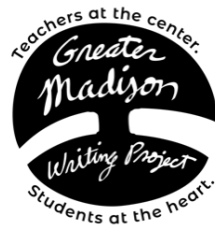
**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

# Teacher Guide

## Informative Unit:

### Our Unique Place

Developed by  
The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Office of Literacy and Mathematics, Office of Educational Accountability and the  
Greater Madison Writing Project



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent  
Madison, Wisconsin

This publication is available from:  
Office of Educational Accountability  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
201 West Washington Avenue  
Madison, WI 53703

<https://dpi.wi.gov/ela/Writing%20Rich%20Classrooms>

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# Table of Contents

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Table of Contents .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Overview .....	1
Lesson One: What is Unique About our Place? .....	3
Lesson Two: Why Know our Place? .....	4
Lesson Three: Ecological Place.....	5
Lesson Four: Cultural Place.....	6
Lesson Five: Economic Place.....	7
Lesson Six: Bringing it All Together .....	8
References.....	9

# Acknowledgements

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The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) wishes to acknowledge the work, commitment, and various contributions of the individuals involved in the creation of these instructional writing resources. Thank you to the Greater Madison Writing Project for their work and guidance through this process. Thanks to the Literacy and Assessment staff members at DPI who have contributed their time and talent to this project. Finally, a special thanks to Wisconsin educators who created these instructional tools and resources to support all Wisconsin educators teaching the Wisconsin Academic Writing Standards.

## **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction:**

Robyn Bindrich, Literacy Consultant

Alison O'Hara, Forward Exam Program Manager

Jennifer Teasdale, Education Program Specialist

Bianca Williams-Griffin, English Language Arts Consultant

Lauren Zellmer, Standards Based Assessment Consultant

## **Greater Madison Writing Project:**

Mark Dziedzic, Greater Madison Writing Project

Bryn Orum, Greater Madison Writing Project

## **Wisconsin Educators:**

Michelle Benn, Milwaukee Public Schools

Jennifer Engel, Milwaukee Public Schools

Mary Ann Feutz, Madison Metropolitan School District

Katie Holme, School District of Reedsburg

Sarah Niesen, Madison Metropolitan School District

Skylar Primm, Cambridge School District

Natasha Stark, Oregon School District

Paul Walter, Slinger School District

Chris Wondra, St. Croix Falls School District

# Overview

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This sequence of informational writing prompts gives students the opportunity to explore their local place through place-based education principles while gaining practice with the informational writing genre as assessed on the Wisconsin Forward Exam.

While the lessons are stand alone and not tied to any particular curriculum or unit, they emphasize the concept of the “Place Prism,” which defines a place through the lenses of ecology, economy, and culture through time (see the [Teton Science Schools](#) website for more). These lessons were developed in a school with a place-based education curriculum but could be adapted to any context.

## **This unit focuses on Wisconsin standards:**

- **W.7.2.b** Write informative text that examines a topic and conveys ideas, concepts, and information through the selection and organization of relevant content by introducing and developing a topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples, organizing ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- **W.8.2.b** Write informative/explanatory text, examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content by introducing and developing a topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples, organizing ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension..

## **Lesson Sequence Overview**

- **Lesson One: What is Unique about our Place?**  
Goal: Students write a paragraph explaining their community to a newcomer. (Day with text-based writing prompt.)
- **Lesson Two: Why Know our Place?**  
Goal: Students write about why they should know about their Place. (Day with stand-alone writing prompt.)

- **Lesson Three: Ecological Place**  
Goal: Students about their place through an ecological lens. (Day with text-based writing prompt.)
- **Lesson Four: Cultural Place**  
Goal: Students write about their place through the cultural place lens. (Day with text-based writing prompt.)
- **Lesson Five: Economic Place**  
Goal: Students write about their place through the economic place lens. (Day with text-based writing prompt.)
- **Lesson Six: Bringing it All Together**  
Goal: Students describe how their thinking has changed through the unit. (Day with text-based writing prompt.)

# Lesson One: What is Unique About our Place?

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## Lesson Focus:

Concept of Place

## Learning Intention:

Students write a paragraph explaining their community to a newcomer.

## Materials:

- Paper and pencil

## Activities

- Discussion
- Respond to the prompt

## Lesson:

1. Students are introduced to the concept of Place and discuss their local Place at multiple scales: School Community, Town/City, School District, County, etc. The class brainstorms the aspects of their community that are unique or unusual compared to other places.
2. Students will using the brainstormed list above write to the following prompt:

Choose one unique thing about our community. Write one paragraph explaining it for someone who is new to our community. Be sure to introduce your topic, use descriptive words and details, and include a concluding statement.



# Lesson Two: Why Know our Place?

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## Lesson Focus:

Understanding the why of Place-Based Education

## Learning Intention:

Students write about why they should know about their Place.

## Materials:

- [Place-Based Learning: Using Your Location as a Classroom](#) video
- Paper and pencil

## Activities:

- Video
- Discussion
- Respond to the prompt

## Lesson:

1. Students watch a short video from Edutopia about a place-based education program in Maryland and discuss why Place-Based Education is valuable for learners.
2. Students will write to the following prompt:

Write one paragraph explaining why it is important to learn about our Place. Be sure to introduce your topic, use descriptive words and details, and include a concluding statement.

# Lesson Three: Ecological Place

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## Lesson Focus:

Understanding ecological place

## Learning Intention:

Students write about their place through this ecological lens.

## Materials:

Paper and Pencil

## Activities

- Discussion
- Respond to the prompt

## Lesson:

1. Students discuss local natural habitats and the plants and animals that live there. This lesson could tie into additional research on local ecosystems, and may require additional teacher instruction, depending on students' prior knowledge. Consider collaborating with your librarian and/or science colleagues.
2. Students will write to the following prompt.

Write one paragraph describing a natural habitat in our area and explain how the plants and animals that live there depend on each other for survival. Be sure to introduce your topic, use descriptive words and details, and include a concluding statement.

# Lesson Four: Cultural Place

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## Lesson Focus:

Understanding cultural place

## Learning Intention:

Students write about their place through the cultural place lens.

## Materials:

Paper and pencil

## Activities:

- Discussion
- Respond to the prompt

## Lesson:

1. Students discuss local traditions and events that are unique or special in their community. This lesson could tie into additional research on the history or significance of those traditions and events. Consider collaborating with your librarian or social studies colleagues.
2. Students will write to the following prompt:

Write one paragraph describing a unique cultural tradition or event in our community and explain its significance to the people who live here. Be sure to introduce your topic, use descriptive words and details, and include a concluding statement.

# Lesson Five: Economic Place

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## Lesson Focus:

Understanding economic place.

## Learning Intention:

Students write about their place through the economic place lens.

## Materials:

Paper and pencil

## Activities:

- Discussion
- Respond to the prompt

## Lesson:

1. Students discuss local organizations that contribute to the community in significant ways. This lesson could tie into additional research on local organizations, and may require additional teacher instruction, depending on students' prior knowledge. Consider collaborating with your librarian, mathematics and CTE colleagues.
2. Students will write to the following prompt:

Write one paragraph explaining how a local organization contributes to the overall well-being of our community. Be sure to introduce your topic, use descriptive words and details, and include a concluding statement.

# Lesson Six: Bringing it All Together

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## Lesson Focus:

Bring all of the lessons together

## Learning Intention:

Students describe how their thinking has changed through the unit.

## Materials:

- Paper and pencil
- [Single Point Rubric for Informative Writing](#)

## Activities:

- Discussion
- Respond to the prompt
- Assess writing with rubric

## Lesson:

1. Students discuss what they already knew about their Place going into this lesson sequence and what they might have learned about their Place that was new or surprising.
2. Students will write to the following prompt. If desired, provide students with a copy of the rubric to assess their writing.

Write one paragraph explaining something about our community that you previously took for granted or overlooked but now appreciate. Be sure to introduce your topic, use descriptive words and details, and include a concluding statement.

## References

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Teton Science Schools. "Place Based Education". Accessed March 2025.

<https://www.tetonscience.org/about/place-based-education/>

Edutopia. (2016). *Place-Based Learning: Using Your Location as a Classroom* [Video]. YouTube

[https://youtu.be/Q3ij\\_dFpZgw?si=TLZQ\\_KQeNDTWi\\_xZ](https://youtu.be/Q3ij_dFpZgw?si=TLZQ_KQeNDTWi_xZ)