

What follows are sample papers on which you can practice your formative assessment skills using the traits of writing scoring guides. Dive in—the more you use and apply the scoring guides, the easier assessing becomes. You’ll begin to internalize the criteria, name what is working and to what degree, and think of ways you can nudge each writer forward in his or her writing.

This appendix is set up similarly to Chapter 2. Two of the papers are scored on one trait at a time using the scoring guides to home in on key qualities. The other six papers are scored for all the traits holistically, with trait-by-trait comments included. The writers of these samples range from grade two to grade six, to give you a sense of how broad students’ writing skills are during these years. These samples also represent all of the modes: narrative, expository, and persuasive.

Appendix A

Sample Writing Papers for Practice

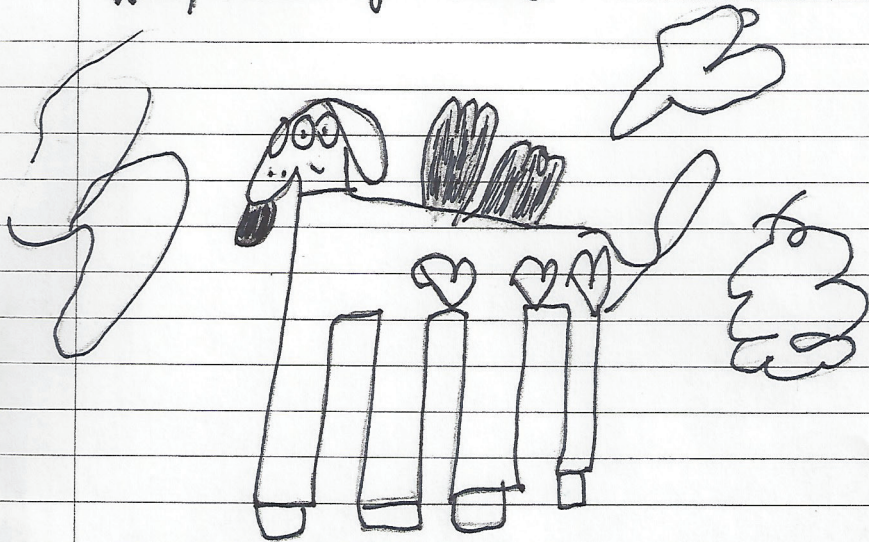
A special note about students in grade two: Many second graders can create multiple sentences—a paragraph—on the same topic. Some second graders may not be at this point yet, so they would benefit more from the application of the developmental scoring guide, which will match their needs as beginning writers. Regardless of age, other writers might also appreciate the feedback from the beginning scoring guide if they are not yet at the stage where they can write a paragraph. The scoring guide for grades 1–2 can be downloaded from my website, www.culhamwriting.com, along with student versions that will support learning.

As you read these sample papers, be sure to have your scoring guides handy and work with a partner or two if you can. The conversation that takes place as you practice on these papers will be rich and constructive—and on the other side, you’ll know how to assess with confidence and reliability. If the scores provided are no more than one point different from those you assign, that is considered agreement; we assess the writing in the same zone of performance. Remember that formative assessment is not really about the score as much as it is about learning how to read the writing for strengths and areas that need development.

Grade 2: “Unicorn”—Traits and Key Qualities

Who wouldn't want a flying unicorn as a pet? This young writer has a vivid imagination and ideas to share. She's at that turning point where she's no longer a beginning writer—she's a developing writer with something to say that can be expressed in multiple sentences that stay on the topic.

IF i had a pet it woid be a flying unicorn. itll be pink her e yels woid be yellow her winks will be white her hoofs will be purple. she will live in the sky on a cloud. her name woid be AVA. she woid eat grass. it woid way two ponds.



Scoring Guide: Ideas

The piece's content—its central message and details that support that message.

<div> <div>6</div> <div>HIGH</div> <div>5</div> <div>4</div> <div>MIDDLE</div> <div>3</div> <div>2</div> <div>LOW</div> <div>1</div> </div>	EXCEPTIONAL <p>A. Finding a Topic: The writer offers a clear, central theme or a simple, original story line that is memorable.</p> <p>B. Focusing the Topic: The writer narrows the theme or story line to create a piece that is clear, tight, and manageable.</p> <p>C. Developing the Topic: The writer provides enough critical evidence to support the theme and shows insight on the topic. Or he or she tells the story in a fresh way through an original, unpredictable plot.</p> <p>D. Using Details: The writer offers credible accurate details that create pictures in the reader's mind, from the beginning of the piece to the end. Those details provide the reader with evidence of the writer's knowledge about and/or experience with the topic.</p>
	STRONG
	REFINING <p>A. Finding a Topic: The writer offers a recognizable but broad theme or story line. He or she stays on topic, but in a predictable way.</p> <p>B. Focusing the Topic: The writer needs to crystallize his or her topic around the central theme or story line. He or she does not focus on a specific aspect of the topic.</p> <p>C. Developing the Topic: The writer draws on personal knowledge and experience, but does not offer a unique perspective. He or she does not probe deeply, but instead gives the reader only a glimpse at aspects of the topic.</p> <p>D. Using Details: The writer offers details, but they do not always hit the mark because they are inaccurate or irrelevant. He or she does not create a picture in the reader's mind because key questions about the central theme or story line have not been addressed.</p>
	DEVELOPING
	EMERGING <p>A. Finding a Topic: The writer has not settled on a topic and, therefore, may offer only a series of unfocused, repetitious, and/or random thoughts.</p> <p>B. Focusing the Topic: The writer has not narrowed his or her topic in a meaningful way. It's hard to tell what the writer thinks is important since he or she devotes equal importance to each piece of information.</p> <p>C. Developing the Topic: The writer has created a piece that is so short the reader cannot fully understand or appreciate what he or she wants to say. He or she may have simply restated an assigned topic or responded to a prompt without devoting much thought or effort to it.</p> <p>D. Using Details: The writer has clearly devoted little attention to details. The writing contains limited or completely inaccurate information. After reading the piece, the reader is left with many unanswered questions.</p>
	RUDIMENTARY

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Key Quality Scores

Finding a Topic: 3

Focusing the Topic: 3

Developing the Topic: 3

Using Details: 3

Overall Ideas score: 3

Sentence Fluency: 5

Conventions: 6

The choice of a flying unicorn as a pet shows imagination and creativity. The writer explains what it would look like and where it would live. The writer does not, however, provide any insight on the topic, which keeps this piece from scoring higher in the ideas trait. The picture is a nice complement, but it lacks significant detail to build onto the text. This

writer is definitely on her way to having a strong piece. Next steps might include asking the writer to develop additional details that make the piece memorable and original, taking a dive into what life with a flying unicorn might be like.

Worth Mentioning

Notice that the score has an up arrow after it. That's because there is no one, perfect, precise, mathematically provable score. This piece scores in the middle for ideas, but it leans upward. Some readers might assign a 3.5, a 3/4 split, or a 3+. I prefer to use arrows so students can see visually where they are on the continuum with a piece. I don't use down arrows, though—that's too negative. Remember, we're assessing the writing at this point in its development and looking for clues about where it can improve.

Grade 2: “Unicorn” Organization Summary

Though the piece begins with a statement of the intended topic, it then devolves into a series of descriptive statements about the unicorn that could appear in any order and make perfect sense. There is no inherent sense of order in the piece as it stands. Nor does it have an ending—it just stops. Next steps for this writer would be to think about grouping statements regarding appearance, where the unicorn lives, why she is named as she is, and so on, using transition words and phrases. As the piece develops in the ideas trait, the logic of the organization will become more clear. Finally, the writer can come up with an ending that reflects the new direction of the piece.

Worth Mentioning

Notice that there’s no arrow after this piece’s overall score. That’s because it is a solid 2, not leaning upward. There is no formula for how many of the key qualities need to be met before a piece moves between points. I look at how the piece scores for each key quality, after I have worked through all of them, and make my assessment based on that. It helps to use a highlighter on the scoring guide, as I have done, for visual impact.

Key Quality Scores

Creating the Lead: 3

Using Sequence Words
and Transition Words: 1

Structuring the Body: 2

Ending with a Sense of
Resolution: 1

Overall Organization
score: 2

Scoring Guide: Organization

The internal structure of the piece—the thread of logic, the pattern of meaning.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL	<p>A. Creating the Lead: The writer grabs the reader’s attention from the start and leads him or her into the piece naturally. He or she entices the reader, providing a tantalizing glimpse of what is to come.</p> <p>B. Using Sequence Words and Transition Words: The writer includes a variety of carefully selected sequence words (such as <i>later</i>, <i>then</i>, and <i>meanwhile</i>) and transition words (such as <i>however</i>, <i>also</i>, and <i>clearly</i>), which are placed wisely to guide the reader through the piece by showing how ideas progress, relate, and/or diverge.</p> <p>C. Structuring the Body: The writer creates a piece that is easy to follow by fitting details together logically. He or she slows down to spotlight important points or events, and speeds up when he or she needs to move the reader along.</p> <p>D. Ending With a Sense of Resolution: The writer sums up his or her thinking in a natural, thoughtful, and convincing way. He or she anticipates and answers any lingering questions the reader may have, providing a strong sense of closure.</p>
	5 ↑ MIDDLE	STRONG
	4 ↑	REFINING
		<p>A. Creating the Lead: The writer presents an introduction, although it may not be original or thought-provoking. Instead, it may be a simple restatement of the topic and, therefore, does not create a sense of anticipation about what is to come.</p> <p>B. Using Sequence Words and Transition Words: The writer uses sequence words to show the logical order of details, but they feel obvious or canned. The use of transition words is spotty and rarely creates coherence.</p> <p>C. Structuring the Body: The writer sequences events and important points logically, for the most part. However, the reader may wish to move a few things around to create a more sensible flow. He or she may also feel the urge to speed up or slow down for more satisfying pacing.</p> <p>D. Ending With a Sense of Resolution: The writer ends the piece on a familiar note: “Thank you for reading...,” “Now you know all about...,” or “They lived happily ever after.” He or she needs to tie up loose ends to leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction or closure.</p>
3 ↑		DEVELOPING
2 ↑		EMERGING
1 ↑ LOW		<p>A. Creating the Lead: The writer does not give the reader any clue about what is to come. The opening point feels as if it were chosen randomly.</p> <p>B. Using Sequence Words and Transition Words: The writer does not provide sequence and/or transition words between sections or provides words that are so confusing the reader is unable to sort one section from another.</p> <p>C. Structuring the Body: The writer does not show clearly what comes first, next, and last, making it difficult to understand how sections fit together. The writer slows down when he or she should speed up, and speeds up when he or she should slow down.</p> <p>D. Ending With a Sense of Resolution: The writer ends the piece with no conclusion at all—or nothing more than “The End” or something equally bland. There is no sense of resolution, no sense of completion.</p>
	1	RUDIMENTARY

Grade 2: “Unicorn” Voice Summary

Scoring Guide: Voice

The tone and tenor of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer, which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL
	A. Establishing a Tone: The writer cares about the topic, and it shows. The writing is expressive and compelling. The reader feels the writer's conviction, authority, and integrity. B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer makes clear his or her reason for creating the piece. He or she offers a point of view that is appropriate for the mode (narrative, expository, or persuasive), which compels the reader to read on. C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer speaks in a way that makes the reader want to listen. He or she has considered what the reader needs to know and the best way to convey it by sharing his or her fascination, feelings, and opinions about the topic. D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer expresses ideas in new ways, which makes the piece interesting and original. The writing sounds like the writer because of his or her use of distinctive, just-right words and phrases.
	5 ↑ MIDDLE
	STRONG
4 ↑ MIDDLE	REFINING
	A. Establishing a Tone: The writer has established a tone that can be described as “pleasing” or “sincere,” but not “passionate” or “compelling.” He or she attempts to create a tone that hits the mark, but the overall result feels generic. B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer has chosen a voice for the piece that is not completely clear. There are only a few moments when the reader understands where the writer is coming from and why he or she wrote the piece. C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer keeps the reader at a distance. The connection between reader and writer is tenuous because the writer reveals little about what is important or meaningful about the topic. D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer creates a few moments that catch the reader's attention, but only a few. The piece sounds like anyone could have written it. It lacks the energy, commitment, and conviction that would distinguish it from other pieces on the same topic.
	3 ↑ LOW
	DEVELOPING
2 ↑ LOW	EMERGING
	A. Establishing a Tone: The writer has produced a lifeless piece—one that is monotonous, mechanical, repetitious, and/or off-putting to the reader. B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer chose the topic for mysterious reasons. The piece may be filled with random thoughts, technical jargon, or inappropriate vocabulary, making it impossible to discern how the writer feels about the topic. C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer provides no evidence that he or she has considered what the reader might need to know to connect with the topic. Or there is an obvious mismatch between the piece's tone and the intended audience. D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer creates no highs and lows. The piece is flat and lifeless, causing the reader to wonder why he or she wrote it in the first place. The writer's voice does not pop out, even for a moment.
	1 ↑ LOW
	RUDIMENTARY

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Key Quality Scores

Establishing a Tone: 2

Conveying the Purpose: 1

Creating a Connection to the Audience: 2

Taking Risks to Create Voice: 2

Overall Voice score: 2

It wouldn't surprise me if you assessed this paper a little higher than I did. It is a charming topic, and it's easy to understand why readers have a positive reaction to it. Here's the issue: if you scored it higher, were you responding to actual moments of voice in the writing or to the potential of the idea? Unicorns are fun to read about, but in this work I see little evidence of the writer's engagement with the topic other than the details about how it looks and where it lives.

That's not enough. Next steps for this writer would be to weave in some wording that catches our attention in new ways, original reasons why unicorns would be great pets, and reaching out to the reader with original thinking.

Worth Mentioning

No one enjoys reading writing without voice, whether it's narrative, expository, or persuasive. Voice is not just a narrative trait; it's critical to make connections to the reader in the other modes as well. Narrative writing draws upon emotion, whereas informational writing should be reliable, credible, and believable. Both are within the voice domain, however. Great models in all modes help students understand this.

Grade 2: “Unicorn” Word Choice Summary

The use of color words works okay in this piece but doesn’t nail the word choice criteria. Why the writer chose certain colors to describe different parts of the unicorn feels random—for example, what’s the reason for yellow eyes or pink wings? This writer has also relied on passive voice throughout, which keeps the energy level low (contributing to voice). The piece overall is ordinary in the word choice trait. Next steps for this writer would be to brainstorm action verbs to spice up the sentences. Then we’d work in some precision with the color words to create a visual and imaginative image.

Worth Mentioning

Sometimes, when assessing writing, it is useful to first read it carefully and then ask yourself, *Is this piece weaker or stronger in this trait?* If your gut tells you stronger, you can focus on the high and medium key quality zones. If, as is the case with this piece, your reaction is weaker, then you can dial in on the middle and low areas of the scoring guide. Remember, this is not an exact science. Look at the message your score sends. To this writer it says, “You’ve communicated your message, but I bet we can make it clearer with some revision in word choice.” That’s a fair assessment.

Key Quality Scores

Applying Strong Verbs: 1

Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: 2

Using Accurate and Specific Words: 2

Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: 3

Overall Word Choice score: 2

Scoring Guide: Word Choice	
The specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning and enlighten the reader.	
6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL A. Applying Strong Verbs: The writer uses many “action words,” giving the piece punch and pizzazz. He or she has stretched to find lively verbs that add energy to the piece. B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: The writer uses many finely honed words and phrases. His or her creative and effective use of literary techniques such as alliteration, simile, and metaphor makes the piece a pleasure to read. C. Using Specific and Accurate Words: The writer uses words with precision. He or she selects words the reader needs to fully understand the message. The writer chooses nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and so forth that create clarity and bring the topic to life. D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: The writer uses words to capture the reader’s imagination and enhance the piece’s meaning. There is a deliberate attempt to choose the best word over the first word that comes to mind.
	5 ↑ STRONG
	4 ↑ MIDDLE REFINING A. Applying Strong Verbs: The writer uses the passive voice quite a bit and includes few “action words” to give the piece energy. B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: The writer provides little evidence that he or she has stretched for the best words or phrases. He or she may have attempted to use literary techniques, but they are clichés for the most part. C. Using Specific and Accurate Words: The writer presents specific and accurate words, except for those related to sophisticated and/or content-related topics. Technical or irrelevant jargon is off-putting to the reader. The words rarely capture the reader’s imagination. D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: The writer fills the piece with unoriginal language rather than language that results from careful revision. The words communicate the basic idea, but they are ordinary and uninspired.
	3 ↑ DEVELOPING
2 ↑ LOW	2 ↑ EMERGING A. Applying Strong Verbs: The writer makes no attempt at selecting verbs with energy. The passive voice dominates the piece. B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: The writer uses words that are repetitive, vague, and/or unimaginative. Limited meaning comes through because the words are so lifeless. C. Using Specific and Accurate Words: The writer misuses words, making it difficult to understand what what he or she is attempting to convey. Or he or she uses words that are so technical, inappropriate, or irrelevant that the average reader can hardly understand what he or she is saying. D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: The writer uses many words and phrases that simply do not work. Little meaning comes through because the language is so imprecise and distracting.
	1 ↑ RUDIMENTARY

Grade 2: “Unicorn” Sentence Fluency Summary

Scoring Guide: Sentence Fluency

The way words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it’s “read” with the ear as much as the eye.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL
	<p>A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences: The writer carefully and creatively constructs sentences for maximum impact. Transition words such as <i>but</i>, <i>and</i>, and <i>so</i> are used successfully to join sentences and sentence parts.</p> <p>B. Varying Sentence Types: The writer uses various types of sentences (simple, compound, and/or complex) to enhance the central theme or story line. The piece is made up of an effective mix of long, complex sentences and short, simple ones.</p> <p>C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: The writer thinks about how the sentences sound. He or she uses phrasing that is almost musical. If the piece were read aloud, it would be easy on the ear.</p> <p>D. Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: The writer diverges from standard English to create interest and impact. For example, he or she may use a sentence fragment, such as “All alone in the forest,” or a single word, such as “Bam!” to accent a particular moment or action. He or she might begin with informal words such as <i>well</i>, <i>and</i>, or <i>but</i> to create a conversational tone, or he or she might break rules intentionally to make dialogue sound authentic.</p>
5	STRONG
4 ↑ MIDDLE	REFINING
3	<p>A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences: The writer offers simple sentences that are sound but no long, complex ones. He or she attempts to vary the beginnings and lengths of sentences.</p> <p>B. Varying Sentence Types: The writer exhibits basic sentence sense and offers some sentence variety. He or she attempts to use different types of sentences, but in doing so creates an uneven flow rather than a smooth, seamless one.</p> <p>C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: The writer has produced a text that is uneven. Many sentences read smoothly, whereas others are choppy or awkward.</p> <p>D. Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: The writer includes fragments, but they seem more accidental than intentional. He or she uses informal words such as <i>well</i>, <i>and</i>, and <i>but</i> inappropriately to start sentences, and pays little attention to making dialogue sound authentic.</p>
	DEVELOPING
2 ↑ LOW	EMERGING
1	<p>A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences: The writer’s sentences, even simple ones, are often flawed. Sentence beginnings are repetitive and uninspired.</p> <p>B. Varying Sentence Types: The writer uses a single, repetitive sentence pattern throughout or connects sentence parts with an endless string of transition words such as <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, <i>or</i>, and <i>because</i>, which distracts the reader.</p> <p>C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: The writer has created a text that is a challenge to read aloud since the sentences are incomplete, choppy, stilted, rambling, and/or awkward.</p> <p>D. Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: The writer offers few or no simple, well-built sentences, making it impossible to determine whether he or she has done anything out of the ordinary. Global revision is necessary before sentences can be revised for stylistic and creative purposes.</p>
	RUDIMENTARY

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Key Quality Scores

Crafting Well-Built Sentences: 2

Varying Sentence Types: 1

Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: 3

Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: 1

Overall Sentence Fluency score: 2

This young writer uses simple, grammatically correct sentences. Yippee! This is a milestone and definitely worth celebrating. However, since the writer is capable of writing multiple sentences on the same topic (a paragraph), we begin to expect more variety, different constructions, and a smoother overall sound to the piece when read aloud. This piece is correct but choppy. The next step for this writer is to begin working with coordinating conjunctions

such as *and*, *but*, and *or*. “It would be pink but her eyes would be yellow,” for example. Working hand in hand with word choice and ideas, the sentences will expand and become more varied and therefore more fluent.

Worth Mentioning

Teacher-readers are able to read past the conventions and see the other traits. They have magic eyes that mere mortals don’t possess. In this case, it’s a bit of a challenge to see where the sentences start and stop because the conventions aren’t in place to help us. If you read a piece that is highly flawed in conventions, you may want to score that area first and then reread for the other traits that may be partially obscured.

Grade 2: “Unicorn” Word Conventions Summary

Oh my goodness. You have probably been itching to get to this trait all along. With the exception of grammar and usage, this piece needs a thorough edit in every area: spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. It doesn’t show control of basic issues such as capitalization at the beginning of sentences, punctuation at the end, and spelling of high-frequency words such as *would*. Next steps for this piece would be to focus on one area, perhaps capitalization, and ask the student to edit her writing for that one key quality. Then move on to the next area of concern. An interesting punctuation issue to notice is that this writer uses an apostrophe when the noun is plural—*hoof’s*, *wink’s*, and *pond’s*, for instance. This may be easy to clear up with a one-on-one conference or chat, now that you see the thinking behind the error.

Worth Mentioning

It’s difficult to assess conventions as one unit. You would be wise to think about each of the four key qualities separately as you assess. Don’t lump everything together here or you may miss the fact that the grammar and usage are under control, given the basic sentences this student has written. This is an example of why holistic scores are not as useful as analytical ones: when you assign one score for conventions, you don’t see the strengths and weaknesses in as much definition to know where to help the student work to improve.

Key Quality Scores

Checking Spelling: 2

Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: 1

Capitalizing Correctly: 1

Applying Grammar and Usage: 4

Overall Conventions score: 2

Scoring Guide: Conventions

The mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar and usage) guides the reader through the text easily.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL	A. Checking Spelling: The writer spells sight words, high-frequency words, and less familiar words correctly. When he or she spells less familiar words incorrectly, those words are phonetically correct. Overall, the piece reveals control in spelling. B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: The writer handles basic punctuation skillfully. He or she understands how to use periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points to enhance clarity and meaning. Paragraphs are indented in the right places. The piece is ready for a general audience. C. Capitalizing Correctly: The writer uses capital letters consistently and accurately. A deep understanding of how to capitalize dialogue, abbreviations, proper names, and titles is evident. D. Applying Grammar and Usage: The writer forms grammatically correct phrases and sentences. He or she shows care in applying the rules of standard English. The writer may break from those rules for stylistic reasons, but otherwise abides by them.
	5 ↑ MIDDLE	STRONG
	4 ↑ MIDDLE	REFINING
	3 ↑ MIDDLE	DEVELOPING
2 ↑ LOW	2 ↑ LOW	EMERGING
	1 ↑ LOW	RUDIMENTARY

Grade 2: “Unicorn” Presentation Summary

Score: 3. This piece is in the middle for presentation.

Scoring Guide: Presentation

The physical appearance of the piece. A visually appealing text provides a welcome mat. It invites the reader in.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL
	A. Applying Handwriting Skills: The writer uses handwriting that is clear and legible. Whether he or she prints or uses cursive, letters are uniform and slant evenly throughout the piece. Spacing between words is consistent.
	B. Using Word Processing Effectively: The writer uses a font style and size that are easy to read and are a good match for the piece's purpose. If he or she uses color, it enhances the piece's readability.
	C. Making Good Use of White Space: The writer frames the text with appropriately sized margins. Artful spacing between letters, words, and lines makes reading a breeze. There are no cross-outs, smudges, or tears on the paper.
5 ↑ MIDDLE	D. Refining Text Features: The writer effectively places text features such as headings, page numbers, titles, and bullets on the page and aligns them clearly with the text they support.
	STRONG
	REFINING
	A. Applying Handwriting Skills: The writer has readable handwriting, but his or her inconsistent letter slanting, spacing, and formation distract from the central theme or story line.
4 ↑ MIDDLE	B. Using Word Processing Effectively: The writer uses an easy-to-read font but formats it in a way that makes the piece cluttered and distracting. His or her choice of font style and/or size may not match the writing's purpose. He or she may use color with varying degrees of success.
	C. Making Good Use of White Space: The writer creates margins but they are inconsistent or ineffective as a frame for the piece. Spacing between letters, words, and lines makes reading difficult at times. An occasional cross-out or smudge blemishes the piece.
	D. Refining Text Features: The writer includes complex text features such as charts, graphs, maps, and tables, but not clearly or consistently. However, he or she does a good job with less complex features such as the size and placement of the title, bullets, sidebars, subheadings, illustrations, and page numbers.
	DEVELOPING
3 ↑ LOW	EMERGING
	A. Applying Handwriting Skills: The writer forms letters and uses space in a way that makes the piece virtually illegible. The handwriting is a visual barrier.
	B. Using Word Processing Effectively: The writer creates a dizzying display of different font styles and sizes, making the piece virtually unreadable. The misuse of color also detracts.
	C. Making Good Use of White Space: The writer formats margins inconsistently and uses white space ineffectively, making the piece hard to read. Space between letters, words, and lines is nonexistent, or there is so much space it's distracting.
2 ↑ LOW	D. Refining Text Features: The writer does not include features or includes features that are confusing or indecipherable rather than useful to the reader. The paper is seriously marred with cross-outs, smudges, and/or tears.
	RUDIMENTARY

Key Quality Scores

Crafting Well-Built Sentences: 2

Varying Sentence Types: 1

Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: 3

Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: 1

Overall Sentence Fluency score: 2

We notice right away that the handwriting is not easy to read. Partly because the letter formation and the use of white space between words are inconsistent, the eye sees a mass of letters, not individual words. What works well is the layout of the page. The writing respects the left and right margins, and the picture (text feature) fits nicely underneath. The next step for this student is to try writing on every other line in order to visually separate the words from one another vertically. Once that's done, we can help the student work on letter formation and adding the appropriate amount of space (finger spacing) between words horizontally. It might be

helpful for the writer to use dotted writing paper, the type that clearly defines the size of the letter shapes, until this becomes more natural and varied, and therefore more fluent.

Grade 2: “Unicorn” Paper Wrap-Up Percentage: 70% Using the six-point grading chart (16 points earned out of 42)

Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation
3	2	2	2	2	2	3

Grade 4: "Garibaldi"—Traits and Key Qualities

As writers develop and are able to write more about specific topics, their ability to handle the traits grows in tandem. We look for elements of sophistication with language when writers arrive at the upper elementary grades, and applaud their attempts to create more text that demonstrates smart thinking.

Garibaldi:

Giuseppe Garibaldi was one of Italy's famous soldier. Giuseppe born in Nizza, Italy in 1807. He became the captain of a big garrison. Giuseppe and his garrison wore a red shirt and blue pants. Giuseppe also connected Italy to be a whole big community. Giuseppe won a lot of wars, never gived up, and even in a war. Giuseppe hurted his leg and never stoped giving up! Giuseppe died but not in war, indeed he lived a happy life until he got a branchitis and died i Caprera, Italy on June 2nd, 1882. We call him Garibaldi from his family name. People still remember him and see him as a herow.

Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Ideas Summary

Scoring Guide: Ideas

The piece’s content—its central message and details that support that message.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL
	<p>A. Finding a Topic: The writer offers a clear, central theme or a simple, original story line that is memorable.</p> <p>B. Focusing the Topic: The writer narrows the theme or story line to create a piece that is clear, tight, and manageable.</p> <p>C. Developing the Topic: The writer provides enough critical evidence to support the theme and shows insight on the topic. Or he or she tells the story in a fresh way through an original, unpredictable plot.</p> <p>D. Using Details: The writer offers credible, accurate details that create pictures in the reader’s mind, from the beginning of the piece to the end. Those details provide the reader with evidence of the writer’s knowledge about and/or experience with the topic.</p>
	5 ↑ MIDDLE
	STRONG
4 ↑ MIDDLE	REFINING
	<p>A. Finding a Topic: The writer offers a recognizable but broad theme or story line. He or she stays on topic, but in a predictable way.</p> <p>B. Focusing the Topic: The writer needs to crystallize his or her topic around the central theme or story line. He or she does not focus on a specific aspect of the topic.</p> <p>C. Developing the Topic: The writer draws on personal knowledge and experience, but does not offer a unique perspective. He or she does not probe deeply, but instead gives the reader only a glimpse at aspects of the topic.</p> <p>D. Using Details: The writer offers details, but they do not always hit the mark because they are inaccurate or irrelevant. He or she does not create a picture in the reader’s mind because key questions about the central theme or story line have not been addressed.</p>
	3 ↑ LOW
	DEVELOPING
2 ↑ LOW	EMERGING
	<p>A. Finding a Topic: The writer has not settled on a topic and, therefore, may offer only a series of unfocused, repetitious, and/or random thoughts.</p> <p>B. Focusing the Topic: The writer has not narrowed his or her topic in a meaningful way. It’s hard to tell what the writer thinks is important since he or she devotes equal importance to each piece of information.</p> <p>C. Developing the Topic: The writer has created a piece that is so short the reader cannot fully understand or appreciate what he or she wants to say. He or she may have simply restated an assigned topic or responded to a prompt without devoting much thought or effort to it.</p> <p>D. Using Details: The writer has clearly devoted little attention to details. The writing contains limited or completely inaccurate information. After reading the piece, the reader is left with many unanswered questions.</p>
	1 ↑ LOW
	RUDIMENTARY

Traits of Writing Scoring Guide for Grades 3–8 © 2010, The Culham Writing Company

Key Quality Scores

Finding a Topic: 3

Focusing the Topic: 3

Developing the Topic: 3

Using Details: 3 ↑

Overall Ideas score: 3 ↑

There is a lot of information in this piece, but some of it matters and some of it doesn’t. It’s an interesting fact, for example, that Garibaldi was the captain of a big garrison; I’d like to hear more about his leadership skills rather than the color of their uniforms. The writer emphasizes that Garibaldi never gave up, but we don’t get a clear understanding about what he did that was so notable. However, the writer nails the criteria at the middle level and is clearly moving in the right direction. Next steps for this writer would be diving into what really matters about the life of Giuseppe Garibaldi and developing that part with interesting details that really show the kind of person he was.

Worth Mentioning

If this writer chose Garibaldi as a fascinating historical person, I would expect to see more specific information in the text about what made him interesting enough to research. The writer is struggling to move from notes to running text in order to capture important information, which is a very difficult skill for all writers. After students research, they must take some time to prioritize and think, *What will the reader want to know about this topic?* Then they can develop their idea around the answer, feeling free to drop details that just don’t matter.

Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Organization Summary

This piece is an example of how organization and ideas work hand in hand. It’s difficult to show control over organization when the information is not solid throughout. However, there are some obvious places where the writer needs to make transitions and connect the thinking so the idea doesn’t jump around from detail to detail. For example, “*We call him Garibaldi from his family name*” appears to be tossed in randomly. The beginning and ending are there, but they don’t shine. A next step would be to group the information (personal information, major accomplishments, impact on history, etc.) and link it using sequence and transition words. Doing this might reveal where the information is lacking as well, and these two traits could improve simultaneously.

Worth Mentioning

Organization is a relatively easy trait to score but difficult for a writer to implement. Writers struggle with organization at every age. Knowing you need a lead, transitions, an internal structure, and a conclusion is quite different from being able to pull them off. Be patient—show great models. Work on organization, key quality by key quality. It will help to demystify this challenging trait.

Key Quality Scores

Creating the Lead: 3

Using Sequence Words and Transition Words: 3

Structuring the Body: 2

Ending with a Sense of Resolution: 3

Overall Organization score: 3

Scoring Guide: Organization

The internal structure of the piece—the thread of logic, the pattern of meaning.

6	HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL
		A. Creating the Lead: The writer grabs the reader's attention from the start and leads him or her into the piece naturally. He or she entices the reader, providing a tantalizing glimpse of what is to come.
		B. Using Sequence Words and Transition Words: The writer includes a variety of carefully selected sequence words (such as <i>later</i> , <i>then</i> , and <i>meanwhile</i>) and transition words (such as <i>however</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>clearly</i>), which are placed wisely to guide the reader through the piece by showing how ideas progress, relate, and/or diverge.
		C. Structuring the Body: The writer creates a piece that is easy to follow by fitting details together logically. He or she slows down to spotlight important points or events, and speeds up when he or she needs to move the reader along.
D. Ending With a Sense of Resolution: The writer sums up his or her thinking in a natural, thoughtful, and convincing way. He or she anticipates and answers any lingering questions the reader may have, providing a strong sense of closure.		
5	MIDDLE	STRONG
4		REFINING
A. Creating the Lead: The writer presents an introduction, although it may not be original or thought-provoking. Instead, it may be a simple restatement of the topic and, therefore, does not create a sense of anticipation about what is to come.		
B. Using Sequence Words and Transition Words: The writer uses sequence words to show the logical order of details, but they feel obvious or canned. The use of transition words is spotty and rarely creates coherence.		
C. Structuring the Body: The writer sequences events and important points logically, for the most part. However, the reader may wish to move a few things around to create a more sensible flow. He or she may also feel the urge to speed up or slow down for more satisfying pacing.		
D. Ending With a Sense of Resolution: The writer ends the piece on a familiar note: "Thank you for reading..." "Now you know all about..." or "They lived happily ever after." He or she needs to tie up loose ends to leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction or closure.		
3	LOW	DEVELOPING
2		EMERGING
A. Creating the Lead: The writer does not give the reader any clue about what is to come. The opening point feels as if it were chosen randomly.		
B. Using Sequence Words and Transition Words: The writer does not provide sequence and/or transition words between sections or provides words that are so confusing the reader is unable to sort one section from another.		
C. Structuring the Body: The writer does not show clearly what comes first, next, and last, making it difficult to understand how sections fit together. The writer slows down when he or she should speed up, and speeds up when he or she should slow down.		
D. Ending With a Sense of Resolution: The writer ends the piece with no conclusion at all—or nothing more than "The End" or something equally bland. There is no sense of resolution, no sense of completion.		
1		RUDIMENTARY

Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Voice Summary

Scoring Guide: Voice

The tone and tenor of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer; which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL
	<p>A. Establishing a Tone: The writer cares about the topic, and it shows. The writing is expressive and compelling. The reader feels the writer's conviction, authority, and integrity.</p> <p>B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer makes clear his or her reason for creating the piece. He or she offers a point of view that is appropriate for the mode (narrative, expository, or persuasive), which compels the reader to read on.</p> <p>C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer speaks in a way that makes the reader want to listen. He or she has considered what the reader needs to know and the best way to convey it by sharing his or her fascination, feelings, and opinions about the topic.</p> <p>D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer expresses ideas in new ways, which makes the piece interesting and original. The writing sounds like the writer because of his or her use of distinctive, just-right words and phrases.</p>
	5 ↑ MIDDLE
	REFINING
4 ↑ MIDDLE	<p>A. Establishing a Tone: The writer has established a tone that can be described as “pleasing” or “sincere,” but not “passionate” or “compelling.” He or she attempts to create a tone that hits the mark, but the overall result feels generic.</p> <p>B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer has chosen a voice for the piece that is not completely clear. There are only a few moments when the reader understands where the writer is coming from and why he or she wrote the piece.</p> <p>C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer keeps the reader at a distance. The connection between reader and writer is tenuous because the writer reveals little about what is important or meaningful about the topic.</p> <p>D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer creates a few moments that catch the reader's attention, but only a few. The piece sounds like anyone could have written it. It lacks the energy, commitment, and conviction that would distinguish it from other pieces on the same topic.</p>
	3 ↑ LOW
	DEVELOPING
	2 ↑ LOW
	EMERGING
1 ↑ LOW	<p>A. Establishing a Tone: The writer has produced a lifeless piece—one that is monotonous, mechanical, repetitious, and/or off-putting to the reader.</p> <p>B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer chose the topic for mysterious reasons. The piece may be filled with random thoughts, technical jargon, or inappropriate vocabulary, making it impossible to discern how the writer feels about the topic.</p> <p>C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer provides no evidence that he or she has considered what the reader might need to know to connect with the topic. Or there is an obvious mismatch between the piece's tone and the intended audience.</p> <p>D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer creates no highs and lows. The piece is flat and lifeless, causing the reader to wonder why he or she wrote it in the first place. The writer's voice does not pop out, even for a moment.</p>
	1 ↑ LOW
	RUDIMENTARY

Key Quality Scores

Establishing a Tone: 3

Conveying the Purpose: 3

Creating a Connection to the Audience: 3

Taking Risks to Create Voice: 3

Overall Voice score: 3

What is important to the writer about the life of Garibaldi? We don't know. That's as much a voice issue as an ideas one. We see a glimpse of voice in the middle—“*Giuseppe hurted his leg and never stoped giving up!*”—but then it fades away. It's a safe piece, but it lacks the voice that would make it more compelling and memorable. A next step for this writer would be to identify where the voice

begins to pop out, such as “*indeed he lived a happy life,*” and to ask him to develop that point more, emphasizing why the audience would find the information as fascinating as the writer does.

Worth Mentioning

We don't teach students how to trait, we teach them how to write. Using the traits gives us a way to dig into the writing and examine it, much like a scientist. However, we know that one trait can highly influence the others, as we see in this piece. Because the idea isn't nailed yet, the other traits can't flourish. Voice is often the successful outcome of all the traits working well together; when the other traits improve, we'll see confidence and energy emerge in the voice, too.

Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Word Choice Summary

Unfortunately, there is a sense of word-choice ordinariness in this piece. Words like *garrison* and *community* stand out because they are specific, unlike many of the other words and phrases. “*Won a lot of wars*” could be described much more clearly, for example. My favorite line in this piece is “*Giuseppe died but not in war, indeed he lived a happy life until he got a bronchitis and died i Caprera, Italy on June 2nd, 1882.*” We’ll deal with the sentence construction issue in the next trait, but I enjoyed the smooth and natural word choice at the beginning of the sentence. A next step for this writer is to pluck out a sentence such as “*He became the captain of a big garrison*”; here, he can rework the verb and add specific, more-accurate words to explain Garibaldi’s rank in the military and how many men he commanded in a garrison.

Worth Mentioning

Perhaps you noticed how I cherry-picked my way through the scoring guide on this piece. Not every criterion will match the writing you are assessing. This writer didn’t attempt literary techniques, for example, so I didn’t highlight that part. Unless I see evidence of an attempt, I can’t respond to it in the writing. That means you can highlight parts of the criteria and look for a pattern of what’s been done and what hasn’t. This piece is a 3, for instance, because of what it does, but the parts of the scoring guide that aren’t highlighted are a good place to note what the writer could try next.

Key Quality Scores

Applying Strong Verbs: 3

Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: 3

Using Accurate and Specific Words: 3

Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: 3

Overall Word Choice score: 3

Scoring Guide: Word Choice

The specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning and enlighten the reader.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL
	A. Applying Strong Verbs: The writer uses many “action words,” giving the piece punch and pizzazz. He or she has stretched to find lively verbs that add energy to the piece.
	B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: The writer uses many finely honed words and phrases. His or her creative and effective use of literary techniques such as alliteration, simile, and metaphor makes the piece a pleasure to read.
	C. Using Specific and Accurate Words: The writer uses words with precision. He or she selects words the reader needs to fully understand the message. The writer chooses nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and so forth that create clarity and bring the topic to life.
5 ↑ MIDDLE	STRONG
	D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: The writer uses words to capture the reader’s imagination and enhance the piece’s meaning. There is a deliberate attempt to choose the best word over the first word that comes to mind.
	REFINING
	A. Applying Strong Verbs: The writer uses the passive voice quite a bit and includes few “action words” to give the piece energy.
4 ↑ MIDDLE	B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: The writer provides little evidence that he or she has stretched for the best words or phrases. He or she may have attempted to use literary techniques, but they are clichés for the most part.
	C. Using Specific and Accurate Words: The writer presents specific and accurate words, except for those related to sophisticated and/or content-related topics. Technical or irrelevant jargon is off-putting to the reader. The words rarely capture the reader’s imagination.
	D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: The writer fills the piece with unoriginal language rather than language that results from careful revision. The words communicate the basic idea, but they are ordinary and uninspired.
3 ↑ LOW	DEVELOPING
	EMERGING
	A. Applying Strong Verbs: The writer makes no attempt at selecting verbs with energy. The passive voice dominates the piece.
	B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases: The writer uses words that are repetitive, vague, and/or unimaginative. Limited meaning comes through because the words are so lifeless.
2 ↑ LOW	C. Using Specific and Accurate Words: The writer misuses words, making it difficult to understand what what he or she is attempting to convey. Or he or she uses words that are so technical, inappropriate, or irrelevant that the average reader can hardly understand what he or she is saying.
	D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning: The writer uses many words and phrases that simply do not work. Little meaning comes through because the language is so imprecise and distracting.
	RUDIMENTARY
	1

Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Sentence Fluency Summary

Scoring Guide: Sentence Fluency

The way words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it’s “read” with the ear as much as the eye.

<div>6</div> <div>HIGH</div>	EXCEPTIONAL <p>A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences: The writer carefully and creatively constructs sentences for maximum impact. Transition words such as <i>but</i>, <i>and</i>, and <i>so</i> are used successfully to join sentences and sentence parts.</p> <p>B. Varying Sentence Types: The writer uses various types of sentences (simple, compound, and/or complex) to enhance the central theme or story line. The piece is made up of an effective mix of long, complex sentences and short, simple ones.</p> <p>C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: The writer thinks about how the sentences sound. He or she uses phrasing that is almost musical. If the piece were read aloud, it would be easy on the ear.</p> <p>D. Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: The writer diverges from standard English to create interest and impact. For example, he or she may use a sentence fragment, such as “All alone in the forest,” or a single word, such as “Bam!” to accent a particular moment or action. He or she might begin with informal words such as <i>well</i>, <i>and</i>, or <i>but</i> to create a conversational tone, or he or she might break rules intentionally to make dialogue sound authentic.</p>
	5 STRONG
<div>4</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	REFINING <p>A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences: The writer offers simple sentences that are sound but no long, complex ones. He or she attempts to vary the beginnings and lengths of sentences.</p> <p>B. Varying Sentence Types: The writer exhibits basic sentence sense and offers some sentence variety. He or she attempts to use different types of sentences, but in doing so creates an uneven flow rather than a smooth, seamless one.</p> <p>C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: The writer has produced a text that is uneven. Many sentences read smoothly, whereas others are choppy or awkward.</p> <p>D. Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: The writer includes fragments, but they seem more accidental than intentional. He or she uses informal words such as <i>well</i>, <i>and</i>, or <i>because</i>, which distracts the reader.</p>
	3 DEVELOPING
<div>2</div> <div>LOW</div>	EMERGING <p>A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences: The writer’s sentences, even simple ones, are often flawed. Sentence beginnings are repetitive and uninspired.</p> <p>B. Varying Sentence Types: The writer uses a single, repetitive sentence pattern throughout or connects sentence parts with an endless string of transition words such as <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, or, and <i>because</i>, which distracts the reader.</p> <p>C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: The writer has created a text that is a challenge to read aloud since the sentences are incomplete, choppy, stilted, rambling, and/or awkward.</p> <p>D. Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: The writer offers few or no simple, well-built sentences, making it impossible to determine whether he or she has done anything out of the ordinary. Global revision is necessary before sentences can be revised for stylistic and creative purposes.</p>
	1 RUDIMENTARY

Key Quality Scores

Crafting Well-Built Sentences: 2

Varying Sentence Types: 3

Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: 3

Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: N/A

Overall Sentence Fluency score: 3

The unevenness of this writer’s skill with sentences really shows up in this piece. On one hand, we can applaud his effort to create one or two differently constructed sentences, but they don’t work. The sentences begin much the same way throughout—“Giuseppe . . .”—creating a singsong sound to the text when read aloud. A suggestion for this writer might be to take one of the flawed sentences that shows an attempt to do something more complex—such as “*Giuseppe died but not in war, indeed he lived a happy life*”—

until he got a bronchitis and died i Caprera, Italy on June 2nd, 1882,”—and help him construct it correctly or break it into at least two interesting-sounding, grammatically correct sentences.

Worth Mentioning

Sometimes, as in this piece, a key quality will not apply. The writer didn’t attempt anything that applies to “Breaking the ‘Rules’ to Create Fluency,” so it’s not marked at all. The other key qualities reveal that this writer needs work in sentences; perhaps during that process, the “Breaking the ‘Rules’” technique can be introduced. In other words, this particular writer needs to work on learning the rules and using them consistently before we worry about breaking the rules to create fluency. Certainly, this writer needs support with sentence beginnings as well.

Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Conventions Summary

Reading this piece for conventions is an exercise in using the full range of scores. This writer shows strength in some conventions and needs to improve in others. We need to be sure the writer’s strengths, such as punctuation and capitalization, are pointed out and celebrated; then we can pick an area, such as grammar and usage (*give*, not *gived*; *hurt*, not *hurted*), to work on further. These are editing points that matter in the final draft of the writing. Of course this piece has some revision to go through before editing, but there will be plenty of work to do on conventions to clean it up for the reader.

Worth Mentioning

When scoring conventions, it’s fair to consider the degree of difficulty of the attempt. We want to reward more complex use of conventions—more difficult words spelled well and more advanced use of punctuation than a period, for instance. If we jump on every error, then writers stop trying to do more with conventions, and that’s not the goal. Ask yourself this as you assess: *How much editing must be done to get this piece ready for a public audience?* A lot (score 1–2)? Some (score 3–4)? Very little (score 5–6)?

Key Quality Scores

Checking Spelling: 4 ↑

Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: 5

Capitalizing Correctly: 5

Applying Grammar and Usage: 3

Overall Conventions score: 4

Scoring Guide: Conventions

The mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar and usage) guides the reader through the text easily.

HIGH	6	EXCEPTIONAL	A. Checking Spelling: The writer spells sight words, high-frequency words, and less familiar words correctly. When he or she spells less familiar words incorrectly, those words are phonetically correct. Overall, the piece reveals control in spelling. B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: The writer handles basic punctuation skillfully. He or she understands how to use periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points to enhance clarity and meaning. Paragraphs are indented in the right places. The piece is ready for a general audience. C. Capitalizing Correctly: The writer uses capital letters consistently and accurately. A deep understanding of how to capitalize dialogue, abbreviations, proper names, and titles is evident. D. Applying Grammar and Usage: The writer forms grammatically correct phrases and sentences. He or she shows care in applying the rules of standard English. The writer may break from those rules for stylistic reasons, but otherwise abides by them.
	5	STRONG	
	4	REFINING	A. Checking Spelling: The writer incorrectly spells a few high-frequency words and many unfamiliar words and/or sophisticated words. B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: The writer handles basic punctuation marks (such as end marks on sentences and commas in a series) well. However, he or she might have trouble with more complex punctuation marks (such as quotation marks, parentheses, and dashes) and with paragraphing, especially on longer pieces. C. Capitalizing Correctly: The writer capitalizes the first word in sentences and most common proper nouns. However, his or her use of more complex capitalization is spotty when it comes to dialogue, abbreviations, and proper names (“ <i>aunt Maria</i> ” instead of “ <i>Aunt Maria</i> ” or “ <i>my aunt</i> ,” for instance). D. Applying Grammar and Usage: The writer has made grammar and usage mistakes throughout the piece, but they do not interfere with the reader’s ability to understand the message. Issues related to agreement, tense, and word usage appear here and there, but can be easily corrected.
	3	DEVELOPING	
LOW	2	EMERGING	A. Checking Spelling: The writer has misspelled many words, even simple ones, which causes the reader to focus on conventions rather than on the central theme or story line. B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: The writer has neglected to use punctuation, used punctuation incorrectly, and/or forgotten to indent paragraphs, making it difficult for the reader to find meaning. C. Capitalizing Correctly: The writer uses capitals inconsistently, even in common places such as the first word in the sentence. He or she uses capitals correctly in some places but has no consistent control over them. D. Applying Grammar and Usage: The writer makes frequent mistakes in grammar and usage, making it difficult to read and understand the piece. Issues related to agreement, tense, and word usage abound.
	1	RUDIMENTARY	

Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Presentation Summary

Scoring Guide: Presentation

The physical appearance of the piece. A visually appealing text provides a welcome mat. It invites the reader in.

6

EXCEPTIONAL

- A. **Applying Handwriting Skills:** The writer uses handwriting that is clear and legible. Whether he or she prints or uses cursive, letters are uniform and slant evenly throughout the piece. Spacing between words is consistent.
- B. **Using Word Processing Effectively:** The writer uses a font style and size that are easy to read and are a good match for the piece's purpose. If he or she uses color, it enhances the piece's readability.
- C. **Making Good Use of White Space:** The writer frames the text with appropriately sized margins. Artful spacing between letters, words, and lines makes reading a breeze. There are no cross-outs, smudges, or tears on the paper.
- D. **Refining Text Features:** The writer effectively places text features such as headings, page numbers, titles, and bullets on the page and aligns them clearly with the text they support.

5

STRONG

4

REFINING

- A. **Applying Handwriting Skills:** The writer has readable handwriting, but his or her inconsistent letter slanting, spacing, and formation distract from the central theme or story line.
- B. **Using Word Processing Effectively:** The writer uses an easy-to-read font but formats it in a way that makes the piece cluttered and distracting. His or her choice of font style and/or size may not match the writing's purpose. He or she may use color with varying degrees of success.
- C. **Making Good Use of White Space:** The writer creates margins but they are inconsistent or ineffective as a frame for the piece. Spacing between letters, words, and lines makes reading difficult at times. An occasional cross-out or smudge blemishes the piece.
- D. **Refining Text Features:** The writer includes complex text features such as charts, graphs, maps, and tables, but not clearly or consistently. However, he or she does a good job with less complex features such as the size and placement of the title, bullets, sidebars, subheadings, illustrations, and page numbers.

3

DEVELOPING

2

EMERGING

- A. **Applying Handwriting Skills:** The writer forms letters and uses space in a way that makes the piece virtually illegible. The handwriting is a visual barrier.
- B. **Using Word Processing Effectively:** The writer creates a dizzying display of different font styles and sizes, making the piece virtually unreadable. The misuse of color also detracts.
- C. **Making Good Use of White Space:** The writer formats margins inconsistently and uses white space ineffectively, making the piece hard to read. Space between letters, words, and lines is nonexistent, or there is so much space it's distracting.
- D. **Refining Text Features:** The writer does not include features or includes features that are confusing or indecipherable rather than useful to the reader. The paper is seriously marred with cross-outs, smudges, and/or tears.

1

RUDIMENTARY

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Key Quality Scores

Crafting Well-Built Sentences: 2

Varying Sentence Types: 3

Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow: 3

Breaking the “Rules” to Create Fluency: N/A

Overall Sentence Fluency score: 3

This piece is easy to read. Skipping a line helps the eye focus on the words. Since the letters are so small, it's nice to have uniform white space. The margins are neat and tidy, and the spacing between words and at the end of sentences also contributes to the readability.

Worth Mentioning

Score: 5. This piece is strong in presentation. It does not receive a 6, however, because the writer did not try anything advanced, such as bullets, subheads, graphs, charts, and so on.

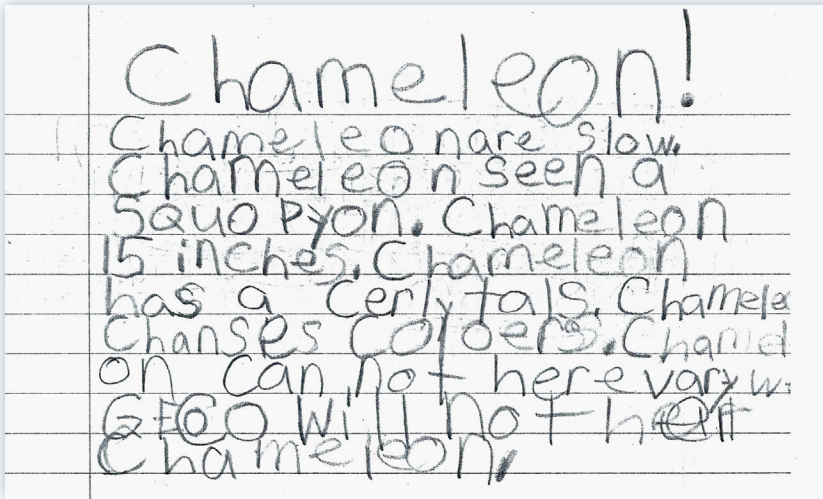
Grade 4: “Garibaldi” Paper Wrap-Up

Percentage: 79% Using the six-point grading chart (24 points earned out of 42)

Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Presentation
3	3	3	3	3	4	5

Grade 2: “Chameleon!”—All Traits

This young writer has learned a lot about chameleons. She has written an informational piece with multiple sentences that stay on topic. The inclusion of an exclamation point in her title seems to indicate that this may be a topic of interest to her. However, the writing falls short of grabbing or keeping the attention of the reader—not unusual for a young, developing writer. There are many directions our comments can take to help this writer improve.



Comments by Trait

Ideas: 2

This writer can tell the reader a lot about chameleons. Sentences stay on topic, which is not always easy for a second grader to do. Although this paper includes some good information and credible details, it's difficult to know what the writer thinks is important. Refining the details will not only paint a better picture in the reader's mind, but will also help to clarify the topic.

Organization: 1

Though this piece gives much information about the topic, it is composed of a string of sentences that could be cut apart and put into any order. There's an old song from the 1960s group the Troggs that goes, "There's no beginning, there'll be no end." That line worked in the song, but it doesn't work when it comes to writing. Helping this writer create a lead that hooks the reader and an ending that ties things up will go a long way toward improving the organization of this piece.

Voice: 1

Sentences that are monotonous and repetitious result in writing that is flat and lifeless. The exclamation point in the title hints that this writer finds chameleons interesting, perhaps even fun. But the passion in this piece stops there. Why do chameleons change colors? Why won't geckos eat chameleons? Answering these questions might be a good way to begin bringing voice into this writing, establishing a tone that adds some of the passion that was hinted at in the title.

Word Choice: 2

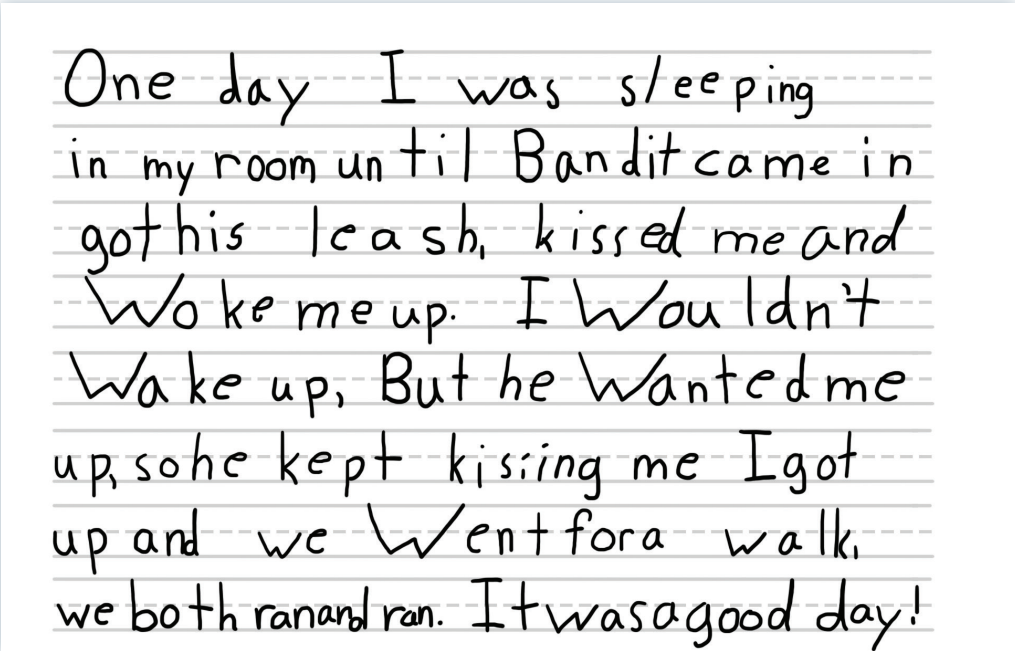
Although this writer has used accurate words in describing chameleons, the piece lacks striking words and phrases and strong verbs. Swapping out passive verbs for action verbs will add energy to the piece. Strengthen the energy, and chances are she will also strengthen the voice.

Sentence Fluency: 1 ↑

The good news is, we have some simple sentences and this writer has basic sentence sense! But the beginnings are repetitive, and some sentences are incomplete and choppy. Sentence fluency is the auditory trait, so a good place to start for improvement would be to read this paper aloud to help this writer hear the repetition and choppiness. Starting even a couple of sentences differently and joining others with the word *and* will make this piece more musical to the ear.

Conventions: 2

This is a good example of a paper that's emerging for the trait of conventions. All sentences start with a capital letter and end with a period. That's cause for celebration, for sure, and goes a long way in guiding the reader through the text easily. There are several places to start with conventions, but let's tackle one at a time. Spelling risks have been taken with more-challenging words, but there are others that should be corrected, such as *very* instead of *vary*. Or you might choose to offer a reminder about indenting, the use of capitals where they aren't appropriate, or grammar and usage issues. Choose one. Remember: Writing is a process, and it takes time.



One day I was sleeping
in my room until Bandit came in
got his leash, kissed me and
Woke me up. I Wouldn't
Wake up, But he Wanted me
up, so he kept kissing me I got
up and we Went for a walk,
we both ran and ran. It was a good day!

Grade 2: “Bandit”—All Traits

Dog owners and dog lovers will want this to receive a high score after reading the first sentence. After all, what dog owner can’t relate to their pet smothering them with kisses to persuade them to go for a walk? There’s much potential here. Getting this dog owner to really think about Bandit in detail will help him to add that personal stamp. With some revision, this will score well for all the traits.

Comments by Trait

Ideas: 4

This writer has written a short piece with a narrow theme that stays on topic. Adding details to describe Bandit, Bandit’s kisses, more about the walk, or what made it a good day would go a long way to further the development of the topic and strengthen the ideas trait.

Organization: 4

A promising lead starts this paper off on a strong note. As the ideas trait is developed, it will also strengthen the body of the piece. The writer is beginning to use transition and sequence words. The piece ends on a familiar note, and exposure to different endings in mentor texts will help this writer go beyond “*It was a good day!*”

Voice: 3

Thinking about what the reader will want to know about Bandit can help this writer’s voice emerge. There are hints of voice when the writer talks about Bandit’s kisses. Readers who are dog lovers might be waiting for a little bit more that connects them to the writing and brings out a smile . . . but this isn’t quite there yet. Letting the reader see more of Bandit’s personality will create a connection and add voice to this piece.

Word Choice: 3

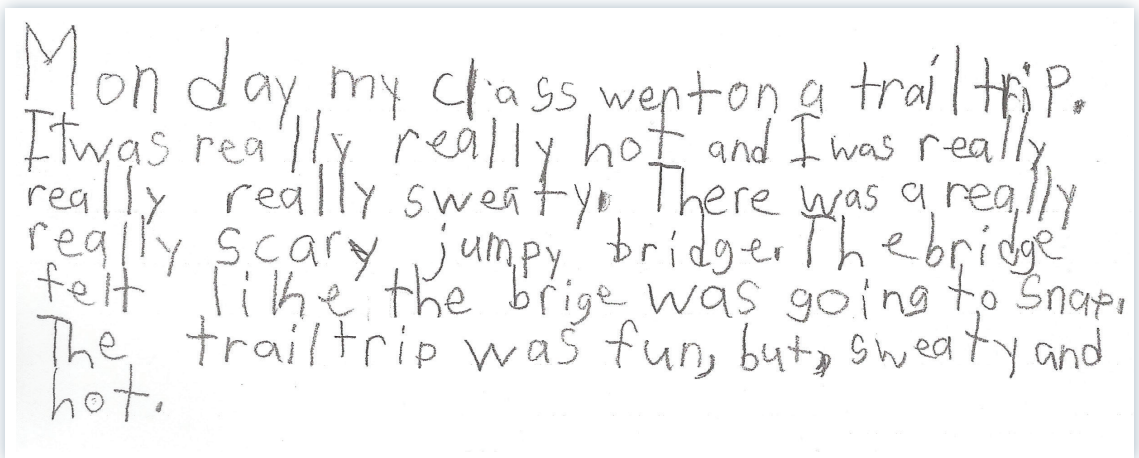
This is a classic example of word choice that communicates the basic idea, but the chosen words are rather ordinary and uninspiring. Adding some lively verbs and stretching for better words and phrases (*slathered me with kisses, sprinted around the block*) will not only strengthen the word choice trait but will also bring out the writer’s voice.

Sentence Fluency: 4

Read aloud, this piece is easy on the ear. Some sentences are shorter; some are longer and joined by transition words such as *but* and *and*. This writer has moved beyond choppy sentences and is ready to try more complex sentence structure.

Conventions: 2 ↑

With only one spelling error (*wauldn’t* for *wouldn’t*), this writer has fairly good spelling control in this piece of writing. Some end punctuation and commas are missing, and there are capital letters in places they don’t belong. Reading this aloud for the writer might help him focus on the punctuation errors and how to fix them. Once those have been edited, it will be easier for the writer to check for capitals at the beginning of sentences and make sure there are none in the middle (unless they’re proper nouns).

A photograph of a student's handwritten work on lined paper. The text is written in a cursive, somewhat messy script. The words "really" are repeated multiple times, and the sentence structure is repetitive. The paper has horizontal lines, and the handwriting is in dark ink.

Monday my class went on a trail trip.
It was really really hot and I was really
really really sweaty. There was a really
really scary jumpy bridge. The bridge
felt like the bridge was going to snap.
The trail trip was fun, but, sweaty and
hot.

Grade 3: “Trail Trip”—All Traits

As is often the case, when you work on one trait or key quality, the others also improve. This paper is a great example of how the addition of details can provide a starting point that will carry revision through all of the traits. Add details, and there will be a way to add sequence and transition words. Those details will most likely add to the voice and word choice, too. More details will make it easier to combine sentences or vary the beginnings. The addition of sequence and transition words will add variety, as well. Some of the added details just might include stretching to use more striking words and phrases, adding to the voice, and providing the opportunity to try spelling more-challenging words and punctuating differently. See how that works?

Comments by Trait

Ideas: 1

Sometimes, if you use a word over and over, the reader might not notice that you really haven’t said much. However, it seems there was a bridge on the trail trip that just might provide an opportunity to tell more. Adding details about the bridge will help create a picture for the reader, narrow the topic, and answer questions that the reader has about that “scary jumpy bridge.”

Organization: 2

The lead and ending of this piece, while present, could use a boost. Adding details will provide a better opportunity to include sequence and transition words, and will strengthen not only the body but also the lead and ending of the piece. This is a perfect example of how strengthening one trait or key quality also strengthens others.

Voice: 1 ↑

The voice of this writer can be glimpsed when he or she talks about the “scary jumpy bridge” that “felt like the bridge was going to snap.” Tell me more! Developing this part of the writing will add to the overall voice of the writing and create more of a connection to the reader.

Word Choice: 2

Specific words such as *scary*, *jumpy*, and *sweaty* begin to bring this piece to life. The feeling that the bridge might snap also adds energy. Yet these don't go far enough for us to say that this writing is developing where the word choice trait is concerned. The passive voice dominates this writing, and a good first step would be to replace passive verbs with lively verbs to add punch and pizzazz to the writing.

Sentence Fluency: 2

There isn't anything out of the ordinary when it comes to sentence fluency in this story. The text is uneven and would benefit from some carefully placed transition words; the writer could also vary sentence beginnings to change up the repetitive sentence pattern.

Conventions: 3

This writer has not taken risks to show what he or she might be able to do when it comes to conventions. The one spelling error (*brige*) is a word that was previously spelled correctly, indicating that it might have been a careless error. Other words are not stretches that would show what this writer is truly capable of when it comes to spelling. The one place the writer appears to take a risk is in the last sentence, using commas: "*The trail trip was fun, but, sweaty and hot.*" It doesn't quite work. Since this is the one "risk" the writer attempts, a logical next step might be to provide support and guidance in the use of commas by adding to and reworking some of the sentences.

Grade 4: "Trumpet"—All Traits

This piece starts with the potential for more. Voice makes an early appearance, and it certainly makes the reader smile, but things get off-track quickly. This is a good illustration of how important a focused, developed topic with good details is when it comes to creating a well-written piece.

Comments by Trait

Ideas: 2

This writer has something to say but has ended up with a short, undeveloped, confusing piece. Once the topic is more focused (for example, why I want to play the trumpet), then it will be easier to develop the topic using specific details.

Organization: 2

Here is a classic example of a piece with a little bit of this and a little bit of that when it comes to the organization trait. There's a start to this paper, but it doesn't give us much of a clue about what's to come. Some transition and sequence words are included. Then we have the end of the story, which feels like the writer ran out of steam. Once the topic is more developed, it will be easier to jump in and pick a key quality of organization to work on.

Yesersday I ask my mother if I could play the trump. But guess (class say what) MY MOTHER SAID “NO”, because a trump A LOT OF MONEY “O-KAY KA-PES.” What will you feel about your parent buying you a trump or any other type of insterment while I feel mmmmm mmm mm pretty kind of embrassing because my parent’s thank that if I blow a trump it will take the air which is the oxygen that is inside your body.

But they changd their mind and got me a trump and I am still alive and can breathe.

Voice: 2 ↑

While there is definitely voice in this writing, the scoring guide helps us to see that it’s not quite as strong as it might seem at first glance. There are a few moments that catch the reader’s attention, but the piece doesn’t go beyond that. The writer attempts to create a tone yet falls short. To truly connect with the reader, this writer will need to delve deeper into the topic so that we know what’s important or meaningful about it.

Word Choice: 2

Just as with voice, there are a few signs of attempts at word choice, but they just aren’t enough—and they’re distracting. No matter how good the word choice attempts are, they don’t really matter until the message begins to make more sense.

Sentence Fluency: 2

The sentence beginnings may be varied, but the sentences in this piece are flawed and awkward. Part of the problem can be fixed with editing, followed by work on sentence construction. Reading this aloud so that the writer can hear how it sounds is a good place to start.

Conventions: 2

There’s a bit of work to be done before this writing is ready for an audience. The conventions are distracting and make scoring, in general, more difficult. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation need work. The use of quotation marks is something that should be celebrated. When used, they are done well!

Grade 5: “Sharks”—All Traits

This writer seems to know the importance of the traits and their role in writing well. This piece has a lot that’s working. It’s hard not to wonder if the five-paragraph essay format or the large scope of the topic is what made it score lower in ideas and organization.

Comments by Trait

Ideas: 3

This piece includes information about several different types of sharks, but it doesn’t focus enough on any one type. Key qualities of the ideas trait will be strengthened if the writer chooses to focus on one type of shark and provides a lot of information about that type.

Organization: 2 ↑

Here’s a classic example of the five-paragraph essay format. It starts with a “padded” version of “In this essay I will talk about . . .” includes three supporting paragraphs, and has a fairly predictable ending. Transition words are not used to guide the reader from paragraph to paragraph.

Voice: 3 ↑

This writer has clearly tried to establish a tone that hits the mark. He or she knows that exclamation marks can be used to show voice, but overuse can be a distraction. Because the idea is not well developed, it feels like there is a lack of commitment to the writing. The voice isn’t completely clear and leaves the reader wondering why this piece was written. My best guess is that it might be tied to an assignment to write a five-paragraph essay on a topic.

Word Choice: 5

Word choice is the strength of this piece. The writer has chosen words that bring the topic to life and paint a picture for the reader. The writing feels accurate and natural.

Sharks

Sharks are amazing creatures that live under the sea. Some people are frightened by sharks but they really aren't that frightening they just want food. In this essay I will tell you about sharks habitat ,different types of sharks and some useful facts. If you want to know more about sharks you will have to read this essay!

I'm sure you have been dying to know where shark habitats are. Well let me tell you where! Sharks love to hangout around the Great Barrier Reef which is down at the bottom of the deep sandy ocean. There is no doubt about it that the Whale shark loves the deep salty water, that is why they enjoy swimming around hunting for plankton in the deep dark water. Sand sharks are a tad bit shyer than the other sharks and that is why they burrow down under the sand at the bottom of the ocean.

There are so many different types of sharks I can't even talk about t them all. The Great White shark is one of the fiercest sharks. This now takes us to the Whale shark. The whale shark is one of the friendliest sharks. I'll be the first to admit the Tiger shark doesn't kid around when hunting for food. The Sand shark is the calmest out of all sharks.

Sentence Fluency: 4

This is a piece that has some well-written sentences and others that need work. Sentence beginnings are varied, and there is a mix of long and short sentences throughout. This writer is ready to try a bit of rule breaking to create fluency.

Conventions: 4

Not much editing will be needed to get this ready for an audience. Spelling, punctuation, basic capitalization, and grammar show control. More-complex capitalization is inconsistent, however, when it comes to the names of various types of sharks.

The Night

I look out the sliding glass door. There watching the last bit if sunlight sink under the hills was my grandmother. Her familiar knit sweater is wrapped around her.

Quietly, I pull open the door and sit next to her on the cement bench covered with tiny rocks.

I look at the sky and see why my grandmother is out here.

The sky is streaked with bold shades of red, orange, and purple. My grandmother looks at me and smiles.

“Beautiful” she says. I could see that idea on her face before, but I say “yes” anyway.

Little by little, the colors fade until there is nothing left but but faint shadows in the dark sky.

Slowly, tiny stars flicker into view. I start to search for constellations hidden behind the horizon.

I make sure not to close my eyes.

I would much rather be out here with my grandmother than in bed or asleep.

I scan the sky over and over, pretending to be up there with the stars.

The moon appears from behind a cloud, big, smooth, and round. The shimmering light falls silkily across the hills around me.

In a way, this place is like my grandmother. Peaceful, calm, and beautiful in a way that is hard to find.

A light goes off in the house as my grandfather goes to bed. Gradually, two more lights flicker off.

Then it is just me, my grandmother, and the velvety sky dotted with stars.

I glance over at my grandmother’s face filled with small lines, more glad to be there with her than anyone else.

I close my eyes and rest my head on the shoulder of her sweater, smelling the familiar smell of sage and juniper that always huvvers around her.

Then, late into the cool night, we sit there, my grandmother smiling at the sky.

Grade 6: “The Night”—All Traits

This writer has paid attention to the night sky! Detailed descriptions will make the reader look twice and spend some time noticing the night sky when evening comes. What a beautiful, touching piece that highlights writing done well. A good writer knows how to engage the reader from beginning to end, making a lasting impression.

Comments by Trait

Ideas: 6

This is a focused piece, capturing with great detail a night spent with the writer’s grandmother. The story is memorable, and the writer’s strong word choices combined with specific details paint the picture of this night in the reader’s mind.

Organization: 6

From beginning to end, this writing flows. It brings the reader in, guides us through with the use of transition and sequence words, and wraps the night up in a satisfying way. The organization works beautifully.

Voice: 6

The tone of this piece is thoughtful and compelling. This writing can be described just as the writer describes the grandmother: peaceful, calm, and beautiful. The writer has made a connection to the reader by sharing her feelings about one night with her grandmother.

Word Choice: 6

Filled with finely honed words and phrases, this piece shows us writing from the heart. The writer has chosen strong verbs and precise words that capture the reader’s imagination and deepen the meaning, from start to finish. You can almost smell the sage and juniper that “huvvers” around the grandmother’s sweater.

Sentence Fluency: 5

This piece sounds beautiful when read aloud. It has a musical quality to it—a result of the use of longer and shorter sentences. This writer is ready to try her hand at using some sentence fragments to add even more to the fluency.

Conventions: 4 ↑

As might be expected, this writer has a good handle on most conventions. Spelling, capitalization, and grammar show good control. She needs to work on punctuation (mostly commas) and paragraphing, but the piece is easy to read.