

***In Common: Effective Writing for All Students***  
**Collection of All Student Work Samples, K-12**

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By The Vermont Writing Collaborative, with Student Achievement Partners and CCSSO

**Grade 4**  
**On-Demand Opinion Writing Samples**



## Grade 4, Prompt for Opinion Writing

### Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

(Directions should be read aloud and clarified by the teacher.)

Name:

*Before you begin: On a piece of lined paper, write your name and grade, the date, the name of your school and your state, and your teacher's name. You will use this paper for writing.*

#### The Best Pet

There are many reasons why people own pets. A pet can entertain you, keep you company or even protect you! Dogs and cats are the most popular pets in America today. Some people prefer an energetic dog and others, a cuddly kitten. Which do you think is best?

Your teacher is going to read two articles aloud. One is about the benefits of owning a cat and the other is about the benefits of choosing a dog as a pet. As you listen to these texts, think about the advantages of each kind of pet. *Which kind of pet is best, a cat or a dog?* After you have had a chance to hear the articles a second time, you will write an essay that states your opinion and explains your thinking.

For the essay, your focusing question will be:

**Which kind of pet is best, a cat or a dog?**

You will explain your thinking with facts and reasons from the articles.

Remember, a good opinion essay:

- *Has an introduction*
- *Clearly states your opinion/claim in a focus statement*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support your opinion and explains your thinking*
- *Groups ideas in paragraphs*
- *Has a conclusion*
- *Uses precise language and linking words to connect ideas*
- *Has correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation*

You will have two class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. You may take notes right on the articles or on a separate sheet of paper. You may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. The essay will have a single draft. When you have finished, be sure to proofread your work.

*GOOD LUCK! WE LOOK FORWARD TO READING YOUR GOOD WORK!*

*Teacher Directions*

### **Which kind of pet is best, a cat or a dog?**

#### **Day 1 (45 minutes)**

- Give out the assignment sheet.
- Read the assignment sheet aloud together and clarify the task for the students.
- Give each student a copy of *Why Cats Make Better Pets than Dogs*. Explain that they may want to underline or take notes on the article as you read it aloud.  
Read the article aloud.
- Pose the question, "Why might a cat make a good pet?" Remind students to use the article and their notes when thinking through their response. Have students turn and talk to a partner about this question for 3 minutes.
- Give each student a copy of *Why Dogs make Good Pets*. Remind students that they may want to underline or take notes on the article. Read the article aloud.
- Pose the question, "Why might a dog make a good pet?" Remind students to use the article and their notes when thinking through their response. Have students turn and talk to a partner about this question for 3 minutes.
- Explain that tomorrow you will be writing about whether a cat or a dog makes a better pet. Collect the articles and assignment sheets. (Be sure names are on them.)



*Teacher Directions***Which kind of pet is best, a cat or a dog?****Day 2 (45 minutes)**

- Return the articles and re-read both aloud.
- Ask students to think about both articles. Which pet would be best? Why? Have students turn and talk to a partner about this. Each student should talk for 3 minutes.
- Return the assignment sheet and re-read it aloud.
- Provide lined paper (or a computer if your students are accustomed to composing on a keyboard) and give students the remainder of the period to write. The writing should be completed individually, without help.
- When the period is over, explain that students may finish writing and proofread tomorrow. Collect student work and materials.

**Day 3 (45 minutes)**

- Return student work and materials. Students may be given access to a dictionary, thesaurus, spell check, or grammar check.
- Give students the remainder of the period to finish writing and proofreading.

Name:

# Why Cats Make Better Pets than Dogs

Should you get that cute little puppy or a cuddly kitten? Deciding between a cat and a dog can be difficult. However, cats as pets do have some advantages.

## Grooming

Cats bathe themselves. Most do not even need brushing. Dogs are more likely to need help from their owners in keeping clean.

## Companionship

Cats enjoy being alone. You can leave them home alone for the day while you go to school. Dogs, however, need company. A dog needs much more of your time.

## Exercise

Cats and dogs both need daily exercise. However, a cat needs much less exercise than a dog. Most dogs need to be taken for walk at least twice a day, even in the rain. Your cat will probably be happy to chase a ball in your living room.

## Noise

Dogs can bark at all hours of the day or night. Cats sleep most of the day and are much quieter. They are unlikely to disturb your neighbors.

## Training

Dogs need training to live with people. They need to be taught not to jump on people, how to sit and stay, and many other things. You may even need to teach your dog to lie down so you can have some quiet time. Cats can be trained to fetch a ball or walk on a leash, but these lessons are just for fun. You don't need to train your cat to have a good pet.

Both cats and dogs can be wonderful family pets. Each can be affectionate and playful, but cats are much easier to care for. Maybe a cat is the right pet for you!

*This article was adapted for classroom use from "Reasons Why Cats Make Better Pets than Dogs" by Dee Em, eHow Contributor <http://www.ehow.com>*

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Name:

## Why Dogs Make Good Pets

Thinking about getting a new pet? One of the most popular pets is a dog. Dogs make great pets for many reasons.

### Companions

Dogs are patient and make great listeners. Many people tell dogs things they can't tell anyone else. Dogs are great for someone who lives alone or needs company.

### Friends

Most dogs are curious. They want to meet other people and animals. Owners are likely to meet others while out walking their dogs. Dogs are good conversation starters. They make it easy to meet new people.

### Health

Dogs can make you healthier. Studies show that dog owners are less likely to get sick. When they do get sick, they get well quicker.

### Safety

Most dogs will bark if there is danger. Dogs can scare off intruders or warn their owners of fire. Specially trained dogs can also find missing people, sniff out bombs and drugs and help disabled people.

### Exercise

A dog needs daily exercise. The owner who walks his dog also benefits from this. Daily exercise can help keep you at a healthy weight. It gives you energy. It also strengthens your muscles and bones. Walking and playing with your dog can make you both healthier!

Is a dog the right pet for you? Owning a dog is a big responsibility, but there are many benefits. A dog might just be the perfect pet for you!

*This article was adapted for classroom use from “Why Dogs Make Good Pets” by Cecilia McCormick, eHow Contributor <http://www.ehow.com>*

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**File Name: O4P Which is Better**

**Opinion/Argument**

**Grade 4**

**On-Demand Writing- Uniform Prompt**

**Which is Better?**

**Introduces a topic clearly**

Many people have a dog for a pet. Some people have cats. Which is better? I say dog. Maybe you say cat. I just might be able to persuade you in the following.

**States an opinion**

Dogs are great companions for lonely people. They can go for a rousing walk in the park, or a good long nap. Playing games of catch or fetch every day makes good fun. Even a jog on the hottest day could even be enjoyable too. Dogs don't just provide fun though. They can also provide protection.

**Provides reasons that are supported by facts and details**

Dogs are very intelligent. They can be trained to find people or save them. Some don't even need to be trained. For instance, if someone is trying to break in, your dog might bark and scare them off. Dogs are great for many different reasons.

**Links opinion and reasons using words and phrases**

Overall, dogs are awesome pets to have. Have I convinced you though? If you are, then great! If you're not then that's okay. It's really up to you. So which one is it going to be?

**Creates an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose**

**Provides a concluding section related to the opinion presented**

This fourth-grade opinion piece has a well-developed introduction that establishes some context (*"Many people have a dog for a pet. Some people have cats."*) and states an opinion (*"Wich is better? I say dog."*). The purpose of the piece, to convince the reader that dogs are better as pets than cats, is clearly stated in the last line of the introduction. Although the paragraphs are incorrectly indented, related ideas are grouped together; the writer presents two main reasons that dogs are better: they are great companions, and they can provide protection. Each reason is well-elaborated using supporting facts and details drawn from the source included in the prompt. Transitional sentences (*"Dogs don't just provide fun though."*) and linking words and phrases (*"even", "also", "for instance"*) connect ideas in the piece and provide cohesion. The last paragraph shows the writer's confidence in her reasoning by acknowledging that readers must form their own opinions after considering the opinion she presents.

**File Name: O4P Which is Better**

**Opinion/Argument**

**Grade 4**

**Revised and Edited for Student Use**

### **Which is Better?**

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Dogs are great companions for lonely people. They can go for a rousing walk in the park or take a good long nap. Playing games of catch or fetch every day makes good fun. Even a jog on the hottest day could be enjoyable, too.

Dogs don't just provide fun, though. They can also provide protection. Dogs are very intelligent. They can be trained to find people or save them. Some don't even need to be trained. For instance, if someone is trying to break in, your dog might bark and scare them off. Dogs are great for many different reasons.

Overall, dogs are awesome pets to have. Have I convinced you, though? If you are convinced, then great! If you're not convinced, then that's okay. It's really up to you. So which one is it going to be?

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**Grade 4**

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