



California Standards Tests

Teacher Guide for the 2006 California Writing Standards Test in Grade Seven

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For More Information

For more information about the CSTs in writing or Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, consult the California Department of Education (CDE) Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp> or contact the Standards and Assessment Division of the CDE at (916) 445-8765 (phone), at (916) 319-0969 (fax), or at STAR@cde.ca.gov (e-mail).

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Introduction

In February 2000, the Governor signed legislation to add writing assessments to the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program's California Standards Tests (CSTs) to be administered at the elementary and middle grade levels. The CSTs in writing have been administered annually since 2001 in grades four and seven as part of the California English-Language Arts Standards Tests (CSTs in English-language arts).

The CSTs in writing address state Writing Application content standards for grades four and seven. In grade four, these standards require students to produce four types of writing: narratives, summaries, information reports, and responses to literature. In grade seven, these standards require students to produce five types of writing: narratives, persuasive essays, summaries, responses to literature, and research reports.

The CSTs in writing do not assess information reports in grade four or research reports in grade seven because these writing assignments require extended time for students to select research topics and gather information before writing can begin. In addition, the narrative writing tested in grades four and seven does not include personal or autobiographical narrative. Writing that would invite personal disclosure is not tested in any genre on the CSTs in writing.

In addition to the CSTs in writing, the 2006 CSTs in English-language arts in grades four and seven contained 75 multiple-choice questions. Beyond 2006, the CSTs in English-language arts in grades four and seven will continue to include a CST in writing. The writing test in each of these grades may address any of the writing types identified as appropriate for testing at that grade level.

This document is the latest in a series of teacher guides for the CSTs in writing in grades four and seven that have been provided each year since writing assessments were added to the STAR Program's CSTs. Every guide has featured the writing tasks administered that year, sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and scoring rubrics used to score student responses. The guides for the 2005 and 2006 CSTs in writing provide multiple sample student responses at each score point for all writing tasks administered. All of the teacher guides are available on the California Department of Education (CDE) Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp>.

Writing Tasks and Scoring Rubric

The writing tasks for the 2006 CSTs in writing in grade seven are shown on pages 8 through 11 and pages 36 through 39. Students in schools, tracks, or programs in session on March 7, 2006, responded to the task administered on that date or on the makeup date, March 8. Students in schools, tracks, or programs not in session on March 7 responded to the task administered on May 2 or on the makeup date, May 3. Students had time to read the tasks and to plan, write, and proofread their essays. The estimated administration time was 75 minutes, including time for directions.

Student responses to the writing tasks administered in 2006 were scored using a four-point holistic scoring rubric, with four being the highest score. Each student response was evaluated by one reader and assigned a score ranging from one to four. Ten percent of the responses were evaluated by a second reader to ensure that the scores were accurate and reliable. The score from the second reader did not count toward the student's writing test score. The score the student received from the first reader was doubled to produce the student's overall score on the writing test.

The scoring rubric for grade seven is shown on pages 63 and 64. On pages 65 through 72, the grade seven rubric is presented in a rearranged format to indicate how all the scoring criteria were applied to student responses in each genre tested.

In 2006, each student's result on the grade seven writing task was reported as a separate Writing Applications score that could range from 2 to 8. This score was combined with the student's multiple-choice score on the CST in English-language arts to determine the student's overall English-language arts performance level. The total score possible for the CST in English-language arts was 83 points if students received the highest rating in the writing test and answered all of the multiple-choice questions correctly.

It is important to note that the score a student receives on the CST in writing does not equate to a performance level. A student can be said to have achieved at a particular performance level only when that student's performance-level result is based on results of the full CST in English-language arts (including the CST in writing).

Sample Student Responses and Teacher Commentaries

Sample student responses to the writing tasks administered in grade seven on March 7 and 8 are shown on pages 13 through 35, along with teacher commentaries. Sample student responses to the tasks administered on May 2 and 3 are shown on pages 40 through 62, along with teacher commentaries. This guide contains three sample student responses at the mid-range of each score point for the two writing tasks administered in grade

seven in March and May 2006. Three responses for each score point are provided to illustrate the different types of responses that may receive the same score. Accompanying these student responses are teacher commentaries that illustrate how criteria for each score point were applied during the scoring process.

The sample responses are drawn from field tests and operational tests. Although there are three student responses for each score point, it should be remembered that the range of student work within any of the four score points is broader than even multiple examples can suggest. Furthermore, responses demonstrate differing combinations of strengths and weaknesses within a given score point.

In 2006, response to literature was tested in grade seven. It should be noted, however, that the type of writing students may be asked to produce can change annually since other genres may be tested in this grade.

Suggested Uses for This Teacher Guide

The writing tasks, sample student responses, and teacher commentaries in this guide are intended to illustrate how the scoring rubric was used to score student responses on the 2006 CST in writing in grade seven. Teachers also can use the information provided as guidance in applying the rubric to their students' writing. Students can familiarize themselves with state content standards addressed on the writing test by using the rubric to score other students' writing. These suggested activities can enable teachers and students to use rubric-based scoring as a diagnostic tool to help identify areas of strength and weakness in student writing.

The list below provides further suggestions for using the teacher guide to inform and improve the assessment and teaching of student writing.

Using the Teacher Guide for School District or School Assessments

Some suggestions for using the teacher guide to help improve school district or school assessments include but are not limited to the following activities:

- Use the contents of the guide to become familiar with the key components of writing assessments (i.e., writing task, scoring rubric, student responses).
- Examine the released writing tasks to identify distinguishing elements of response to literature writing.
- Examine the scoring rubric to ascertain critical features of a holistic rubric.

- Analyze sample student responses in conjunction with teacher commentaries and criteria in the scoring rubrics to determine grade-level-specific writing expectations. This information can inform decisions about areas of focus for writing programs.
- Compare the state writing tasks and scoring rubrics with those that accompany the school's existing curricular program. This information can help identify areas that may need to be strengthened in writing programs. It could be determined, for example, that a particular writing program may not provide students enough opportunities to write in a particular genre. It also could be determined that the characteristics of a writing genre in a particular curricular program do not align well with the characteristics of that genre as defined by the state content standards and the CST in writing.

Using the Teacher Guide for Classroom Assessments

Some suggestions for using the teacher guide to help improve classroom assessments include but are not limited to the following activities:

- Use the writing tasks, sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and scoring rubrics to help teachers understand what is required by specific state content standards that are the focus of the writing tests.
- Use the writing tasks and scoring rubrics to help teachers understand the advantages and benefits of writing tests:
 - The tasks and rubrics engage students in cognitively complex activities, and
 - They give students an opportunity to create rather than select a response.
- Encourage teachers to study the scoring rubrics to understand the criteria that should be used to assess writing.
- Use the writing tasks, sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and scoring rubrics to help teachers identify the knowledge and skills required by the writing tests. This information should become the focus of writing instruction.
- Encourage teachers to use the writing tasks, sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and scoring rubrics to help their students understand what is expected of them on the CST in writing.

Questions and Answers About the Grade Four and Grade Seven CSTs in Writing for 2006

In 2004, the California Department of Education (CDE), the State Board of Education (SBE), and Educational Testing Service (ETS)* convened a statewide Writing Test Task Force in Sacramento to review the current status of the California Writing Standards Tests (CSTs in writing) and recommend possible changes. The task force consisted of teachers (kindergarten through grade twelve), administrators, test measurement specialists, university professors, and other educators. The following are answers to commonly asked questions about the recommendations of the task force and the relationship of those recommendations to the 2006 administration of the CST in writing:

What did the Writing Test Task Force recommend?

The task force made a number of recommendations, including field testing new writing tasks, modifying the scoring process, reviewing the scoring rubric, modifying the writing test format, and clarifying directions to students. The full text of the task force recommendations is available in Item #4 of the SBE January 2005 Meeting Agenda. The agenda can be accessed on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr05/agenda0105.asp>.

How were the new writing tasks developed?

The following process was used for developing the new writing tasks:

- The writing tasks initially were developed by item writers at item-writing workshops and by ETS content experts.

- Proposed writing tasks were reviewed by ETS content experts, CDE content experts, and the English-Language Arts Assessment Review Panel. Reviewers approved 20 writing tasks for field testing in grade four and 20 writing tasks for field testing in grade seven.
- ETS pilot tested a number of writing tasks to determine which of the modifications in format and directions recommended by the Writing Test Task Force were most helpful to students.
- The new writing tasks with modified formats and directions were field tested in 2005 with thousands of California students.
- Following reviews of field test results by CDE, ETS, and the English-Language Arts Assessment Review Panel, two grade-four and two grade-seven writing tasks were selected for the spring 2006 administration.

Are the writing genres that were eligible for testing in previous years still eligible for administrations of the CSTs in writing?

Yes. All the writing genres eligible for testing in grades four and seven in previous years were eligible for the 2006 administration of the CSTs in writing and will continue to be eligible for future administrations.

* ETS is the testing contractor for the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, which includes the CSTs in writing.

How were the writing tasks administered in 2006 different from those administered in previous years?

Since the writing genres eligible for testing are the same as in previous years, the new writing tasks administered in 2006 were very similar to those administered previously. The following changes were the most notable:

- A planning page was added to allow students to plan their responses.
- The directions to students were refined to make them clearer.

Students will have fewer pages on which to write their responses to summary writing tasks when this genre is assigned in future years. This change will indicate to students that summaries are not expected to be as long as the passages they summarize.

Was writing on the planning page scored?

Writing on the planning page was not scored. Students were free to use this page or not use it as they wished.

What if students spent so much time planning their essays that they did not finish their responses?

The directions on the planning page told students to spend no more than 15 minutes planning their responses. In addition, after students had 15 minutes for planning, the test administrator was to announce that students should finish any work on the planning page and begin their essays.

If students wrote their essays on the planning page of the test booklet, were their essays scored?

No. A brief introduction to the planning page stated that writing on that page was not to be scored. As in previous years, the directions in the test booklet

stated that only writing on the lined pages of the test booklet would be scored.

Was the process for scoring the 2006 writing test the same as in previous years?

No. In the past, the two readers who read each student response gave the response an identical score approximately 75 percent of the time. The responses received either identical or adjacent scores from the two readers over 99 percent of the time. Ninety-nine percent identical or adjacent scores constitutes such high percentage of interrater agreement that it essentially amounts to a score produced by a single scorer. To expedite scoring and reduce scoring costs, therefore, each student response from the 2006 administration was read by only one scorer without sacrificing scoring reliability. The SBE had approved this recommendation at the January 2005 meeting.

In 2006, one reader evaluated each student response and assigned a score ranging from one to four. Ten percent of the responses were read by a second reader to ensure that the scores were accurate and reliable. The score from the second reader did not count toward the student's writing test score. The score the student received from the one reader was doubled to produce the student's overall score on the writing test.

If one reader's score was doubled, did students receive only scores of 2, 4, 6, or 8 on the writing test?

That is correct. In previous years, if the two readers' scores were identical or only one point apart, the two scores were added together to produce the student's writing test score. In 2006, only one reader read each student response and gave it a score of 1, 2, 3, or 4. This score was doubled to produce the student's overall score of 2, 4, 6, or 8.

Did the writing tests receive a performance-level result in 2006?

No. As in past years, a student's score on the writing test was added to the student's multiple-choice score on the grade four or grade seven CST in English-language arts. This combined score was then placed on a scale, and the scale score was assigned a performance level for the CST in English-language arts.

Did California teachers score the 2006 writing tests?

The readers were college graduates who possessed at least a bachelor's degree. Whenever possible, educators were hired as readers. California teachers selected the sample student responses used to train the readers.

Were the scoring rubrics changed?

The English-Language Arts Assessment Review Panel reviewed the scoring rubric for grade seven and made slight adjustments to ensure that it was making accurate distinctions among score points. This updated rubric was used to score the 2006 CST in writing. The scoring rubrics for 2006 are on pages 63–64.

Where can I find additional information on the writing test scoring process?

Additional information is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/scoring-process.asp>.

Where can I find additional information on the writing test to inform instruction?

Several teacher guides to the CSTs in writing are available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp>. These guides contain background information on the writing test, the writing tasks administered in the previous operational administration, the scoring rubric used to score the tests, student responses that illustrate student writing at each score point, and teacher commentaries explaining why the student responses received the scores they did.

Grade Seven Response to Literature Writing Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

The writing task below was administered to students who took the CST in writing in grade seven on March 7 or 8, 2006. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries for this task are shown on pages 13 through 35. The writing task used for the May 2 and 3, 2006, administration is shown on pages 36 through 39.

Response to Literature Writing Task

Directions:

- Read the narrative on the following pages.
- As you read, you may mark the story or make notes. Marks and notes will not be scored.
- After reading the narrative, you will be given directions to write an essay. You will have time to read, plan your essay, and write a first draft with edits.
- You may reread or go back to the narrative at any time during the test.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.
- Use only a No. 2 pencil to write your essay.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you

- show your understanding of the narrative,
- organize around several clear ideas,
- give examples and cite evidence from the narrative, and
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Both Sides of the Fence *by Teresa Bateman*

Alberto and Juan lived in two houses that stood side by side outside a small pueblo. Although both houses were much alike, Alberto had a splendid apple tree, puffed with pink blossoms each spring and bent low each autumn with fruit both red and ripe.

His neighbor, Juan, had little and nothing, except his family and his good nature.

Each day Alberto would brag about his apple tree. "It bears the finest blossoms and the finest apples," he declared. "That makes me the finest man in the

pueblo.”

“It is a beautiful tree,” Juan agreed. “I’m glad you let us enjoy its beauty as well.”

Somehow the thought that others benefited from his tree lessened Alberto’s enjoyment. The tree was his, after all. Alberto decided to build a high fence so that he alone could enjoy the tree’s blossoms and bounty.

Townsfolk shook their heads at his foolishness and left him to his pride.

One spring, however, Alberto was unhappy to see that a branch of his tree extended over the fence into his neighbor’s yard.

“I can’t cut it off,” Alberto decided. “To damage so fine a tree would be wrong. Still, why should Juan receive any benefit from a tree that is clearly mine?”

He fretted and fumed through the pink-blossomed spring. He pondered and puzzled through the green-leafed summer. Then fall came, and with it a moment of truth.

While Alberto could pick the apples on his own land, and gather the windfalls so not even squirrels could enjoy them, he could not set foot on the other side of the fence.

He pretended it didn’t matter. But it did.

Then one day, Alberto discovered an apple cake on his doorstep.

“*Gracias*,” read the note. It was signed “Juan.”

Alberto was furious. His apples were being used without his permission, and he considered Juan’s note a slap in the face.

“I must have justice!” Alberto declared. He hurried to the home of the mayor, bringing the cake along as evidence.

“See here,” Alberto declared, plunking the cake down. “This was made with apples from *my* tree. Juan is guilty of stealing and left proof of it on my doorstep! He’s probably sitting in his house, eating my apples and laughing at me even as we speak.”

The mayor helped himself to a piece of cake while reading the note.

“A branch of your tree goes over the fence,” the mayor pointed out. “Surely these apples are from that branch?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Alberto fumed. “My father planted that tree on property that’s been in my family for years. The land and the tree are mine. The apples are mine as well.”

The mayor considered the problem from all angles. “Four days from now a judge will visit our pueblo,” he said at last. “Present your case, and surely justice will be done.”

Alberto frowned. “How will I prepare my arguments for the judge?” he asked.

The mayor seemed to understand his problem.

“You’ve told me your side of the story. A fence, however, has two sides, as does every argument. The judge will expect you to understand both. A clever

man knows his opponent's thoughts. Come back tomorrow and present me with Juan's point of view."

Alberto headed home, absently nibbling on the cake as he considered the arguments he would present to the judge. He tried to imagine what Juan might say. The branch *did* extend over the fence, and Juan had so little that any food would be welcome. Still, "It's *my* tree," Alberto said firmly to a passing dog.

The next morning Alberto returned to the mayor and presented what he imagined to be Juan's side of the case.

"He will say the apples fell onto his property and that makes them his," Alberto stated. "But if a dog wandered into his yard, the dog would not become his." (He was very proud of this argument.)

The mayor frowned. "Why, then, did Juan give you the apple cake?"

"Why? To rub my nose in his theft!" Alberto declared.

"Perhaps," the mayor said. "Yet Juan can ill afford to give food away. You are missing something. A fence has two sides, as does every argument. Perhaps you need another day to consider. You don't want to appear uninformed before the judge."

Alberto returned home and stared out at the tree and the fence. He thought of his own argument—the tree was his; therefore its fruit was his. He thought of Juan's probable argument—that the apples had fallen into his yard and, therefore, belonged to him. But why did Juan give him the cake? That night Alberto tossed and turned.

Early the next day he marched to the mayor's house. "How can I know why Juan gave me the cake?" he said angrily. "Who can know what is in another man's heart?"

"Juan knows," the mayor quietly replied. "Remember—things can look quite different from the other side of the fence."

"Very well," Alberto said grudgingly. "I will talk to Juan myself. It can only make my case against him stronger." He hurried from the mayor's door and soon arrived at Juan's house.

Alberto pounded on Juan's door, anxious to gather the evidence he needed.

Juan smiled when he opened the door. "Did you like the cake?" he asked.

Alberto opened his mouth, but before he could get out a word, Juan continued. "I had to thank you," he said. "My family so enjoyed the branch of your tree that comes over the fence—blossoms in the spring, shade in the summer. I knew the man who owns the finest apple tree in the pueblo must surely be the most generous man as well, but the apples, of course, were yours. We got so much joy out of your tree, it would be poor repayment to simply give you the apples, so my wife baked all of them into a cake. I hope you enjoyed it."

Alberto felt no taller than an ant. His arguments dissolved like sugar in water.

"Will you join us?" Juan asked. He motioned to the table set with a simple

meal of beans, rice, and tortillas.

Alberto knew at once he would not be presenting any case before the judge the following day.

“With pleasure,” he said, “if you will allow me to add something to the meal.”

He hurried home, gathered a basket of his finest apples, and carried them to the other side of the fence.

“Both Sides of the Fence” by Teresa Bateman, from *CRICKET*, October 2003. Vol. 31. No. 2, copyright © 2003 by Teresa Bateman. Used by permission of Cricket Magazine.

Response to Literature Writing the Essay

In “Both Sides of the Fence,” the character of Alberto changes dramatically. Use details from the narrative to explain what lesson Alberto learns and how he learns it.

When you write your essay, remember

- to show your understanding of the narrative,
- to organize around several clear ideas,
- to give examples and cite evidence from the narrative, and
- to use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Response to Literature Task—Grade Seven

Student responses to the response to literature task on pages 8 through 11 and 36 through 39 were scored using the Grade Seven Scoring Rubric shown on pages 63 and 64. This rubric incorporates portions of the English-language arts content standards for Writing Strategies and Written Conventions that address writing in general and include criteria specific to response to literature writing.

Standard

- 2.2 Write responses to literature:
- a. Develop interpretations exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight.
 - b. Organize interpretations around several clear ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
 - c. Justify interpretations through sustained use of examples and textual evidence.

Grade Seven Focus

For the writing tasks in grade seven, students were expected to read a short story and write a response that supports a judgment about it with accurate interpretations and specific textual examples and details. Students who did well incorporated effective writing strategies, including a clearly presented central idea that is supported with relevant details and explanations, a consistent organizational structure and focus, unifying transitions, and a sound grasp of written conventions. Effective responses demonstrated a thoughtful, comprehensive understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample One

"It bears the finest blossoms and the finest apples. That makes me the finest man in the pueblo." This is what the greedy Alberto brags to his respectful neighbor Juan about every day. In the beginning of the story, Alberto is stuck-up and overly proud about his lovely apple tree. His neighbor Juan teaches Alberto to appreciate the things people do for him instead of being selfish about his tree. Alberto learns this important lesson when Juan bakes him a cake made of apples.

Alberto is a very greedy and rude neighbor. In the spring, he fenced up his apple tree so that no other people could see it but him. Soon after he built the fence, Alberto found a branch poking into Juan's yard. This angered Alberto so much that he wanted to take Juan to court. Alberto should thank Juan for all of the good deeds he had done for him.

Unlike Alberto, Juan is a kind and respectful man. He has very little to offer, and he does the best he can to feed his family. When he finds the tree in his yard, Juan starts to cherish it. The branch gives him shade in the Summer and beautiful blossoms in Spring. Juan even bakes a cake made of apples for Alberto, and Alberto thinks he is teasing him.

The character Alberto changes in many ways throughout the story. He is foolish to think Juan would tease him with an apple cake in the beginning of the story. When he is trying to make his statement for court, Alberto starts to realize that Juan might have actually done something kind for him. Alberto heads next door and Juan explains how much he appreciated the branch. As soon as Juan finished his speech, Alberto learned how much of a monster he had been to Juan.

The lesson that Alberto learned was an important and life-changing one. Juan showed him that greed and

Commentary

This response demonstrates a thoughtful and comprehensive grasp of the story and a clear understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by interpreting the story accurately and coherently and providing relevant textual evidence to support the interpretation. The writer clearly addresses all of the writing task by identifying the lesson that Alberto, the main character, learns and supporting it with specific examples from the story.

The response demonstrates a consistent organizational structure and focus beginning in the first paragraph where the writer presents a clear central idea ("His neighbor Juan teaches Alberto to appreciate the things people do for him instead of being selfish about his tree.").

In the second and third paragraphs, the writer assesses Alberto's character, noting that he is "greedy" and "rude" and suspects his neighbor, Juan, is "teasing him" when Juan gives him an apple cake. In the third paragraph, the writer also shows how Juan differs from Alberto ("Unlike Alberto, Juan is a kind and respectful man. He has very little to offer, and he does the best he can to feed his family. When he finds a tree in his yard, Juan starts to cherish it.").

In the fourth paragraph, the writer describes how Alberto changes when he realizes that Juan gave him the apple cake out of kindness ("Alberto starts to realize that Juan might have actually done something kind for him." "Alberto learned how much of a monster he had been...").

In the final paragraph, the writer explains how, by the end of the story, Alberto is a changed man ("Alberto... joined the poor family during dinner giving them his finest apples..."). The writer also explains what

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

selfishness does not make a good man. At the beginning of the story, Alberto did not appreciate anything Juan did for him, and after Juan baked him a cake and told him the story of the branch, Alberto learned that there are people who appreciate the things you do for them. In the end, Alberto had forgotten everything that had happened and joined the poor family during dinner giving them his finest apples from the finest apple tree in the pueblo.

Commentary

Alberto learned (“Alberto learned that there are people who appreciate the things you do for them.”).

This response demonstrates sentence variety, including simple sentences (“Alberto is a very greedy and rude neighbor.” “The lesson that Alberto learned was an important and life-changing one.”), compound sentences (“He has very little to offer, and he does the best he can to feed his family.” “Juan even bakes a cake made of apples for Alberto, and Alberto thinks he is teasing him.”), complex sentences (“Soon after he built the fence, Alberto found a branch poking into Juan’s yard.” “When he finds the tree in his yard, Juan starts to cherish it.”), and a compound-complex sentence (“At the beginning of the story, Alberto did not appreciate anything Juan did for him, and after Juan baked him a cake and told him the story of the branch, Alberto learned that there are people who respect the things you do for them.”). The writer mixes sentence types effectively, especially in paragraph three.

This response contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. In the third paragraph, “summer” and “spring” are mistakenly capitalized, and the last paragraph contains a noun-verb agreement error (“... greed and selfishness does not make a good man.”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

Everyone learns important lessons during their life. In the short story "Both Sides of the fence," Teresa Bateman shows us how Alberto learned the lesson of his lifetime. In the beginning of the story, Alberto was arrogant and conceited; but one experience changed his character dramatically.

At first, Alberto was extremely protective of his fine apple tree. The thought that anyone other than him could enjoy it irritated him to no end. "somehow the thought that others benefited from his tree lessened Alberto's enjoyment." I can infer from this statement that Alberto was a very selfish man in the beginning.

When a branch of his tree grew over to his neighbor's yard, Alberto was not pleased. One day, Alberto discovered that an apple cake made from his apples was left at his doorstep. "Gracias," read the note. It was signed 'Juan.'" Needless to say, Alberto was livid! He rushed over to the mayor, and he demanded justice. I can tell that Alberto was furious at Juan for using his apples without his permission. To him, this was the final straw.

Alberto's confrontation with his neighbor Juan was one he would never forget. Juan explained to him good-naturedly that since Alberto's apple tree's branch provided his family much enjoyment, Juan's wife baked an apple cake for Alberto as a thank you. Alberto was speechless after Juan's explanation. "Alberto felt no taller than an ant. His arguments dissolved like sugar in water." I think that the aforementioned statement shows to us the beginning of the change in Alberto.

But I believe that this final line truly proves to us Alberto's change of heart: "He hurried home, gathered a basket of his of his finest apples, and carried them to the other side of the fence." As we all can see, this was an experience for Alberto that taught him a lifelong lesson: learning to share what you have with others around you.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a response to literature and a thoughtful and comprehensive grasp of the story by providing relevant explanations and specific examples to support judgments about Alberto, the main character. The writer presents an accurate and coherent interpretation of the change in Alberto's character and the lesson he learns.

The response demonstrates a consistent organizational structure that incorporates well-chosen incidents and quotations to effectively illustrate the changes in Alberto's character. In the first paragraph, the writer clearly presents the central idea that paragraphs two through five will illustrate ("In the beginning of the story, Alberto was arrogant and conceited; but one experience changed his character dramatically."). In the second paragraph, the writer cites a quotation that illustrates Alberto's selfishness ("somehow the thought that others benefited from his tree lessened Alberto's enjoyment."). In the third paragraph, the writer describes Alberto's anger when he mistakenly assumes Juan has given him an apple cake to tease him ("... Alberto was livid! He rushed over to the mayor, and he demanded justice." "To him, this was the final straw."). In the fourth paragraph, the writer describes how Alberto's begins to change after his confrontation with Juan ("Alberto was speechless after Juan's explanation. 'Alberto felt no taller than an ant. His arguments dissolved like sugar in water.'").

In an economical concluding paragraph, the writer quotes the last line from the story to illustrate how Alberto's character has changed and describes the lesson Alberto has learned ("He hurried home, gathered a basket of his finest apples, and carried them to the other side of the fence." "... learning to share what you have with others around you.").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Two (continued)

Commentary

This response demonstrates sentence variety, including simple sentences (“Everyone learns important lessons during their life.”), compound sentences (“He rushed over to the mayor, and he demanded justice.”), and complex sentences (“When a branch of his tree grew over to his neighbor’s yard, Alberto was not pleased.” “As we all can see, this was an experience for Alberto that taught him a lifelong lesson: learning to share what you have with others around you.”). In the third paragraph, the writer mixes sentence types and lengths well to produce a smooth progression through the paragraph.

The response contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. The first paragraph contains a pronoun agreement error (“Everyone learns important lessons during their life.”) and a semicolon instead of a comma before a coordinating conjunction (“... Alberto was arrogant and conceited; but one experience changed his character dramatically.”). In the second paragraph, the first word in one sentence is not capitalized (“somehow the thought that others benefited from his tree lessened Alberto’s enjoyment.”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

Alberto learns a very important lesson in the story, "Both sides of the Fence." He learns that he might be wrong about why something happened. It might have happened for another reason.

Alberto was a very arrogant man, always bragging about his apple tree. "It bears the finest blossoms and the finest apples," he declared. "That makes me the finest man in the peblo." He wanted to keep the pride and joy of his apple tree all to himself. "Alberto decided to build a high fence so that he alone could enjoy the tree's blossom and bounty," (page 3). Then during one spring, he was bothered and angry by a tree branch that was growing over the fence into the neighbor Juan's yard. Alberto got even angrier when he found an apple cake on his door step made by his neighbor. "Alberto was furious, his apples were being used without his permission. . ." (page 3). He then went to the mayor and discussed this situation. The mayor replied, "A fence, however, has two sides, as does every argument," (page 4). He said Alberto was to find out Juan's side of the argument. Alberto decided to talk to Juan. Alberto was angry but Juan replied, "Did you like the cake?" (page 5). Juan starts to say how his family enjoyed the beauty in the spring and the tree's shade in the summer, and he wanted to bake a cake to show his gratitude. Alberto was so shocked to hear this, that his anger was blown away, and he felt as if, "His arguments dissolved like sugar in water," (page 5).

The moral of this story is that there might be another reason something happened, and it can be a good reason. This is what Alberto learned. He was always jumping to the bad side of conclusions, and he never realized there might be a good side. Also, there was another lesson: to not take too much pride. Alberto was always boasting about his tree and building up his pride, and

Commentary

This response clearly addresses all of the writing task and demonstrates a clear understanding of audience and the purpose of a response to literature. It provides thoughtful interpretations of the story and supports them with examples from the text. The writer describes how Alberto, the main character, changes as the story progresses and how he eventually learns important lessons.

The writer maintains a consistent organizational structure and focus, beginning with a clearly stated central idea early in the essay ("He learns that he might be wrong about why something happened. It might have happened for another reason."). The writer then recounts the story to illustrate how Alberto's character changes. Initially, the writer notes, Alberto was proud and superior ("Alberto was a very arrogant man . . ." "He wanted to keep the pride and joy of his apple tree all to himself."). As the story progresses, the writer illustrates Alberto's increasing anger ("... he was bothered and angry . . ." "Alberto was furious, his apples were being used without his permission."). Finally, the writer describes how Alberto's character changes when he learns why Juan baked a cake with Alberto's apples ("... he wanted to bake a cake to show his gratitude. Alberto was so shocked to hear this, that his anger was blown away . . ."). The retelling of events provides the basis for the writer's conclusions ("The moral of this story is that there might be another reason something happened, and it can be a good reason." "... to not take too much pride.").

In the final paragraph, the writer speculates about why Alberto changed ("When Juan was so thankful for Alberto's tree, he told Alberto how much it did for him. Juan's words touched Alberto's heart.").

The response demonstrates some sentence variety, including simple sentences ("He then went to

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

when he found out he was wrong about Juan, he soon felt "no taller than an ant," (page 5).

Alberto learned his lesson from his neighbor, Juan. When Juan was so thankful for Alberto's tree, he told Alberto how much it did for him. Juan's words touched Alberto's heart. Knowing that Juan did not have much and his tree made a difference, Alberto was probably glad to share it.

Commentary

the mayor and discussed this situation." "He said Alberto was to find out Juan's side of the argument."), complex sentences ("Then during one spring, he was bothered and angry by a tree branch that was growing over the fence into the neighbor Juan's yard."), and compound-complex sentences ("Alberto was always boasting about his tree and building up his pride, and when he found out he was wrong about Juan, he soon felt 'no taller than an ant.'").

The response contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. The second paragraph contains a misspelling ("gratitude") and an unnecessary comma before a quotation ("... and he felt as if, 'His arguments dissolved like sugar in water,'"). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample One

In the narrative Both Sides of the Fence a man named Alberto is greedy and conceited. He also had a very fine and plentiful apple tree. Alberto was told by his neighbor Juan how much he enjoyed his apple tree. However, the thought that everyone was benefited by the fine apple tree lessened Alberto's enjoyment. Wrapped in his selfishness, Alberto built a tall fence around his tree.

The following spring Alberto's apple tree branch hung over Juan's yard. Alberto was outraged, but as a thespian he faked it like it did not matter. One day Alberto discovered an apple cake on his doorstep with a note from Juan that read "Gracias." It was like a slap in the face to Alberto.

Alberto demanded justice for the crime. The mayor just told him that a fence and argumenet both have two sides. Later, Alberto discovers that Juan baked the cake out of thanks not as a mockery. Alberto learns that you must be giving to those that need it, and you must always think of the other man's heart before you accuse him.

Commentary

This response addresses the writing task and demonstrates a general understanding of purpose and audience by explaining the lessons Alberto, the main character, learns using examples from the text to illustrate how he learns them.

The response demonstrates a mostly consistent organizational structure. After a first sentence that identifies qualities of Alberto's character ("... Alberto is greedy and conceited."), the second sentence makes an abrupt transition ("He also had a very fine and plentiful apple tree.") into a sequential account of the story's events. The writer's account, however, more convincingly illustrates Alberto's selfishness than it does the greed and conceit that constitute the writer's central idea ("... the thought that everyone was benefited by the fine apple tree lessened Alberto's enjoyment. Wrapped in his selfishness, Alberto built a tall fence around his tree.").

In the final paragraph, the writer explains the lessons Alberto learns ("... you must be giving to those that need it, and you must always think of the other man's heart before you accuse him."). Although the writer's discussion of the story is mostly relevant to these lessons, it is so general that it does not clearly illustrate them ("[The apple cake] was like a slap in the face to Alberto. Alberto demanded justice for the crime. The mayor just told him that a fence and argumenet both have two sides."). The discussion does not make clear, for example, that Alberto has "accuse[d]" Juan of anything.

The response demonstrates some sentence variety. Most sentences are simple ("Alberto demanded justice for the crime." "The mayor just told him that a fence and argumenet both have two sides."), but some are compound-complex ("Alberto learns that you must be giving to those that need it, and you

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

Commentary

must always think of the other man's heart before you accuse him."). In the second paragraph, the writer uses transitional phrases effectively ("The following spring..." "One day...") and mixes sentence lengths to produce a smooth progression through the paragraph.

The response contains some errors in the conventions of the English language. Errors include a misspelling ("argumenet"), the lack of a comma to set off an appositive ("In the narrative Both Sides of the Fence a man named Alberto..."), and the lack of a comma to indicate a pause ("... Alberto discovers that Juan baked the cake out of thanks not as a mockery."). The writer also uses "like" where the conjunction "as if" or "as though" is needed ("but as a thespian he faked it like it did not matter."). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

In the narrative "Both Sides of the Fence," one of the main character, Alberto, gradually changes from a greedy and conceited man to a generous man.

One example that Alberto was greedy was, "Somehow the thought that others benefited from his tree lessened Alberto's enjoyment." This shows that he is greedy because he doesn't want to share his tree with others. Another reason is that he hates the fact that other benefits from his tree. Another reason that Alberto is greedy is that, "Alberto was unhappy to see a branch of his tree extend over the fence into his neighbor's yard." This shows that Alberto doesn't like it when his things are in another persons possession. This also shows that he doesn't like to share. So then afterwards when his neighbor bakes a cake from his apple, he got angry and decided to go to his neighbors house to settle things out. After he heard his neighbor talk a bit about his apples his feelings about giving things to others changed. One reason that he changed is that when he saw that his neighbors had little to eat he said, "If you would allow me to add something to the meal." This shows that he really has changed because he is more generous. Also he isn't afraid to share his prized apples.

The lesson that Alberto learned is be generous. He learned this lesson just because the branch of his apple tree crossed over to his neighbors yard.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a grasp of the story and a general understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by making a judgment about Alberto, the main character, and supporting it with relevant details from the text and with explanation. The writer addresses the writing task by describing how Alberto's character changes and how these changes illustrate the lesson Alberto learns.

The writer maintains a mostly consistent organizational structure by stating a central idea in the first paragraph ("... Alberto, gradually changes from a greedy and conceited man to a generous man.") and citing details and using explanation to support this idea. In the second paragraph, for example, the writer cites details from the text to suggest Alberto's greed ("... the thought that others benefited from his tree lessened Alberto's enjoyment.") and explains how these details illustrate his greed ("This shows that he is greedy because he doesn't want to share his tree with others."). Later in the second paragraph, the writer notes that Alberto's character changes as the story progresses ("After he heard his neighbor talk a bit about his apples his feelings about giving things to others changed."). The writer then quotes from the story to demonstrate the change in Alberto and explains the significance of the quotation ("If you would allow me to add something to the meal." "This shows that he really has changed because he is more generous."). The final paragraph describes the lesson the story illustrates. ("The lesson that Alberto learned is be generous.").

The response is weakened somewhat by the use of examples that better illustrate Alberto's selfishness than the greed and conceit the writer cites in the introduction, and the organizational structure suffers from redundancies ("One example that Alberto was greedy was, 'Somehow the thought that others benefited from his tree lessened Alberto's enjoyment.'" "Another

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Two (continued)

Commentary

reason is that he hates the fact that other benefits from his tree.”).

The response contains some sentence variety, including simple sentences (“This also shows that he doesn’t like to share.” “The lesson that Alberto learned is be generous.”) and some complex sentences (“This shows that he is greedy because he doesn’t want to share his tree with others.” “So then afterwards when his neighbor bakes a cake from his apple, he got angry and decided to go to his neighbors house to settle things out.”).

This response contains some errors in the conventions of the English language, including a misspelling (“possession”), a missing apostrophe in a possessive (“neighbors house”), and a missing comma after an introductory subordinate clause (“After he heard his neighbor talk a bit about his apples his feelings about giving things to others changed.”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

In the short story "Both Sides of the Fence" by Teresa Bateman, the character Alberto changes his attitude towards his neighbors, sharing, and life dramatically. Throughout the story, he has a foolish pride attitude, but in the end he ends up snapping up his snobbish act into a generous one.

I could tell that Alberto had foolish pride because when Juan (his neighbor) commented "I am glad you let us share the beauty (of the tree) as well," he built a fence around his yard so nobody would benefit from the tree, but himself. Another way that I could tell that in the beginning he was unsharing was that he was furious when Juan left a cake on his door step. "I must have justice," he cried. When he complained when his friend did a good deed it was obvious that he could not appreciate anything that had not been done to his liking.

One last thing that convinced me that he needed to change, was when he ran to the mayor and complained that he even wanted to file a case against Juan for baking the cake. I was amazed how jealous he was of Juan just for using the apples. I could not graspe that he could be as angry as he was in this situation.

In the end of the story, Alberto runs to Juan's house to find out why Juan would do such a crime. Before Alberto can fit a word in he is cut off by Juan telling him this "I had to thank you . . . my family enjoys the branch of your tree that comes over your fence." When Alberto finds out this news, "Alberto felt no smaller than an ant." Alberto now realizes that Juan had done no wrong, but he did by accusing Juan of a crime. Alberto has defenatly changed over the course of the story, and I think it was for the best.

This was a good story because now Alberto now knows he can't assume that others have done wrong. His point of view changed from being a foolish man to a generous one.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of audience and the purpose of a response to literature and a comprehensive grasp of the text. It addresses the writing task by identifying a lesson that Alberto, the main character, learns and presents evidence from the text to illustrate how he learns it.

The writer maintains a mostly consistent focus and organizational structure. In the first paragraph, the writer introduces the central idea ("Throughout the story, [Alberto] has a foolish pride attitude, but in the end he ends up snapping up his snobbish act into a generous one."). In the second paragraph, the writer supports this idea with reasonably coherent interpretations of Alberto's actions ("I could tell that Alberto had foolish pride because when Juan [his neighbor] commented 'I am glad you let us share the beauty [of the tree] as well,' he built a fence around his yard so nobody would benefit from the tree, but himself."). The writer's next piece of evidence ("When he complained when his friend did a good deed it was obvious that he could not appreciate anything that had not been done to his liking.") is somewhat inaccurate, however, since Alberto's failure to appreciate Juan's generosity derives more from an inability to comprehend Juan's motives than from an insistence that everything be to his liking.

The focus begins to stray in the third paragraph when the writer cites a third example of Alberto's shortcomings ("One last thing that convinced me that he need to change . . . he even wanted to file a case against Juan . . ."). Rather than supporting this claim, however, the writer drifts into expressions of dismay ("I was amazed at how jealous he was of Juan for just using the apples. I could not graspe that he could be as angry as he was in this situation.").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

Commentary

In the fourth paragraph, the writer describes Alberto's talk with Juan and Alberto's illumination ("Alberto now realizes that Juan had done no wrong, but he did by accusing Juan of a crime.").

The writer concludes by explaining the lesson Alberto learns and summarizing the change in his character ("... Alberto now knows he can't assume that others have done wrong. His point of view changed from being a foolish man to a generous one.").

This response demonstrates some sentence variety, including simple sentences ("His point of view changed from being a foolish man to a generous one."), a compound sentence ("Alberto now realizes that Juan had done no wrong, but he did by accusing Juan of a crime."), complex sentences ("This was a good story because now Alberto now knows he can't assume that others have done wrong."), and compound-complex sentences ("Throughout the story, he has a foolish pride attitude, but in the end he ends up snapping up his snobbish act into a generous one.").

The response contains some errors in the conventions of the English language, including misspellings ("attitue" "graspe" and "defenatly"), missing commas after subordinate clauses ("When he complained when his friend did a good deed it was obvious that ... "Before Alberto can fit a word in he is cut off by Juan telling him ..."), and misuse of parentheses to separate an appositive ("... when Juan [his neighbor] commented ...") and to incorporate a prepositional phrase ("... share the beauty [of the tree] as well."). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample One

In the Begging of the story Alberto would brag about his apples and being the greatest one in the pueblos. But one day he looked outside an saw that his Apple tree branch was going over his neighbors fence. Alberto knew that his neighbor Juan took some Apples off of the branch that was hanging over the fence. Alberto knew because Juan sent over a cake with Apples in it. Alberto went and told the mayor but he said, "go and ask Juan what was the Idea for taking the apples." So Alberto went home and thought up a lie so that the mayor could believe him.

So Alberto went back and told the mayor a lie and the mayor said, "go ask him, ". So the next day Alberto went to ask, and Juan Just said, "thank you for that apple tree with pink blossoms for the summer shade." And that he was sorry. Then Alberto felt small as an ant and everything desolved like sugar in water. The lesson I think Alberto learned was that he should not brag and be so stingy. I think he learned that because he was feeling small like an ant when he heard Juan apology.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of audience and the purpose of a response to literature. It addresses some of the writing task by retelling parts of the story and drawing a conclusion about the lesson that Alberto, the main character, learns. The writer demonstrates a limited grasp of the text by developing inaccurate interpretations of events and limited explanations of how those events support the writer's conclusions.

The organizational structure is marred by a lack of focus. The writer begins by plunging into an uneven retelling that sometimes omits material and explanations that would help illustrate the changes in Alberto. Midway through the first paragraph, for example, the writer may intend to illustrate Alberto's selfishness, but this intent is not communicated effectively ("Alberto knew that his neighbor Juan took some Apples ... because Juan sent over a cake with Apples in it. Alberto went and told the mayor ..."). The response includes misinterpretations as well ("So Alberto went home and thought up a lie so that the mayor could believe him."). The final two sentences of the essay explain the lessons the writer thinks Alberto learned, but these lessons are not adequately illustrated by the writer's account of the story.

The response demonstrates little sentence variety. Most sentences are simple sentences with compound verbs ("But one day he looked outside an saw that his Apple tree branch was going over his neighbors fence.") or simplistic compound sentences consisting of independent clauses connected by "and" or "but" ("Alberto went and told the major but he said, 'go and ask Juan what was the idea for taking the apples.'"). "So" functions as a vague transition in three consecutive sentences ("So Alberto went home and thought up a lie so that the mayor could believe

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

Commentary

him." "So Alberto went back and told the mayor a lie and the mayor said, 'go ask him,' So the next day Alberto went to ask, and Juan Just said, 'thank you for that apple tree with pink blossoms for the summer shade.'").

The response contains several errors in the conventions of the English language, including misspellings ("Begging" for "beginning," and "desolved"), capitalization errors ("In the Begging," "his Apple tree branch," "what was the Idea,") usage errors ("an" for "and" and "apology" for "apologize."), a sentence fragment ("And that he was sorry."), and missing commas ("In the Begging of the story Alberto . . ." "Alberto went and told the mayor but he said . . ." "Then Alberto felt small as an ant and everything . . ."). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

In this story called "Both Sides of the Fence" there was 2 characters. They are Alberto and Juan. The problem in this story is that Alberto has a apple tree and likes to keep it for himself. But one day he notice's the branch has grow over the fence and gets made because he thinks Juan is stealing his apples.

In the beginning of this story Juan and Alberto are nextdoor neighbors, but Alberto has a apple that every-one likes. But he is selfish and doesn't like the idea of people admiring his tree. So, he builds a fence between their houses. Then he knew no one could look at his tree this way.

But one day he notices that the branch went over the fence and is mad. I think he is pretty selfish with his tree. Afterwords, Juan leaves a apple cake on Albertos porch and thinks its wrong to leave his apples on his porch. So he went to the mayor to complain.

In conclusion Alberto learned that Juan wasn't steal- ing his apples, he was admitting his tree. Then, Alberto thought difficulty about Juan how than when he did when he thought he was stealing his apple.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of audience and the purpose of a response to literature by providing only a sketchy retelling of the story. The retelling includes a limited explanation of how Alberto, the main character, changes and a simplistic judgment about the lesson he learns.

The writer notes that, initially, Alberto is selfish and angry ("... [he] doesn't like the idea of people admiring his tree." "... one day he notices that the branch went over the fence and is mad."). The retelling ends abruptly, however, when Alberto goes to the mayor to make his complaint. More importantly, the writer's account does not describe how Alberto misinterprets Juan's motives or how, after his talk with Juan, Alberto realizes his mistake. The writer's explanation of the lesson Alberto learns is extremely literal and is not illustrated by the writer's discussion ("... Alberto learned that Juan wasn't stealing his apples, he was admitting his tree.").

The response demonstrates an inconsistent organizational structure. The writer suggests a central idea in the first paragraph ("The problem in this story is that Alberto has a apple tree and likes to keep it for himself.") but follows it with repetitive statements ("But one day [Alberto] notice's the branch has grow over the fence and gets made..." "But one day he notice's that the branch went over the fence and is mad.") and an extraneous statement of opinion ("I think he is pretty selfish with his tree.").

The response demonstrates some sentence variety, including simple sentences ("They are Alberto and Juan.") and a compound-complex sentence ("In the beginning of this story Juan and Alberto are nextdoor neighbors, but Alberto has a apple that everyone likes."). Frequent use of "but" and "so" as transitional words tends to magnify the simplicity and repetitive-

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Two (continued)

Commentary

ness of the sentence structures (“But he is selfish and doesn’t like the idea of people admiring his tree. So, he builds a fence between their houses... But one day... So he went to the mayor to complain.”).

This response contains several errors in the conventions of the English language, including misspellings (“notice’s” for “notices,” “grow” for “grown,” “After-words”), subject-verb agreement errors (“there was 2 characters”), missing apostrophes (“Albertos porch” and “its” for “it’s”), missing commas after introductory clauses and phrases (“In this story called ‘Both Sides of the Fence’ there...” “In the beginning of this story Juan and Alberto...”), usage errors (“a” for “an”), and sentence construction errors (“Then, Alberto thought difficulty about Juan how than when he did when he thought he was stealing his apple.”). These errors interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing .

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

In the story Alberto changes from being a mad man to being a nice man. Alberto learned that having his Tree over the fence wouldn't be so bad. At first he thought Juan was mean by baking Alberto a apple pie. He thought Juan was rubbing it in his face bye making him a cake.

Alberto learned his lesson when he went to Juans house to get Juans side of the Story, when Juan adme-diatly was pollite to him and Alberto decided not to press any chares Alberto felt no taller that day. Then when Juan asked Alberto for dinner, Alberto rushed home to bring them apples, so they can fest.

Alberto learned a big lesson that day he learned not to Judge anyone by what They are. He learned a big lesson. Never Judge a book by its cover.

In the beginning of this Story Alberto changed from a snob that was very mad, because his tree was over the fence. He was being very arogent and selfish Jerk. But at the end Juan and Alberto are probably good friends now.

Commentary

This response addresses some of the writing task and demonstrates some understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by attempting to illustrate how Alberto, the main character, changes in the story and to explain the lesson Alberto learns. The writer's description of the change in Alberto is limited and incomplete, however, and the explanation of the lesson Alberto learns is inaccurate.

In the first sentence of the response, the writer suggests a change in Alberto ("In the story Alberto changes from being a mad man to being a nice man."), but the explanations of this change in paragraphs one and two are too limited to illustrate that Alberto became a "nice man." Similarly, the lessons the writer identifies in paragraph three are neither illustrated by the story nor supported by the evidence the writer presents ("... he learned not to Judge anyone by what They are... Never Judge a book by its cover.").

The organizational structure is inconsistent. The writer begins the response with general statements of interpretation ("... Alberto changes from being a mad man to being a nice man. Alberto learned that having his Tree over the fence wouldn't be so bad.") but concludes paragraph one with a narrative of events that should be combined with the narrative in paragraph two. In paragraph three, the writer makes generalizations that are not supported by the writer's discussion, and in paragraph four, the writer introduces opinions that stray from the purpose of the response ("He was being very arogent and selfish Jerk. But at the end Juan and Alberto are probably good friends now.").

The response contains some sentence variety, including simple sentences ("He thought Juan was rubbing it in his face bye making him a cake." "He learned a big lesson."), complex sentences ("But at the end Juan and Alberto are probably good friends now."), and

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

Commentary

compound-complex sentences (“Then when Juan asked Alberto for dinner, Alberto rushed home to bring them apples, so they can fest.”).

The response contains many errors in the conventions of the English language, including misspellings (“learnd,” “bye” for “by,” “admediatly,” “pollite,”), capitalization errors (“having his Tree,” “get Juans side of the Story,” “what They are,” “selfish Jerk”), commas missing after introductory words in a sentence (“In the beginning of this Story Alberto changed from a snob . . .”), and an incorrect form of an article (“baking Alberto a apple pie”). These errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample One

In "Both sides of the Fence" Theres a person his name is Alberto and he changes dramatically in the Story and he learns it from his mother or his dad or if he doesn't have a dad or mom he must of learned it from a family member or one of his freinds, relly close friends. Alberto changes dramatically by theres something real going on hes excited and Theres nothing going on he relly bored that means he change dramatically. So Everyday he changes dramatically because he might be excited, sad, lonely, energetic, or really happy about something or TV or Theres something really exciting outing or he is really happy that won the lottery. So Alberto learns that he changes dramatically and keep going with life but one day there was a big crash that Alberto heard a big Boom he ran out and there was a big truck in his house. The very next day he found a fence that had a branch that was on the fence it was a apple tree.

Commentary

This response fails to address any part of the writing task and demonstrates no understanding of audience or the purpose of a response to literature. Although the writer mentions the title of the story and the main character's name, there is little evidence that the writer comprehends or has a grasp of the text.

The response provides little evidence of organizational structure. The first paragraph suggests a vague central idea ("[Alberto] changes dramatically in the Story...") that is referred to occasionally during the writer's subsequent discussion ("Alberto changes dramatically by there's..." "So Alberto learns that he changes dramatically..."), but the discussion does not support this central idea. Most of the discussion, rather, consists of meandering speculations about Alberto that are unrelated to the story. The lack of organizational structure and the largely incoherent discussion of irrelevant events reflect the writer's lack of understanding of the purpose of a response to literature.

The response consists of a series of run-on sentences. These sentences are usually composed of independent clauses connected by "and" or "or" or of fused independent clauses ("In 'Both sides of the Fence' Theres a person his name is Alberto and he changes dramatically in the Story and he learns it from his mother or his dad or if he doesn't have a dad or mom he must of learned it from a family member or one of his freinds, relly close friends." "... one day there was a big crash that Alberto heard a big Boom he ran out and there was a big truck in his house."). The writer demonstrates no control at the sentence level.

This response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language. The writer fails to use correct punctuation and coordinating conjunctions to

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

Commentary

separate dependent and subordinate clauses from independent clauses, creating run-ons (“Alberto changes dramatically by theres something real going on hes excited and Theres nothing going on he relly bored that means he change dramatically.”). The contractions contain no apostrophes (“Theres,” “hes”), and the writer incorrectly capitalizes words within sentences (“in the Story,” “So Everyday he,” “or TV or Theres something,” and “heard a big Boom”). The response also contains a misspelling (“relly”), a usage error (“he must of learned”), and an incorrect article before a vowel (“it was a apple”). These errors seriously interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

From my theory I think Alberto has learned to Share. He also must learn not to be so greedy and understand people's feelings. Alberto must need to be more respectful to others and not judge them every time. Alberto can learn these things from his own knowlage. All things can be learned by our own mistakes. Alberto can also learn this by other people show him respect and give him kindness.

Commentary

This response addresses only one part of the writing task and demonstrates no understanding of the purpose of a response to literature. Although the response identifies lessons Alberto, the main character, learns or ought to learn, the writer provides no textual evidence to support these claims. Without this evidence, the writer fails to demonstrate a grasp of the story.

The response demonstrates some sense of organizational structure. The first three sentences list lessons ("Alberto has learned to share. He must also learn not to be so greedy and understand people's feelings. Alberto must need to be more respectful to others and not judge them..."), and the last three sentences list where Alberto can learn these lessons ("... from his own knowledge... by our own mistakes... by other people show him respect and give him kindness."). Within this structure, however, the writer's focus drifts from what Alberto has learned to what he should learn ("... I think Alberto has learned... He also must learn... Alberto can learn these things..."). More importantly, this structure is inappropriate for a response to literature since it provides no focus or overarching central idea and no textual references for support.

This response contains no sentence variety. It consists solely of simple sentences that are nearly all of the same length ("Alberto must need to be more respectful to others and not judge them every time." "Alberto can learn these things from his own knowlage." "All things can be learned by our own mistakes.").

This short response contains errors in the conventions of the English language, including a capitalization error ("... has learned to Share."), a missing comma after introductory words ("From my theory I think Alberto has learned..."), a misspelling ("knowlage"), and an incorrect verb form ("by other people show him respect"). These errors are unlikely to interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

Albert's dad planted that tree and now its his and he doesn't want people to look at it anymore so he builds a fence and the branch to the tree is growing you don't want to cut it because it is so pretty. The branch in growing into his neighbors yard and so the neighbor has been taking apples off the tree and he made Alberto an apple pie. Then Alberto get mad and went the Mayor and told him but the mayor just helped himself to pie. In the end Alberto took down the fence so that know everyone can enjoy it. Because of the apple tree Alberto and Juan are friends again. the apple tree is still in the same spot and that branch is still in Juan's yard and he is welcome to use as many apples as he wants. The mayor also like that Apples so every spring he asks Juan for Apple pie because he really likes it and Juan is more then willing to make this pie for him.

Commentary

This writer addresses one part of the writing task by describing events from the story but demonstrates no understanding of audience or the purpose of a response to literature by failing to explain how these events illustrate a lesson. The inaccuracy of the writer's account demonstrates a limited grasp of the story.

The response lacks a central idea, organizational structure, or focus. It begins abruptly with a retelling of events ("Albert's dad planted that tree and now its his and he doesn't want people to look at it anymore so he builds a fence and the branch to the tree is growing you don't want to cut it because it is so pretty.") but soon drifts into narrative that is almost totally inaccurate ("In the end Alberto took down the fence ... [Juan] is welcome to use as many apples as he wants ... [the mayor] asks Juan for Apple pie ..."). In the second half of the response, the writer imagines the future relationship between Alberto, Juan, and the mayor and thereby demonstrates a misunderstanding of the task and the purpose of a response to literature.

The response demonstrates little sentence variety. Sentences consist mainly of statements connected by "so," and "and," which results in rambling sentences ("The branch in growing into his neighbors yard and so the neighbor has been taking apples off the tree and he made Alberto an apple pie." "the apple tree is still in the same spot and that branch is still in Juan's yard and he is welcome to use as many apples as he wants."). The writer demonstrates little control at the sentence level.

The response contains numerous errors in the conventions of the English language, including a lack of commas to separate phrases and clauses from the rest of the sentence ("Albert's dad planted that

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 7 and 8, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

Commentary

tree and now its his . . .” “Alberto get mad and went the Mayor and told him but the mayor . . .”), missing apostrophes in contractions and possessives (“its” “neighbors”), capitalization errors (“went the Mayor” “the apple tree is still in the same . . .” “The mayor also like that Apples”), usage errors (“then” for “than”), and subject/verb agreement errors (“Alberto get mad . . .” “The mayor also like that . . .”). These errors interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Grade Seven Response to Literature Writing Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

The writing task below was administered to students who took the CST in writing on May 2 or 3, 2006. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries are presented on pages 40 through 62.

Response to Literature Writing Task

Directions:

- Read the narrative on the following pages.
- As you read, you may mark the narrative or make notes. Marks and notes will not be scored.
- After reading the narrative, you will be given directions to write an essay. You will have time to read, plan your essay, and write a first draft with edits.
- You may reread or go back to the narrative at any time during the test.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.
- Use only a No. 2 pencil to write your essay.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you

- show your understanding of the narrative,
- organize around several clear ideas,
- give examples and cite evidence from the narrative, and
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

excerpt from
Dancing Miranda
by Diane De Anda

Miranda loves to dance. It is hard for her to sit still as her mother drives her to rehearsal. As they walk through the parking lot to the building where the rehearsal will be held, the mother tells Miranda to go ahead of her. Miranda's mother will catch up to her inside.

Miranda gave her mother a quick smile, let go of her hand, and bounded forward in great skipping leaps up the ramp, across the red and gold carpet in

the lobby, down the long side aisle, and up the steps onto the stage. Miranda felt herself slide across the hard shiny floor. In a few minutes Inez and the other girls arrived and joined her on the stage, laughing as they all practiced little leaps and pirouettes.

As Miranda moved toward the edge of the side curtains, she could hear her mother and her dance teacher talking.

“It’s an inborn talent, a gift, Mrs. Montero. Were you such a dancer also as a girl?” Mrs. Sommers smiled warmly at Miranda’s mother.

“I did a lot of dancing in my daydreams, but couldn’t move like my Miranda.” Mrs. Sommers noticed Mrs. Montero’s eyes cloud slightly as she continued. “I had polio as a young girl and wore braces on my legs until I was way into my teens.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to pry,” Mrs. Sommers began.

At that point Mrs. Montero noticed Miranda, who had been standing just inside the curtain. Unaware that she had heard their conversation, Mrs. Montero excused herself and walked over to Miranda.

“Here, *m’ija*,¹” she said, as she pushed her daughter’s hair away from her face and clipped it in place with the two barrettes she had in her hand. “This will let you see where you are going when you twirl across the floor. I’ll be sitting in the front row ready to clap real loud. You’d better get back with your group now.” She winked at Miranda, and Miranda managed to turn the corners of her mouth up slightly.

Miranda watched her mother as she walked back and continued talking with the teacher. She looked at her mother’s shoes—simple, plain flats, not like the square or slender heels the other mothers wore. But she had never thought about it before. Her mom was simply her mom, just the way she was. She had never thought of her as different. Certainly she had never thought of her mother as a young girl. But now she could picture her mother as a child sitting alone as the other children sailed by her just as Miranda did, gliding so easily and lightly across the ground. She could see her mother’s feet hidden in coarse, brown, laced shoes that looked almost nailed to the ground. She remembered now a few pictures of her mother as a little girl smiling in a group of girl cousins at a birthday party. She remembered the silver braces on the heavy brown shoes that looked so odd beneath the full skirt of her pink ruffled party dress. Miranda bent one leg up at the knee and gracefully extended it out. She imagined the weight of thick shoes and braces, and her leg dropped stiff and heavy as a rock to the ground.

“Everyone take your places. Quickly, quickly,” Mrs. Sommers called to the group.

Miranda hesitated a moment as she watched her mother hold on to the

¹*m’ija*: my daughter.

guardrail to steady her balance on the steps down from the stage.

“Come on, Miranda, come on and get in line. We’re on first,” said her friend Inez tugging on her arm.

“Okay, okay, I’m coming,” she called as she trailed slowly behind Inez, who skipped with excitement to her place in the line.

In the dance studio they took up the whole floor. Now on the big stage Miranda felt dwarfed by the huge curtains and the high ceilings with the bright lights. She looked out over the big empty cavern where the audience would sit. There in the front row, just as she had promised, sat Miranda’s mother, smiling and nodding toward her daughter.

The music filtered softly onto the stage. The music that usually filled Miranda with a lightness that lifted her in magic gliding movement now filled her with a strange sadness. It was the sadness of the dark eyes that had watched other children dancing, the dark eyes that now watched Miranda dance. Heavy, aching sadness poured into Miranda.

Tap, tap, tap. The teacher’s cane marked Miranda’s missed cue. *Tap, tap, tap.* The cane prodded her forward into the spotlight. Miranda moved to the music automatically, the steps paired to the rhythm of the music from hours of practice. But her spins wobbled with the heavy sadness. She strained to leap; her legs thick with the sadness the music pulsed into her. She didn’t look at her mother in the audience. She couldn’t look at those dark eyes watching her dance across the stage. And the sadness stopped only when the music ended and the curtain pulled across the stage.

Mrs. Sommers approached the group, “I know that dancing on a big stage thinking about all the people who will be watching you can make you feel a little shaky and unsure. But, remember the picture I told you to keep in your mind. Just concentrate on that, and we’ll keep practicing here today until it feels just like we’re back in our own little studio.” She looked at Miranda, “Just let the music guide you and you’ll be fine. Now take a fifteen-minute break, and we’ll try it again.”

Miranda’s mother was waiting for her as she walked down to take a seat. Mrs. Montero put her arm around her daughter. “Your teacher seems to think that you all had a little stage fright. Did you feel nervous up there, *m’ija*?”

“I guess so,” Miranda whispered, looking away.

“You know, you didn’t look scared to me, Miranda. I’m used to seeing you so happy flying across the floor, but this time you just looked so sad, like something was weighing you down. What is it *m’ija*?”

Miranda’s eyes were filling with tears when she looked up at her mother. “I heard you talking to the teacher about when you were a little girl.”

Mrs. Montero put her arms around Miranda. “*Ay, m’ija,*” she whispered as she kissed her daughter on the top of her head. She held her a moment then knelt

down to look into her daughter's face. "Miranda, you only heard the first part of the conversation, and not the most important part. I told your teacher not to feel embarrassed or upset. You see, Miranda, when I watch you dance and see how free and happy you are floating with the music, I feel free and light myself. It's hard to explain, but seeing you is more beautiful to me than all my childhood day-dreams. And when you leap and leave the ground, I feel this wonderful lightness inside me. It's your gift, Miranda, but it's also a gift to all of us who watch you."

Miranda looked up at her mother's eyes, her mother's dark, happy, dancing eyes, and the sadness lifted away from them both as they stood there with their arms around each other.

Tap, tap, tap. Mrs. Sommers called Miranda's group back onto the stage. Miranda grazed her mother's cheek with a quick kiss and dashed up the stairs, savoring the new lightness that lifted her so easily forward onto the stage. *Tap, tap, tap.* They all took their places. *Tap, tap, tap.* The Music Center was silent.

Then the music began, weaving its magic through Miranda. She felt the rhythm build with every breath. The strong, electric rhythm pulsed through her. It drew her forward, spinning to the front of the stage. Miranda looked up and met her mother's smiling face, her dark and shining eyes. And then the music lifted them both into the air, soaring them across the stage, Miranda and the girl with the dancing dark eyes.

From *Dancing Miranda* by Diane De Anda, copyright © 1999 by Arte Público Press. Reprinted by permission of Arte Público Press.

Response to Literature Writing the Essay

Explain how Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes throughout the narrative. Use details from the narrative to support your answer.

When you write your essay, remember

- to show your understanding of the narrative,
- to organize around several clear ideas,
- to give examples and cite evidence from the narrative, and
- to use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample One

From the time Miranda was in the car to the time Miranda finished dancing her second time through in the rehearsal, her attitude toward dancing completely changed. At the beginning of the narrative, it was clear that Miranda loved to dance. However, as the story continued, I began thinking differently.

As her mother drives her to dance rehearsal, Miranda is antsy to arrive at the studio. She was looking forward to joining her friends on stage, laughing, and practicing together. From the way Miranda joyfully leaped and twirled to her dance rehearsal, I was able to tell that Miranda was excited to be going to rehearsal and excited to dance!

When Miranda and her mother finally arrived at the stage where Miranda and the other girls would perform, Miranda's mother, Mrs. Montero, began a conversation with Miranda's dance teacher, Mrs. Sommers. Miranda overheard their conversation and discovered that her mother had a disability as a child, preventing her from enjoying things like dance. Hearing this awful news made Miranda's happy and anxious attitude turn into a strange sadness. It was apparent that she was feeling this way by the way she moved across the dance floor without the energy she had had earlier. Instead, her spins were wobbly, her leaps were weak, and she couldn't even bare to look at her mother. Her dark eyes were filled with sadness, and the music that usually lifted her with lightness and a magical feeling, made her feel heavy and sad.

Hearing about her mother's sad news made Miranda not as excited about dancing as she did before. She felt her mother's feelings as a child not being able to be on stage doing things like dance like most kids could do. Mrs. Montero asked Miranda what was causing her the sadness. When Miranda told her mother that it was the thought of her mother as a disabled child, Miranda had a

Commentary

This response clearly addresses the writing task and demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by using relevant, accurate details from the text to explain how Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes through the story.

The writer develops a consistent organizational structure that introduces a central idea early in the response and supports it in the paragraphs that follow. In the first sentence, the writer clearly states the central idea ("From the time Miranda was in the car to the time Miranda finished dancing her second time through in the rehearsal, her attitude toward dancing completely changed."). The last two sentences of the introduction lead effectively into the body by suggesting the coming change in Miranda's attitude ("At the beginning of the narrative, it was clear that Miranda loved to dance. However, as the story continued, I began thinking differently.").

In the second through fifth paragraphs, the writer traces the changes in Miranda's attitude using details from the text to illustrate the changes. The second paragraph describes Miranda's initial excitement ("From the way Miranda joyfully leaped and twirled to her dance rehearsal, I was able to tell that Miranda was excited to be going to rehearsal and excited to dance!"). The third paragraph describes how her excitement turns to disappointment when she overhears that her mother had a disability and how her empathy for her mother affects her mood and her dancing ("Hearing this awful news made Miranda's happy and anxious attitude turn into a strange sadness. It was apparent that she was feeling this way by the way she moved across the floor . . . " " . . . her spins were wobbly, her leaps were weak . . .").

The fourth and fifth paragraphs describe how

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

whole new feeling.

Mrs. Montero explained to Miranda how she felt the same lightness and happiness as Miranda did when Miranda leaped and floated through the air. She let Miranda know that seeing her dance so beautifully made her feel so wonderful inside. After hearing this, Miranda's sadness lifted away, and she felt much better. As Miranda started dancing again, she felt the magical feeling weave through her. She enjoyed dancing again, and the lightness of the music lifted her and her mother through the air.

Commentary

Miranda's talk with her mother rekindles her love for dancing ("Mrs. Montero explained to Miranda how she felt the same lightness and happiness as Miranda did when Miranda leaped and floated through the air." "... Miranda's sadness lifted away... she enjoyed dancing again...").

The writer uses a variety of sentence structures, including simple sentences ("Mrs. Montero asked Miranda what was causing her the sadness."), compound sentences ("She enjoyed dancing again, and the lightness of the music lifted her and her mother through the air."), complex sentences ("At the beginning of the narrative, it was clear that Miranda loved to dance." "However, as the story continued, I began thinking differently."), and a compound-complex sentence ("After hearing this, Miranda's sadness lifted away, and she felt much better."). The writer often uses subordination effectively for transitional purposes ("After hearing this, Miranda's sadness lifted away, and she felt much better. As Miranda started dancing again, she felt the magical feeling weave through her. She enjoyed dancing again, and the lightness of the music lifted her and her mother through the air.").

This response contains very few errors in the conventions of the English language. In the second paragraph, the writer shifts verb tenses from simple present to simple past tense ("As her mother drives her to dance rehearsal, Miranda is antsy to arrive at the studio." "When Miranda and her mother finally arrived..."). The third paragraph contains a misspelling ("bare" for "bear"), and the fourth paragraph contains a capitalization error ("She felt her mother's Feelings as a child not being able to be on stage doing things like dance like most kids could do."). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

In the beginning of the story "Dancing Miranda" by Diane De Anda, the author displays the love and passion Miranda has for dancing. Everything was fine as Miranda walked into the building where the rehearsal would be held. She hurried forward in leaps up the ramp and onto the stage. When Miranda heard her mother and teacher talking, she was no longer full of joy, but filled with sadness.

As Miranda heard her mother tell her teacher about how she would always daydream about dancing and how she had polio and wore braces on her legs until she was a teenager, she was filled with a great sadness. She was simply her mom. Miranda never thought of her as different. Then she could easily picture her mother sitting alone as a child while the other children played around her. When the author displayed Miranda hesitating as she watched her mother hold the guardrail to steady herself, it showed that Miranda really cares about her mom and the fact that her mother never got to fulfill her dreams of dancing. It really bothered her.

When Miranda got on to the stage, the music that lifted her up started to fill her with sadness. Her spirit wobbled, and it was hard to leap. The sadness didn't stop until the music stopped. Being on stage reminded her of the dreams she was living that her mother never got to live. Readers could immediately tell that she felt extreme sorrow and guilt. Miranda felt she did not deserve to be on the stage that he mother never got to dance on. It did not feel right to Miranda.

The only thing that eased Miranda's sadness was when her mother told her "... You see, Miranda, when I watch you dance and see how free and happy you are floating with the music, I feel free and light myself. It's hard to explain, but seeing you is more beautiful to

Commentary

This response clearly addresses the writing task by providing relevant details from the story to explain how Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes. The writer demonstrates a thoughtful and comprehensive grasp of the story and a clear understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by developing thoughtful interpretations and supporting them with specific textual references.

The writer maintains a consistent focus on events that illustrate the changes in Miranda's attitude toward dancing. Rather than present a central idea that describes the changes in Miranda's attitude, the writer allows a recounting of events to illustrate the changes. In the first paragraph, the writer notes Miranda's initial "love and passion" for dance and illustrates it with examples ("She hurried forward in leaps up the ramp and onto the stage."). The last sentence in the first paragraph suggests the first change in Miranda's attitude and provides a transition into the second paragraph ("When Miranda heard her mother and teacher talking, she was no longer full of joy, but filled with sadness.").

In the next three paragraphs, the writer uses examples and interpretations to illustrate how events in the story affect Miranda. In the second paragraph, for example, the writer observes that after hearing her mother and her teacher talking, Miranda hesitates while watching her mother steady herself on a guardrail. Miranda's hesitation, the writer says, illustrates Miranda's concern for her mother ("... it showed that Miranda really cares about her mom and the fact that her mother never got to fulfill her dreams of dancing."). Similarly, in the third paragraph, the writer interprets Miranda's sadness, "wobbl[ly]" spirit, and difficulty leaping as symptoms of deeper emotions ("... she felt extreme sorrow and guilt. Miranda felt she did not deserve to be on the stage that he mother never got to dance on.").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Two (continued)

me than all my childhood daydreams. And when you leap and leave the ground, I feel this wonderful lightness inside me. It's your gift, Miranda, but it's also a gift to all of us who watch you." Miranda then looked at her mother's, happy eyes, and her sadness disappeared. All Miranda needed was to talk to her mother and for her to tell her everything was okay. When Miranda's group did thier dance routine again, she sailed through all the moves. The music lifted her and her mother again.

The author of this story, Diane De Anda, really used a character that people could relate to. "Dancing Miranda" isn't a story where everything is cheerful, but it is a realistic story. Miranda's mother deserved to fulfill her dreams and Miranda saw that. This story shows the sad reality that there are things that could stop someone from fulfilling their dreams. These hard experiences make us stronger in the end. When the music played again and Miranda and her mother both smiled, somehow we know everything ended up okay.

Commentary

In the final paragraph, the writer moves beyond the changes in Miranda's attitude to comment on the significance of the story ("This story shows the sad reality that there are things that could stop someone from fulfilling their dreams. These hard experiences make us stronger in the end."). The writer provides closure by citing an incident from the story and drawing a conclusion from it ("When the music played again and Miranda and her mother both smiled, somehow we know everything ended up okay.").

The response demonstrates sentence variety, including a combination of simple sentences ("Miranda never thought of her mother as different." "It really bothered her."), compound sentences ("Miranda then looked up at her mother's happy eyes, and her sadness disappeared."), and complex sentences ("When Miranda heard her mother and teacher talking, she was no longer full of joy, but filled with sadness.").

This response contains very few errors in the conventions of the English language. The third paragraph contains a minor usage error ("on to" for "onto"), and the fourth paragraph contains a misspelling ("thier"). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

Miranda was excited about going to dance class. Her mother drove her to rehearsal so she could cheer her daughter on as she practiced on a big stage. Miranda couldn't wait to begin. She was so talented and gifted that she got all of the dance steps right, but something happened that distracted her. As the story continues, Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes.

As I said before; Miranda couldn't wait to start dancing. She jumped up on stage right next to the curtains, and she overheard her mother and dance teacher, Mrs. Sommers, talking. She overheard Mrs. Sommers ask Miranda's mother if she was a good dancer too. Miranda's mother sadly replied that she spent most of her childhood with braces on her legs. Miranda felt so wierd thinking about how her mother couldn't dance as a child, and that Miranda could.

It was time to dance now, and Miranda felt strange and didn't want to dance anymore. She just wanted to go home because she couldn't dance thinking about her mother just sitting there watching. It probably gave her a sick feeling in her stomach, because Miranda couldn't concentrate. She was slower and got all of the steps wrong. She was miserable. The pain stopped when the music stopped, and she ran over to her mother.

"What's wrong Miranda? What happened out there?" Miranda's mom asked her.

"I heard you talking about how you could only dream about dancing as a child, but not actually do it," Miranda explained. Her attitude towards dancing changed because she didn't want her mom to watch her perform her dream. Miranda's mom sighed and told her that she wanted to watch Miranda dance and that it gave her so much joy. She said that Miranda was so much more beautiful than all of her childhood dreams. Miranda gave

Commentary

This response clearly addresses the writing task and illustrates a comprehensive and thoughtful grasp of the story by clearly demonstrating how Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes. The writer supports interpretations with relevant details and examples from the story.

The response demonstrates a clear and consistent organizational structure and focus. The writer begins by describing Miranda's initial love of dancing ("Miranda was excited about going to dance class." "Miranda couldn't wait to begin."). The last sentence of first paragraph suggests the essay's central idea and provides a concise transition into the subsequent discussion. ("As the story continues, Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes.").

The second and third paragraphs describe how the conversation between Miranda's mother and Mrs. Sommers, her dance teacher, produces a change in Miranda's attitude ("Miranda felt so wierd thinking about how her mother couldn't dance as a child . . . She just wanted to go home because she couldn't dance thinking about her mother . . .").

In paragraph five, Miranda tells her mother she overheard her talking to Mrs. Sommers and the writer explains why this conversation saddens Miranda and what happens as a result ("[Miranda's] attitude towards dancing changed because she didn't want her mom to watch her perform her dream."). The writer then explains that Miranda's mother rekindles her daughter's enthusiasm by describing the joy she receives by watching Miranda dance ("Miranda gave her a smile and ran back onto the stage and danced.").

To conclude the response, the writer summarizes ("As you can see, her attitude changes because she

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

her a smile and ran back onto the stage and danced. She was concentrating and making her mother and herself feel free and happy.

As you can see, her attitude changes because she overheard her mother talking about her childhood in braces, but it changes back to being happy because she now understands the joy she brings to her mother. Her attitude may have changed because of something bad, but it changed back because of something good. Miranda still feels sad about her mom's childhood, but that can't be changed. She feels incredible because of what her mother said about her, and she will probably remember those words for the rest of her life.

Commentary

overheard her mother talking about her childhood in braces, but it changes back to being happy because she now understands the joy she brings to her mother.”).

The response includes a variety of sentence structures, including simple sentences (“Miranda was excited about going to dance class.”), compound sentences (“She was so talented and gifted that she got all of the dance steps right, but something happened that distracted her.” “It was time to dance now, and Miranda felt strange and didn’t want to dance anymore.”), complex sentences (“As the story continues, Miranda’s attitude toward dancing changes.” “Her attitude towards dancing changed because she didn’t want her mom to watch her perform her dream.”), and a compound-complex sentence (“As you can see, her attitude changes because she overheard her mother talking about her childhood in braces, but it changes back to being happy because she now understands the joy she brings to her mother.”).

This response contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. Errors include a semicolon used incorrectly at the beginning of the second paragraph (“As I said before; Miranda couldn’t wait to start dancing.”), a misspelling (“wierd”), and a misused comma before a subordinate clause (“It probably gave her a sick feeling in her stomach or something, because Miranda couldn’t concentrate.”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample One

Miranda Montero loves to dance. When she dances it's like gliding on clouds. When she and her mother are at a recital she overhears her mother and dance teacher talking. Her dance teacher is asking if Miranda's mom used to be a dancer. Mrs. Montero said when she was little she had to wear leg braces because she had polio, but that didn't stop her from dreaming about dancing. When Miranda has to perform, she messes up because she is thinking about how sad her mother's childhood must have been. She and her mom get to talking, and her mom says just because she had a problem, doesn't mean Miranda should feel sorry for her. Later Miranda must perform again but this time she thinks about her mom's dreams and she does a great job.

Miranda's attitude definitely changed throughout the story because her thoughts travel back to her mother's childhood, so she doesn't dance as well as she could. Miranda talks to her mother about it, and her attitude changes again because her mom tells her how proud she is of Miranda. So when Miranda goes on stage for the second time, she doesn't worry about her mom's past, she thinks about what her mom told her. She watches her mom in the audience and sees the sparkle in her mother's eyes as she dances. She realizes that her mother's dreams for her are more important than her mother's past no matter how sad it may have been.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by retelling events from the story to illustrate how Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes.

Although the writer maintains a consistent focus on the changes in Miranda's attitude, the response would be strengthened by a more consistent organization. The first two sentences of the response briefly but effectively introduce Miranda's initial attitude toward dance ("Miranda Montero loves to dance. When she dances it's like gliding on clouds."). The brevity of this introduction, however, produces an abrupt transition into the next sentence ("When she and her mother are at a recital she overhears her mother and dance teacher talking."). The rest of the first paragraph provides a coherent but general account of the changes in Miranda's attitude ("When Miranda has to perform, she messes up because she is thinking about how sad her mother's childhood must have been.").

The second paragraph opens with a central idea that would be better stated in the introduction or conclusion of the response ("Miranda's attitude definitely changed throughout the story because her thoughts travel back to her mother's childhood, so she doesn't dance as well as she could."). The rest of the second paragraph covers the same ground as the first paragraph but at a more specific level.

An interpretation of Miranda's feelings in the final sentence of the response provides an effective sense of closure ("She realizes that her mother's dreams for her are more important than her mother's past no matter how sad it may have been.").

The response demonstrates some sentence variety, including simple sentences ("Miranda Montero loves

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

Commentary

to dance.”), compound sentences (“Miranda talks to her mother about it, and her attitude changes again because her mom tells her how proud she is of Miranda.”), complex sentences (“So when Miranda goes on stage for the second time, she doesn’t worry about her mom’s past, she thinks about what her mom told her.”), and compound-complex sentences (“Mrs. Montero said when she was little she had to wear leg braces because she had polio, but that didn’t stop her from dreaming about dancing.” “Miranda’s attitude definitely changed throughout the story because her thoughts travel back to her mother’s childhood, so she doesn’t dance as well as she could.”). Although the writer uses occasional transitions (“Later Miranda must perform again . . .”), the essay would benefit from more frequent transitions to indicate shifts in thought.

The response contains some errors in the conventions of the English language, including occasional misspellings (“child hood” and “definitely”), a missing apostrophe in the possessive form of a noun (“mothers eyes”), and a missing comma after an introductory subordinate clause (“When she and her mother are at a recital she overhears her mother and dance teacher talking.”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

Miranda Montera is a young, graceful girl. She has a lot of energy and many skills as a dancer. Because of these things, she loves dancing and performing. One day, though, her perception of dancing dramatically changes.

At the studio one day, Miranda eavsdropped on a conversation between her mother and her dance teacher. Her mother was explaining to her teacher about the polio that her mom had had as a kid. The moment Miranda heard this, she became heavy with sadness. She felt terrible that her mother would never dance like her.

A while after the conversation, Miranda and her group were about to preform. Miranda usually being a fantastic dancer, wobbles and misses her cue. This is because she is so sad and sorry for her mother. Also, she feels bad for always running around her. Miranda is in a terrible mood.

After her preformance, her mother talks to her. Miranda confesses about hearing her mother and the teacher talking, but her mother has something to confess to Miranda. She says that when she watches her daughter dance, she is filled with joy and feels like she can dance that way too. Then Miranda is filled with an overcoming sense of joy. At the next preformance, Miranda is back to being an amazingly wonderful dancer.

Commentary

This response addresses the writing task by describing how events from the story illustrate changes in Miranda's attitude toward dance. The writer demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by providing textual examples and details to develop a reasonably coherent interpretation of the story.

The writer maintains a consistent organizational structure. The first paragraph establishes Miranda's initial attitude toward dancing and leads effectively into an ensuing discussion of the changes in Miranda's attitude ("... she loves dancing and performing. One day, though, her perception of dancing dramatically changes.").

The discussion of changes in Miranda's attitude in subsequent paragraphs demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the text, but the generality of the discussion omits details that would help clarify how Miranda's attitude changes. In the second paragraph, for example, the writer notes that Miranda is sad her mother had polio, but does not mention that her sadness comes from knowing that she can do something her mother never had a chance to do ("The moment Miranda heard [her mother had polio], she became heavy with sadness. She felt terrible that her mother would never dance like her."). Similarly, in the third paragraph, the writer notes that Miranda misses a cue because she is sad, but glosses over details that would convey more clearly how her attitude changes ("Miranda... wobbles and misses her cue. This is because she is so sad and sorry for her mother."). The third paragraph also contains an inference that is not clearly supported by the text ("Also, she feels bad for always running around her.").

In the concluding paragraph, the writer describes how Miranda's talk with her mother revives her enthu-

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Two (continued)

Commentary

siasm for dancing (“Then Miranda is filled with an overcoming sense of joy. At the next performance, Miranda is back to being an amazingly wonderful dancer.”).

The response contains some sentence variety, including simple sentences (“Miranda Montero is a young, graceful girl.” “Miranda is in a terrible mood.”), compound sentences (“Miranda confesses about hearing her mother and the teacher talking, but her mother has something to confess to Miranda.”), and complex sentences (“The moment Miranda heard this, she became heavy with sadness.”). Although the transitions could be introduced more gracefully, the writer does realize where transitions are needed to indicate causation (“Because of these things, . . .”), shifts in time (“A while after the conversation, . . .”), and consequence (“Then Miranda is filled with an overcoming sense of joy.”).

This response contains some errors in spelling (“eavsdropped,” “A while,” and “preform”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

In the touching story called "Dancing Miranda", there is a girl who's name is Miranda, and she dances just like a fairy! It's amazing to read how she has so much talent for dancing, but before a performance one night, she doesn't seem to have much talent at all. Her steps were filled with sad and heavy thoughts of her mother's childhood. When her mother was a girl about Miranda's age, she had polio and had to wear these heavy, burdening braces that greatly effected her dreams of dancing ballet.

Miranda's mother never told her about it until she found out before her rehearsal. During rehearsal, Miranda was preoccupied and just didn't seem to be into the music. Her once light and weightless footsteps were now heavy with sadness. It was as she felt she didn't deserve to be reaching toward her dream, while her mom was just encouraging her by the sidelines. While Miranda was on a 15 minute break from rehearsal, her mom went to talk to her and asked her why she was so sad. "Before the rehearsal, I overheard you and Mrs. Sommers talking about your childhood," Miranda responded almost in tears. Her mother then said, "But, you missed the most important part when I told your teacher that you shouldn't be embarrassed one bit. I love watching you happily and freely dance because then I felt equally as free."

As the sadness slowly lifted away from both of them, Mrs. Sommers told them to begin rehearsal again. Once they started, Miranda felt as if she could fly and joy glowed off of her graceful steps. This was when she knew that she wouldn't have to be ashamed or upset.

Commentary

This response addresses most of the writing task and demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a response to literature by providing textual examples and details to illustrate the changes in Miranda's attitude toward dance.

The writer maintains a mostly consistent organizational structure and focus and provides a reasonably coherent interpretation of the story. The response begins slightly off-task by emphasizing Miranda's outstanding talent and skill rather than by establishing her initial attitude toward dance ("... she dances just like a fairy!" and "... has so much talent..."). The writer then notes that after overhearing her mother explain one night that she had childhood polio, Miranda is sad and her sadness affects her ability to dance ("[Miranda's] steps were filled with sad and heavy thoughts of her mother's childhood.").

The second paragraph describes the conversation in which Mrs. Montero tells Miranda how much she loves watching Miranda dance ("... 'I love watching you happily and freely dance because then I felt equally as free.'"). In the final paragraph, the writer explains how her conversation with her mother revives her love of dance ("Miranda felt as if she could fly and joy glowed off of her graceful steps.").

The organizational structure is weakened somewhat by the absence of a separate introductory paragraph, a comment in the first paragraph that is extraneous to the writer's purpose ("It's amazing to read how she had so much talent for dancing..."), and material in the second paragraph ("Her once light and weightless footsteps were now heavy with sadness.") that repeats material from the first paragraph ("Her steps were filled with sad and heavy thoughts.")

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

Commentary

This response contains some sentence variety, including simple sentences (“Her once light and weightless footsteps were now heavy with sadness.”), complex sentences (“While Miranda was on a 15 minute break from rehearsal, her mom went to talk to her and asked her why she was so sad.” “As the sadness slowly lifted away from both of them, Mrs. Sommers told them to begin rehearsal again.”), and compound-complex sentences (“It’s amazing to read how she has so much talent for dancing, but before a performance one night, she doesn’t seem to have much talent at all.”). The writer uses transitions effectively in places to clarify time (“During rehearsal . . .” “Her once light and weightless footsteps were now heavy with sadness.”) and sequence (“Her mother then said . . .”).

Errors in the conventions of the English language are limited to usage errors (“who’s” for “whose” and “effected” for “affected”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample One

At the begging of the story I don't think Miranda appreciated dancing as much as she did after the story. Miranda overheard her mom and teacher talking. Her mom explained that when she was young she had braces on her legs until she was in her late teens. When Miranda heard this, she became very sad and pictured the old photos of her mom as a child. When Miranda got on stage she was so sad that she couldn't concentrate on her dancing, and when she got off stage the teacher just thought Miranda was nervous. When she talked to her mom after the dance she admitted hearing the conversation between her and the dance teacher. Her mom told her that she is lucky she is so good at dancing and she shouldn't worry about her mom. That's why she had a better appreciattion for her dancing after the story.

Commentary

This response addresses some of the writing task but shows little understanding of purpose and audience. It demonstrates a limited grasp of the text, lacks accuracy, and provides few textual examples and details to illustrate the writer's claims.

The organizational structure consists of a thinly developed paragraph in which few textual references are provided to explain how Miranda's attitude changes. The first sentence presents the central idea ("At the begging of the story I don't think Miranda appreciated dancing as much as she did after the story.") but the discussion that follows is too limited to support this idea.

After presenting the central idea, the writer narrates events in the story. The narrative begins when Miranda overhears her mother talking to her teacher. The writer notes that Miranda is saddened to hear that her mother wore leg braces when she was growing up, that this sadness affects her concentration when dancing, and that after talking with her mother she appreciates dance more. The writer does not establish, however, that Miranda initially loves dancing or make clear that her love of dancing returns after talking with her mother. Sometimes the discussion is so general that it becomes inaccurate ("Her mom told her that she is lucky she is so good at dancing and she shouldn't worry about her mom.").

The response demonstrates some variety in sentence types, including simple sentences ("Miranda overheard her mom and teacher talking."), complex sentences ("When Miranda heard this, she became very sad and pictured the old photos of her mom as a child."), compound sentences ("Her mom told her that she is lucky she is so good at dancing and she shouldn't worry about her mom."), and compound-complex sentences ("When Miranda got on stage

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

Commentary

she was so sad that she couldn't concentrate on her dancing, and when she got off stage the teacher just thought Miranda was nervous."). The writer recognizes the need for transitions to indicate causation and sequence, but the repetitive use of "when" to begin transitional clauses reduces sentence variety.

The response contains several errors in the conventions of the English language, including misspellings ("begging" for "beginning," "atmitted" and "appreciation") and missing commas after introductory subordinate clauses ("... when she was young she had braces on her legs..." "When Miranda got on stage she was so sad..."). These errors are unlikely to interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

There's a girl named Miranda who loves to dance. Her mom, Mrs. Montero, had daydreams when she was a little girl. Mirandas mom admired Miranda's dancing, it made her feel so happy.

When Miranda went to rehearsal she was a little frightened because every one out in the seats was watching her. She started to hesitate for a moment when Mrs. Sommers, there danceing teacher, called to the group. When the music came on, that's when she fell in the moment. But this time it had slipped.

Miranda had heard her mom talking to the dance teacher, Mrs. Sommers. When Miranda heard most of the conversation it had gave her a feeling that caused her the frightness of dancing on the stage.

Although, during a 15-minute break from danceing, Miranda sat next to her mom. Her mom had thought something was weighing her down. She asked what was wrong. Miranda started to get some fears out of her. "I heard you talking to the teacher about when you were a little girl," Said Miranda. Her mom put her arms around and simply gave her a kiss on the top of her head. Mrs. Montero explained the conversation to her daughter. She told her teacher not to feel embarrassed or upset. Mrs. Montero felt free and light when she saw her daughter dance and see how free and happy she was floating with the music.

Finally, after there conversation, the sadness lifted away from them both. Suddenly, Miranda heard a tap tap tap. Mrs. Sommers called Miranda's group back onto the stage. Miranda no longer felt scared. As the music played she felt the rhythm build with every breath, spinning to the front of the stage. Miranda and the girl with the dancing dark eyes.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of the purpose of a response to literature and a limited and sometimes inaccurate grasp of the text. The writer addresses some of the writing task by including limited facts and explanations to illustrate how Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes.

The essay begins with an inconsistent focus and organizational structure. The first paragraph opens by stating that Miranda loved to dance, adds vaguely that her mother daydreamed as a girl, and then provides a detail that is not revealed until the end of the story ("Mirandas mom admired Miranda's dancing, it made her feel so happy.").

The second paragraph begins without adequate transition from the first paragraph ("When Miranda went to rehearsal, . . .") and continues with an account that lacks coherence ("When the music came on, that's when she fell in the moment. But this time it had slipped."). The response becomes clearer and more coherent, although inaccurate, in the third paragraph where the writer suggests that Miranda's change in attitude resulted from stage fright. The coherence of the fourth paragraph, which describes the conversation between Miranda and her mother, is impaired by irrelevant information ("[Mrs. Montero] told her teacher not to feel embarrassed or upset."). The fifth paragraph describes Miranda after her love for dance returns.

The response suffers from both a lack of adequate detail and inaccuracy. It never mentions, for example, that learning of her mother's disability produces Miranda's change in attitude, and it fails to clearly convey why Miranda's conversation with her mother lifts both their spirits. Moreover, the writer inaccurately attributes Miranda's sudden inability to spin and leap to stage fright rather than to sadness and empathy for her mother.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Two (continued)

Commentary

The response contains some variety in sentence types, including simple sentences (“She asked what was wrong.”) and complex sentences (“Her mom, Mrs. Montero, had daydreams when she was a little girl.” “When the music came on, that’s when she fell in the moment.”).

The response includes several errors in the conventions of the English language, including misspellings (“reheral,” “every one,” and “danceing”), misuse of past participles (“it had gave her a feeling”), lack of apostrophes to form possessives (“Mirandas mom”), usage errors (“after there conversation”), a missing comma after an introductory subordinate clause (“When Miranda went to rehearsal she was . . .”), capitalization errors (“girl,” Said Miranda”), and a comma splice (“Mirandas mom admired Miranda’s dancing, it made her feel so happy.”) These errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

When Amanda and her mom went to the rehearsal place. While she was there she saw her mother talking to her dance teacher. When Miranda's mother was a kid she had polio and had a brace on her.

Later the teacher told the class to rehearse on stage. She felt really sad when she listened to the music. Miranda's steps, leapes, and twirls were not good. During her spinnes she wobbled from her heavy sadness. She tried to leap, but her saddness strained her thick leg with the saddness that pulsed into her.

The teacher thought that she had stage fright. Miranda talked to her mother about it. Miranda felt sad when her mother talked to her dancing teacher about when her mother was a little girl.

Her mother then talked it over with Miranda. Her mother told Miranda how she felt when her mother saw Miranda dance. Her mother felt happier than she was in her childhood dream. Her mother felt free and happy when her mom saw Miranda dance and float to the music. It is a gift to you Miranda. It is a gift to all of us.

When she went back to stage She felt happy weaving on stage. The music lifted them both into the air.

Commentary

This response addresses some of the writing task by retelling parts of the story and linking them to the changes in Miranda's attitude toward dancing. The writer's grasp of the text, however, is too limited and superficial to illustrate effectively how Miranda's attitude changes.

The response demonstrates an organizational structure that is inconsistent because it lacks adequate transitions and explanation. The writer says in the first paragraph, for example, that Miranda sees her mother talking to the dance teacher and that her mother wore a leg brace as a child. In the second paragraph, the writer adds that Miranda dances poorly because she is sad. These paragraphs lack the transitions and explanation, however, to make clear that it is learning her mother wore a leg brace that makes her sad and affects her dancing. Only later does the writer vaguely suggest that Miranda became sad when she overheard her mother talk about her leg brace ("Miranda felt sad when her mother talked to her dancing teacher about when her mother was a little girl.").

The response suggests only to a limited extent that Miranda's attitude toward dancing changes. The writer does make clear at the end of the response that Miranda's sadness disappears and her enthusiasm for dance returns, but never suggests that Miranda initially loved to dance or that knowledge of her mother's disability temporarily dampened that love.

The superficiality of the writer's discussion suggests a limited grasp of the text. The writer only vaguely suggests, for instance, that Miranda's gift for dance compensates her mother for her childhood disappointment and that Miranda regains her enthusiasm for dance when she realizes she is dancing for her mother as well as herself ("Her mother then talked it over with Miranda. Her mother told Miranda how she felt when

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

Commentary

her mother saw Miranda dance. Her mother felt happier than she was in her childhood dream. Her mother felt free and happy when her mom saw Miranda dance and float to the music.”).

The response demonstrates little sentence variety. It consists mostly of simple sentences with an occasional complex or compound sentence. The predominance of simple, relatively short sentences produces repetitive and somewhat choppy rhythms (“Later the teacher told the class to rehearse on stage. She felt really sad when she listened to the music. Miranda’s stepes, leapes, and twirls were not good. During her spinnes she wobbled from her heavy sadness.”).

The response contains many errors in the conventions of the English language, including several misspellings (“whent,” “reherisal,” “reherse,” “stepes,” “leapes,” “spinnes,” and “sadness”), a sentence fragment (“When Amanda and her mom whent to the rehersal place.”), missing commas after an introductory subordinate clause (“When Miranda’s mother was a kid she had polio . . .”), and a capitalization error (When she went back to stage She felt happy . . .”). These errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample One

At first Miranda is happy because she is starting dance class. Except something goes wrong. She is listening to her mom and her dance teacher talking! She hears something unusual. She found out that her mom had polio as a kid growing up that must had been really sad. Also what else is really sad is she knows that as a child her mom must have been depressed most of her life because she had no friends. Wouldn't that be sad for you too if you didn't have any friends. So she felt really bad for her mom. I would if that was my mom. Another thing was that it is just said that her mom even had polio.

She had braces on her legs because she had trouble walking. No Friend. Now adays they would make fun of her, I don't know if they did then. they probably did because people are really cruel. Not just the legs but knowing that he mother could have died that wouldn't be very good. If it wasn't for her mom Miranda wouldn't even be here so she is happy that her mom didn't die.

Now she is happy because she knows that she's here and that her mom didn't die. That definetely cheered her right up. So her mood changed alot. Right now if that was me I would feel really, really bad, My mood would not have changed about that sort of thing. But her attitude changes tword dancing because now that her mom had day dreaming about dancing is really sad.

If I were her I would still do it. But my heart wouldn't be there. The good thinkng is I would make my Mama proud of me. Knowing that she always will be there for me makes me feel a whole lot better.

Commentary

A response consisting of unfounded inferences about Miranda and her mother, extraneous expressions of the writer's feelings, and occasional references to the story demonstrates that the writer has no understanding of the purpose of a response to literature. The response addresses part of the writing task by suggesting a cause for the first change in Miranda's attitude toward dancing but fails to develop this observation with relevant support. The writer demonstrates little grasp of the story by misinterpreting events from the text.

The response lacks an organizational structure. The writer begins with a promising opening in which the first sentence establishes Miranda's initial attitude toward dance and the second sentence suggests the direction of the subsequent discussion ("At first Miranda is happy because she is starting dance class. Except something goes wrong."). The writer then slips into a meandering combination of textual references, often inaccurate inferences, and discussions of the writer's own feelings ("Also what else is really sad is she knows that as a child her mom must have been depressed most of her life because she had no friends. Wouldn't that be sad for you too if you didn't have any friends. So she felt really bad for her mom. I would if that was my mom. Another thing was that it is just said that her mom even had polio.").

The writer never successfully addresses the writing task. Although the response says that Miranda felt badly for her mother, for instance, the writer never addresses how Miranda's sorrow affects her attitude toward dancing. In paragraph three, the writer says that Miranda's attitude changed from sad to happy but, again, does not state how this affects her feelings about dancing. At the end of paragraph three, the writer refers to Miranda's attitude change but the statement is incoherent and does not make clear

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample One (continued)

Commentary

whether it refers to the first or the second change in Miranda's attitude ("... her attitude changes tword dancing because now that her mom had day dream-ing about dancing is really sad.").

The writer makes a number of inferences that demonstrate little grasp of the text ("[Mrs. Montero] had no friends." "If it wasn't for her mom Miranda wouldn't even be here so she is happy that her mom didn't die.").

The response demonstrates some variety in sentence types, including simple sentences ("She hears something unusual." "So she felt really bad for her mom."), complex sentences ("She had braces on her legs because she had trouble walking."), and compound sentences ("If it wasn't for her mom Miranda wouldn't even be here so she is happy that her mom didn't die."). It also contains some sentence fragments ("No Friend.") and run-on sentences ("Now adays they would make fun of her, I don't know if they did then."). Several sentences are awkwardly constructed ("Not just the legs but knowing that he mother could have died that wouldn't be very good."). The writer demonstrates little control at the sentence level.

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language, including misspellings ("adays," "definetely," "alot," "tword," and "thinkng"), a missing question mark ("Wouldn't that be sad for you too if you didn't have any friends."), the incorrect use of the subjunctive tense ("I would if that was my mom." "If it wasn't for her mom..."), a comma used instead of a semicolon ("Now adays they would make fun of her, I don't know if they did then."), and a capitalization error at the beginning of a sentence ("they probably did because people are really cruel." These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample Two

Miranda attitude change because she talked with her mother. And then when Miranda whent back to the stage to dance the mom and the daughter was happy. And Miranda moved better than before than the first time. And the music made them happy.

Commentary

This short response demonstrates no understanding of the purpose of a response to literature and addresses only one part of the writing task by retelling part of the story. The very general level of this retelling demonstrates little grasp of the text.

The response provides a sequential organizational structure that summarizes the story beginning with Miranda's change in attitude after talking with her mother. The writer does not mention Miranda's initial love of dancing or the change in her attitude when she overhears her mother talking to her dance teacher. Rather than using specific details and explanations to describe Miranda's changes in attitude and performance, the writer says only that after talking with her mother Miranda "moved better" and the music made them both "happy."

The response consists of four awkwardly constructed sentences. The first two sentences are simple, and the last two are complex. The lack of variety in sentence types and lengths produces rhythmic monotony, and the writer's use of "and" as a transition into the last three sentences suggests a limited ability to clarify relationships among ideas.

Three of the four sentences contain errors in the conventions of the English. The errors include a lack of the possessive form where it is needed ("Miranda attitude"), an incorrect verb form ("Miranda attitude change because she talked with her mother."), a misspelling ("whent"), and lack of a comma after an introductory subordinate clause ("And then when Miranda whent back to the stage to dance the mom and the daughter was happy."). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample Three

Miranda's attitude was happy, because her mother was there watching her for minutes but later she walked away to talk with Mrs. Montero, then Miranda get a little upset her mother was talking with Mrs. Montero when she was dancing in the stage, then when Miranda finished dancing the teacher of the group call them to do a practice of 4 hours because they were first on the stage. Miranda didn't look at her in the audience, when the music ended, Miranda's mother was waiting for her as she walked down to take a seat

Commentary

This response demonstrates no understanding of a response to literature by failing to explain the changes in Miranda's attitude toward dancing. The writer provides a partial, inaccurate retelling of the text that demonstrates little grasp of the story. The writer's explanations relate only marginally to the changes in Miranda's attitude.

The writer attempts to retell the story but finishes the retelling long before the story ends ("... Miranda's mother was waiting for her as she walked down to take a seat."). The response recounts details that are only marginally related to changes in Miranda's attitude toward dancing and that include factual inaccuracies ("Miranda's attitude was happy, because her mother was there watching her..." "... her mother was talking with Mrs. Montero..." "... the teacher of the group call them to do a practice of 4 hours..."). The writer does not mention the conversation between Miranda's mother and Mrs. Sommers, Miranda's dance teacher, or between Miranda and her mother, or how these conversations generate the changes in Miranda's attitude toward dancing. The writer attempts to organize the response sequentially, but the factual inaccuracies, gaps in the retelling, and lack of transitional material make it very difficult to identify an organizational structure.

This response demonstrates no control at the sentence level. The writer begins with a series of ideas connected with "because," "but," and "then," which creates a long run-on sentence. This sentence is followed by a sentence that contains comma splices, resulting in another run-on sentence.

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language, including misplaced commas ("Miranda's attitude was happy, because..." "Miranda didn't look at her in the audience, when

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 2 and 3, 2006

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample Three (continued)

Commentary

the music ended, ...”), missing commas before a coordinating conjunction in a compound-complex sentence (“... her mother was there watching her for minutes but later ...”), a subject-verb agreement error (“... then Miranda get a little ...”), comma splices (“Miranda’s attitude was happy, because ...” “... she walked away to talk with Mrs. Montero ...” “... when Miranda finished dancing the teacher ...”), and inappropriate use of prepositions (“... when she was dancing in the stage, ...”). These errors interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

2006 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric*

The scoring rubric that follows is used to assign scores to students' written responses on the grade seven writing tests. This rubric includes two sets of criteria. The criteria under "The writing" are adapted from the state English-language arts content standards for Writing Strategies and Written Conventions of English. These criteria are used to evaluate written responses in all genres tested for their clarity of purpose, central idea, and organization; their coherence; and their use of supporting evidence, sentence variety, and writing conventions. The criteria under "Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing," "Response to Literature writing," "Persuasive writing," and "Summary writing," adapted from the grade seven content standards for Writing Applications for these genres, are used to evaluate student writing in the specific genres to which they apply.

On pages 65 through 72, the grade seven rubric is presented in a rearranged format to indicate how all the scoring criteria are applied to student responses in each genre tested.

4

The writing—

- Clearly addresses all of the writing task.
- Demonstrates a *clear* understanding of purpose and audience.
- Maintains a *consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the *effective* use of transitions.
- Includes a *clearly presented* central idea with *relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes sentence variety.
- Contains *few, if any, errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do **not** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- Provides a *thoroughly developed* plot line, including major and minor characters and a *definite* setting.
- Includes *appropriate* strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Develops interpretations that demonstrate a *thoughtful*, comprehensive grasp of the text.
- Organizes *accurate and coherent* interpretations around *clear* ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- Provides *specific* textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- *Authoritatively* defends a clear position with precise and relevant evidence and *convincingly* addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Summarizes text with clear identification of the main idea(s) and most significant details, in student's own words, and clearly reflects underlying meaning.

* The English-Language Arts Assessment Review Panel reviewed the scoring rubric for grade seven and made slight adjustments to ensure that it was making accurate distinctions among score points. This rubric was used to score the 2006 CST in writing.

3 **The writing—**

- Addresses most of the writing task.
- Demonstrates a *general* understanding of purpose and audience.
- Maintains a *mostly consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including use of isolated and/or single word transitions.
- Presents a central idea with *mostly relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes some sentence variety.
- Contains *some errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do **not** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- Provides an *adequately developed* plot line, including major and minor characters and a *definite* setting.
- Includes *appropriate* strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Develops interpretations that demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the text.
- Organizes accurate and *reasonably* coherent interpretations around *clear* ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- Provides textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- *Generally* defends a position with relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Summarizes text with the main idea(s) and important details, mostly in the student's own words, and generally reflects underlying meaning.

2 **The writing—**

- Addresses *some* of the writing task.
- Demonstrates *little* understanding of purpose and audience.
- Maintains an *inconsistent* point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include *ineffective or awkward* transitions that do not unify important ideas.
- *Suggests* a central idea with *limited* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes *little* sentence variety.
- Contains *several errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors **may** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- Provides a *minimally developed* plot line, including characters and a setting.
- *Attempts* to use strategies but with *minimal* effectiveness (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Develops interpretations that demonstrate a *limited* grasp of the text.
- Includes interpretations that *lack* accuracy or coherence as related to ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- Provides *few, if any*, textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- Defends a position with *little, if any*, evidence and *may* address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Summarizes text with some of the main idea(s) and details, which may be superficial, minimal use of the student's own words, and minimal reflection of underlying meaning.

1 **The writing—**

- Addresses *only one part* of the writing task.
- Demonstrates *no* understanding of purpose and audience.
- *Lacks* a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas.
- *Lacks* a central idea but may contain *marginally related* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes *no* sentence variety.
- Contains *serious errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- *Lacks* a developed plot line.
- *Fails* to use strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Demonstrates *little* grasp of the text.
- *Lacks* an interpretation or *may* be a simple retelling of the passage.
- *Lacks* textual examples and details.

Persuasive writing—

- *Fails* to defend a position with *any* evidence and *fails* to address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Summarizes text with few, if any, of the main ideas and/or details, little or no use of the student's own words, little or no reflection of underlying meaning.

Grade Seven Scoring Rubric in Rearranged Format

In the following charts, the grade seven scoring rubric is presented in a rearranged format to indicate how all the scoring criteria in the rubric—those derived from the state content standards for Writing Strategies and Written Conventions as well as those derived from the content standards for Writing Applications—are applied to student responses in each genre tested.

The column under “Genre” contains the scoring criteria derived from the grade seven content standards for Writing Applications. The column under “Organization and Focus” contains scoring criteria derived from the subset of Organization and Focus standards within the grade seven content standards for Writing Strategies. The column under “Sentence Structure” contains the scoring criterion derived from the Sentence Structure standard within the grade six content standards for Written and Oral English Language Conventions. The column under “Conventions” contains the scoring criteria derived from the subsets of Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization, and Spelling standards within the grade seven content standards for Written and Oral English Language Conventions. Although some columns contain more bullets than others, this is not meant to imply that columns with more bullets are more important in the scoring than the other columns. References to the writing content standards from which each scoring criterion is derived are presented in coded form following each criterion for score point four.

2006 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Fictional or Autobiographical Narrative Writing

	Genre <i>(Fictional Narrative Writing)</i>	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides a <i>thoroughly developed</i> plot line, including major and minor characters and a <i>definite</i> setting. (Gr. 7 WA 2.1 a, b) ■ Includes <i>appropriate</i> strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action). (Gr. 7 WA 2.1 c) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Clearly</i> addresses all of the writing task.* ■ Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.** ■ Maintains a <i>consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1) ■ Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes sentence <i>variety</i>. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>few, if any, errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on content standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.

Genre (Fictional Narrative Writing)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides an <i>adequately developed</i> plot line, including major and minor characters and a <i>definite</i> setting. ■ Includes <i>appropriate</i> strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses most of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains a <i>mostly consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the use of isolated and/or single word transitions. ■ Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes some sentence <i>variety</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>some errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides a <i>minimally developed</i> plot line, including characters and a setting. ■ <i>Attempts</i> to use strategies but with <i>minimal</i> effectiveness (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>some</i> of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains an <i>inconsistent</i> point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include <i>ineffective or awkward</i> transitions that do not unify important ideas. ■ <i>Suggests</i> a central idea with <i>limited</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>little</i> sentence variety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>several errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Lacks</i> a developed plot line. ■ <i>Fails</i> to use strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>only one</i> part of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>no</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a central idea but may contain <i>marginally related</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>no</i> sentence variety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>serious errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

2006 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Response to Literature Writing

	Genre (Response to Literature Writing)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a <i>thoughtful</i>, comprehensive grasp of the text. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 a) ■ Organizes <i>accurate</i> and <i>coherent</i> interpretations around <i>clear</i> ideas, premises, or images from the literary work. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 b) ■ Provides <i>specific</i> textual examples and details to support the interpretations. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 c) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Clearly</i> addresses all of the writing task.* ■ Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.** ■ Maintains a <i>consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1) ■ Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes sentence <i>variety</i>. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>few, if any, errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the text. ■ Organizes <i>accurate</i> and <i>reasonably</i> coherent interpretations around <i>clear</i> ideas, premises, or images from the literary work. ■ Provides textual examples and details to support the interpretations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>most</i> of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains a <i>mostly consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the use of isolated and/or single word transitions. ■ Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>some</i> sentence <i>variety</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>some errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a <i>limited</i> grasp of the text. ■ Includes interpretations that <i>lack</i> accuracy or coherence as related to ideas, premises, or images from the literary work. ■ Provides <i>few, if any,</i> textual examples and details to support the interpretations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>some</i> of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains an <i>inconsistent</i> point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include <i>ineffective</i> or <i>awkward</i> transitions that do not unify important ideas. ■ <i>Suggests</i> a central idea with <i>limited</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>little</i> sentence <i>variety</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>several errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on content standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.

Genre (Response to Literature Writing)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demonstrates <i>little</i> grasp of the text. ■ <i>Lacks</i> an interpretation or <i>may</i> be a simple retelling of the passage. ■ <i>Lacks</i> textual examples and details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>only one</i> part of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>no</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a central idea but may contain <i>marginally related</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>no</i> sentence variety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>serious errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

2006 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Persuasive Writing

Genre (<i>Persuasive Writing</i>)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>4 ■ <i>Authoritatively</i> defends a clear position with precise and relevant evidence and <i>convincingly</i> addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and/or expectations. (Gr. 7 WA 2.4 a, b, c)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Clearly</i> addresses all of the writing task.* ■ Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.** ■ Maintains a <i>consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1) ■ Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes sentence <i>variety</i>. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>few, if any, errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)
<p>3 ■ <i>Generally</i> defends a position with relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and/or expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses most of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains a <i>mostly consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the use of isolated and/or single word transitions. ■ Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes some sentence <i>variety</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>some errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
<p>2 ■ Defends a position with <i>little, if any</i>, evidence and <i>may</i> address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>some</i> of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains an <i>inconsistent</i> point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include <i>ineffective or awkward</i> transitions that do not unify important ideas. ■ <i>Suggests</i> a central idea with <i>limited</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>little</i> sentence <i>variety</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>several errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on content standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.

Genre (<i>Persuasive Writing</i>)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>1 ■ <i>Fails</i> to defend a position with any evidence and <i>fails</i> to address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>only one</i> part of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>no</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a central idea but may contain <i>marginally related</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>no</i> sentence variety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>serious errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

2006 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Summary Writing

Genre (Summary Writing)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>4 ■ Summarizes text with clear identification of the main idea(s) and most significant details, in student's own words, and clearly reflects underlying meaning. (Gr. 7 WA 2.5 a, b, c)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Clearly</i> addresses all of the writing task.* ■ Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.** ■ Maintains a <i>consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1) ■ Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes sentence <i>variety</i>. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>few, if any, errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)
<p>3 ■ Summarizes text with the main idea(s) and important details, mostly in the student's own words, and generally reflects underlying meaning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses most of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains a <i>mostly consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the use of isolated and/or single word transitions. ■ Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes some sentence <i>variety</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>some errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
<p>2 ■ Summarizes text with some of the main idea(s) and details, which may be superficial, minimal use of the student's own words, and minimal reflection of underlying meaning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>some</i> of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains an <i>inconsistent</i> point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include <i>ineffective</i> or <i>awkward</i> transitions that do not unify important ideas. ■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>little</i> sentence <i>variety</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains <i>several errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on content standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.

Genre (Summary Writing)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
1 ■ Summarizes text with few, if any, of the main ideas and/or details, little or no use of the student's own words, little or no reflection of underlying meaning.	■ Addresses <i>only one</i> part of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates <i>no</i> understanding of purpose and audience. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas. ■ <i>Lacks</i> a central idea but may contain <i>marginally related</i> facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes <i>no</i> sentence variety.	■ Contains <i>serious errors</i> in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.