

Vail School District  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Practice Prompt#1  
Informational

**DIRECTIONS:**

Read the writing prompt and excerpts below. Then use scratch paper for your prewriting/planning and your draft.

Weather can impact humans in both good and bad ways. Read the two articles below on extreme weather. Write an informational essay to your community explaining how weather can be harmful to people.

Your writing should:

- . Include a clear beginning, middle, and end
- . Include a beginning that grabs the reader's attention
- . Include important details and evidence from the articles
- . Use supporting words and phrases

Remember to edit for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

## **Dangers of Drought**

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Did you know that recent years have been some of the hottest on record for the continental United States? Almost 75 percent of the lower 48 states have dealt with drier than normal conditions. Higher temperatures and reduced rainfall have combined to create drought conditions.

But what is a drought? It is simply a long period of very dry weather. The period of time could last for months or even years. During a drought, there is less than normal precipitation, or moisture. Precipitation includes rain, snow, and sleet.

There are many signs of drought in the surrounding environment. The water level in ponds, lakes, and rivers gets lower. Water evaporates from these bodies of water. During a drought, there is not enough moisture to replenish this water. Another sign of drought is dry, cracked soil and brown, dried out plants. All living things need water to survive. During a drought, the soil dries out. When plants can't get the water they need to grow, they wilt and die. Plants and trees in home gardens, on farms, and in every other place can be affected by drought.

Many scientists think that there is a connection between the increase in the number of areas affected by drought and climate change. Some studies seem to indicate that greenhouse gas emissions are slowly warming the planet. When we burn fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, this creates more greenhouse gases. These gases become part of Earth's atmosphere where they trap some of the heat from the planet's surface. Some of this heat is redirected back toward Earth where it warms the surface.

As Earth's climate changes, many parts of the world could have a greater risk of drought. This leads to other environmental hazards, including wildfire, flash floods, and landslides. Dry land leads to dry vegetation. Dry grass, plants, and trees can more easily catch fire. When heavy rain falls on extremely dry land, there is a greater chance of flooding and landslides because the water stays on the surface rather than soaking into the soil.

One result of drought is crop loss. A natural disaster has been declared in parts of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas. Farmers in these places do not have enough water to grow crops such as wheat and corn. When farmers can't produce enough crops, there is a shortage of food and food prices increase.

Climate change is an incredibly slow process. It occurs over decades and even centuries. There are things people can do to reduce the risk of drought. We must conserve water and use it more efficiently. Perhaps we can develop crops that require less water. We must also take steps to reduce greenhouse gases.

## **Water, Water, Everywhere**

[www.learninga-z.com](http://www.learninga-z.com)

Water is essential to life on Earth. About 70 percent of the planet's surface is covered by water. But when there is too much water flowing across the land, it can be dangerous. Floods can consume communities and cause serious damage.

Flooding occurs when there are heavy rains, such as during thunderstorms or from hurricanes. Flooding also happens when a river overflows or when a dam or levee breaks. During a flood, water covers an area of land that is normally dry. Flooding can happen in any part of the United States. In fact, flooding can involve as little as a few inches of water or enough water to cover a house.

Most floods develop over hours or even days, but some floods occur with little warning. These are called flash floods. They can be very dangerous. Flash floods are a wall of roaring water that brings rocks, mud, and other debris along with it.

Water can be a very powerful and destructive force. During a flood, human-made structures are often not strong enough to resist the force of the water. Homes, bridges, trees, and cars can be torn loose and swept away by the water.

People who live in low-lying areas, near waterways, or close to a levee or dam are most at risk during a flood. People who live in areas affected by drought are also at risk. During a drought, there is little rainfall. The soil turns dry and hard. When such an area is hit by heavy rainfall, the rush of water cannot penetrate the dry soil. Instead, much of the water stays on the surface and floods the surrounding area.

Human activity also plays a part in flooding. As more buildings are constructed, more open land is used. This open land acts as a sponge, absorbing rain as it falls. In cities, the water stays on the surface, flowing quickly across the concrete. Most cities include storm sewers. These are designed to catch and control water, but sometimes there is simply too much water and flooding occurs.

What can you do before a flood occurs? Identify any flood hazards where you live. During a flood, find a way to safely move to higher ground. If you have to leave your home, do not walk through moving water. People can be knocked down by as little as six inches of water.

Floods are a common hazard in the United States, but they are mostly natural events. Anywhere it rains is at risk of flooding. The best way to stay safe is to be familiar with your surroundings. Know what to do and where to go if a flood occurs.





