

# Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies & Science

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## Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing

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## Samples of Student Writing

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Following are writing samples that have been annotated to illustrate the criteria required to meet the standards for particular types of writing—argument, informational/explanatory text, and narrative—in a given grade. Each of the samples exhibits the level of quality required to meet the Writing standards for that grade; some samples, as noted in their descriptions, exceed the standards’ requirements in one or more ways.

The range of accomplishment within each grade reflects differences in individual development as well as in the conditions under which the student writers were expected to work. Some of the samples were written in class or for homework; others were written for on-demand assessments; still others were the result of extended projects that involved research. Where possible, each sample includes information about the circumstances under which it was produced. The samples come from students in kindergarten through grade 8 and from high school students in grades 9, 10, and 12. The students attended school in a number of states and districts across the country.

At the lower grades, the samples include “opinion” writing, an elementary type of argument in which students give reasons for their opinions and preferences. Because reasons are required, such writing helps prepare students for drafting the arguments they will be expected to create beginning in grade 6.

### Acknowledgment

The *Standards* work group would like to express its appreciation to colleagues in Massachusetts, California, and Washington state as well as to those at ACT, Inc., and the *Concord Review* who helped find and obtain permission for several of the samples included in the set. The group also would like to express its appreciation to the New Standards Project and to the International Reading Association, which allowed the use of several samples from their publications.

## Table of Contents

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<b>Student Sample: K, Narrative</b>	
“I Went to Disnand” .....	6
<b>Student Sample: K, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“Frag (Frogs)” .....	7
<b>Student Sample: K, Argument (Opinion)</b>	
“My fabit Book is do you Want to be my friend” .....	8
<b>Student Sample: Grade 1, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“My Big Book About Spain” .....	9
<b>Student Sample: Grade 1, Narrative</b>	
“I bot a little coton ball” .....	10
<b>Student Sample: Grade 2, Argument (Opinion)</b>	
“Owl Moon” .....	11
<b>Student Sample: Grade 2, Narrative</b>	
“My first tooth is gone” .....	12
<b>Student Sample: Grade 3, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“Horses” .....	13
<b>Student Sample: Grade 3, Narrative</b>	
“When my Puppys Ranaway” .....	16
<b>Student Sample: Grade 4, Narrative</b>	
“Glowing Shoes” .....	18
<b>Student Sample: Grade 4, Argument (Opinion)</b>	
“Zoo Field Trip” .....	20
<b>Student Sample: Grade 5, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“Author Response: Roald Dahl” .....	22
<b>Student Sample: Grade 5, Narrative</b>	
“Getting Shot and Living Through It” .....	24
<b>Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument</b>	
“Dear Mr. Sandler” .....	26
<b>Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument</b>	
“A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus” .....	28
<b>Student Sample: Grade 7, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“A Geographical Report” .....	30

<b>Student Sample: Grade 7, Argument</b>	
“Video Cameras in Classrooms” .....	36
<b>Student Sample: Grade 8, Narrative</b>	
“Miss Sadie” .....	38
<b>Student Sample: Grade 8, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“Football” .....	41
<b>Student Sample: Grade 8, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“The Old Man and the Sea” .....	43
<b>Student Sample: Grade 10, Argument</b>	
“_____ School Bond Levy” .....	45
<b>Student Sample: Grade 10, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“Animal Farm” .....	48
<b>Student Sample: Grade 12, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“In the Wake of the Spanish Lady” .....	51
<b>Student Sample: Grade 12, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“Fact vs. Fiction and All the Grey Space in Between” .....	60
<b>Student Sample: Grade 12, Informational/Explanatory</b>	
“The Making of a Human Voice and How to Use It” .....	65
<b>Student Sample: Grade 12, Argument</b>	
Untitled essay on dress codes .....	69

## Permissions

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The following student writing samples have been reprinted for the Common Core State Standards Initiative with the express permission of the following organizations and individuals.

The National Center on Education and the Economy, on behalf of New Standards:

“I Went to Disnand”; “Fraggs (Frogs)”; “My fabit book is do you Want to be my friend”; “My Big Book About Spain”; “I bot a little coton ball”; “Owl Moon”; “My first tooth is gone”; “Horses”; “Whey my Puppys Ranaway”; “Zoo Field Trip”; “Author Response: Roald Dahl”; “Getting Shot and Living Through It”; “A Geographical Report”; “The Old Man and the Sea”; “\_\_\_\_\_ School Bond Levy”

Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:

“Glowing Shoes”; “Video Cameras in Classrooms”

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

“Dear Mr. Sandler”; “A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus”; “Animal Farm”

California Department of Education:

“Miss Sadie”; “Football”

The *Concord Review*:

“In the Wake of the Spanish Lady: American Economic Resilience in the Aftermath of the Influenza Epidemic of 1918”

ACT, Inc.:

Untitled essay on dress codes

Permission to reprint each of the following samples was granted by its author:

“Fact vs. Fiction and All the Grey Space in Between”; “The Making of a Human Voice and How to Use It”

## Student Sample: K, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### I Went to Disnand

I went to disnand (Disneyland) we wen (went) frovw (from) the deser (desert). I had a fun on vacshne (vacation). at Disnand (Disneyland). I see lot of rids (rides). I went on the mader hon (Matterhorn). I went on fer wel (Ferris wheel). I went on a meere go rowrg (merry-go-round). I went on a pol (?). I went my house.

---

#### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes a situation by naming a place.
  - *disnand* (Disneyland)
- recounts several loosely linked actions, controlling for chronological order.
  - *I had a fun on vacshne* (vacation). . . . *I see lot* (lots) *of rids* (rides). *I went on the mader hon* (Matterhorn). . . . *I went my house*.
- provides a reaction to what happened.
  - *I had a fun on vacshne* (vacation).
- provides a sense of closure.
  - *I went my house*.
- demonstrates a command of some of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates consistent control of beginning-of-sentence capitalization and end-of-sentence punctuation. The writer also uses capital letters appropriately in the title of the piece.

## Student Sample: K, Informational/Explanatory

This informational report is a process piece that was produced in class.

### Frogs (Frogs)

To day befor (before) We had riyda (writing) groos (groups) Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ red (read) us a storry (story) a baowt (about) frogs. We had to riet (write) a baowt (about) frags (frogs). We haf (have) a tadpol (tadpole) in the sciens (science) sentr (center). It has 2 bac (back) ligs (legs) and wen (when) it has 2 frunt (front) ligs (legs) its tal (tail) disupirs (disappears) and it can not eyt (eat) wen (when) its maot (mouth) is chajn (changing). Then the scknn (skin) gets to (too) little and the frags pol (pull) off thrr (their) scknn (skin) an thaa (they) eyt (eat) it. Saum (Some) of the frogs bloo (blow) baubools (bubbles). Frogs lad (laid) eggs that look like jele (jelly) and the fish eyt (eat) some but some hach (hatch) to tadpoos (tadpoles). It gros (grows) bigr (bigger) and bigr (bigger) and bigr (bigger).

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes the topic in a title and goes beyond the title to create a context for writing about frogs.
  - *To day befor (before) We had riyda (writing) groos (groups) Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ red (read) us a storry (story) a baowt (about) frogs.*
- supplies facts and information relevant to the topic.
  - *It has 2 bac (back) ligs (legs) and wen (when) it has 2 frunt (front) ligs (legs) its tal (tail) disupirs (disappears) . . . Then the scknn (skin) gets to (too) little and the frags pol (pull) off thrr (their) scknn (skin) . . .*
- uses additive (adversative and temporal) linking words.
  - *. . . and wen (when) . . . Then . . . but . . .*
- provides examples relevant to the topic.
  - *Frogs lad (laid) eggs that look like jele (jelly) . . .*
- offers a sense of closure.
  - *It gros (grows) bigr (bigger) and bigr and bigr.*

For a kindergartener, the writer demonstrates remarkable control of the conventions of standard written English. As this was a process piece, it is reasonable to assume that the writer received feedback to correct possible errors with capital letters and periods.

## Student Sample: K, Argument (Opinion)

This opinion piece about a work of literature was produced in class.

### **My fabit Book is do you Want to be my friend**

the mas (mouse) as (asked) the hos (horse) if you will be my friend the hos (horse) sayd (said) No. the mas (mouse) Fid (found) a FRIEND the mos (mouse) as (asked) the lutl (little) mas (mouse) if you will be my friend the latr (other) mas (mouse) Sayd (said) Yes they dig a hol (hole) in the gan (ground) my fait (favorite) pot (part) is the hos (horse)

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#### **Annotation**

The writer of this piece

- introduces the topic by naming the title of the book.
  - *My fabit (favorite) Book is do you Want to be my friend*
- expresses preferences relevant to the topic (a favorite book and a favorite part of the book).
  - *. . . my fait (favorite) pot (part) is the hos (horse)*

Although the writer does not specify the reasons for his preferences, this piece is still an adequate representation of opinion writing at the kindergarten level.

## Student Sample: Grade 1, Informational/Explanatory

This informational report was produced in class.

### My Big Book About Spain

Spain is in Europe. Spain is located in the south western tip of Europe. Europe is a far away place from here. Spain has alot of fiestas. In some of the fiestas they make masks and make special food too. Spian has bull fights and I would want to see one. I think Spian looks like a upside down hat. In some of the fiestas the people are loud. Some of the fiestas are even beautiful and colorful. Spain has alot of different people. In the bull fights they make the bulls tired and make them fall out. Spain is very colorful even if you go there you will see I'm right. Spain has 5 neighbors. Spain's neighbors are France, Andorra, Algeria, Portugal and Morocco. One day when I am a researcher I am going to go to Spain and write about it!

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#### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- provides a title to establish the topic.
  - *My Big Book About Spain*
- supplies facts and information about the topic.
  - *Spain is located in the south western tip of Europe.*
  - *Spain has alot of fiestas.*
  - *Spian . . . has bull fights . . .*
  - *Spain's neighbors are France, Andorra, Algeria, Portugal and Morocco.*
- provides a conclusion.
  - *One day when I am a researcher I am going to go to Spain and write about it!*

Although this piece does not illustrate the successful grouping of like facts (and hence no linking words), it otherwise is an adequate representation of grade 1 report writing. With the removal of two sentences (*I think Spain looks like a upside down hat* and *Spain has alot of different people*), the paper's organization would be improved. This piece illustrates the writer's awareness of beginning-of-sentence capitalization and end-of-sentence punctuation as well as the use of capital letters in proper nouns.

## Student Sample: Grade 1, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### I bot a little coton ball

I went to biye (buy) a hamster I was so excited I woted (wanted) to own (run) all the waye (way) these (there) but I didn't want to get run over.

I got a nerves (nervous) hamster but I didn't know she was going to be so nerves (nervous) So we bot (bought) her that afternoon she skwet (squeaked) so much she suwed (sounded) like a skewing (squeaking) bed. And at nite (night) when my Dad came home he sedi (said) wus (what's) that noese (noise) I sed it is nibllet (Nibblet) I named (named) my hamster nibllet becaus (because) she nibls (nibbles) to (too) much becaus she liks (likes) that She is a difent (different) hamster becaus (because) Flufey (Fluffy) was there befor (before) that hamster but he did (died) becaus my bother (brother) sed (said) thot (that) hamster onley (only) live for tow (two) yers (years) but I did tek (take) her out of the box.

After I took her out she was so soft and cuddley (cuddly) she felt like a littl (little) coten (cotton) ball.

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes the situation with the opening sentence.
  - *I went to biye (buy) a hamster . . .*
- recounts appropriately sequenced events. (Though the writer does not always signal the chronology of events with transition words, the piece holds together logically.)
  - *I got a nerves (nervous) hamster . . . And at nite (night) when my Dad came home . . . After I took her out . . .*
- uses detail to describe actions and incidents.
  - *I was so excited I woted (wanted) to own (run) all the waye (way) these (there) . . .*
  - *. . . she skwet (squeaked) so much she suwed (sounded) like a skewing (squeaking) bed.*
- includes dialogue and linking words.
  - *And at nite (night) when my Dad came home he sedi (said) wus (what's) that noese (noise) . . .*
  - *. . . so . . . and . . . After . . .*
- provides a concluding sentence that signals closure and echoes the title.
  - *After I took her out she was so soft and cuddley (cuddly) she felt like a littl (little) coten (cotton) ball.*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - There is some evidence in this piece that the writer understands various uses of capital letters: frequently sentences begin with a capital letter, and the pronoun *I* is consistently capitalized. With the exception of the pronoun *I* in the title, however, there are no capital letters there. Periods end some sentences but not all.

## Student Sample: Grade 2, Argument (Opinion)

This opinion piece about a work of literature was produced in class.

### Owl Moon

When you go owling you don't need words, or worm (warm) or any thing but hope. This is (from) the book Owl Moon. This book is written by Jane Yolen. I like that phrase Because The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wonted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go.

When other kids are happy that makes me happy. I like it Because it makes me feel good Because you don't haf't (have) to have words to go owling but you haf't to have hope to see an owl.

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces the central message of the book she is writing about with a quotation from the book.
  - *When you go owling you don't need words, or worm (warm) or any thing but hope. This is (from) the book Owl Moon.*
- states an opinion relative to the book and provides reasons to support it.
  - *I like that phrase Because The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wonted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go. When other kids are happy that makes me happy.*
- uses words to link ideas.
  - *I like it Because you don't haf't (have) to have words to go owling but you haf't to have hope to see an owl.*
- includes a concluding sentence.
  - *I like it Because you don't haf't (have) to have words to go owling but you haf't to have hope to see an owl.*
- demonstrates a command of some of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates the writer's understanding that capital letters are used in a title, that the pronoun *I* should be capitalized, and that sentences begin with a capital letter. The title of the book is underlined and most words are spelled correctly. The use of the comma and the apostrophe is not consistent, but all sentences end with periods.

## Student Sample: Grade 2, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### **My first tooth is gone**

I recall one winter night. I was four. My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend. It was my sister and I had run right into each other. Boy! did we cry. But not only did I cry, my tooth was bleeding. Then it felt funny. Then plop! There it was lying in my hand. So that night I put it under my pillow and in the morning I found something. It was not my tooth it was two dollars. So I ran down the hall, like I wasn't supposed to, and showed my mom and dad. They were suprised because when they lost teeth the only thing they got is 50¢.

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#### **Annotation**

The writer of this piece

- establishes a situation in time and place appropriate for what is to come.
  - *I recall one winter night. I was four. My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend.*
- develops sequenced actions using linking words to signal chronological ordering.
  - *My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend. . . . But not only did I cry . . . Then it felt funny. Then plop! There it was lying in my hand.*
- provides a reaction to what happened.
  - *Boy! did we cry.*
  - *Then it felt funny.*
- includes some detail.
  - *So I ran down the hall, like I wasn't supposed to, and showed my mom and dad.*
- provides a sense of closure.
  - *They were suprised because when they lost teeth the only thing they got is 50¢.*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates the writer's consistent use of beginning-of-sentence capitalization and end-of-sentence punctuation (both periods and exclamation points). The pronoun *I* is also capitalized consistently, and almost all the words are spelled correctly. The writer sets off a parenthetical phrase with commas and uses an apostrophe correctly.

## Student Sample: Grade 3, Informational/Explanatory

This informational report is a process piece that was produced in class.

### **Horses**

By \_\_\_\_\_

#### Why I Chose This Animal

I chose horses because I like to ride them. I also like to pet them. At the camp I go to everybody gets to have horses back riding lessons. Horses are so beautiful and fun to ride.

#### Horse Families

A mother or female horse is called a mare. A father or male horse is called a stallion. A foal is a baby horse.

#### Markings

A star is a little white diamond on the forelock. The forelock is a horse's forehead. A race is a white line down the middle of the horse's face. A blaze is kind of like a race but wider. If the white line on its face spreads out to its eyes it is called a white face. A small amount of white on its muzzle is called a snip. A muzzle is a horse's mouth.

#### Breeds and Color Coats

Icelandic and Shetland ponies are very small when they are full grown. Chestnuts are red-brown and Roans have white hairs on their brown coat. Cream is a rare color. Rare means you don't see the color cream very much. Brown horses are brown all over. Blacks are black all over. Piebalds have black and white spots. Skewbalds are brown and white. Duns are a sandy brown with black manes and tails. Palominos have a yellowish coat and a shiny mane and tail. Grays have black and white hairs that make the color gray. Bays are brown with black manes, tails, and legs. Whites are white all over.

#### Breeds I Like

I like thoroughbreds because they are such a pretty brown. I like Arabians because their different coats are very beautiful and they're one of the oldest horses. I like Morgans because they have a beautiful reddish-brown coat. I like Lipizzaners because their white coats are so very pretty. I like Icelandic and Shetland ponies because they are so very cute, pretty and small.

#### Horses from Different Countries

Hokaidos are from Japan, Sumbas are from Indonesia, and Pintos are from America.

#### Horse Movement

A horse can walk, trot, canter, and gallop. A trot is kind of like a skip. A canter is like a fast skip. And a gallop is like running.

#### Friendly Horses

Horses can be great friends. Some horses can be dangerous. Most horses are very lovable.

#### Foals

Baby horses are called foals. When a foal is ready to be born, the mare (the mother horse) lies down. As soon as the foal is born it struggles to break out of the membrane sack. When the foal breaks out of the sack it breathes on its own. In about less than a minute the foal tries to get up and walk on its own. Foals are born with their hooves first and head last. They drink their mother's milk until they're nine to ten months old.

#### How Long a Horse Lives

They live about 12 to 14 years.

### Horse Habitat

You usually find horses in a barn. Some horses are wild. You can find horses on ranches too.

### What Horses Eat

Horses eat hay, grass, barley and oats. The best food for a tired horse is oatmeal. Don't give a young horse too much oatmeal, it makes them too hyper. Horses love carrots, apples, molasses and sugar cubes. A block of salt gives the horse important minerals and makes them thirsty so they will drink enough water.

### The Most Dangerous Horse

The most dangerous horse is the Percheron. Some people cannot pronounce that so they call them war horses. It is only dangerous if it is a wild horse. If it is wild it can kill you in 7 to 8 minutes. If it is trained it is nice like any other horse.

### The Fastest Horse

The fastest horse is the wild stallion. If you thought, like I did that the Wild stallion was really dangerous you were wrong. A wild stallion can kill you but it could take up to one hour.

### The First Horses

The first horses were no bigger than a fox and looked like a donkey. They had short tails and small ears. These horses lived millions of years ago, but now they are extinct. The only way we knew there were horses like that was because the first humans (our ancestors) painted these horses on ancient cave walls. These horses lived in North America and over the years they changed into the horses we know now.

### Horse Survival

Most horses live on farms or ranches, but some horses are wild. Wild horses can survive hard weather and they graze on hills, marshes and grasslands. These days wild horses are very rare. People work to keep these wild horses free.

### My Description of a Horse

A horse is a mammal because it has fur, drinks milk and their babies are born alive. They have four legs and hooves. They have beautiful long manes and tails.

I like horses and I know a lot about them. I like to ride them and they're so beautiful! Their coats are beautiful, I wish I had a horse of my own!

---

## **Annotation**

The writer of this piece

- produces an introduction that explains why she chose horses as her topic and that provides a general statement about horses.
  - *I chose horses because I like to ride them. . . . Horses are so beautiful and fun to ride.*
- uses headers as an organizing structure, clustering related information together logically.
  - *Horse Families; Markings; Breeds and Color Coats; Horses from Different Countries*
- provides adequate, relevant, and specific facts.
  - *Hocaidos are from Japan, Sumbas are from Indonesia, and Pintos are from America.*
  - *A horse can walk, trot, canter, and gallop.*

- *They [horses] live about 12 to 14 years.*
- *The most dangerous horse is the Percheron.*
- uses linking words appropriately to connect ideas.
  - *I like Morgans because they have a beautiful reddish-brown coat.*
  - *When a foal is ready to be born, the mare (the mother horse) lies down.*
  - *The first horses were no bigger than a fox and looked like a donkey.*
  - *Most horses live on farms or ranches, but some horses are wild.*
- includes a concluding section.
  - *I like horses and I know a lot about them. I like to ride them and they're so beautiful! Their coats are beautiful, I wish I had a horse of my own!*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are some errors, such as the following.
  - *When the foal breaks out of the sack it breathes on it's own. In about less than a minute the foal tries to get up and walk on it's own.*
  - *Don't give a young horse too much oatmeal, it makes them too hyper.*

## Student Sample: Grade 3, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### When my Puppys Ranaway

ONE night when the air was warm, my puppys were sleeping on the back porch. Me and my sisters were getting ready for bed.

When I was in bed, I read a chapter from my Nancy Drew book. When I finished the chapter I turned out my lamp. I wuldn't go to sleep.

I went into the living room. I saw my mom geting ready to walk out the door. I asked "where are you going"? "Just for a drive" she replied. She had a worried exspression on her face.

I knew somthing was wrong.

I thought maybe if I went outside and played with my puppys. I would forget about moms worried exspression and go to sleep.

When I opened The back door I expected my puppys Maggie and Tucker to jump up on me. They didn't come at all. I called, they still didn't come.

Now I knew somthing was wrong.

I went and woke up my dad, he said moms got it under control I thought mom had taken them to the vet because something was really wrong. Dad wouldn't tell me anything else. I went to my room and cried. Thats all I rembered about that night because I fell asleep.

The next day I still worried.

I worried all through school.

When I got home from me and my mom made a snack for sisters.

I asked my mom, "so were are the puppys"? Her eyes started to fill with tears as she answered my question with 3 words, "I don't know," she burst into tears. So did I. She hugged me. "If we never find them I am sure they will have a good home.

I went outside and sat in moms rocking chair. I cried some more.

Mom came out I got up. She sat down and motioned me by waving her hand to come and sit on her lap. I went over and cried on her shoulder.

After dinner that night we went looking for them, we couldn't find them at all.

My dad after work each day went to the pound to see if they had picked them up. They didn't at all.

I've got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppys very soon.

---

## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes the story’s time and location and hints at the focus of the events to follow.
  - *ONE night when the air was warm, my puppys were sleeping on the back porch. . . . I turned out my lamp. I wuldn’t go to sleep. . . . I saw my mom geting ready to walk out the door. . . . She had a worried expression on her face. I knew somthing was wrong.*
- recounts a sequence of events that unfolds naturally using temporal words, phrases, and clauses and that provides pacing.
  - *When I opened The back door I expected my puppys Maggie and Tucker to jump up on me. They didn’t come at all. I called, they still didn’t come.*
- tells what the narrator thought or felt.
  - *I knew somthing was wrong.*
  - *The next day I still worried.*
  - *I worried all through school.*
  - *I’ve got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppys very soon.*
- develops the character (narrator) through a description of external behavior.
  - *I went to my room and cried.*
  - *I went outside and sat in moms rocking chair. I cried some more.*
- provides descriptive details.
  - *Her eyes started to fill with tears as she answered my question with 3 words, “I don’t know,” she burst into tears. So did I. She hugged me.*
- employs dialogue effectively.
  - *I asked “where are you going?” “Just for a drive” she replied. She had a worried expression on her face.*
- provides a satisfying conclusion.
  - *I’ve got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppys very soon.*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are many minor errors, such as the following.
  - *When my Puppys Ranaway*
  - *I went and woke up my dad, he said moms got it under control I thought mom had taken them to the vet because somthing was really wrong.*

## Student Sample: Grade 4, Narrative

This narrative was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were asked to respond to the following prompt: “One morning you wake up and find a strange pair of shoes next to your bed. The shoes are glowing. In several paragraphs, *write a story* telling what happens.”

### Glowing Shoes

One quiet, Tuesday morning, I woke up to a pair of bright, dazzling shoes, lying right in front of my bedroom door. The shoes were a nice shade of violet and smelled like catnip. I found that out because my cats, Tigger and Max, were rubbing on my legs, which tickled.

When I started out the door, I noticed that Tigger and Max were following me to school. Other cats joined in as well. They didn’t even stop when we reached Main Street!

“Don’t you guys have somewhere to be?” I quizzed the cats.

“Meeeeeeooooow!” the crowd of cats replied.

As I walked on, I observed many more cats joining the stalking crowd. I moved more swiftly. The crowd of cats’ walk turned into a prance. I sped up. I felt like a rollercoaster zooming past the crowded line that was waiting for their turn as I darted down the sidewalk with dashing cats on my tail.

When I reached the school building . . . SLAM! WHACK! “Meeyow!” The door closed and every single cat flew and hit the door.

Whew! Glad that’s over! I thought.

I walked upstairs and took my seat in the classroom.

“Mrs. Miller! Something smells like catnip! Could you open the windows so the smell will go away? Pleeeeease?” Zane whined.

“Oh, sure! We could all use some fresh air right now during class!” Mrs. Miller thoughtfully responded.

“Nooooooo!” I screamed.

When the teacher opened the windows, the cats pounced into the building.

“It’s a cat attack!” Meisha screamed

Everyone scrambled on top of their desks. Well, everyone except Cade, who was absolutely obsessed with cats.

“Awww! Look at all the fuzzy kitties! They’re sooo cute! Mrs. Miller, can I pet them?” Cade asked, adorably.

“Why not! Pet whichever one you want!” she answered.

“Thanks! Okay, kitties, which one of you wants to be petted by Cade Dahlin?” he asked the cats. None of them answered. They were all staring at me.

“Uh, hi?” I stammered.

Rrrriiiiiing! The recess bell rang. Everyone, including Mrs. Miller, darted out the door.

Out at recess, Lissa and I played on the swings.

“Hey! Look over there!” Lissa shouted. Formed as an ocean wave, the cats ran toward me.

Luckily, Zane’s cat, Buddy, was prancing along with the aroma of catnip surrounding his fur. He ran up to me and rubbed on my legs. The shoes fell off. Why didn’t I think of this before? I notioned.

“Hey Cade! Catch!”

Cade grabbed the shoes and slipped them on.

The cats changed directions and headed for Cade.

“I’m in heaven!” he shrieked.

---

## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- produces an introduction that orients readers and draws them in by establishing a situation on which the story line is developed.
  - *One quiet, Tuesday morning, I woke up to a pair of bright, dazzling shoes, lying right in front of my bedroom door. The shoes were a nice shade of violet and smelled like catnip. I found that out because my cats, Tigger and Max, were rubbing on my legs, which tickled.*
- creates an organizing structure in which events are logically and causally sequenced.
  - The teacher opens the window; cats come into the classroom; at recess the cats surge toward the narrator; her shoes fall off; another student (one who loves cats) picks up the narrator’s shoes; the cats move toward him; he is delighted.
  - . . . *Tigger and Max were following me to school. Other cats joined in as well. . . . When I reached the school building . . . SLAM! WHACK! “Meeyow!” The door closed and every single cat flew and hit the door.*
- creates a story with an initiating event (the narrator finding the shoes), complicating action (the cats following the narrator), climax (the narrator’s shoes coming off), and resolution (the cats transferring their affections to the delighted student who now has the shoes).
- uses a variety of temporal words, phrases, and clauses to signal sequence.
  - *When I started out the door . . . As I walked on . . . When I reached the school building . . .*
- tells what the narrator thought or felt (internal responses of a character).
  - *I felt like a rollercoaster zooming past the crowded line that was waiting for their turn . . .*
  - *Whew! Glad that’s over! I thought.*
- uses specific details to develop plot.
  - The sequence of events unfolds naturally from the point when the narrator finds the dazzling shoes smelling of catnip to the point when the narrator gives Cade the shoes to be free from all the cats.
- provides closure through a logical outcome of the event sequence.
  - The narrator describes Cade earlier in the piece as a student obsessed with cats. The story concludes logically because such a character would likely be pleased with the effects of wearing catnip-scented shoes.
- demonstrates an exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates an almost perfect control of conventions. There is even a sentence fragment used appropriately: *Well, everyone except Cade, who was absolutely obsessed with cats.* It should be noted, however, that the piece was likely edited for publication.

## Student Sample: Grade 4, Argument (Opinion)

This argument is a process piece that was produced in class.

### Zoo Field Trip

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience. In addition, we will provide a study guide to \_\_\_\_\_ to identify the animals and provide information about conservation of endangered wildlife.

If we went of a field trip, we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money. These skills will be very useful again and again. We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates. This will provide us with a plan that covers the entire project from start to finish. The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.

The first thing to do is research, research, research! Next, we will choose a fund raiser (with your approval, of course). This will earn money for the field trip. The parents will hopefully chip in their time and money, if we don't get enough. We will prepare a plan schedule. This will provide the dates that team members will need to accomplish the steps toward our goal. My competent adult model is the Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World. It shows us step by step how to plan a trip and what to see.

Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_? How does this help \_\_\_\_\_ and the students? Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation. This project will be evaluated by its successful planning and its ability to involve our class in wildlife conservation. The trip will be evaluated by the student participation on the trip and a plan of conservation that identifies what we can all do to protect and respect wildlife so they will still be around when we have children.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces an opinion about a concrete issue.
  - *We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience.*

- supports the opinion with relevant reasons.
  - . . . we will provide a study guide to \_\_\_\_\_ to identify the animals and provide information about conservation of endangered wildlife. . . . we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money. . . . We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates. . . . The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.
- links the ideas with words, phrases, and clauses.
  - *The first thing to do . . . Next . . . Now, you are asking . . . Besides the fact . . .*
- adopts a relatively formal style.
  - The entire style of this document is formal, as appropriate for students writing to secure permission from an adult audience.
- provides a concluding section.
  - The final paragraph details possible objections to the field trip and argues against each one:
 

*Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_? . . .*

*Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation.*
- demonstrates an exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece has been edited by student response groups as well as by adults, so it is nearly flawless in terms of observing the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 5, Informational/Explanatory

The informational writing that follows was produced in class.

### Author Response: Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl is a very interesting author to me. That's because he knows what a kid wants to hear. He has a "kid's mind". He is the only author that I know that makes up interesting words like Inkland, fizz wizard, and gobblefunking. All his stories are the same type. I don't mean the same story written again and again. What I mean is that they all have imagination, made up words, and disgusting thoughts. Some of his stories that have those things are Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Matilda, The Witches and Danny the Champion of the World. The Witches is the book that I am reading right now, and it is like The BFG, another book that is by Roald Dahl. They are alike because in The BFG, Sophie and the BFG (the big friendly giant), are trying to stop other giants from eating human beings. The Witches has the same problem. The Boy, (he has no name), is trying to stop the witches from turning children into small mice, and then killing the mice by stepping on them. Both stories have to stop evil people from doing something horrible. Roald Dahl uses a lot of similes. Some similes that he used that I like are: Up he shot again like a bullet in the barrel of a gun. And my favorite is: They were like a chorus of dentists' drills all grinding away together. In all of Roald Dahl's books, I have noticed that the plot or the main problem of the story is either someone killing someone else, or a kid having a bad life. But it is always about something terrible. All the characters that Roald Dahl ever made were probably fake characters. A few things that the main characters have in common are that they all are poor. None of them are rich. Another thing that they all have in common is that they either have to save the world, someone else, or themselves.

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces the topic and provides a general observation about it to set a context for readers.
  - *Roald Dahl is a very interesting author to me. That's because he knows what a kid wants to hear.*
- uses adequate facts, concrete details, and vivid language from the books to convey ideas and insights.
  - *He is the only author that I know that makes up interesting words like Inkland, fizz wizard, and gobblefunking.*
  - *Roald Dahl uses a lot of similes. Some similes that he used that I like are: Up he shot again like a bullet in the barrel of a gun. And my favorite is: They were like a chorus of dentists' drills all grinding away together.*
  - *In all of Roald Dahl's books, I have noticed that the plot or the main problem of the story is either someone killing someone else, or a kid having a bad life.*
- employs a formal, objective style.
  - *. . . I have noticed . . .*
  - *A few things that the main characters have in common . . .*
- includes only appropriate information.
  - The writer stays focused on the characteristics shared by the Roald Dahl books.
- uses appropriate links to join ideas.
  - *The Witches is the book that I am reading right now, and it is like The BFG, another book that is by Roald Dahl. They are alike because . . .*

- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there is some awkward wording, such as the following example.
  - *Both stories have to stop evil people from doing something horrible.*

DRAFT

## Student Sample: Grade 5, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece produced in class.

### Getting Shot and Living Through It

We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room. We were preparing for the shots of our lives. Getting shots for malaria and more.

There were many benches all covered in the night. It was hard to see the color the marky dark but it seemed to be some sort of faded brown. The room was big, no, huge which gave it all the more reason to be terror bringing. Who knew what would be lurking in the corner! Rat, monster, anything! There were also doors. Three doors, which were also brown and also faded. One was the way in. Not the way out unfortunately. Another was the way to the other evil places. With the evil hallway and the evil office. The last door was the most evil, The Shot Room.

The rest of the room was filled with families. Including my family of five. My five year old self, my three year old bother, and my one year old sister. Then there was my mom and dad. Some of the other children were screeching or crying or not knowing what would happen to them. So they would just be playing. I was in the middle of both. I was playing with fear, playing, knowing what would happen, knowing that the worst moment of my life was coming over closer. It was like knowing you would be put to sleep, sent to the dementors, waiting to take a ride in the Electric Chair.

I had had shots before. They were not your best friend. After a long while a nurse said, "Alyssa, Trevor, and Taryn, your turn." It was our turn. I got half dragged and I half walked. The door creaked open. It was the room of no return. The door slammed shut. There was not way out. Grown-ups guarding every escape. Seeing there was no way out we gave up and went for it.

Trevor went first. Before the shot was even touching him he was already howling. When it did hit him he was yelling loud enough to deafen you. He was done. It was my turn. (He was still crying so a nurse tried to calm him down).

I was paralyzed with fear, I was death-defyed, I was scared. My mom and dad told me to "just be brave." "Just be brave?!" How could I "just be brave?!" But I had not time to think. It was coming. Just waiting to pounce, just waiting to penetrate my skin! I say why Trevor had screamed so loud. I couldn't hear anything, I could just see it coming, closer, closer!

It touched, entered my flesh, and fulfilled it's job. I started with a whimper the, BOOM! full blast cry.

When Taryn had her turn she didn't even notice! Ugh! She was supposed to cry the most! Worse than Trevor!

But then I remembered it was over. We opened the door and the sparking sun blinded our eyes. It was over. All over. Finally.

---

#### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- orients readers and creates interest by establishing the situation and setting the scene.
  - *We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room. We were preparing for the shots of our lives.*

- creates an organizing structure in which events are logically sequenced.
  - *Trevor went first. . . . It was my turn. . . . When Taryn had her turn . . .*
- uses detail to develop setting, plot, and character.
  - *We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room. We were preparing for the shots of our lives.*
  - *There were also doors. Three doors, which were also brown and also faded. One was the way in. Not the way out unfortunately.*
  - *The rest of the room was filled with families. Including my family of five. My five year old self, my three year old bother, and my one year old sister.*
- employs a range of appropriate techniques, such as humor, pacing, and reporting characters' thoughts.
  - *Humor through exaggeration: Before the shot was even touching him he was already howling. When it did hit him he was yelling loud enough to deafen you.*
  - *Pacing: It touched, entered my flesh, and fulfilled it's job. I started with a whimper the, BOOM! full blast cry.*
  - *Reporting a character's thoughts: I was paralyzed with fear, I was death-defyed, I was scared.*
- provides closure and a realistic outcome, which is emphasized by the use of sentence fragments.
  - *We opened the door and the sparking sun blinded our eyes. It was over. All over. Finally.*
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are some minor errors. There is some awkward and incorrect wording but also some interesting word structures, such as a rhetorically defensible sentence fragment and comma splice.
  - *We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room.*
  - *We were preparing for the shots of our lives. Getting shots for malaria and more.*
  - *I was paralyzed with fear, I was death-defyed, I was scared.*

## Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument

This argument was written as homework after a class in which grade 6 students viewed a movie titled *Benchwarmers* and discussed how movie writers and producers promote smoking. The letter is addressed to the producer of a film in which smoking appears.

Dear Mr. Sandler,

Did you know that every cigarette a person smokes takes seven minutes off their life? I mentioned this because I just watched the movie, *Benchwarmers*, and I noticed that Carlos smoked. Why did you feel the need to have one of the characters smoke? Did you think that would make him look cool? Did you think that would make him look older? It did neither of those things. As a matter of fact, I think it made him look stupid and not very cool. Especially when he put out a cigarette on his tongue.

If I were producing a movie, I would want my characters to be strong, healthy and smart. I would not have any smokers in my movies for many reasons. The first reason is it sets a bad example for children. An estimated 450,000 Americans die each year from tobacco related disease. In fact, tobacco use causes many different types of cancers such as lung, throat, mouth, and tongue. Another reason not to promote smoking is it ages and wrinkles your skin. Who wants to look 75 if you are only 60? It turns your teeth yellow and may lead to gum disease and tooth decay. Lastly, smoking is a very expensive habit. A heavy smoker spends thousands of dollars a year on cigarettes. I can think of better things to spend money on.

So Mr. Sandler, I urge you to take smoking out of all future movies you produce. Instead of having your characters smoke have them do healthy things. That will set a positive influence for children instead of poisoning their minds. Thanks for reading my letter. I hope you agree with my opinion.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_

P.S. I love your Chanukah song.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this argument

- introduces a claim about a topic or concept.
  - *I would not have any smokers in my movies for many reasons.*
- supports claims with logical reasons.
  - *The first reason is it sets a bad example for children.*
  - *Another reason not to promote smoking is it ages and wrinkles your skin.*
  - *It turns your teeth yellow and may lead to gum disease and tooth decay.*
- supports reasons with detailed and relevant evidence.
  - *Lastly, smoking is a very expensive habit. A heavy smoker spends thousands of dollars a year on cigarettes.*
- signals the relationship between reasons using logical connecting words.
  - *The first reason . . . Another reason . . . Lastly . . .*
- sustains an objective style and tone.
  - *Dear Mr. Sadler . . . Thanks for reading my letter. I hope you agree with my opinion. . . . Sincerely . . .*
  - Except perhaps for the postscript, the level of formality is appropriate for an argument addressed to someone that the student does not know (in this case, a movie producer).

- includes only relevant information and evidence in support of claims.
- provides a concluding statement or section that offers a recommendation that follows from the argument.
  - *Instead of having your characters smoke have them do healthy things. That will set a positive influence for children instead of poisoning their minds.*
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are a few problems, such as those in the examples below, that do not interfere materially with the underlying message.
  - *. . . I just watched the movie, Benchwarmers, and I noticed that Carlos smoked.*
  - *That will set a positive influence for children . . .*

## Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument

This argument (inappropriately named a story) is a process piece produced in class.

### A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus

People get pets so that they will never be lonely, and they will always have a friend to be there for them. Ask your heart, what makes the best pet??? Some people think a best pet is picky, energetic, and sneaky, but I think my pet is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me! Gus was about eight weeks old when we got him, now he is 4 ½ months old, and he is about as big as a size eight sneaker. He is a little gray and white kitten. If you look closely he has a gray tail, but there are darker gray rings around it. He has a little white on his face, and some on his tummy and paws. He has a little stripe on his leg but it is his back left leg only. He's very cute, and he purrs a lot! He also has a cute little gray nose.

One of the reasons why my cat Gus is the best pet is because he is a cuddle bug. When Gus was a baby, he had to be kept in a cage because he wasn't allowed to interact with the other pets until he was older. He couldn't interact with the other pets because when Twister was a baby, the ferrets bit her ear and dragged her under the bed, and bit her in the back of the neck and we didn't want the same thing to happen to Gus. Also because Twister had to be kept in a cage when she was little, too. His cage was in my room so when he meowed, as if to say, "Get me out!" I would have to take him out and sleep with him. All he would do is thank me for doing that by snuggling against my chin! Another example to prove that Gus is a cuddle bug, is that when I'm feeding Gus, I put his and Twister's bowl up on the counter when I do so, and Twister sits there patiently while Gus is snuggling against my legs to show affection toward me. He snuggles my leg even when I'm walking around! Well, at least he tries to, because he follows me, and when I stop walking, he starts to cuddle. Eventually I pick him up and cuddle him back!!! Finally, when I have nothing to do and I'm just sitting on my bed reading, Gus jumps up with me and then he pushes away the covers to get under them, and he sleeps on my chest to keep my company when I'm board. After he slept on my tummy many times, he finally got the nickname \_\_\_\_\_ Cuddle Buddy. Now I always snuggle with my favorite cuddle buddy . . . Gus!!!

A second reason why Gus is the best pet is because he's playful. Most of the time when Gus is lying on the couch minding his own business, I'll reach out to pet him then he'll start biting my hand and attacking it!!! He does this to be playful, not to hurt anyone but he just wants to have fun. It kind of tickles when he does it, actually. Gus also has a little toy mouse that is attached to a string that I drag around the house so that Gus will follow it. The mouse has a leopard skin pattern on it with balls of fur as hands and feet. The mouse is about the size of the pencil sharpeners in Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ classroom. He goes after that mouse so fast that it's hard to see him running by to catch it. When Gus was a baby, I would put him in my bed to sleep with, but before we went to sleep, I would move my feet around underneath the covers, while Gus was on top chasing them around. Eventually, he got tired and lied down near my feet, but before he was completely asleep, I would pick him up and put him near my pillow and we slept together. Gus loves doing that all the time. I love how Gus is so playful!!!

The last reason why Gus is the best pet is because he loves me! He always misses me whenever I'm not there. When I come home from school and I open the door, Gus comes flying around the corner, and starts to climb my pants! When he gets high enough. I grab him in my arms and we start cuddling each other while Gus is happily purring. He does this a lot. Most of the time I'm in my room watching TV, while Gus and Twister are fighting and killing each other, they come dashing around the corner and into my room. I, of course, have to break up the fight. After that, I put them on my bed and hold them down, but they keep squirming. Soon, they get tired and sleep with me, silently, watching TV. Gus is with me as much as possible. Sometimes he's busy playing with Twister, sleeping, or eating. Otherwise, he's playing or sleeping with me. We do so many things together and I'm glad I got him, but technically, he chose me. It was a homeless cat shelter. They were able to catch the kittens, but not there mommy. His brothers and sisters were all playing, but he was sleeping under the table. Soon, he walked out from under the table and slept with me while we cuddled on the couch. That's how I met Gus.

People have feelings for their pets that show that they love them very much. When I had to decide what makes the best pet, I would say that Gus is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me.

When you think about the examples that I gave you, like when I told you about how Gus snuggles against my chin, you saw that Gus **IS** the best pet and if you don't believe me, you have a problem with deciding who the best pet is.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces a claim about a topic or concept.
  - . . . *I think my pet is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me!*
- supports the claim with logical and detailed evidence.
  - *One of the reasons why my cat Gus is the best pet is because he is a cuddle bug.* The writer elaborates on this point by providing three examples of his cat's affectionate nature: freed from his cage, the cat snuggles against the narrator's chin; the cat rubs against the narrator's legs; and the cat sleeps on the narrator.
  - *A second reason why Gus is the best pet is because he's playful.* The writer elaborates this point with three examples of the cat's playful nature: Gus attacks the narrator's hand; Gus plays with a toy mouse; and Gus attacks the narrator's feet when they are under the covers.
  - *The last reason why Gus is the best pet is because he loves me!* The writer elaborates this point with three examples: Gus runs to greet the narrator when he returns home from school; Gus and the other cat, Twister, scuffle with one another until the narrator separates them, and then they sleep with the narrator as he watches television; and Gus spends as much time as possible in the narrator's company.
- signals the relationship between the reasons.
  - *One of my reasons . . . A second reason . . . The last reason . . .*
- sustains an objective style and tone appropriate for making a case.
  - The style throughout the document is appropriate for convincing readers about the writer's claim and about the reasons that support the claim. Only the last sentence in the three-page-long paper (. . . *if you don't believe me, you have a problem with deciding who the best pet is*) seems inappropriate because it lapses into ad hominem.
- includes only relevant information and evidence in support of claims (although the reference to the cat having come from a homeless shelter might better have been placed in the introduction).
- provides a concluding statement.
  - *When I had to decide what makes the best pet, I would say that Gus is the best pet . . . When you think about the examples that I gave you, like when I told you about how Gus snuggles against my chin, you saw that Gus **IS** the best pet . . .*

## Student Sample: Grade 7, Informational/Explanatory

The extended project that led to this scientific report required students to review existing research, conduct original research, and produce a report. Although the student who wrote the report was in grade 7, the conceptual understanding it displays is clearly at an exemplary level.

### A Geographical Report

My report is on a very rare and unique wetland that many people do not even know exists. They occur only in a few places around the world.

My topic is created by a specific geographical condition. Vernal pools in San Diego occur only on the local mesas and terraces, where soil conditions allow, but these are the ideal place for much of the city's urban and agricultural development. Is it possible to find a balance between the two conflicting purposes of expansion and preservation?

This raises an interesting question; how can you establish vernal pools being thought of as a geographical asset?

#### METHODS

To answer my question I had to get information on vernal pools: what they are, where they are, and how they are a sensitive natural habitat. Then I needed to examine how city expansion is affecting vernal pools, and if it is apt to continue. I needed to know what the City thinks about the problem and what they are planning to do.

First I looked for any information available on vernal pools at public libraries, but I couldn't find what I was looking for. The topic is apparently too obscure. Next I went to a university library that had an environmental department to get as much information as possible (University of San Diego).

I also interviewed several authorities in the field: the district representative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency responsible for the protection of wetlands; a senior environment planner with the City of San Diego, who wrote the City's Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO); the Station botanist at Miramar Naval Air Station, who is in charge of their vernal pool management plan on the land that has the largest number of pools remaining in the City of San Diego; a biologist working for RECON (Regional Environmental Consultants), a firm which is mapping the vernal pools for the City of Hemet, (another city in San Diego County facing the same issues); and finally a geographer working for SANDAG (San Diego Association of Governments), a regional organization that gathers, records, and analyzes data associated with regional planning and environmental issues. They answered many questions and offered their own ideas and information, including additional articles on my subject. I looked at several maps and photos of vernal pools locations, and charts of changing land use.

To decide how much education may be needed about vernal pools, I made a questionnaire, and surveyed two classrooms of elementary students, and a group of forty-two adults, trying to cover most age groups.

#### WHAT VERNAL POOLS ARE

Vernal pools are a unique and rare form of wetland. Wetlands are areas that are covered or soaked by water enough to support plants that grow only in moist ground. Some examples of wetlands are bogs, swamps, marshes, and edges of lakes and streams. These are what people think of when they hear "wetland". But vernal pools are different than these other types of wetlands. They are located on dry and flat places. No one would expect to find a wetland in such a dry area!

San Diego vernal pools are surrounded by small mounds called "mima mounds". The name mima mounds come from the Mima Prairie near Olympia, Washington. People don't know for sure how mima mounds are formed. Some think that they were formed by gophers piling up the earth. Others think that ice wedges from glaciers caused the upheaval, or maybe the wind pushed loose dirt, catching in clumps of shrubs. Mounds can be found on prairies or terraces with a hardpan or clay layer underneath.

Vernal pools are depressions between the mima mounds. In winter the pools are filled by rain storms. In spring the pools look their best, when plants are in full splendor. By summer the pools are dry and look only like a dry pothole, (See illustration of pool cycles and typical cross section.) A vernal pool does not dry by soaking into the ground; the layer of clay or rock underneath the pool prevents the water from soaking through. Instead they dry out from evaporation, or use by the plants. The mima mounds are not impervious so one pool tends to drain into another. Therefore, the pools have to be on flat land; the pools cannot be on a slope or the water would run off, and the pools would not be filled.

[Illustration here]

Typical Cross Section of Vernal Pool

[Illustration here]

Vernal Pool Cycle

#### WHY VERNAL POOLS ARE SO IMPORTANT

Vernal pools are a very rare, specific habitat. Hardly any are left, so we don't have many to lose. There used to be vernal pools on many of the mesas and terraces of San Diego County, and the Central Valley of California. Now there are almost no vernal pools in the Central Valley, and an estimated 97% have been lost in San Diego County. An estimated 80% of the remaining pools in San Diego are located on Miramar Naval Air Station. (See map, next page.)

[Illustration here]

Vernal Pool Distribution, San Diego County

It does not take much to disturb a vernal pool. Even grazing or off road vehicle use in the summer, when pool species are dormant and people could think they are just a dry hole, can damage them. Most are disturbed by grading and flattening of their habitat, or by breakup of the impervious layer. With just flat land there would be no depressions for vernal pools to form; what would form would be "vernal mud". With no impervious layer the water would just sink into the ground, and would be there only for a short period of time, not enough for wetland plants.

The mima mounds have to be protected too. If the watershed for the pools is changed, the condition of the pools changes. If there isn't enough water from runoff, then all plant or animal life in them disappears, because they need enough moisture at the right time, to live. If there is too much water, then the pool may turn into another kind of wetland, such as a bog.

Although people have begun to study them, there is still a lot to learn. One thing scientists know is that they are a part of a larger environment. Many animals travel from other areas to feed on plants or animals, or drink from the vernal pools. For example, water fowl from many other places will stop at the pools to eat the fairy shrimp and snack on the plants.

Vernal pools have a large assortment of rare and exotic flora and fauna (plants and animals). Five of them are on the federal list of endangered species, and one more is a candidate for listing. The plants and animals in vernal pools are unusual because they have only developed recently compared to other changes in evolution. As scientists study the pools more intently they are finding more and more unknown species. There are temporary pools in other places around the world, but California's vernal pools are different because of their long drought phase, which causes the plants and animals to adapt to the climate. They go into a dormant phase. For example, fairy shrimp lay eggs before the drought which hatch when it gets moist enough to be active. Some plants, in a short period of time,

develop seeds; others appear to die out, but quickly spout again from the rain. Many of these species cannot survive outside vernal pools, and some are “endemic” (species found only in a very restricted geographical area).

## PROTECTION TECHNIQUES

The first step is to try to keep development away from vernal pools. But to do this you first need to know where the pools are. Thanks to regional mapping efforts, existing vernal pools have been fairly well identified in San Diego County.

There are already laws against disturbances of vernal pools. You could go to jail or get fined a large sum of money for disturbing a wetland. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protects the listed endangered species present, and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers makes sure you don’t fill any kind of wetland habitat, including vernal pools. The local office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has submitted a proposal to Washington for a stricter permit process for vernal pools.

When possible the vernal pools should be part of a large preserve of open space. That way the pools would not be isolated islands, but part of their natural communities, and would be protected by a buffer of distance. Fences should not be put directly around the vernal pools unless it cannot be avoided, because it would keep some animals out, such as rabbits which spread plant seeds around when they eat them.

It is important to educate people about vernal pools so they know how important they are and what they look like, and so they know how to preserve them. To see how much education may be needed in San Diego, I surveyed ninety-two people (forty-two adults and fifty elementary students to try to cover all age groups). I asked them if they had heard of vernal pools, and if they knew what they were. About 21% thought they had heard of them, but only 7% really knew what they were. (See pie chart.) I found that much education is needed.

[Illustration here]

Survey Results

At N.A.S. Miramar the Station botanist has been putting articles dealing with vernal pools in almost every issue of the base newspaper. Now most people on the base know about vernal pools, and know how valuable they are.

## RECOGNIZING AN ASSET

Education is a key to preserving vernal pools. Vernal pools are very unique and we do not have many to lose. Making new ones does not work. Studies done at the University of California, Santa Barbara, have shown that after five years their complexity goes down.

First, vernal pools must be protected. There could be different ranges of accessibility, from remote (available to research only), somewhat accessible (good for guided seasonal visits), to readily accessible (which may have to be protected by fencing or supervision). The most accessible ones would be a great educational opportunity for the general public. The pools closer to development could be developed into nature centers, with raised boardwalks to protect the habitat, as is done over the hot springs in Yellowstone. (See illustration.)

[Illustration here]

Cross Section of Possible Nature Center

Interpretive signs and docents could provide information. Being very unique, vernal pools would make interesting learning centers. People would learn how the plants and animals adapt to the seasonal changes. This would teach people the importance of vernal pools, how complex they are, how to identify them, and how to preserve them

when wet or dry. A park in the Sacramento area has an adjacent vernal pool with hiking trails around it; and it seems to work there because the people there know how important and delicate it is.

Ecotourism, a popular concept now, would be another idea. San Diego is a place where tourists already come. The very climate and geography that brings people here is what created vernal pools. Ecotourism would be easy to add to the other attractions, and would indirectly benefit the city. A tour company might be authorized to place advertisements to bring people to learn the importance of vernal pools and their ecosystem. With many people outside San Diego knowing about vernal pools and concerned about their well-being, there would be widespread support for vernal pool protection.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of endangering vernal pools will not go away, because the City will need more land to develop. However, vernal pools remain a rare and unique wetland, and need protection. Even though there are laws made to protect them, pools are still being lost. Education is needed. Widespread education showing how important vernal pools are, and how easy they are to disturb, will create widespread support for protection.

A balance between expansion and preservation will not come easily, but if the public views vernal pools as a geographical asset, the balance will shift toward long-term vernal pool preservation.

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## Annotation

The writer of this scientific research report

- provides a clear and coherent introduction that establishes the subject and conveys a knowledgeable stance.
  - *My report is on a very rare and unique wetland that many people do not even know exists. . . . Vernal pools in San Diego occur only on the local mesas and terraces, where soil conditions allow, but these are the ideal place for much of the city's urban and agricultural development.*
- develops the subject through relevant and specific facts and details.
  - *San Diego vernal pools are surrounded by small mounds called "mima mounds".*
  - *. . . the layer of clay or rock underneath the pool prevents the water from soaking through. . . . an estimated 97% [of vernal pools] have been lost in San Diego County.*
- organizes specific information under broader concepts and categories, and provides headings, figures, tables, and diagrams when useful.
  - The writer uses a number of headings to help section off the text: *Methods, What Vernal Pools Are, Why Vernal Pools Are So Important, Protection Techniques, Recognizing an Asset, and Conclusion.*
  - The writer offers a cross-section of a vernal pool, an illustration of the vernal pool cycle, a map of the distribution of vernal pools in San Diego County, a pie chart of responses to the survey, and a cross-section of a possible nature center.
- employs discipline-specific and technical vocabulary.
  - *Vernal pool . . . wetland . . . bogs . . . mima mounds . . . pool cycles . . . habitat . . .*
- maintains a formal, objective style.
  - *Vernal pools have a large assortment of rare and exotic flora and fauna (plants and animals). Five of them are on the federal list of endangered species, and one more is a candidate for listing.*
  - *Vernal pools are a unique and rare form of wetland. Wetlands are areas that are covered or soaked by water enough to support plants that grow only in moist ground.*
- uses strategies to present explanations and manage the complexity of the topic.
  - If/then and cause/effect: *If the watershed for the pools is changed, the condition of the pools changes. If there isn't enough water from runoff, then all plant or animal life in them disappears, because they need enough moisture at the right time, to live.*
  - Definition: *Vernal pools are a unique and rare form of wetland. . . . They are located on dry and flat places. . . . Vernal pools are depressions between the mima mounds. . . . Vernal pools are a very rare, specific habitat.*
  - Comparison/contrast: *Some examples of wetlands are bogs, swamps, marshes, and edges of lakes and streams. . . . But vernal pools are different than these other types of wetlands. They are located on dry and flat places.*

- links ideas and creates cohesion by varying sentence structures to express relationships between ideas.
  - *Vernal pools are a very rare, specific habitat. Hardly any are left, so we don't have many to lose.*
  - *First, vernal pools must be protected. There could be different ranges of accessibility, from remote (available to research only), somewhat accessible (good for guided seasonal visits), to readily accessible (which may have to be protected by fencing or supervision). The most accessible ones would be a great educational opportunity for the general public.*
- emphasizes the most significant information.
- provides a conclusion that follows logically from the information presented.
  - *A balance between expansion and preservation will not come easily, but if the public views vernal pools as a geographical asset, the balance will shift toward long-term vernal pool preservation.*
- demonstrates an exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 7, Argument

This argument was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were asked to write a letter to their principal about a plan to install video cameras in the classroom for safety reasons. The abbreviated time frame of the assessment (and the consequent lack of opportunity to do research and to revise) explains the absence of information from sources and possibly also the occasional errors.

### Video Cameras in Classrooms

You are seated in class as your teacher explains and points things out on the whiteboard. You twitch your hand, accidentally nudging your pencil, which rolls off your desk and clatters to the floor. As you lean over to pick up your pencil, your cell phone falls out of your coat pocket! Luckily you catch it without your teacher seeing, but it is in plain view of the video camera's shiny lens that points straight at you. The classroom phone rings, and after a brief conversation, your teacher walks over to your desk and kneels down beside you. "About that cell phone of yours . . ." How did that get you in trouble? How could it possibly be a good idea to put cameras in classrooms?

When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative. Cameras aren't there because people talk a lot. It is the teacher's job to keep people quiet. If something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened.

If we already have cameras in the halls, why spend the money to get thirty more cameras for all the different classrooms? Our school district already has a low budget, so we would be spending money on something completely unnecessary. There hasn't been camera-worthy trouble in classrooms. Camera-worthy trouble would be bad behavior every time a teacher left the room. There is no reason to install cameras that might just cause trouble, both for the students and for the budget.

Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room. Some students get nervous and flustered, trying hard to stay focused on their work with a camera focused on them. 90% of students claim that they do better work when they are calmer, and cameras are not going to help. Other students look at cameras as a source of entertainment. These students will do things such as wave at the camera, make faces, or say hi to the people watching through the camera. This could be a big distraction for others who are trying to learn and participate in class. Still other students will try to trick the camera. They will find a way to block the lens or do something that the camera will not be likely to catch. All of these different students will be distracted by the cameras in their classrooms.

Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this argument

- introduces a claim about a topic or concept, although the student does not state the claim directly until the end of the piece.
  - . . . *I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.*
- acknowledges and disagrees with a counterclaim.
  - *Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems.*
- supports his claim with logical reasons.
  - The opening anecdote indicates that students may be unfairly punished for minor and undisruptive actions.
  - [Cameras are not necessary because] *[i]f something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened.*

- . . . we already have cameras in the halls . . .
- Our school district already has a low budget . . .
- supports reasons with relevant evidence.
  - *Some students get nervous and flustered, trying hard to stay focused on their work with a camera focused on them.*
  - *Other students . . . will do things such as wave at the camera, make faces, or say hi to the people watching through the camera.*
  - *Still other students will try to trick the camera.*
- signals the relationship between reasons and evidence using logical connecting words.
  - *If . . . already . . . why . . . so . . . Some students . . . Other students . . . These students . . . All of these different students . . .*
- sustains an objective style and tone.
  - *When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative.*
  - *Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room.*
- includes only relevant information and evidence in support of claims, such as in the following example.
  - *Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room.*
- provides a concluding section that offers a restatement and a recommendation that follows from the argument.
  - *Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.*
- demonstrates a very good command of the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 8, Narrative

This narrative was written to fulfill an assignment in which students were asked to introduce a special person to readers who did not know the person. The students were advised to reveal the personal quality of their relationship with the person presented. The grade 8 student who wrote this piece borrowed ideas from a fictional piece she had read.

### Miss Sadie

Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. But I still can see her. The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body. Her summer dresses stained from cooking. I smell her sweet smelling kitchen. I see her gray hair pulled back in that awful, yellow banana clip. Most of all, I hear that voice. So full of character and wisdom.

I used to bring Miss Johnson cookies every summer day of 1988. I miss the days where I would sit on that shabby old porch and listen to her stories. “Melissa!” she would holler. “What “chu doin’ here? Come see me and my poor self, have ya?”

She once told me of her grandmother who escaped slavery, back when white men could only do anything, she would say. Her grandma ran for miles without food or water. It wasn’t too long before her master came looking for her and took her home to whip her. I thought of how Blacks are treated today. I sighed. She would sing in her soulful, blaring voice, old negro hymns passed down from her mother and grand mother. I would sit there in amazement.

Once, Jimmy Taylor came walking by us yelling, “Melissa! Whattaya want with that old, fat, Black lady, any ways?”

Before I could retaliate, Miss Johnson said to me, “Now, you musn’t, we must feel sorry for that terrible child. His mother must have done gone and not thought him no manners!” She actually wanted me to bow my head and pray for him. (Even though I went to his house and punched him out the next day.)

My friends would tease me for spending the whole summer with Sadie Johnson, “The cookoo of Connecticut,” they called her. But I’m so very glad I did. She taught me then, to not care what other people thought. I learned that I could be friends with someone generations apart from my own.

My visits became less frequent when school started. I had other things to think about. Boys, clothes, grades. You know, real important stuff.

One day I was thinking, I haven’t seen Miss Sadie in a while. So after school I trotted up to her house amidst the twirling, autumn leaves.

I rang her bell. The door cracked open and the woman adjusted her glasses. “May I help you?”

“Miss Sadie, it’s me, Melissa.”

“I—I,” she’d stuttered. “I don’t remember,” she said and shut the door. I heard crying. I rang the door again and she screamed, “Please leave?” in a scared, confused voice.

I went home bewildered and my mother told me to stop bothering Miss Sadie. I said I wasn’t bothering her. Mama said, “Miss Johnson has a disease. Alzheimer’s disease. It makes her forget things . . . people, family even. And so, I don’t want you over there anymore, you hear?” Then, I didn’t realize or comprehend, how someone so special to you could forget your own existence when you’d shared a summer so special and vivid in your mind.

That Christmas I went to bring Miss Johnson cookies. She wasn't there. I learned from a family member that she was in the hospital and that she'd die very soon. As the woman, a daughter maybe, spoke, my heart broke.

"Well, you make sure she gets these cookies." I said, my voice cracking and tears welling in my eyes.

Today, I've learned to love old people. For their innocence, for their knowledge. I've learned to always treat people with kindness, no matter how cruel they may seem. But mainly I've learned, that you must cherish the time spend with a person. And memories are very valuable. Because Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. I'm glad that I can still see her.

---

## Annotation

The writer of this narrative

- orients readers by backfilling information after entering immediately into the story line.
  - The writer begins in the present, when *Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair*, and then immediately creates an image with specific details of Miss Sadie as she was in the past (*every sway of her big brown body . . . her gray hair pulled back in that awful, yellow banana clip*).
  - The writer skillfully backfills information about the setting (*the old chair squeaking; that shabby old porch*) and the narrator's experiences with Miss Sadie (bringing Miss Sadie cookies, listening to her stories, listening to her sing *old negro hymns*).
- creates an organizing structure in which events are sequenced both chronologically and logically.
  - The embedded incident involving Jimmy Taylor illustrates Miss Sadie's ability to forgive rude behavior.
  - The incident in which the narrator learns that Miss Sadie has Alzheimer's disease advances the action.
- uses a variety of temporal words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, to shift from one time frame to another, and to show the relationships among events.
  - *no longer . . . still . . . used to . . . I miss the days . . . once . . . then . . . Today . . .*
- uses relevant, specific details and literary devices purposefully to develop setting, plot, and character.
  - *The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body.*
  - *Her summer dresses stained from cooking. I smell her sweet smelling kitchen.*
  - *. . . her soulful, blaring voice . . .*
  - *. . . the twirling, autumn leaves.*
  - *The door cracked open . . .*
  - *"I-I," she'd stuttered.*
- uses a variety of techniques to create particular effects.
  - Dialogue: *"Now you musn't, we must feel sorry for that terrible child. His mother must have done gone and not taught him no manners!"*
  - Tension: *I heard crying. I rang the door again and she screamed, "Please leave?" in a scared, confused voice.*
  - Sarcasm and irony: *I had other things to think about. Boys, clothes, grades. You know, real important stuff.*
  - Reflection on events: *Then, I didn't realize or comprehend, how someone so special to you could forget your own existence when you'd shared a summer so special and vivid in your mind.*

- shows internal mental processes to develop complex characters and convey their motives and emotional responses.
  - “Whattaya want with that old, fat, Black lady, any ways?”
  - *As the woman, a daughter maybe, spoke, my heart broke.*
- provides an engaging conclusion that returns to the beginning.
  - In the closing, the writer returns to the image in the beginning of the narrative (*Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. But I still can see her*) to reflect on the importance of memories (*I’m glad that I can still see her*).
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - Occasional sentence fragments were likely included for stylistic purposes (e.g., *The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body; Her summer dresses stained from cooking; Because Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days*).

## Student Sample: Grade 8, Informational/Explanatory

This essay was written about a favorite activity. The writer wrote for one entire class period the first day and revised his essay the second day after discussing ideas for revision with a partner.

### Football

What I like doing best is playing football, mainly because it is one of my best sports. One of the greatest things about it, in my opinion, is the anticipation, wondering what the other players are thinking about what you might do. Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.

At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore. That is true for everyone, but in time you get used to the aches and pains. After awhile, you develop mental discipline, which allows you to ignore some of the pain. The mental discipline then allows you to go all out, to unload everything you have, every play. That's how you win games, everyone going all out, giving 110%.

The game takes concentration, just as much as any other sport, if not more. You develop this aspect in practice. That is why it is so important to have hours and hours of it. Mentally, you have to get over the fear, the fear of eleven madmen waiting for chance to make you eat dirt. And that comes through practice. Once you overcome the fear, you can concentrate on the more important things, like anticipating the other guy's next move. Studying the playbook and talking with other players also helps.

During the game, your mind clears of all thoughts. These thoughts become instinct. You have to react, and react quickly, and you develop reactions and instinct in practice. For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled. But, you should react instinctively to that situation by increasing your momentum.

Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard. Right when you unload for a stick, all your body tightens. Then you feel the impact. After you regain your thoughts, you wonder if you're all right. You wait for your brain to get the pain signal from the nerves. Even so, if you do get that signal, which is always the case, you keep right on playing. You can't let that experience shake your concentration.

On offense, while playing receiver, you can actually "hear" the footsteps of the defensive back as you're concentrating on catching the ball. What separates the men from the boys is the one who "hears" the footsteps but doesn't miss the ball. That's mental discipline, concentration.

Football is very physical or else it wouldn't be fun. But it is also a mental game and that is why it's challenging. You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this explanation

- establishes the topic in an introduction that provides a sense of what is to follow.
  - *What I like doing best is playing football . . . Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.*
- develops the subject through relevant and specific facts, details, and examples.
  - *At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore.*
  - *For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled.*

- organizes specific information under broader concepts or categories.
  - Information is organized into three components of the mental aspect of football: discipline, concentration, and instinct.
- uses factual, precise language and maintains a relatively formal style (with occasional lapses into cliché and undefined terms).
  - *Mentally, you have to get over the fear, the fear of eleven madmen waiting for chance to make you eat dirt.*
  - *That's how you win games, everyone going all out, giving 110%. . . . you'll be leveled . . . Right when you unload for a stick . . .*
- uses strategies appropriate to informational and explanatory texts, such as definition, compare/contrast, and cause/effect.
  - Definition: *What separates the men from the boys is the one who "hears" the footsteps but doesn't miss the ball. That's mental discipline, concentration.*
  - Compare/contrast: *The game takes concentration, just as much as any other sport, if not more.*
  - Cause/effect: *If you don't [have more momentum] you'll be leveled.*
- uses appropriate links to join ideas and create cohesion.
  - *At times . . . The first time . . . After a while . . . During the game . . . For example . . . But . . . Playing defense . . . After . . . On offense . . . However . . .*
- provides only accurate and relevant information, such as in the following example.
  - *For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled.*
- provides a conclusion that follows logically from the explanation presented.
  - The conclusion emphasizes the importance of the controlling idea (the mental aspect of football) but in a new light: *You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.*
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - While there are some minor errors (e.g., *But, you should react instinctively . . .*), there are also some stylistically interesting constructions (e.g., *Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard*).

## Student Sample: Grade 8, Informational/Explanatory

This analysis of a work of literature was completed as a homework assignment for an English class.

### The Old Man and the Sea

In the book The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway tells the story of an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who, considered by the villagers to be the worst type of unlucky, is still determined to win a battle against a giant Marlin off the coast of Cuba. Santiago succeeds, but his successes do not come without great hardship and struggle. He spends three days being dragged in his skiff by the enormous marlin with minimal food and water, all the while enduring acute physical pain, tiredness, and an unending loneliness due to the absence of his young friend, Manolin. It is only after Santiago's prize fish is completely devoured by sharks that he returns home to the village scorners and the safety of Manolin's trust. As his suffering and loss compound, we can see that Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" offers a key insight into Santiago's life.

As the story begins, we learn that Santiago has gone eighty-four days straight without catching a fish. Young Manolin's parents will no longer allow the two to fish together, for they do not want their son being exposed any more to this type of failure. Santiago and Manolin are deeply saddened by this news, but Santiago does not let the loss of his friend or the defeat that others see him suffering keep him off the sea. Rather, with bright and shining eyes he thinks "maybe today. Every day is a new day" (pg. 32), and prepares to catch the biggest fish of his life. This shows that even though almost all of Santiago's acquaintances feel that his fishing career is over, he sees it about to reach its all time high. Though he knows he is physically older and weaker than most of his fellow fisherman, he refuses to let their opinions and stereotypes destroy his confidence and determination.

As the story progresses, Hemingway presents an even more vivid picture of Santiago refusing to be destroyed by the forces that threaten to defeat him. Even after he accomplishes the difficult task of hooking the giant Marlin, he finds his skiff being dragged by the fish for over two days. Living in the small boat is no easy task for Santiago, and soon injury and suffering seem to take over his entire body. His back is sore from sitting so long against the stiff wood, his face is cut from fishing hooks, his shoulders ache, and his eyes have trouble focusing. Most difficult to endure though is the terrible condition in which he finds his hands. The left one is weakened from a period of being tightly cramped, and both are extremely mutilated from the burn of the moving fishing line. It would have been so much easier for Santiago to simply give up and release the fish, yet he knows that if he endures a little longer, victory will be his. Even when it seems he has no effort left, Santiago promises himself "I'll try it again." (pg. 93) This is Santiago's real inner determination coming through. He has encountered so many obstacles during the past few days, yet he will not let them defeat his dream of killing the fish. There is no outside force promising a splendid reward if he succeeds, only those that threaten to ridicule him if he is destroyed. Santiago is working solely on his own desire to fulfill his dream and prove to himself that, although his struggles may cost him his life, he can accomplish even the seemingly impossible.

After three long days and nights, Santiago's determination pays off, and at last he manages to catch and kill the Marlin. It is only a very short time that he has to relish in his triumph though, for a few hours later vicious sharks begin to destroy the carcass of the great fish. For hours, Santiago manages to ward them off, but this time it is not he who wins the final battle. Spirits low and pain at an all time high, Santiago returns to the village, towing behind him only the bare skeleton of a treasure that once was. It seems as though Santiago is ready to just curl up and die, and indeed he has reason to feel this way. Yet as he rests alone and talk with Manolin, we see a hint of Santiago's determination, that has characterized his personality throughout the entire story, begin to shine through. Upon reaching home, he begins to make plans with Manolin about future adventures they will have together. Hemingway tells us that Santiago, in his youth, had loved to watch the majestic lions along his home on a white sand beach in Africa, and he still returns to those dreams when searching for contentment. That night, as Santiago drifts off to sleep, Hemingway tells that he was indeed "dreaming about the lions." (pg. 127) This is perhaps the truest test of how much courage and determination a person has. If even when they have suffered the biggest defeat of their life, they

are able to look to the future and realize the wonderful things they still possess. Though the forces of nature and time destroyed Santiago's prize fish, he refuses to let that fact ruin the rest of his life. No one can take away his love for Manolin or memories of what once was, and because of this, no one can ever truly defeat Santiago.

In conclusion, throughout the entire story The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago refuses to surrender to the forces working against him. He ignores the comments of those who think he is unlucky, endures great physical pain, and rises up from the depths of sorrow over the lost Marlin to find happiness in what he does possess. Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" truly does display the amount of determination that Santiago shows throughout his life.

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## Annotation

The writer of this explanation

- establishes the topic in an introduction that provides a sense of what is to follow.
  - The writer provides a brief summary of the plot in the introduction and then uses a quotation to advance the thesis of the essay: *As his suffering and loss compound, we can see that Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" offers a key insight into Santiago's life.*
- develops the subject through relevant and specific facts, details, quotations, information, and examples.
  - The second, third, and fourth paragraphs each tells part of the story and supports the writer's thesis by providing examples of Santiago's struggle and determination (e.g., *Rather, with bright and shining eyes he thinks "maybe today. Every day is a new day" (pg. 32), and prepares to catch the biggest fish of his life.*)
  - The writer uses concrete details to illustrate Santiago's suffering (e.g., *eighty-four days straight without catching a fish; [hands] extremely mutilated from the burn of the moving fishing line; towing behind him only the bare skeleton of a treasure that once was*).
- uses precise language and maintains a formal, objective style.
  - *In the book The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway tells the story of an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who, considered by the villagers to be the worst type of unlucky, is still determined to win a battle against a giant Marlin off the coast of Cuba.*
  - *As the story begins, we learn . . . In conclusion . . .*
- employs strategies appropriate to explanatory texts.
  - Two key elements of the quotation in the introduction (*destroyed but not defeated*) are used as devices to help establish the structure.
- uses appropriate links to join ideas and create cohesion.
  - *As the story progresses . . . Even after . . . After three long days and nights . . . In conclusion, throughout the entire story The Old Man and the Sea . . .*
- provides a conclusion that follows logically from the explanation presented.
  - In the last paragraph, the writer summarizes the elements of the narrative that support his thesis and returns to the quotation in the thesis statement (*Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" truly does display the amount of determination that Santiago shows throughout his life*).
- demonstrates a very good command of the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 10, Argument

This argument was produced by a student who was asked to write a persuasive essay that required research. The student generated the topic and had an opportunity to revise.

### \_\_\_\_\_ School Bond Levy

The \_\_\_\_\_ School Board has recently proposed a bond levy to add new facilities as well as conduct some major repairs to the school. The bond includes building a new gymnasium, a new science room and lab, a new Media Center/Library, new Chapter 1 and Special Education classrooms, and other facilities such as more parking space, an increase in storage area, and new locker rooms. Along with new construction, the board is proposing to remodel facilities such as the drama/music areas, the entire roof, the heating system, the school kitchen, and present gym as well. This bond allowing \_\_\_\_\_ School to add more facilities should be passed in order for young students to be provided with a better education.

Several arguments have been brought up concerning the levy since it failed in the March election. Some say that the school doesn't need to have brand new facilities and better classrooms, but it does. Just this year the school had to shut down for days at a time as a result of a malfunction of the heating system. The roof of the library also had a leaking problem all winter long. The leaking has actually caused the ceiling tiles to rot to the point where they are having to be removed. It isn't safe to sit underneath them because, in fact, they have fallen to tables where students had been working only minutes before.

Another issue that people may be concerned with is the money that taxpayers have to put up for the building. The cost of the project in its entirety will be 2.9 million dollars, meaning that for the next 25 years, taxpayers would pay 40 cents more per thousand dollars in property tax than they do this year. The project does cost a significant amount of money, but the school needs it. If something isn't done now, then the facilities such as the library, the science room and others will continue to grow steadily worse. The construction and remodeling needs to be done eventually, so why not now, when interest rates are low and expenses are also low. Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_ commented that it would cost the taxpayers much less money now than ten years from now. Another reason that this is a good time to pass this bond is that the results of Ballot Measure 5 are going into effect at the same time as the levy. As it stands now, property tax rates will go down another \$2.50 by next year; however, if taxpayers don't mind paying what they do now and can handle a 40 cent increase, then the school can be that much better.

Many other good reasons we exist for funding this construction now. For one, better facilities will be made available to everyone: staff members, students, and community members. The new gym will allow student athletes to have earlier practices and more time for homework. With only one gym in a K-12 school system, the junior high has to practice in the morning before school, starting at 6:30 A.M., meaning that both the girls and boys teams had to practice at the same time, with half of the court for the girls half for the boys. After school, the high school girls would practice from 3:30 to 5:30 P.M. The varsity boys would then start at 5:30 or 6:00 and go until 7:30. After that, the junior varsity boys would come in for an hour and a half. It's absurd to think that student athletes can make good use of their time with a schedule like that. If the bond were to pass, both the new gym and the present gym would be used for practices and athletes wouldn't have to wait so long to practice every day.

Another reason that the gym should be built is that it is no longer adequate. The bleachers are too close to the court and so there is no room to walk by without getting in the way during a game. The gym also poses a problem for the cheerleaders. As it is now, there is no room for them to cheer. They have to stand on one of the ends which, of course, is right in the way of people walking by. If a new gym were built, enough room would be provided surrounding the court that there wouldn't be any of the problems there are now.

Another advantage to the bond proposed is that it would provide more space in the school. The school has always been small, which is in some ways nice, but it needs to expand. The lack of space is a problem because everyone is crammed into one little hallway trying to make it around from class to class. As it is, there isn't enough room for the library to just be a library or the kitchen to just be a kitchen. Students can't even go to the library when they need to because Health, Media, and other classes are held there. The Satellite Learning classroom, which shares a space with the kitchen, usually has a difficult learning atmosphere each day people prepare food for the hot lunch program. Another problem area is the current science room and lab. Lab facilities are outdated and cannot be

replaced for a variety of reasons related to the plumbing and electrical systems. Both science teachers have said publicly that the chemical storage room is inadequate and unsafe. The science curriculum is a core part of students' education and they deserve good facilities.

It is clear then, that \_\_\_\_\_ School needs significant improvements in which case the bond must be passed. As a community, education is an essential part of the future. In the past, \_\_\_\_\_ has relied in the timber industry for employment, but times are changing and the younger generations need to be better prepared to meet the challenges that arise. For example, they need to be able to take part in a variety of activities and be able to achieve in many different areas. If the school is inadequate, how can the younger generations be provided with the education and training they need to be successful in the future?

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## Annotation

The writer of this argument

- establishes a substantive claim and distinguishes it from alternate or opposing claims.
  - *This bond allowing \_\_\_\_\_ School to add more facilities should be passed in order for young students to be provided with a better education.*
  - *Some say that the school doesn't need to have brand new facilities and better classrooms, but it does.*
  - *Another issue that people may be concerned with is the money that taxpayers have to put up for the building.*
- points out the weaknesses of the counterclaims.
  - *Just this year the school had to shut down for days.*
  - *. . . it would cost the taxpayers much less money now than ten years from now.*
- supports claims with logical reasons.
  - *. . . brand new facilities and better classrooms [are needed] . . .*
  - *. . . better facilities will be made available to everyone: staff members, students, and community members.*
  - *. . . [the gym] is no longer adequate.*
  - *The school has always been small . . . [and] it needs to expand.*
- provides relevant and sufficient evidence in support of his reasons.
  - Details about the malfunction of the heating system and the falling ceiling tiles in the library support the reason (claim) that *brand new facilities and better classrooms* are needed.
  - Details about the scheduling of classes in the library support the reason (claim) that the school *needs to expand*.
- explains how the evidence links to his reasons.
  - The writer relates that *just this year the school had to shut down for days at a time as a result of a malfunction of the heating system* and that *it isn't safe to sit underneath the rotted ceiling tiles in the library*.
  - The writer relates that students can't even go to the library when they need to *because Health, Media, and other classes are held there*.
- develops the argument in part based on knowledge of the audience.
  - The content of the essay is shaped in part for an audience of adults concerned with accelerative tax levels. For example, the third paragraph deals with costs by detailing the actual dollar amount needed. The writer also argues that acting now will prevent greater, more expensive deterioration

later and that current low interest rates and expenses make additions and repairs more cost effective today than they would be in the future.

- conveys relationships between reasons and signals shifts in claims using transition words, phrases, and clauses.
  - *Another issue that people may be concerned with . . . Many other good reasons . . . Another reason . . .*
  - *The project does cost a significant amount of money, but the school needs it.*
- maintains a formal style that is appropriate for the topic and audience.
  - *Another advantage to the bond proposed is that it would provide more space in the school.*
- enhances the reliability of his argument by paraphrasing from a credible, authoritative source.
  - *Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_ commented that it would cost the taxpayers much less money now than ten years from now.*
  - *Both science teachers have said publicly that the chemical storage room is inadequate and unsafe.*
- provides a concluding section that enhances the argument by articulating consequences if the school bond levy should fail.
  - *If the school is inadequate, how can the younger generations be provided with the education and training they need to be successful in the future?*
- demonstrates a very good command of the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 10, Informational/Explanatory

This essay was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were told to write about a character in a work of literature whose pride or selfishness creates problems. The abbreviated time frame of the assessment situation (and the consequent lack of opportunity to revise) explains the absence of information and quotations from researched sources and perhaps the occasional spelling errors as well.

### Animal Farm

In the novel, Animal Farm, by George Orwell, there is one very particular character whose pride and selfishness creates problems. This character had just merely good ideas in the beginning. However, as time went on, his true self-interest began to shine through. This character started a free republic of animals and turned it into a plantation that used animals as slaves. He never did have enough and always wanted more, regardless of the price that others had to pay. This character whose pride and selfishness creates problems, is none other than the great leader of Animal Farm himself, comrade Napoleon [Napoleon], the pig.

Comrade Napoleon is a powerful authority on Animal Farm. In fact he is the leader of Animal Farm and a high strung leader at that. After Old Major died, Napoleon lived upon Old Major's ideas. Napoleon lead all the animals to rebellion so that Manor Farm ceased to exist, and Animal Farm was born. In the first year, he even worked the fields and helped bring in their biggest harvest ever. Little did the animals know, but he would soon change. Eventually the animals started receiving less food because Napoleon needed more food to power his "large" brain. Later, he goes and runs off his successor, Snowball, so he can have the whole farm to himself. Then he stopped working the fields. He started taking young animals and selling them or using them for his own use. He stopped sleeping in the hay and slept in the farm house instead. Finally, he took away half the grain fields so he could plant barely to make himself beer. This Napoleon was a power hungry, selfish individual for sure.

Being power hungry, always causes problems, and boy did Napoleon cause problems. The animals had received so little food that many were starving, you could see their bones, and some even died of starvation. Napoleon's lack of work meant the animals had to work harder, and it wasn't easy on an empty stomach. Many animals would break their legs or hoofs but would continue to work. The lack of new workers due to Napoleon's selling them off, meant that nobody could retire, and one old animal even died in the fields. Snowball was a great teacher for the animals, and now that he was gone, they lacked education. Then with finally only half of the fields being productive for food, the animals starved even more and worked harder to make beer that they never saw. Not to mention that they had to sleep on a dirt floor while the lazy Napoleon slept in his nice comfortable bed. His selfishness had definitely created problems.

Napoleon's experience had changed the farm drastically. He thought things were getting better while the animals knew they were only getting worse. After the rebellion, many humans disliked Animal Farm and the animals disliked humans. Napoleon's selfish ways were much like those of a farmer. So eventually as Napoleon became more "human," the town's people began to like him. Napoleon could care less about his animals, just so long as he was on good terms with the humans. By the novel's end, Napoleon is great friends with every human in town. However, his animal slaves are no longer happy as they once were. They still hate humans which means now, they hate Napoleon. So due to Napoleon's pride, the story has changed its ways from start to finish. He has turned friends into foe and foe into friends, but at great cost.

In the novel, Animal Farm, by George Orwell, Comrade Napoleon is a character whose pride and selfishness creates problems. The starving animals have suffered greatly because of their leader's pride. On the other hand, Napoleon has gained great success through his selfishness. Unfortunately, that's just the way it is. You can't have pride without problems. Even if they are little problems, it's still due to pride. Now, if Napoleon had pride in his farm rather than in himself, well then maybe the humans would've hated him, but he'd still has his true friends of four legs. However, he chose to follow a different path and he burned those bridges along the way. So for now, Comrade Napoleon's

pride and selfishness has created problems for the animals, but someday, it will create problems for himself.

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## Annotation

The writer of this explanation

- provides a clear and coherent introduction that establishes the subject and conveys a knowledgeable stance.
  - The writer introduces a character (Comrade Napoleon the pig) and conveys a knowledgeable stance when providing background about the role Napoleon plays in the novel.
- develops a complex subject through relevant and specific details and examples.
  - Details: *In the first year, [Napoleon] even worked the fields and helped bring in their biggest harvest ever. . . . Not to mention that they had to sleep on a dirt floor while the lazy Napolean slept in his nice comfortable bed.*
  - Examples: *. . . nobody could retire, and one old animal even died in the fields.*
- organizes complex information.
  - The organization of the explanation is mostly chronological because the writer focuses on how Napoleon changes over time, how he becomes *power hungry, selfish, and more “human.”* The writer also describes the problems that Napoleon’s changed nature creates.
- maintains a formal, objective style, with the following notable exception.
  - *. . . and boy did Napolean cause problems.*
- uses strategies appropriate to informational and explanatory texts.
  - Cause/effect: *The animals had received so little food that many were starving . . . The lack of new workers due to Napolean’s selling them off, meant that nobody could retire . . .*
  - Comparison/contrast: *He thought things were getting better while the animals knew they were only getting worse.*
- uses appropriate links and varies sentence structures to express relationships between ideas and to create cohesion.
  - *In the novel . . . In fact . . . In the first year . . . Eventually . . . Being power hungry . . . Not to mention . . . On the other hand . . .*
  - *In the novel, Animal Farm, by George Orwell, there is one very particular character whose pride and selfishness creates problems. This character had just merely good ideas in the beginning.*
- provides only accurate and relevant information, such as in the following example.
  - *. . . they [the other animals] had to sleep on a dirt floor while the lazy Napolean slept in his nice comfortable bed.*
- provides a conclusion that follows logically from the explanation presented.
  - The writer’s conclusion sums up the main points of the explanation and reflects on the link between pride and the problems it creates (*You can’t have pride without problems*).

- demonstrates a marginal command of the conventions of standard written English, having made several distracting errors in spelling and other mechanics.
  - *The character whose pride and selfishness creates problems, is none other than the great leader of Animal Farm himself, comrade Napoleon, the pig.*
  - . . . *ceized* [seized] . . .
  - . . . *barely* [barley] . . .
  - . . . *deffinately* [definitely] . . .

## Student Sample: Grade 12, Informational/Explanatory

The essay that follows was written for an Advanced Placement U.S. History class. The student had unlimited time to write and likely received feedback and instructional support while creating the essay.

### **In the Wake of the Spanish Lady: American Economic Resilience in the Aftermath of the Influenza Epidemic of 1918**

Whatever does not kill me makes me stronger.<sup>1</sup>

—Friedrich Nietzsche

America in the years leading up to 1918 was as confident in its medical ability as it had ever been. In only one century, it had seen the successful vaccination, containment, or cure for the notorious menaces of smallpox, anthrax, rabies, meningitis, typhoid, malaria, yellow fever, diphtheria, cholera, and tetanus.<sup>2</sup> Due to the new strides in bacteriology, germ theory, and sanitation, as well as new methods devised to control food-, water-, and insect-borne diseases, Americans were experiencing an era of unprecedented health. Whereas in all previous wars, more American soldiers were lost to disease than in action, American troops in World War I saw an all-time low in the number of deaths due to disease. Army camp inspections, carried out by William Henry Welch, the respected doctor and assistant to the Army Surgeon General, revealed that, though camps were overcrowded, “the health of the army proved to be as good as any reasonable doctor could expect.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the new light that had been shed on disease control did not apply to air-borne viruses. Because neither antibiotics nor a way to control the spread of air-borne diseases had been invented yet, America was as vulnerable to the deadly grip of influenza that would befall it in 1918 as Medieval Europe had been to the Bubonic Plague of the 14th century.

More people died of the Spanish Flu in the 10 months that it devastated the world than had died of any other disease or war in history. A commonly cited estimate of deaths is 21 million worldwide, yet prominent demographer Kingsley Davis estimates that the disease killed approximately 20 million in the Indian subcontinent alone.<sup>4</sup> The actual number of deaths will never be known, but the modern estimate is somewhere between 50 and 100 million.<sup>5</sup> If an equal percentage of the world population died today, that would be close to 2 billion victims.<sup>6</sup> A bare minimum of 550,000 Americans, or .5 percent of the American population, died in the apocalyptic pandemic.<sup>7</sup> Yet, due to some historical and demographic particulars of the 1918 flu, the American economy—which nearly collapsed in some areas during the outbreak—was not crippled in any lasting way.

The flu is not generally thought of as a killer. Instead, it is perceived as a pesky annual virus, slightly more troublesome than the common cold, but nothing serious. In reality, the average yearly flu is an extremely virulent disease, infecting anywhere from 30 to 60 million Americans annually, of whom about 36,000 die (usually the very old or the very young.)<sup>8</sup> It mutates so frequently that humans are never fully immune to it, so a yearly vaccine must be produced to counteract it, whereas most viruses require only one vaccination in a lifetime.<sup>9</sup> The killer flu of 1918, dubbed the Spanish Flu or the Spanish Lady, was a particularly deadly mutation of this influenza virus.<sup>10</sup> In comparison to the .1 percent of infected who die of the annual flu, it killed 2.5 percent of those who contracted it.<sup>11</sup> This mutation had a propensity to cause pneumonia, untreatable at the time, and clogged its victims’ lungs with bloody sputum until their faces turned dark purple and they died of suffocation.<sup>12</sup>

The origins of the Spanish Flu are uncertain, but most experts believe that the first wave in the U.S. emerged in Fort Riley, Kansas, on March 11, 1918, when one of the men came down with a milder form of the mysterious illness.<sup>13</sup> As of the next day, 414 soldiers had contracted the virus, and by the end of the week at least 500 were sick.<sup>14</sup> In total, 48 men died from the first influenza-pneumonia strain by the time it had run its course in the camp—too low a number to merit any concern in the medical community in 1918.<sup>15</sup> Even though the virus struck at least 13 other military camps, there was sparse evidence that civilians were similarly affected, and, besides, disease was a fact of life in any military camp.<sup>16</sup> So, little attention was directed to the budding pandemic. America instead

focused on the new draft calls, the war in Europe, the suffragette movement, and the Bolshevik tumult in Russia, while ignoring the mild outbreak of a hard-to-identify flu.<sup>17</sup>

As expected, the flu subsided quickly with a forgettable number of casualties. Unforeseen, however, was the deadlier second wave that would emerge that August to explode in September with unprecedented virulence. Influenza viruses thrive in cold, dry weather, which is why flu season tends to be during the winter.<sup>18</sup> The fact that it exploded like it did in August, which is neither cold nor dry, makes this flu remarkable. The epidemic first struck Camp Devens, an overcrowded military camp thirty miles from Boston, on September 8 after brewing in Europe for about a month.<sup>19</sup> From there, it spread to the rest of the United States in an unsettlingly erratic manner, hitting most of the East coast, then some of the Midwest and the Gulf Coast region, then the West coast, and ultimately striking the interior.<sup>20</sup> Although at times slow in reaching certain regions, the Spanish Flu was horrifyingly thorough in its damages.

Nearly every city in the United States was affected economically by the flu in the short-term. In many places, the workforce was paralyzed because 21-to-29-year-olds suffered the greatest casualties.<sup>21</sup> So many people died at uncommonly young ages that the average life expectancy dropped 12 years, from 51 in 1917 to 39 in 1918.<sup>22</sup> Whether or not the infected had been young, healthy, and robust prior to contracting the flu was of little consequence. The military, which consisted of a particularly young, healthy, and robust demographic, was hit the hardest of any social group in America: 40 percent of the Navy and 36 percent of the Army developed the flu in 1918.<sup>23</sup> With victims' average age being 33, the volume of death claims by flu victims blind-sided the life insurance companies.<sup>24</sup> One life insurance company handled \$24 million worth of unanticipated death claims for 68,000 deaths.<sup>25</sup> The fact that the majority of victims were in the prime of their lives defied actuarial projections, confusing insurance companies, destroying families, and disrupting the economy at large.

In the most severe stages of the flu, the “essential services” of cities verged on collapse as policemen, firemen, garbage collectors, telephone operators, and even the doctors, nurses, and social workers who were struggling to fight the flu, were absent from work.<sup>26</sup> The Bureau of Child Hygiene strove to handle an overwhelming population of orphans as the fathers and mothers of America, those in the most vulnerable age-range, were decimated by influenza.<sup>27</sup> Employment standards plummeted, the only requirement in some places being “two hands and willingness to work.”<sup>28</sup> Worst off of any “essential service” were the processors of the dead. As morgues filled up, in some places with bodies stacked three and four high, corpses accumulated in the streets, spreading bacteria and the residual influenza virus.<sup>29</sup> In some situations, the dead were left untended, festering in their homes for days.<sup>30</sup> The primary emergency during the flu was in these “essential services,” which could not have held out much longer than they did. While those services continued functioning, even at a minimal level, the rest of the economy was able to rebound to normal capacity within three years, the “Roaring Twenties” as evidence of this resilience. Despite the chaos, the nation persisted.

In *The Review of Economic Statistics* of December 1919, the year 1919 was deemed a “year of readjustment,” one in which the United States was healing from the tensions of 1918.<sup>31</sup> According to the article, in 1918, “industries were straining their energies to meet the unusual demands occasioned by the war,” yet it should be noted that the strain was also partially due to the Spanish Flu.<sup>32</sup> In one county in West Virginia, during the fall of 1918, the three months of flu had left 6,000 ill, of whom 500 died.<sup>33</sup> This sapped the county economy to near-collapse as 80 percent of the labor force fell ill.<sup>34</sup> Coupled with the large population overseas for the war, situations like this compromised cities across the nation, especially with Surgeon General of the Army William Crawford Gorgas shipping thousands of America’s fittest young doctors and nurses to Europe, where he believed they were most necessary.<sup>35</sup> The doctors and nurses who continued to serve at home, like many of the civilians who remained, were generally too old, or too young, or too disabled to adequately respond to the Spanish Flu.<sup>36</sup>

When the epidemic reached cities with a deficient work force and incompetent, sparse medical care, the critical damage to the economy was compounded by restrictive public health ordinances. In an effort to restrict exposure to the virus, the Surgeon General had issued public health ordinances that prohibited most public gatherings

and required gauze masks to be worn at all times.<sup>37</sup> In Philadelphia alone, it is estimated that theaters, cinemas, and hotels lost \$2 million to the flu from the ordinances, while saloons lost \$350,000.<sup>38</sup> These ordinances turned out to be fairly pointless: even in places that strictly adhered to the recommendations of the Surgeon General the case and death rates were no lower than those in lenient cities.<sup>39</sup> On a smaller scale, tobacco sales dropped off about 50 percent in places that strictly required cotton face masks because men could not smoke while wearing masks.<sup>40</sup> These masks turned out to be completely ineffective, because the weave of the gauze proved too porous to stop a virus, usually a tiny sphere with a diameter of about 1/10,000 of a millimeter.<sup>41</sup> The futile public health ordinances and gauze masks temporarily damaged business during the flu crisis, yet the economy rebounded.

When contagious diseases attack a society, it tends to hit the poorest sector of economy the hardest. One of the reasons for this is that they are more prone to infect people who have cramped living quarters, poor hygiene, inadequate water and food supplies, and exposure to parasites—some of the consequences of poverty.<sup>42</sup> Because the working class would be disproportionately affected by disease, the work force would be disproportionately affected by disease, the work force would be disproportionately diminished in the lowest-paying, most essential jobs during an epidemic. By contrast, the Spanish Flu, being an air-borne disease (and thus not preventable through good hygiene and health), affected all sectors of the economy equally. It killed vast numbers of people, but, as noted by historian Alfred W. Crosby, it “ignored the differences between rural and urban, patrician and peasant, capitalist and proletarian, and struck them all down in similar proportions.”<sup>43</sup> Because it was so unbiased in its selection, no social hierarchies were overturned, nor were any particular divisions of employment gutted of laborers. Influenza’s only prejudice was that it ravaged the young, healthy age-range—something fairly irrelevant to economic status—and thus the only long-term economic imbalance was proportional: there were fewer people to work and fewer people sharing in the wealth.

Although the Spanish Flu killed a lower percentage of the population than it affected and lasted for a shorter period of time, the economic benefits of the epidemic can be compared to those of the Black Death. One of the peculiar positive effects of the Black Death, according to historian Norman Davies, was that it marked “the decisive point in the decline of the feudal system in Western Europe.”<sup>44</sup> Although social upheaval may have already been gaining momentum, the deadly epidemic that killed approximately one-third of Europe allowed formerly impoverished and powerless serfs to assert their independence.<sup>45</sup> With an absence of competition in the work force and a high demand for menial labor, serfs were able to gain comparative economic freedom with rising pay.<sup>46</sup> This escalation of the price of labor and goods during the plague is echoed in the aftermath of the Spanish Flu epidemic. *The Review of Economic Statistics* of December 1919 observes the post-influenza wage inflation, noting that the “efficiency of labor, unfortunately, has not materially improved and is still generally below the pre-war level,” yet “rates of wages have remained high during 1919 and have continued to rise rather than decline.”<sup>47</sup> *The Review* also remarks on the oddity that “unemployment has not developed, in spite of the demobilization of the army; and in many sections labor is still reported to be scarce.”<sup>48</sup> The unusually high wages and low labor supply despite the re-absorption of troops into the work force could be attributed to the fact that so many people had succumbed to the pandemic on the home front that the re-entry of troops had normalized, rather than overwhelmed, the labor market.

In the years following 1918, the influenza pandemic, though surely seared in the memories of those it personally affected, quickly subsided from national consciousness.<sup>49</sup> Even during the epidemic, the flu was rarely mentioned in the papers or truly noticed on a national level. As noted by Crosby, “*The Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature*, 1919-1921 has 13 inches of column space devoted to citations of articles about baseball, 20 inches to Bolshevism, 47 to Prohibition, and 8 inches to the flu.”<sup>50</sup> As the United States emerged victorious from the devastations of World War I, the brief but deadly nightmare of the Spanish Flu was lost to the national memory. The war had put pressure on Americans to sacrifice as much as possible: the government urging people to grow what food they could, eat less meat and fewer luxury foods, buy war bonds, and serve in the army as required by the draft. Wartime America was dealing with death on a regular basis as the war casualties continued to grow, ultimately reaching approximately 117,000 deaths—about 53,000 in battle, the remainder due to disease.<sup>51</sup> With such a high proportion of war losses due to disease and the influenza deaths accompanying the hardships on the home front, the flu must have seemed so intricately enmeshed in the reality of war that it became unremarkable.

After the war had ended and the flu had essentially run its course in most places, the thrifty attitudes about consumption enforced by the war effort and the strict public health ordinances were immediately discarded. Americans had a brief attention span for such restrictions—they were only heeded during the war for patriotic reasons or in the midst of a deadly, dramatic pandemic. *The Review of Economic Statistics* of December 1919 remarked that “extravagant expenditure, both public and private, is found on every hand.”<sup>52</sup> San Franciscans—who endured the worst hit of the Spanish Flu on the West Coast—had complied with the October-November 1918 masking ordinance that had required gauze masks be worn at all times.<sup>53</sup> Yet, a mid-December masking recommendation of that same year met the fierce opposition of 90 percent of the city and was struck down by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.<sup>54</sup> The intolerance for what were thought at the time to be potentially life-saving health measures reflects the prevalent mood at the time of impatience with inconvenience that trumped even fear of death.

Perhaps the Spanish Flu would have drawn more attention if only it had left the scar of a long depression in its wake. Yet, after the crippling 10 months of the flu, the American economy was not only undamaged, but booming. Following the “year of readjustment” of 1919, the United States experienced a sunny era of unprecedented prosperity.<sup>55</sup> The national income, which had remained stagnant from 1890 to 1918, rose more than \$200 per capita and laborers enjoyed a workday diminished from 12 to eight hours, as well as a paid annual vacation.<sup>56</sup> With the advent of mass-production due to the innovations of the assembly line and expanded industrial exploitation of electricity, productivity soared to unheard-of levels.<sup>57</sup> In the mere 30 years between 1899 and 1929, industrial production expanded by 264 percent.<sup>58</sup> All of this was accomplished by a manufacturing labor pool that, according to historian William E. Leuchtenburg in his book *The Perils of Prosperity*, contained “precisely the same number of men in 1929 as it had in 1919.”<sup>59</sup> The workforce to attain these new heights was the same workforce that been described in 1919 as generally sufficient, yet which was in many sectors “still reported to be scarce.”<sup>60</sup> In the same way that the Renaissance thrived in the wake of the Black Plague by benefiting from capital redistribution to a greater demographic, the destruction of the Spanish Flu had opened up a decade of culture and materialism to a population that benefited from the resulting availability of jobs and higher wages.

With thousands of the fittest soldiers, doctors, and nurses overseas and the stress of coping with wartime and its strict economic regulations, a flu epidemic was the last thing that Americans of 1918 needed, or expected. It was especially traumatic when even the enormous strides that had been made in recent years in the medical community were insufficient to control this epidemic of a traditionally unobtrusive disease. Disturbingly, young, healthy adults were the most likely to succumb to the virus and die of a violent, delirious pneumonia. With the backbone of the economy debilitated and inept medical care, U.S. society could have collapsed. However, the flu lasted for a short enough time that it did not permanently disable the workforce. Also, because the primary target was an age-group rather than a class, the virus infected different socioeconomic sectors evenly. As a consequence, though in many places the workforce was reduced to the point of near-collapse, the population retained its socioeconomic balance. Finally, because the flu took place for 10 months during and after World War I, the most devastated demographic was replaced by the return of soldiers who could then be reabsorbed easily into society, thereby alleviating the labor-pool crisis. From the perspective of its victims and their loved ones, the 1918 influenza was a tragedy; however, viewed within an economic paradigm, the Spanish Lady smoothed the transition from the turbulence of the 19th and early 20th centuries into the prosperity of the 1920s.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche *Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 5, [http://books.google.com/books?id-oH4q25gwkOgC&pg=PR3&dq=twilight+of+the+idols&sig=6sr5p PhV2ST 4tHWj\\_CbRqJ-5Ty4#PPA5,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id-oH4q25gwkOgC&pg=PR3&dq=twilight+of+the+idols&sig=6sr5p PhV2ST 4tHWj_CbRqJ-5Ty4#PPA5,M1)

<sup>2</sup> Alfred W. Crosby. *America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 10; *The American Experience: Influenza 1918*, Program Transcript, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/influenza/filmmore/transcript/transcript1.html>

<sup>3</sup> Crosby, p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 206, 207

<sup>5</sup> Svenn-Erik Mamelund, "Can the Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918 Explain the Baby Boom of 1920 in Neutral Norway? Population English Edition, 2002) Vol 59, No. 2 (March-April, 2004) p. 232, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1634-2941%28200403%2F04%2959%3A2%3C229%3ACTSIPO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z>

<sup>6</sup> John M. Barry, Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History (New York: Penguin Group, 2004) p. 238

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 238

<sup>8</sup> Tim Appenzeller, "Tracking the Next Killer Flu," National Geographic (October 2005) p. 12

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 12

<sup>10</sup> It is generally thought that the Spanish flu got its name because Spain, being a neutral country in the World War I, did not censor its newspapers, so the mortality rates were exposed to the world. It is certain that the flu did not originate in Spain, though it is not certain where it did originate. Most experts agree that it probably began in America. Ibid., p. 12

<sup>11</sup> Gina Kolata, Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus That Caused It (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999) p. 7

<sup>12</sup> Barry, p. 243

<sup>13</sup> Mary Ellen Snodgrass, World Epidemics: A Cultural Chronology of Disease from Prehistory to the Era of SARS (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Incorporated, 2003) p. 272

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 272

<sup>15</sup> Crosby, p. 19

<sup>16</sup> The flu was not made a reportable disease in many cities until the second wave of the epidemic was already in full swing because the medical community was reluctant to accept that influenza had reached such proportions. This partially accounts for the incomplete civilian records concerning the flu, in contrast to the records of controlled populations, like the military and prisons, which kept strict medical records of any and all diseases in the community. Kolata, Flu, p. 10

<sup>17</sup> Crosby, pp. 17, 18

<sup>18</sup> Gina Kolata, "Why winter for the flu? A virus has its reasons; [4 edition]," International Herald Tribune (December 6, 2007) p. 5 <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=1393874091&SrchMod=e&sid=2&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1197252984&clientId=14764>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>20</sup> The American Experience: Influenza 1918, Maps, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/influenza/maps/index.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Crosby, p. 21

<sup>22</sup> Laura B. Shrestha, "CRS Report for Congress: Life Expectancy in the United States," (Domestic Social Policy Division, 2006) p. 31, <http://www.ncseonline.org/NLE/CRSreports/06Sep/RL32792.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Kolata, Flu, pp. 6, 7

<sup>24</sup> Crosby, p. 312

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 312

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 75

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 75

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 75

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 76

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 76

<sup>31</sup> Joseph S. Davis, "Economic Conditions Since the Armistice," The Review of Economic Statistics Vol 1, Monthly Supplement (December 1919) p. 9, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00346535%28191912%291%3C9%3AIIROTY%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 9

<sup>33</sup> Snodgrass, p. 276

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 276

- <sup>35</sup> Barry, pp. 142, 143
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 143
- <sup>37</sup> Crosby, p. 74
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 87
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 74
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 104
- <sup>41</sup> Barry, pp. 359, 103
- <sup>42</sup> Kolata, Flu, p. 47
- <sup>43</sup> Crosby, p. 323
- <sup>44</sup> Norman Davies, Europe: A History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 412
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 412
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 412
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 412; Davis, p. 10
- <sup>48</sup> Davis, p. 10
- <sup>49</sup> Crosby, p. 314
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 314
- <sup>51</sup> The Great War: Resources, WWI Casualty and Death Tables, PBS, [http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath\\_pop.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath_pop.html)
- <sup>52</sup> Davis, p. 9
- <sup>53</sup> Crosby, pp. 70, 108-110
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 70, 108-110
- <sup>55</sup> Davis, p. 10; William E. Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity: 1914-32 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958) p. 178
- <sup>56</sup> Leuchtenburg, pp. 178-179
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 179
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 180
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 179
- <sup>60</sup> Davis, p. 10

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## Annotation

The writer of this explanation

- provides a clear and coherent introduction that establishes the subject and conveys a knowledgeable stance.
  - *More people died of the Spanish Flu in the 10 months that it devastated the world than had died of any other disease or war in history. . . . Yet, due to some historical and demographic particulars of the 1918 flu, the American economy—which nearly collapsed in some areas during the outbreak—was not crippled in any lasting way.*
- develops a complex subject through judicious use of relevant and specific facts, details, examples, and quotations.
  - Details: *In only one century, it had seen the successful vaccination, containment, or cure for the notorious menaces of smallpox, anthrax, rabies, meningitis, typhoid, malaria, yellow fever, diphtheria, cholera, and tetanus.<sup>2</sup> . . . The war had put pressure on Americans to sacrifice as much as possible: the government urging people to grow what food they could, eat less meat and fewer luxury foods, buy war bonds, and serve in the army as required by the draft.*
  - Facts: *Following the “year of readjustment” of 1919, the United States experienced a sunny era of unprecedented prosperity.<sup>55</sup> The national income, which had remained stagnant from 1890 to 1918, rose more than \$200 per capita and laborers enjoyed a workday diminished from 12 to eight hours, as well as a paid annual vacation.<sup>56</sup>*
  - Examples: *It mutates so frequently that humans are never fully immune to it . . . The killer flu of 1918, dubbed the Spanish Flu or the Spanish Lady, was a particularly deadly mutation of this influenza virus.<sup>10</sup>*

- Quotations: *As noted by Crosby, “The Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature, 1919-1921 has 13 inches of column space devoted to citations of articles about baseball, 20 inches to Bolshevism, 47 to Prohibition, and 8 inches to the flu.”<sup>50</sup> . . . All of this was accomplished by a manufacturing labor pool that, according to historian William E. Leuchtenburg in his book *The Perils of Prosperity*, contained “precisely the same number of men in 1929 as it had in 1919.”<sup>59</sup>*
- makes discriminating use of researched information, incorporating it effectively into the text.
  - The writer incorporates information effectively to show how devastating the flu was as well as the *historical and demographic particulars* that allowed the economy to escape *lasting damage* (e.g., *By contrast, the Spanish Flu, being an air-borne disease . . . affected all sectors of the economy equally. . . . Because it was so unbiased in its selection, no social hierarchies were overturned, nor were any particular divisions of employment gutted of laborers*).
- organizes and presents information so that each new piece of information builds on what precedes it to create a unified whole.
  - The information is organized logically (and, in places, chronologically). The introduction previews the content. The piece then moves through several carefully sequenced categories of information: background details; information about the number of deaths the flu caused; the progress of the pandemic; the immediate effect on young workers, the military, and service workers; the impact of restrictive public health ordinances; the way the “egalitarian” infection attacked all strata of society; the ironic economic benefit of the flu; the resurgence of materialism; and the rapid growth of prosperity. The conclusion summarizes the main points of the explanation.
- demonstrates a command of discipline-specific and technical vocabulary and maintains a formal, objective style.
  - . . . *bacteriology . . . diphtheria . . . sanitation . . . suffragette movement . . . pandemic . . . virulent disease . . . influenza viruses . . .*
  - *In an effort to restrict exposure to the virus, the Surgeon General had issued public health ordinances that prohibited most public gatherings and required gauze masks to be worn at all times.*<sup>37</sup>
- demonstrates control of a range of strategies to present complex information or explanations and employs them effectively to manage the complexity of the topic.
  - Cause/effect: . . . *there was sparse evidence that civilians were similarly affected, and, besides, disease was a fact of life in any military camp.*<sup>16</sup> *So, little attention was directed to the budding pandemic . . . With an absence of competition in the work force and a high demand for menial labor, serfs were able to gain comparative economic freedom with rising pay.*<sup>45</sup>
  - Compare/contrast: *More people died of the Spanish Flu in the 10 months that it devastated the world than had died of any other disease or war in history. . . . The flu is not generally thought of as a killer. Instead, it is perceived as a pesky annual virus, slightly more troublesome than the common cold, but nothing serious. . . . When contagious diseases attack a society, it tends to hit the poorest sector of the economy the hardest. . . . By contrast, the Spanish Flu, being an air-borne disease (and thus not preventable through good hygiene and health) affected all sectors of the economy equally.*
- uses various sentence structures to enhance ideas and reinforce the relationships among them.
  - *Due to the new strides . . . Whereas in all previous wars . . . Yet, due to some historical and demographic particulars . . . Instead, it is perceived . . . As expected, the flu subsided quickly . . . Nearly every city . . . In many places . . . In the most severe stages . . . When the epidemic reached cities . . .*
- emphasizes the most significant information and confirms the accuracy of key points.

- The writer quotes appropriately, paraphrases and cites works, and documents facts and sources (e.g., *The epidemic first struck Camp Devens, an overcrowded military camp thirty miles from Boston, on September 8 after brewing in Europe for about a month.*<sup>19</sup>).
- demonstrates a very good command of the conventions of standard written English, although the work may have been edited for publication.

DRAFT

## Student Sample: Grade 12, Informational/Explanatory

This essay was one of a portfolio of four submitted by a high school student for placement in a college composition course sequence. The student had unlimited time to write and likely received feedback and instructional support while creating the portfolio.

### Fact vs. Fiction and All the Grey Space in Between

The modern world is full of problems and issues—disagreements between peoples that stem from today’s wide array of perceptions, ideas, and values. Issues that could never have been foreseen are often identified and made known today because of technology. Once, there were scatterings of people who had the same idea, yet never took any action because none knew of the others; now, given our complex forms of modern communication, there are millions who have been connected. Today, when a new and arguable idea surfaces, the debate spreads across the global community like wildfire. Topics that the general public might never have become aware of are instantly made into news that can be discussed at the evening dinner table. One such matter, which has sparked the curiosity of millions, is the recent interest in the classification of literature as fiction or nonfiction.

A number of questions have arisen: What sparked the booming interest? Where exactly is the line that separates fiction from nonfiction, and how far can the line be stretched until one becomes the other? Are there intermediaries between the two, or must we classify each piece of literature as one or the other? Do authors do this purposefully, or with no intent? The answers to these questions are often circular and simply lead to further dispute. In modern times, the line between the classification of literature as either fiction or nonfiction has become blurred and unclear; the outdated definitions and qualifications have sparked the development of new genres and challenged the world’s idea on the differences between the two.

#### *The Spark Which Lit the Fire*

Though it had been a fairly relevant and known topic to members of the literary world, the idea that a book is not always completely fiction or nonfiction seemed to be an obscure and unnecessary subject for the public to ponder. However, the average Monday morning watercooler conversation was forever changed when what has become known as the “Million Little Lies Scandal” broke out in early 2006. It started on October 26, 2005 when author James Frey appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. He was the only guest of the day, there to promote and discuss his book entitled *A Million Little Pieces*. The book, a nonfiction memoir, recounts Frey’s experience as an alcoholic, drug addict, and criminal, and the heroic story of his overcoming of every obstacle in his path to getting clean. After his appearance on the show and addition into Oprah’s highly esteemed and publicized book club, the novel skyrocketed to the top of the charts, eventually becoming a number one best seller. But his success was short lived; in the months that followed, *The Smoking Gun*, a Web site that posts legal documents, arrest records, and investigates celebrity police dealings, unearthed some discrepancies between Frey’s story and the police documents that should have supported his claims.

Though the Web site had originally only been searching for Frey’s mugshot, one small inconsistency soon led to another, and after a six-week investigation, the site released its findings. Investigators had taken any parts of Frey’s story that could be verified by a police record, matched it with his actual records, and were shocked by what they found; nearly all of Frey’s memoir was either highly embellished or flat out fabricated. Huge discrepancies between the truth and what was stated in Frey’s book became headline news; instances like Frey claiming to be in jail for eighty-seven days when in reality he was incarcerated for a mere four hours, or the serious drug charges that he claimed were filed against him that were never found on any record.

Frey was caught, and on January 8, 2006, *The Smoking Gun* published an article called “A Million Little Lies,” which took an in-depth look at every provable inconsistency in the novel. By comparing direct quotes from the book to police records—or rather, the lack of police records—Frey’s entire novel was pieced apart until there was nothing remaining. Completely discredited, yet still somehow maintaining the entire situation was a misunderstanding, Frey

attempted to salvage his namesake by reappearing on *Oprah*; in the end, this proved to be more damaging than helpful. He had his reasons for what he'd done, he tried to explain.

Reasons that were valid and legitimate according to him, as he stated that he would not have been able to get the book signed unless he was willing to sell it as nonfiction. Details had been slightly exaggerated, he conceded, but this was only to allow the novel to fluctuate and flow in a way that would not have been possible had he stuck to the bare facts.

Regardless, in the end, it was proved beyond anyone's reasonable doubt that James Frey's novel landed dead center in the proverbial grey area between black and white—his novel was partially fiction and partially nonfiction. And so started the media frenzy; the scandal covered newsstands for weeks, people took sides with either Frey or his critics, and similarly themed novels were called into question. Suddenly the world *cared* about a novel's validity; they no longer assumed that the words fiction and nonfiction could themselves define the amount of fact that stood behind a piece of literature. People also realized, simultaneously, that they might not exactly know what defined and separated fiction and nonfiction, or if, in more modern times, the two might mesh together a bit more than in the literature of old.

#### *With Difficulty, the Line is Drawn*

Fiction and nonfiction: they're two words that are surprisingly hard to define. It's difficult to ascertain what the words have meant in the past, what they each encompass today, and how past and present definitions have been molded and shaped by the literature of the time. Traditionally, fiction is 'a tale drawn from the imagination' and nonfiction is 'a statement of fact'; however, the two are so much more complex than that. For many, the word 'fiction' is associable with the word 'story,' as if the two are equal or interchangeable. Subgenres of fiction often contribute to this perception; novels, short stories, fairy tales, comics, films, animation, and even video games help the mind classify fiction as a substance completely fabricated in the mind. Fiction is largely assumed to be a form of art or entertainment, and in many cases this is true—science fiction and romance novels are two examples of how we are entertained by a good book. But frequently, stories are told to educate—to raise awareness regarding a certain topic about which the author is concerned.

Stories like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Ayn Rand's *Anthem* all warn us about terrible futures that may arise as the result of the choices of humanity. Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* is a short work of fiction based entirely around fact; while it tells the tale of a fictional little African boy thrown into a bloody civil uprising, his story of being a recruited child soldier is happening to hundreds of similar boys to this very day. Fables and parables are other, more subliminal examples of educational, moral-based fiction.

In the same way, nonfiction is surrounded by many presumptions; people assume that anything read in a nonfiction book is true, otherwise the literature would be labeled as fiction. Nonfiction literature *is* factual literature, but there is one important note to make. Nonfiction is literature that is *presented* as fact. This presentation may be accurate or inaccurate; in other words, the author is presumed to be writing what he or she believes to be the truth, or what he or she has been led to believe is the truth. Examples of nonfiction include essays, documentaries, scientific papers, textbooks, and journals. Nonfiction differs from fiction, however, in the areas regarding how the literature is presented and used. Directness, simplicity, and clarity are all aims of nonfiction literature.

Providing straight, accessible, understandable information to the reader is the purpose of nonfiction, and the ability to communicate well to the audience is what defines a skilled writer of the field. And despite the truth behind nonfiction writing, it is often necessary to persuade the reader to agree with the ideas being presented; therefore, a balanced, coherent and informed argument is also vital.

#### *More Than Simply Black or White*

The line between fiction and nonfiction starts to blur, however, when one considers genres that seem to mesh the two; historical fiction, new journalism, and biographies/autobiographies. These are only three of the defined new

genres encompassed by what has become the intermediary between fiction and nonfiction— literary nonfiction. When one explores these three genres, it becomes blaringly obvious how easily fiction and nonfiction can blur into one.

Historical fiction is the product when an author takes real people and real events and tells the story of what actually happened to them, but inserts characters of their own creation and a plot line that they invent in order to tie the entire novel together. This idea is perfectly exemplified in Ann Rinaldi’s *An Acquaintance with Darkness*. This novel takes real historical aspects (the assassination of President Lincoln; the trial of the only woman associated with his murder; the society of Washington, D.C., at the time of his death; the history behind the practice of grave robbing) and inserts the character of a young girl and her dying mother who, between the two of them, manage to tell the historical side of the story along with their own imagined one. All the pieces of history are told completely as they happened; so on some level, this novel *is* nonfiction. Yet it is also blatantly fiction—it has *characters*.

New journalism, biographies, and autobiographies, however, blur the lines in a slightly different way; they call into question people’s ability to relay information truthfully and with no bias. New journalism is the term coined in the 1960s to describe the then unconventional journalism techniques that brought the reader inside the life and mind of the story. It’s a practice very common today; just watch any network investigation series. The journalist attempts to get inside the mind of whomever is being investigated; he or she digs up information regarding that person’s past, present, and potential future. The author then takes all the factual background information they’ve collected and pairs it with the emotions, memories, and feelings described to them by the person, and writes the complete story. If the complete work is to be published as a book rather than a news article or made into a television script, it often ends up being sold as a fiction novel. Yet is this the correct classification, given that all the information is true?

One excellent example of new journalism is Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*. When asked about it, Capote himself even called it “unclassifiable.” Capote traveled to Kansas to investigate the murder of a family of four; he ended up staying there for years, befriending the people of the town, discovering what he could about the murders from them, and piecing together his book from interviews and information he gained during his stay. When it was published, the novel became a best seller and also one of the first highly noted pieces of literature to border the line between fiction and nonfiction; it was the first of its kind to bring the idea of the blurring line to households across the United States.

Biographies and autobiographies are often questioned in the same way. Though not always thought of as controversial and previously considered nonfiction, biographies and autobiographies don’t appear to fit into today’s definition of fiction or nonfiction. The authors of both are simply telling the story of their own life or of someone else’s life, but that begs an obvious question; is a highly detailed, written record of a person’s feelings and perceptions able to be considered nonfiction? How can we classify people’s emotions and memories as fact? An outstanding example of an autobiographical piece that cannot be defined is Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*. His self-proclaimed ‘nonfiction novel’ is a collection of stories stemming from both his imagination and his personal experience in Vietnam during the war. O’Brien feels that the idea of creating a story that is technically false yet truthfully portrays a situation—as opposed to just stating the facts and stirring no emotion within the reader—is the correct way to educate the public in a meaningful, everlasting way. He, like many others, believes that biographies and autobiographies should be left as their own separate being; a genre where the reader may classify for himself or herself what truth and what fiction might lie within the literature. All of the issues mentioned above are shrouded in debate; there are no straightforward answers.

Fiction and nonfiction are two polar opposites on a scale that today offers little to no gradient. In years past, these two words have been definition enough and have managed to encompass all types of written word. Times change, however, and in the modern day, authors have begun to push the boundaries and discover the furthest extent of where literature can take us. Since they feel as if their literature does not fit into the classifications of fiction or nonfiction, authors are creating *new* genres where their novels and books can be properly sorted and defined. An update is long overdue—both an update to the definitions currently used to classify books, and an update in which we create new areas into which books can be classified.

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## Annotation

The writer of this explanation

- provides a clear and coherent introduction that establishes the subject and conveys a knowledgeable stance.
  - *In modern times, the line between the classification of literature as either fiction or nonfiction has become blurred and unclear; the outdated definitions and qualifications have sparked the development of new genres and challenged the world's idea on the differences between the two.*
- develops a complex subject through judicious use of facts, details, examples, and other information.
  - *Frey was caught, and on January 8, 2006, The Smoking Gun published an article called "A Million Little Lies," which took an in-depth look at every provable inconsistency in the novel. By comparing direct quotes from the book to police records—or rather, the lack of police records—Frey's entire novel was pieced apart until there was nothing remaining.*
  - *Stories like Cormac McCarthy's The Road, George Orwell's 1984, and Ayn Rand's Anthem all warn us about terrible futures that may arise as the result of the choices of humanity.*
- organizes and presents information so that each new piece builds on what precedes it to create a unified whole.
  - *The writer uses headers to help organize sections and uses cohesion devices to link sentences (The Spark Which Lit the Fire; With Difficulty, the Line is Drawn; More Than Simply Black or White).*
  - *However, the average Monday morning watercooler conversation was forever changed when what has become known as the "Million Little Lies Scandal" broke out in early 2006.*
  - *Regardless, in the end, it was proved beyond anyone's reasonable doubt that James Frey's novel landed dead center in the proverbial grey area between black and white—his novel was partially fiction and partially nonfiction.*
  - *Fiction and nonfiction: they're two words that are surprisingly hard to define. It's difficult to ascertain what the words have meant in the past, what they each encompass today, and how past and present definitions have been molded and shaped by the literature of the time.*
  - *Fiction and nonfiction are two polar opposites on a scale that today offers little to no gradient.*
- demonstrates control of strategies and uses discipline-specific vocabulary.
  - *Fiction and nonfiction: they're two words that are surprisingly hard to define.*
  - *The line between fiction and nonfiction starts to blur, however, when one considers genres that seem to mesh the two; historical fiction, new journalism, and biographies / autobiographies.*
- links ideas by varying sentence structures to express the precise relationship among ideas and to create cohesion.
  - *All the pieces of history are told completely as they happened; so on some level, this novel is nonfiction. Yet it is also blatantly fiction—it has characters.*
  - *Where exactly is the line that separates fiction from nonfiction, and how far can the line be stretched until one becomes the other? Are there intermediaries between the two, or must we classify each piece of literature as one or the other?*
- provides a conclusion that articulates the significance of the information.
  - *Since they feel as if their literature does not fit into the classifications of fiction or nonfiction, authors are creating new genres where their novels and books can be properly sorted and defined.*

- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are some errors in the essay, such as the following.
  - . . . *The Smoking Gun*, a Web site that posts legal documents, arrest records, and investigates celebrity police dealings . . .
  - *By comparing direct quotes from the book to police records—or rather, the lack of police records—Frey’s entire novel was pieced apart until there was nothing remaining.*

***Note on Narrative Writing***

The writer has used narrative—the recounting of James Frey’s troubles—to add interest and lend concreteness to his essay. He presents vivid and relevant details in his narrative and crafts a structure that reveals the significance of the story within the more philosophical explanation that surrounds it.

## Student Sample: Grade 12, Informational/Explanatory

The essay that follows was one of a portfolio of four essays submitted by a high school student for placement in a college composition course sequence. The student had unlimited time to write and likely received feedback and instructional support while creating the portfolio.

### **The Making of a Human Voice and How to Use It**

The violin is arguably the most cherished and well-known orchestral instrument in the world. Many are moved by its unique quality of sound; it is known as the only instrument close to the sound of a human voice. Maybe the violin is so revered because “humans in all times and places are powerfully moved, or threatened, by the possibility that with our hands and minds we can create something that is perfect” (Ebert). But the sound of this instrument was not magically created overnight; the creation of the very first violin took many years and has been a product of much experimentation. This is the reason that every beginning violinist should learn to appreciate the art of making a violin and the process of holding and bowing his instrument so that he will have the knowledge to play it well.

The process of constructing a violin is an age-old tradition that has been developed and refined for centuries. Each step is crucial to the quality of the instrument’s sound. The violin’s body consists of a rib structure, which is made from six thin maple ribs that are bent to shape by applying dry heat. The ribs are reinforced at the joints by wood blocks that are located in each of the four outward curving corners, one at the top rib, and one at the lower rib. To reinforce the glue-joints between the ribs and the table and back of the violin, strips of willow or pine are glued along the inside edges of the ribs to create the lining. The back plate of the violin is made from either one or two matched pieces of maple. The wood chosen for these pieces is very important and affects the sound production of the violin. The outline of the plate is drawn onto the maple and sawn out, and the arching (the outward bulge) is then painstakingly carved to a thickness of about five millimeters. The front plate of the violin, or table, has two soundholes carved from it on either side of the bridge. These soundholes are [shaped like the letter f] and are made to project the sound. Purfling is done by inlaying thin strips of wood around the top and back of the violin a short distance from the rim. Purfling strengthens the delicate edgework and produces a beautiful frame around the instrument’s outline (Gusset).

The bridge is cut from a thin sliver of maple. Intricate shapes are carved from it, known as the “heart,” “ears,” and the two “feet” that allow it to stand on the violin table. The bridge is placed directly between the small nicks cut in the middle of each [soundhole]. The top of the bridge is curved to conform to the arch of the violin table, which allows the player to play each string individually (Skinner). The bridge is held onto the instrument by as much as seventeen pounds of pressure exerted from the four strings, which makes it a very delicate piece that must be checked periodically for leaning or warping. A bass-bar is fitted to the underside of the table underneath the left foot of the bridge. Underneath the right foot of the bridge, a soundpost is wedged between the front and back panel. The soundpost is made of spruce or pine and resists the downward pressure of the strings and improves the sound.

A neck is fitted to the top rib and is made to hold the fingerboard above the table. The fingerboard is a piece of ebony that extends beyond the neck and gradually widens towards the bridge. At the top of the neck is a pegbox that has holes drilled into each side in which the pegs are held. The pegs are used for a wide range of tuning. The pegbox slopes slightly backwards, which tensions the strings across the ebony nut at the top of the fingerboard and keeps them raised above the fingerboard. At the top of the pegbox is a scroll, added during the baroque period as an artistic flourish to provide an aesthetic touch to its already pleasing appearance (Vienna Online Magazine). The strings are wrapped around the pegs, stretched across the bridge, and held by an ebony or boxwood tailpiece. Anywhere from one to four fine tuners can be attached to the tailpiece; these are used to tighten or loosen the string to change its pitch for fine-tuning. The tailpiece is held into place by a loop of gut or nylon that is wrapped around an ebony end button located in the middle of the bottom rib.

After gluing is done, the violin must be exposed to air and sun for several days to a few weeks to darken the wood through the process of oxidation (Gusset). A protective varnish is brushed onto the surface of the violin, which has a slight dampening effect to the sound, but it is primarily used to protect the wood from perspiration, dust, dirt, and humidity (Kolneder 21). “The classical Italian makers appear to have used different formulations for the ground coat, which seals and protects the wood and does much to bring out its natural beauty, and the top coats, which were tinted with rich red, yellow and golden-brown colours . . . Recent research suggests that walnut or linseed oil may have been an important constituent of the finest old Italian varnish, later supplanted by recipes based on shellac and alcohol” (Stowell 5).

Both the construction of the violin and the way it is played are equally important to its sound production. This is very critical to learn early so that a bad habit does not need correcting later on. The modern violin is held between the chin and the left shoulder, with the scroll angling towards the left. Violin teachers will have varying ideas of the correct position to hold a violin, but many great violinists have held their instruments in different ways and have been successful. Some will hold a violin directly under the chin, and others believe that the highest position on the shoulder is best. A chinrest is usually attached to the left side of the tailpiece to make it more comfortable for the violinist to hold. Sometimes a shoulder rest can be attached to the back of the violin which can be taken off after playing. The shoulder rest can be made of various materials and provides height and padding to the violinist’s shoulder.

The left hand gently moves along the neck and fingerboard of the violin. The left fingers press down upon the string, shortening its length, which creates a higher pitch. The right hand holds the bow, which consists of a long stick of wood and a gathering of horsehair stretched from one end of the bow to the other. “In the bowing area, two C-shaped indentations (the waist) accommodate the bow’s motion across the strings” (Kolneder 13). The four strings can be bowed with the horsehair, plucked, or bounced with the stick of the bow to produce vastly different colors of sound. “Bowing across the string is the normal manner of tone production, but the process is actually extremely complicated and in its most minute details not yet entirely understood . . . The strings’ basic pitch depends on its length, thickness, material . . . and tension. These factors determine the frequency, that is, the number of vibrations . . . per second” (Kolneder 16). The bow must be rosined frequently to allow the strings to vibrate to create the fullest sound.

Even if a luthier, or stringed instrument maker, takes years to complete a violin, it can only produce its best sound if every step of its construction and every piece is made with is of the best quality. The same is true of the time needed for a musician to play the violin well. A player must learn that what counts is not how much time is spent practicing, but the quality of practice. A private teacher is also required, so proper instruction will be given. A musician must also fully understand and appreciate the skill required for constructing a violin. Not until then will a violinist be able to use his knowledge to bring forth their instrument’s fullest and most beautiful sound.

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## Annotation

The writer of this explanatory essay

- provides a clear and coherent introduction that establishes the subject, and conveys a knowledgeable stance.
  - *The violin is arguably the most cherished and well-known orchestral instrument in the world. Many are moved by its unique quality of sound; it is known as the only instrument close to the sound of a human voice. . . . the sound of this instrument was not magically created overnight; the creation of the very first violin took many years and has been a product of much experimentation. This is the reason that every beginning violinist should learn to appreciate the art of making a violin and the process of holding and bowing his instrument so that he will have the knowledge to play it well.*
- develops a complex subject (the making of a violin) through judicious use of relevant and specific facts, details, quotations, and examples.
  - Facts: . . . *the creation of the very first violin took many years and has been a product of much experimentation.*
  - Details: *The four strings can be bowed with the horsehair, plucked, or bounced with the stick of the bow to produce vastly different colors of sound.*
  - Quotations: *“Bowing across the string is the normal manner of tone production, but the process is actually extremely complicated and in its most minute details not yet entirely understood . . . The strings’ basic pitch depends on its length, thickness, material . . . and tension. These factors determine the frequency, that is, the number of vibrations . . . per second” (Kolneder 16).*
  - Examples: . . . *many great violinists have held their instruments in different ways and have been successful. Some will hold a violin directly under the chin, and others believe that the highest position on the shoulder is best.*
- represents and cites accurately the data, conclusions, and opinions of others, effectively incorporating them into her own work while avoiding plagiarism.
  - *At the top of the pegbox is a scroll, added during the baroque period as an artistic flourish to provide an aesthetic touch to its already pleasing appearance (Vienna Online Magazine).*
  - *“The classical Italian makers appear to have used different formulations for the ground coat, which seals and protects the wood and does much to bring out its natural beauty, and the top coats, which were tinted with rich red, yellow and golden-brown colours . . . Recent research suggests that walnut or linseed oil may have been an important constituent of the finest old Italian varnish, later supplanted by recipes based on shellac and alcohol” (Stowell 5).*
- organizes and presents information so that each new piece builds on what precedes it to create a unified whole.
  - The information is sequenced logically. The writer provides a carefully sequenced explanation of how a violin is made. Her explanation conveys detailed descriptions of the various parts of a violin and their purposes, what a violin is made of, how it is played, and the steps in the process of building one.
- demonstrates a command of discipline-specific and technical vocabulary and maintains a formal, objective style.
  - . . . *a rib structure . . . glue-joints . . . back plate . . . soundholes . . . tuning . . .*
  - *Purfling is done by inlaying thin strips of wood around the top and back of the violin a short distance from the rim. . . . a luthier, or stringed instrument maker . . .*

- demonstrates control of a range of strategies to present complex information.
  - If/then (with an embedded definition): *Even if a luthier, or stringed instrument maker, takes years to complete a violin, it can only produce its best sound if every step of its construction and every piece is made with is of the best quality.*
  - Definition: *The fingerboard is a piece of ebony that extends beyond the neck and gradually widens towards the bridge.*
- links ideas with transitions and by varying sentence structures to express the precise relationships among ideas and to create cohesion.
  - *This is the reason . . . At the top of the neck . . . After gluing is done . . . Even if a luthier . . .*
  - *But the sound of this instrument was not magically created overnight; the creation of the very first violin took many years and has been a product of much experimentation. This is the reason that every beginning violinist should learn to appreciate the art of making a violin . . .*
- emphasizes the most significant information and confirms the accuracy of key points by quoting appropriately and citing works.
  - *“... Recent research suggests that walnut or linseed oil may have been an important constituent of the finest old Italian varnish, later supplanted by recipes based on shellac and alcohol” (Stowell 5).*
- provides a conclusion that articulates the implications and significance of the explanation.
  - *A musician must . . . fully understand and appreciate the skill required for constructing a violin. Not until then will a violinist be able to use his knowledge to bring forth their instrument’s fullest and most beautiful sound.*
- demonstrates a very good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are a few errors and weak constructions in the essay, such as the following.
  - *. . . the creation of the very first violin took many years and has been a product of much experimentation.*
  - *The soundpost is made of spruce or pine and resists the downward pressure of the strings and improves the sound.*

## Student Sample: Grade 12, Argument

This essay on dress codes was written for a university/college placement assessment. Two different perspectives on an issue (whether or not dress codes should be adopted in school) were provided in the prompt, and students were advised to either support one of the two points of view given or present a different point of view on the issue. The students were allowed thirty minutes to write.

I believe that it would be beneficial for our schools to adopt dress codes. Although some may argue that this action would restrict the individual student's freedom of expression, I do not agree. Our right to express ourselves is important, but in our society none of us has unrestricted freedom to do as we like at all times. We must all learn discipline, respect the feelings of others, and learn how to operate in the real world in order to be successful. Dress codes would not only create a better learning environment, but would also help prepare students for their futures.

Perhaps the most important benefit of adopting dress codes would be creating a better learning environment. Inappropriate clothing can be distracting to fellow students who are trying to concentrate. Short skirts, skimpy tops, and low pants are fine for after school, but not for the classroom. T-shirts with risky images or profanity may be offensive to certain groups. Students should express themselves through art or creative writing, not clothing. With fewer distractions, students can concentrate on getting a good education which can help them later on.

Another benefit of having a dress code is that it will prepare students to dress properly for different places. When you go to a party you do not wear the same clothes you wear to church. Likewise, when you dress for work you do not wear the same clothes you wear at the beach. Many professions even require uniforms. Having a dress code in high school will help students adjust to the real world.

Lastly, with all the peer pressure in school, many students worry about fitting in. If a dress code (or even uniforms) were required, there would be less emphasis on how you look, and more emphasis on learning.

In conclusion, there are many important reasons our schools should adopt dress codes. Getting an education is hard enough without being distracted by inappropriate t-shirts or tight pants. Learning to dress for particular occasions prepares us for the real world. And teens have enough pressure already without having to worry about what they are wearing.

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### Annotation

The writer of this argument

- establishes the importance of the issue and, makes a precise claim.
  - *I believe that it would be beneficial for our schools to adopt dress codes.*
- distinguishes the claim from a counterclaim and points out its weaknesses but does not adequately develop the counterclaim.
  - *Although some may argue that this action would restrict the individual student's freedom of expression, I do not agree. Our right to express ourselves is important, but in our society none of us has unrestricted freedom to do as we like at all times. We must all learn discipline, respect the feelings of others, and learn how to operate in the real world in order to be successful.*
- supports claims with logical reasoning but generally fails to provide specific evidence. (If this piece had not been produced during an on-demand assessment, the student might have gathered and incorporated evidence to strengthen the argument.)
  - *Perhaps the most important benefit of adopting dress codes would be creating a better learning environment. Inappropriate clothing can be distracting to fellow students who are trying to concentrate.*
  - *Another benefit of having a dress code is that it will prepare students to dress properly for different places. When you go to a party you do not wear the same clothes you wear to church.*

- *If a dress code (or even uniforms) were required, there would be less emphasis on how you look, and more emphasis on learning.*
- develops the argument in part based on an awareness of the audience’s likely values.
  - The writer addresses an unknown adult audience likely to appreciate values such as *discipline, respect [for] the feelings of others, and the creation of a better learning environment.*
- conveys relationships between reasons and signals alternative claims using words, phrases, and complex syntax.
  - *Although some may argue . . . Perhaps the most important benefit . . . With fewer distractions . . . Another benefit . . . When . . . Likewise . . . If a dress code (or even uniforms) were required. . . Lastly . . . In conclusion . . .*
- maintains a formal style appropriate for the topic and the assessment situation.
- demonstrates a fairly good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are some errors in the essay, such as the following.
  - *T-shirts with risky [risqué] images . . .*
  - *. . . espress themselves . . .*