



California Standards Tests

Teacher Guide for the 2005 California Writing Standards Test in Grade Seven

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prepared by the
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For More Information

For more information about the California Writing Standards Tests (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> (Internet) 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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Karen Hayashi
Elk Grove Unified School District

Carol Jago
Santa Monica High School

JoAnne Matney
Rocklin Unified School District

Judy Welcome
Gateway Unified School District (retired)

Darby Williams
Sacramento County Office of Education

Cheryl Cartin
Elk Grove Unified School District

Nicki Boyko
Walnut Creek Elementary School District

Shirley Burns
Bassett Unified School District

Christopher Dempsey
Modesto City Elementary School District

Chris Giotta
Walnut Creek Elementary School District

Gabrielle Rouss
Beverly Hills Unified School District

Kim Sutherland
Brentwood Union Elementary School District

Tina Ton
Pittsburg Unified School District

Donna Van Allen
Los Angeles County Office of Education

Amanda Cottrell
Manteca Unified School District

Beverly Hill
San Juan Unified School District

Elizabeth Harrington
San Gabriel Unified School District

Melissa King
Manteca Unified School District

Nancy Brownell
Davis Joint Unified School District

Karen Buxton
San Juan Unified School District

Cathe Jacobs
Los Angeles County Office of Education

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 California Writing Standards Tests (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 gather information and/or research topics 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 2005 CSTs in English-language arts in grades four and seven contained 75 multiple-choice questions. Beyond 2005, 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. 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 2005 CSTs in writing in grade seven are shown on pages 11 and 35. Students in schools, tracks, or programs in session on March 1, 2005, re-

sponded to the task administered on that date or on the makeup date, March 2. Students in schools, tracks, or programs not in session on March 1 responded to the task administered on April 26 or on the makeup date, April 27. 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 2005 were scored using a four-point holistic scoring rubric, with four being the highest score. Two readers evaluated each response, and the student's reported score was the sum of the two scores. If the two readers assigned scores that differed by more than one point, a third reader scored the response. If a third reader was needed, the third reader's score was added either to the score to which it was identical or to the higher of the two scores to which it was adjacent. If the third reader's score was adjacent to only one score, it was added to that score.

The scoring rubric for grade seven is shown on pages 62 and 63. On pages 64 through 71, 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 2005, 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 1 and 2 are shown on pages 13 through 34, along with teacher commentaries. Sample student responses to the tasks administered on April 26 and 27 are shown on pages 36 through 61, 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 April 2005. 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 the January 2006 teacher guide contains more student responses for each score point than previous guides, 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. It also should be remembered that, within a given score point, responses will demonstrate differing combinations of strengths and weaknesses.

In 2005, narrative writing was tested in grade seven. It should be noted, however, that since other genres may be tested in this grade, the types of writing students may be asked to produce can change annually.

Suggested Uses for This Teacher Guide □

The writing prompts, 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 2005 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 components of writing assessments (i.e., prompt, scoring rubric, student responses).
- □ Examine the released prompts to identify distinguishing elements of fictional narrative 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 prompts and scoring rubrics with those that accompany the school's existing curricular program. This information can help identify areas that 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 prompts, 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 prompts and scoring rubrics to help teachers understand the advantages and benefits of writing tests:
 - They engage students in a cognitively complex activity.
 - 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 prompts, 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 prompts, 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 Seven CST in Writing

In 2001, the California Writing Standards Tests (CSTs in writing) were added to the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program in grades four and seven as part of the California English-language arts Standards Tests (CSTs in English-language arts). 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 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.

ETS, the testing contractor for the STAR Program, was scheduled to field test new writing prompts in 2005 for the first time in three years. Convening the task force provided an opportunity for representatives from the field and other specialists to recommend possible changes to the writing test that could be incorporated into the field tests. The following are answers to common questions about the outcomes of the task force and subsequent field testing.

Why was the Writing Test Task Force convened?

The task force was convened because the majority of students who took the CSTs in writing during the first five years of its administration received scores of 2, 3, or 4 out of a possible 8 on the writing test. A large number of students who scored proficient or advanced on the overall grade four and grade seven CSTs in English-language arts were among those who received these scores. These results gave rise to two main issues:

First, when writing test scores are confined to such a narrow range, they do not discriminate effectively among student writing abilities. Consequently, these

scores contribute relatively little useful information to the results of the grade four and grade seven CSTs in English-language arts. Second, the CDE had received numerous inquiries from parents, teachers, and school and school district administrators about why many of their students who had achieved proficient and advanced on the grade four and grade seven CSTs in English-language arts received scores of 4 or below on the writing tests.

The Writing Test Task Force was convened to review the CSTs in writing and recommend possible changes.

What did the Writing Test Task Force recommend?

The task force made a number of recommendations, including field testing new writing prompts, modifying the scoring process, reviewing the scoring guide, modifying writing test format, and clarifying the 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 at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr05/agenda0105.asp>.

How were the new writing prompts developed?

The process for developing the new writing prompts was as follows:

- The prompts initially were written by item writers at item writing workshops and by ETS content experts.
- Proposed prompts were reviewed by ETS content-area experts, CDE content-area experts, and the English-Language Arts Assessment Review Panel. Reviewers approved 20 prompts for field testing in grade four and 20 prompts for field testing in grade seven.

- ETS pilot tested a number of prompts 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 prompts with modified formats and directions were field tested 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 prompts were selected for the spring 2006 administration.

Will all the writing genres that were eligible for testing in previous years continue to be eligible in 2006 and beyond?

Yes. All the writing genres eligible for testing in grades four and seven in previous years will continue to be eligible.

When will the new prompts and formats be available for operational use?

The new prompts will be available beginning with the spring 2006 administration.

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

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

- A planning page has been added to allow students to plan their responses.
- Students will have fewer pages on which to write their responses to summary writing tasks. This change was implemented to indicate that summaries are not expected to be as long as the passages they summarize.

- The directions to students have been refined to make them clearer.

Will writing on the planning page be scored?

Writing on the planning page will not be scored. Students are free to use this page or not use it as they wish.

What if students spend so much time planning their essays that they do not finish their scored responses?

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

If students write their essays on the planning page of the test booklet, will their essays be scored?

No. A brief introduction to the planning page states that writing on that page will not be scored. As in previous years, the directions in the test booklet state that only writing on the lined pages of the test booklet will be scored.

Will the process for scoring the writing test be the same as in past 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. CDE recommended that to expedite scoring and reduce scoring costs, each student response be read by only one scorer (with ten percent read by a second reader) without sacrificing scoring reliability. The SBE approved this recommendation at the January 12, 2005, meeting.

Beginning in 2006, one reader rather than two will read each student response and assign a score ranging from one to four. Ten percent of the responses will be read by a second reader to ensure that the scores are accurate and reliable. The score from the second reader will not count toward the student's writing test score. The score the student receives from the one reader will be doubled to produce the student's overall score on the writing test.

If one reader's score will be doubled, will 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 will read each student response and will give it a score of 1, 2, 3, or 4. This score will be doubled to produce the student's overall score of 2, 4, 6, or 8.

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

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

Do California teachers score the writing tests?

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

Is the CDE considering changing the scoring rubric?

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 will be used to score the 2006 CST in writing. The 2006 scoring rubric for grade seven is now available in *Questions and Answers About the California Writing Standards Tests in Grades Four and Seven* on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp>. The scoring rubrics for 2005 are on pages 62–71.

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/scoringprocess.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 prompts 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.

Note: Pages 8 through 10 show the first five pages of a sample writing test booklet for grade seven to illustrate how the test format and directions will appear in the 2006 writing test booklets. The fictional narrative genre is used for illustrative purposes only. The planning page and directions for the other genres are essentially the same as for narrative, except for minor modifications in the directions that may be necessitated by differences in genre. The prompt shown in the sample was previously released.

Sample Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task*



Grade 7

California Writing Standards Test Writing Prompt and Response Booklet

Fictional Narrative Writing Task

Directions:

- In this writing test, you will respond to the writing task on the following pages.
- You will have time to plan your response and write a first draft with edits.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.
- Use only a No. 2 pencil to write your response.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you

- develop a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- develop a setting and character(s);
- use appropriate strategies: for example, dialogue, suspense, narrative action; and
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

* This sample is intended only to illustrate the changes made to the test format and directions to students for the 2006 administration. It is **not** intended to suggest that the writing genre or prompt shown here has been selected for the 2006 CST in writing.

Sample Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task

Read the following writing task. You must write a narrative about this topic.

Writing a Fictional Narrative

Imagine that in the year 2005 the world's technologies suddenly stop working. Write a narrative about a day in the life of a person if this occurred.*

When you write about this experience, remember

- to develop a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- to develop a setting and character(s);
- to use appropriate strategies: for example, dialogue, suspense, narrative action; and
- to use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Planning Your Narrative

The following page may be used to help you plan your essay before you begin writing. Your work for the planning activity will NOT be scored.

You should not spend more than 10 to 15 minutes planning your narrative.

* Please note that this prompt previously appeared in the May 2002 *Teacher Guide for the California Writing Standards Tests at Grades 4 and 7*.

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE.

**This page is blank
on purpose.**

Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

The writing task below was administered to students in grade seven who took the CST in writing on March 1 or 2, 2005. The prompt used for the April 26 and 27 administration is shown on page 35. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries are included for both tasks.

Fictional Narrative Writing Task

Directions:

- In this writing test, you will respond to the writing task on the following page.
- You will have time to plan, write, and proofread.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.
- Use only a No. 2 pencil to write your narrative.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you

- develop a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- develop a setting and character(s)
- use appropriate strategies, for example: dialogue, suspense, narrative action
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

Read the following writing task. You must write a fictional narrative about this topic.

Writing the Fictional Narrative:

Imagine that you have just moved to a city under the sea. The next morning you decide to explore. Write a story about what happens next.

When you write about this experience, remember

- to develop a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- to develop a setting and character(s)
- to use appropriate strategies, for example: dialogue, suspense, narrative action
- to use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

Fictional Narrative Writing Task—Grade Seven

Student responses to this fictional narrative writing task and to the task on page 35 were scored using the Grade Seven Scoring Rubric shown on pages 62 and 63. This rubric incorporates portions of the English-language arts content standards for Writing Strategies and Written Conventions that address writing in general and includes criteria specific to narrative writing.

Standard

Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

- 2.1 Write fictional or autobiographical narratives:
- a. Develop a standard plot line (having a beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, and denouement) and point of view.
 - b. Develop complex major and minor characters and a definite setting.
 - c. Use a range of appropriate strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; naming of specific narrative action, including movement, gestures, and expressions).

Grade Seven Focus

Students were expected to write a fictional narrative with a developed plot line, setting, and characters. Students who did well incorporated narrative strategies such as dialogue, specific narrative action, and descriptive detail; developed major and minor characters; and demonstrated a sound grasp of written conventions. Students do not write autobiographical narratives on the CSTs in writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

I had never really gotten to know the city I had just moved into. The idea to move was sudden. The company I work for, Seaweed Supreme Inc. wanted me to move somewhere under the sea so we'd have a better understanding of the cycle of seaweed, and of the cultures that inhabit the same area. The creatures that live around seaweed constantly are especially important to our study, mainly because we want to know how the ocean natives react to different seaweed items, such as clothing made from seaweed. We have no idea whether or not the skin of the people wearing it will be irritated.

Before I began my study, I decided to get to know the different people I would now be with until our study was complete. The morning after I moved in I stepped outside and was amazed at how bright it was. I grew up in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and very little light reached us there. Here, in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Greece, the water is so clear and bright, it's almost blinding.

Right off the bat, I realized this was the right place to conduct this study. Everyone knew everyone else!

"Hello, you must be new here. My name is Sandy," said a young starfish.

"Why yes, as a matter of fact, I am new here. I moved in yesterday. How did you know I was new in town?" I wondered, taken by surprise.

Sandy laughed. "Well ma'am, this town is kinda small. Everyone knows everyone else. Do you need someone to show you around?"

"That would be great." I said, eager to accept Sandy's offer.

"Okay, Great! What'd you say your name was?"

"Actually, I didn't say. But it's Hailey." I replied.

"Hailey. That's a pretty name. Well, were do you want to start?" She asked.

"Hmmm," I said thinking. Where did I want to start? My company was studying the effects on people that seaweed had in four main areas. I needed to know where clothing stores, restaurants, hospitals, and submarine stations were. The most important was the submarine stations because if I could find a way to make seaweed into feul, there would be an endless supply.

"First the nearest submarine station, and then clothing stores, restaurants, and hospitals." I replied after a moment of silence.

"Ummm, okay. Come on." She said, puzzled.

"The reason I moved here is because my company is conducting research on ways we can use seaweed," I said, trying not to

Commentary

This response demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a story by developing a plot that focuses on the narrator's need to learn about seaweed in a location "somewhere under the sea" and on the realization that the narrator will succeed in her endeavor.

The writer provides a definite setting (a small, one-restaurant town "in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Greece [where] the water [is]...clear and bright."). The writer maintains a consistent focus on the narrator's exploration of the town and establishes the clear central idea that Hailey, the narrator, gains confidence that her study of seaweed will succeed thanks to the friendly inhabitants of the town. This idea is illustrated mainly through dialogue between Hailey and the starfish Sandy, the narrator's new friend.

Although this narrative lacks traditional plot elements, such as rising action, conflict, and falling action, it demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a story. It progresses from the narrator's initial statement that she "had never really gotten to know the city [she] had just moved into," through her exploration of the town with Sandy, to her eventual conclusion that "if the people in this town were all this helpful, [she] would finish this study faster than [she] thought [she] would."

Dialogue is used both to illustrate the good will between the characters ("Hello, you must be new here. My name is Sandy...Do you need someone to show you around?" "That would be great." I said...." "This is great. My research should go well, thanks to your help," I said, smiling. "Thanks. Do you need me to help you get back to your house?" [Sandy] asked.") and to advance the plot ("We crossed the street and walked two more blocks before

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

laugh at Sandy's puzzled face.

"Oh, okay. Well here we are."

The submarine station was surprisingly close, just around the corner, in fact. The building was old and in bad need of some paint. There was only one pump, and it looked like it wouldn't work very well.

"Well, hopefully, if my research goes well, this station will be better and cheaper than ever before!" I said trying to be optimistic.

"Ya. Well, good luck. Okay, the restaurant is pretty close, but the hospital and clothing store are both in a different town. Like I said before, this is a small town. I'd take you to the other places, but I have to get ready for work in an hour." Sandy said. "That's fine. I have to write a report on my first day for my company, so I'd better do that before I forget all the details," I said. Sandy nodded her head.

We crossed the street and walked two more blocks before crossing another street. "Well, here you have it. The most popular restaurant in town. Actually, it's the only restaurant in town," Sandy said, throwing out her arms. "This is great. My research should go well, thanks to your help," I said, smiling.

"Thanks. Do you need me to help you get back to your house?" She asked.

"No, that's alright. I can find my way back okay. Besides, you need to get to work," I said, confident at my ability to get home.

Sandy checked her watch. "Wow! Time has flown. I'll see you around! Bye!" she said as she turned around and raced down a sidestreet.

"Bye! Thanks!" I called after my newfound friend. As I walked home, I thought about my project. If people in this town were all this helpful, I would finish this study faster than I thought I would. Hopefully, I'd benefit the entire underwater community and, in a sense, give back to my generous neighbors here in my new neighborhood.

"It will work," I said, trying to boost my confidence even more. "Everything will turn out okay in the end."

Commentary

crossing another street." "Sandy checked her watch. ...'Bye!' she said as she turned around and raced down a sidestreet."). Details sometimes illustrate characters' reactions (Sandy's "puzzled" face and the narrator's "smiling" appreciation of Sandy's assistance).

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including simple sentences ("The building was old and in bad need of some paint."), complex sentences ("Before I began my study, I decided to get to know the different people I would now be with until our study was complete."), and compound sentences ("There was only one pump, and it looked like it wouldn't work very well.").

This story contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. In the second paragraph, the writer omits a comma after the subordinate clause (The morning after I moved in I stepped outside...."). There are occasional misspellings ("feul," and "were" for "where"), a verb agreement error ("The most important was the submarine stations...."), and mistaken use of a period, creating a sentence fragment ("First the nearest submarine station, and then, from there, clothing stores, restaurants, and hospitals.' I replied after a moment of silence."). These errors are to be expected in first draft writing and do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

"Good morning, West Lagoon! This is WL Radio Big, and we're here with today's weather. Today will be wet with a chance of high waves, but in the city, things should now be a cool 75 degrees. And now for a 45 minute commercial free music session." I groaned as I hit my alarm clock. I opened my sleepy eyes and looked around.

I was still in absolute amazement that I was actually living in the brand new underwater city. It was enclosed in an air-tight clear dome with a tiny door where you could leave the city. I wanted to look at the city that morning, so I jumped out of bed and quickly put on my clothes. I liked the city, but I thought that the creators took the "underwater" theme too far.

All the rooms were decorated with coral, kelp, sand, and other things you would find in a lagoon. The rooms also had water beds with little glow-in-the-dark plastic fish inside of the clear mattresses. Mermaid light switches, fishing nets, and paintings of bubbles were other little decorative pieces you could find in our apartment.

As I scarfed down my breakfast of eggs and toast, my mom asked, "Megan, I'm going to go see some of the wildlife outside of the city. Want to come?" My mom was a marine biologist, and we moved here because she had to study the wildlife and other elements of the sea.

"Definitely!" I replied. "The only reason I was hurrying was to explore too."

"I wouldn't have let you go by yourself," she replied.

"I know," I said. "Come on, you're going so slow."

"Just let me get—" she started.

"No! Let's go!" I shouted.

"Alright! Just stop it. I'm going as fast as I can," she replied.

As soon as we finally got out the door, I said,

"Look, mom! Look at the news!"

The TV's in the electronics shop were all showing footage of hundreds of sharks swimming towards West Lagoon.

"That's odd... sharks don't usually join together like that."

"Who cares mom. They're going to kill us." I screamed.

"We'll be fine. Let's go get scuba suits so we can go outside the city and see if the sharks are really swimming towards West Lagoon," mom said confidently.

After we squeezed into the scuba suits (which was quite an ordeal), we took the ladder up to the door.

"Don't worry, Meagan we'll be fine. Just don't talk when you have the diving mask on," mom reassured.

The door opened, and seawater tumbled through the opening.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a story by thoroughly developing a plot line through a series of suspenseful events and details that vividly illustrate events. The plot focuses on Megan, the narrator and major character, and her mother, a minor character, as they explore the life surrounding their underwater city.

The writer maintains a first-person point of view, a consistent focus on the activities of Megan and her mother, and a consistent organizational structure. The opening paragraph establishes a definite setting (A radio blares, "Good morning, West Lagoon! This is WL Radio Big...") "All the rooms were decorated with coral, kelp...Mermaid light switches, fishing nets, and paintings of bubbles."), the middle section describes the characters' escape from sharks, and the conclusion illustrates the characters' relief at their escape.

The writer demonstrates the clear central idea that the "brand new" underwater city is technologically advanced (it is "enclosed in an air-tight clear dome" and maintained at 75 degrees) but dangerous. The plot includes a foreshadowing of danger ("Look, mom! Look at the [television] news... 'That's odd [says the mother]...sharks don't usually join together like that.' 'Who cares mom, they're going to kill us,' I screamed."), a low-key beginning ("It was actually pretty boring. Mom took a lot of samples of seawater and sand. I swam in circles and played around."), a sudden recognition of danger ("I looked and gasped... All of the sharks were charging..."), and a resolution after the characters escape ("...we looked at each other and laughed... The next day, we decided it would be best if we moved back to California...").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

"Push yourself through the opening and do it quickly!" Mom shouted as she jumped through the opening and into the sea. I jumped through and looked back at the door. The square was already shut. My mom touched me on my shoulder and we swam forward into the vast Pacific Ocean.

It was actually pretty boring. Mom took alot of samples of seawater and sand. I swam in circles and played around. I turned to look at my mom to see what she was doing. It seemed as if she was frozen in place. She was staring up towards the sky. I looked and gasped.

Hundreds of sharks were swimming above us. I knew this was a bad idea. I knew it! I was the one who wanted to go. Without warning, I suddenly sneezed. One of the sharks looked down at my mom and I, then, the deafaning sound of crashing water was in my ears. All of the sharks were charging.

I swam over to my mom and grabbed her. West Lagoon was a tiny speck in the distance, so I knew that somehow we had to hide from the sharks until they were gone. I spotted some kelp to our right. I knew it was our only chance to live. When we reached the kelp, the sharks were biting at our feet. My mom and I jumped headfirst into a pile of dead kelp. Luckily, the sharks swam right over us. Once we were sure they were gone we (once again) swam as fast as we could to reach West Lagoon. I was punching in the code to open the door when my mom pinched me and pointed. The sharks were back. Then the door opened slowly. I squeezed through first. It's good to be small. I thought, but my mom couldn't fit.

I grabbed her hands and pulled. The sharks were biting her flippers so I pulled harder. She was finally through. I pushed the door closed as the sharks tried to bite my hands. When the door was shut, my mom and I sat breathing hard. We shakily dressed back into our nomal clothes and made our way back to the apartment. To break the silence, I said,

"I think I'll listen to the news next time."

"No kidding," replied my mom.

Then we looked at each other and laughed. We just laughed to relieve the stress. The next day, we both decided that it would be best if we moved back to California, but that's a whole different story.

Commentary

The writer uses a number of narrative strategies to advance the plot. These include dialogue, especially as Megan and her mother are preparing to leave their house ("Come on, you're going so slow." [says Megan]. "Just let me get—" [Megan's mother] started.); suspense when the characters spot the sharks; narrative action, mainly during the characters' escape; and detail to help the reader visualize events.

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including simple sentences ("I swam over to my mom and grabbed her."), complex sentences ("After we squeezed into the scuba suites, [which was quite an ordeal], we took the ladder up to the door."), and compound sentences ("Today will be wet with a chance of high waves, but in the city, things should now be a cool 75 degrees.").

This story contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. Errors include misspellings ("definatly," "foreward," "alot," and "deafaning"), a capitalization error ("... mom said confidently." "mom reassured..."), a pronoun case error ("One of the sharks looked down at my mom and I..."), and use of a period where a comma is required ("They're going to kill us." I screamed."). These errors are to be expected in first draft writing and do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

Sheento woke up to the gentle rays of sunlight filtering through his window. Then he rose from his bed to look out from his balcony. Six weeks in this place and the sight still took his breath away. In the everlasting twilight that comes from living 800 ft. below the surface of the ocean, many schools of multicolored fishes shine within the waves. The whole metropolis of Aquacia was on the ocean floor and surrounded by a gigantic glass dome. Not just glass, he reminded himself again, it was super-hardened plastic. Then the whole city came alive in a flash. The automated lights everywhere in the city blinked on, and then came the morning cacophony as all of the six million inhabitants of Aquacia woke as one.

Everyone here worked nearly all day, and nearly everyone worked at the Talaculum mine that kept this city alive. It was hard to believe this bustling underwater metropolis could ever become a deep, dark ghost town left to the depths of Davy Jones's Locker. Like it or not, however, this city's whole economy depended on the Talaculum mine, and that mine was beginning to dry-out. That was why Sheento was called down here in the first place, to find more Talaculum. 6 weeks and nothing was not a good sign though... His face tightened in frustration at just the thought of his fruitless efforts. Sheento sighed and began the long walk to the little underwater town that would bring him to the immense mine.

Once he got there, the Entry Supervisor, Mark Bolar, ran out to greet him.

"Hey, Sheen, my man. Any luck findn' Talaculum?" he asked hopefully.

"Not a dang bit," Sheento muttered impatiently and began to walk off.

Before he got more than 2 ft. away though, Bolar grabbed his arm in a surprisingly strong grip.

As Sheento winced in pain, Bolar began in a very serious voice: "Hey now, newbie man. I am a 9th generation Aquacian, and I want to see the 10th! Find something."

"I'm trying to," Sheento answered back. "But scum like you accosting me are not speeding things up much!" Then he yanked his arm out of the vice grip and strode off. He was barely out of the Entrance Terminal before he regretted what he had said. Mark really wasn't scum, but the lower classes had been getting increasingly hostile towards engineers like him. If the Talaculum supply declined, they would be the first ones to leave.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a story, developing a plot line that focuses on the major character, Sheento, as he uncovers a conspiracy by his boss, a minor character.

The writer tells the story from the third-person point of view and maintains a consistent focus on Sheento's efforts to discover a new underwater source of the mineral Talaculum, the economic lifeblood of the undersea city Sheento inhabits. The opening paragraphs establish the setting ("gentle rays of sunlight filtering through his window," the undersea city basking in "everlasting twilight," "multicolored fishes" shimmering under the city's "glass dome") and situation ("Sheento was called down here in the first place, to find more Talaculum. 6 weeks and nothing was not a good sign though..."), and the middle paragraphs illustrate how Sheento discovers his boss, Harold Mlang's, intrigues. The two-sentence concluding paragraph, however, is somewhat abrupt ("The former boss didn't say anything. He just glared as he went to spend 50 of his own years, in jail") and would benefit from further elaboration.

The writer establishes the clear central idea that Sheento is frustrated by his inability to discover more Talaculum. This idea is developed through description and explanation ("[Sheento's] face tightened in frustration at just the thought of his fruitless efforts.") sometimes combined with dialogue ("Ahhh! Stupid Machines! Sheento screamed at the monitors as each one cheerily kept printing ERROR! ERROR! on their screens....").

Narrative action and dialogue illustrate the conflict between characters and suggest the pressure they feel ("Hey now, newbie man [says one character]. I am a 9th generation

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

Finally, Sheento made it to the scanning center and began yet another gruelling 12 hours of examining barren rock on the ocean floor... After 9 hours of this, he got a blip somewhere 48 miles southwest of Aquacia. Excitedly he punched in the examination codes, but before he could get a closer look, the blip was gone and he lost it.

"Ahhh! Stupid machines!" Sheento screamed at the monitors as each one cheerily kept printing "ERROR! ERROR!" on their screens, oblivious to his rantings.

Dejectedly, 3 hours later, Sheento headed down the hall to report another day of complete failure. He couldn't even report the blip. He didn't want to get the boss's hopes up. The plaque on the ebony door read "Chief Operations Executive: Harold Mlang". Harsh words came from the boss's mouth to some unlucky soul on the intercom; he hoped the C.O.E's wrath didn't turn on him as he tentatively knocked on the strange, old-fashioned door.

A sigh came from behind the room, and Mlang in a very nasty voice said, "Come in Engineer Serat."

"I'm sorry to--" he began but was cut off by the boss.

"I've heard the rest many times. You may go," he tiredly said. Sheento left the room and as soon as he did, Mlang started yelling at the intercom again.

"You're lucky. Gran, the fool obviously didn't notice anything wrong, but we can't have anymore slip-ups like that. One second with the distortion field is all it takes for him to pick up something.

"Sorrreee," the other person named Gan replied, "It won't happen again, relax!"

Sheento's suspicions were confirmed. The C.O.E was hiding something. The blip was real! To satisfy his curiosity, he hijacked a personal sub and went to the location of the blip. Once he got there, he couldn't believe his eyes. Their was a huge warehouse stuffed with the firey-blue Talaculum.

2 hours later he was standing in the C.O.E's office with police officers on either side.

"You have been hoarding Talaculum your whole career to sell on the black market when the demand rose, haven't you? There's enough down there for 50 more years!"

The former boss didn't say anything. He just glared as he went to spend 50 of his own years, in jail.

Commentary

Aquacian and I want to see the 10th! Find something.' 'I'm trying to,' Sheento answered back. 'But scum like you accosting me are not speeding things up much!'" Sheento's discovery of the conspiracy as well as the conflict between Sheento's boss and his accomplice also are communicated through dialogue ("You're lucky [says his boss to his accomplice]. Gran, the fool obviously didn't notice anything, but we can't have anymore slip-ups like that.").

The writer uses transitional words effectively to move from one event to another ("Finally, Sheento made it to the scanning center..." "Like it or not, however, this city's..."), but introductory phrases often provide transitional connections as well ("After 9 hours of this, he got a blip..." "To satisfy his curiosity, he...").

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including simple sentences ("Then the whole city came alive in a flash."), complex sentences ("Once he got there, the Entry Supervisor, Mark Bolar, ran out to greet him."), and compound sentences ("The automated lights everywhere in the city blinked on, and then came the morning cacophony as all of the 6 million inhabitants of Aquacia woke as one.").

This story contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. Errors include misspellings ("twilight," "fishes," "their" for "there," "gruelling," and "warehouse") and a capitalization error ("Entrance Terminal"). These errors are to be expected in first draft writing and do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

This place was like no other. The buildings touched the top of the glass walls. I loved this place. It had everything the world above had. This was one of the newer underwater cities, but it was very populated already. By the way, my name is Steven, and I just moved here. With all this came one problem. Someone was trying to destroy the glass walls that keep everyone safe from the water outside. In the last week, there have been six different places where the walls have been cracked. As I'm walking, I see a weird man leaving the area where one of the walls are. As I passed, he seemed to be in a hurry. I decided to go take a look at what he was doing back there. When I got there, I saw a huge crack in the wall. With some quick thinking, I put a dumpster over the crack and took off for my friends house to use the phone.

"Knock, knock."

"Who is it?"

"Me, Steven. Open up, Star."

"Coming," he replied

"How you doing Steven?" were the next words I heard as he opened the door.

"Can I use your phone Star?"

"Yeah! But why not go to your house?" he asked.

"Because I found another crack in the walls!"

"Oh," he said with fear in his voice.

"Hello, John."

"Yeah, who is this?"

"Steven, listen. I found another crack in the walls!"

"Oh no! Where!?"

"On the corner of 5th and Main, the first alley to your right behind the dumpster."

"Thanks, Steven. I'll get a team right on it. Bye and thanks."

"No problem."

That was the last word said in that call.

"What do you think we should do?" Star asked.

"Want to go see what is going on at the wall?"

"Alright. Lets go."

At the wall, I was fast to find John. I was curious to find out how bad it was.

"Hey, John, how bad is it?"

"Well, if you hadn't called, we would be up to our necks in water." He told me.

"Umm, John."

"Yeah."

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a story. It focuses on the efforts of Steven, the narrator and major character, to learn the source of cracks in the walls of an underwater city. Although this story demonstrates little character development or explanation, it provides an adequate plot line developed through narrative action and dialogue.

Minor characters, John and Star, help Steven discover who is causing the cracks, but lacking development, these characters function as little more than names. A setting is suggested in the first paragraph ("This was one of the newer underwater cities, but it was very populated already." "The buildings touched the top of the glass walls."), but it does not establish a clear sense of place.

The writer maintains a consistent first-person point of view and conveys the central idea that Steven assumes responsibility for capturing the "weird man" he suspects is responsible for the cracks in the city walls. The organizational structure includes an opening that establishes the setting and provides background information ("In the last week there have been six different places where the walls have been cracked.") and middle paragraphs that develop the plot with appropriate narrative action ("I decided to go take a look at what he was doing back there." "I put a dumpster over the crack..."). The plot is developed primarily with dialogue as the narrator tracks down the perpetrator, a character named Streak ("Steven, listen. I found another crack in the walls! 'Oh no! Where!?' 'On the corner of 5th and Main, the first alley to your right behind the dumpster.' 'Thanks, Steven. I'll get a team right on it. Bye and thanks.'"). The writer provides a brief

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

"Has anyone ever seen a strange man walking away from any of the cracks that have already been covered?"

"Yeah, now that you said that, some people have. Why you ask?"

"Cuz I saw him before I came here to check what was going on."

"Okay, would you mind going to the station and answering some questions?"

"Not at all. See ya later Star."

"See ya."

After the questioning, I was on my way home to get something to eat. It was time for lunch. Again I saw the same black figure walking into an old abandoned building. I was tempted to follow so I did. This was weird because this city was so new it was surprising to see a building like this. I saw a light come from upstairs. I figured it was him. I got this far, so why stop now?

At the top in a room there stood the figure with its back to me taking off the clock. I saw that it was Streak. Pulling out my cell phone, I called John.

"Hello."

"John, it's Steven. Get down to the old abandoned building. The criminal is here."

"On my way." Within minutes, I could hear the teams of men on their way.

"Where is he?" John asked me.

"In there." The second the cops were in there, Streak was in custody.

"Thanks, Steven. We would not have caught Streak if it weren't for you."

"No problem. Can I go home now?"

"Yeah." Finally, the criminal was caught, and I could go home.

Commentary

conclusion ("Finally, the criminal was caught, and I could go home.").

Transitional sentences and phrases are sometimes used effectively to move from one event to the next ("When I got there, I..." and "After the questioning, I..."). The organizational structure weakens, however, where the writer neglects to use transitions as the narrative shifts settings ("...I...took off for my friends house to use the phone." "Knock, knock.""). Similarly, when the narrator follows the perpetrator into an old building, the narrator's location in relation to the perpetrator is not made clear ("At the top in a room there stood the figure with its back to me taking off the clock. I saw that it was Streak. Pulling out my cell phone, I called John.").

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including compound sentences ("This was one of the newer underwater cities, but it was very populated already.") and complex sentences ("As I'm walking, I see a weird man leaving the area where one of the walls are.").

This story contains some errors in the conventions of the English language. These include a verb agreement error ("...where one of the walls are"), missing apostrophes in a possessive form ("friends house") and in a contraction ("lets"), and some misspellings ("abandoned," "custity" and "finaly"). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

I have just moved to a city under the sea. I am very excited to see what coral city has to offer. Being that I've always loved water creatures, I can't wait to see all the life down under the sea. Since today is my first day to live here, I have just been unpacking my things. Tomorrow I shall explore.

Day two and I am set out to explore the dwellings of coral city. The lively colors are very eye catching. The creatures here in coral city have so much vivid color. While I was exploring, I saw a jellyfish, it was very cool. The only thing about coral city was, there was the most coral there. I don't think I've ever seen this much coral.

I carried on with my journey. "Oh my gosh," I said as I saw a whale pass by. I've never been so close to a whale, in my life. "Man that was the coolest thing ever." After I saw the whale, I set out to find some dolphins. Dolphins are my favorite sea creatures. While I was looking for dolphins I saw a boy. This boy looked at me & said "hi."

I said, "Hi, my name's Loraine."

"Nice to meet you," he responded.

The boy told me his name was Anthony. So Anthony and I carried on to look for dolphins. Anthony told me he had lived in coral city for a year now & that he really enjoys it. I thought Anthony was a very smart boy because he knew exactly where to find the dolphins. I had a blast playing with the dolphins.

After we left the dolphins, we went to a diner called "Under The Sea." This diner sold anything and everything. They especially sold sea food. I had some shrimp and a salad. Anthony had crab legs & a potatoe. The food was the best food I've ever tasted. Every bite of it was great. It was so good I had to take my leftovers home.

We finished our meals, and it was about 9:15 p.m. I told Anthony that I had to be home by 10:00 p.m. and he said, "Ok. Where do you live?"

I told him, "I live on Dolphin Rd."

He knew exactly where it was. I thought to myself that he knows this place pretty well. We were walking to my house and he said, "Maybe we can hang out more often." I nodded my head yes. I wrote his address down and gave him mine. After this night we hung out more often and became really good friends. Twenty years later we got married by reverend Killer Whale. Since our marriage, we have been very happy together.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a story. Employing dialogue, explanation, and description, the writer adequately develops a plot line about how Loraine, the narrator and major character, meets and spends a first day with her future husband Anthony, a minor character, as they explore the narrator's new underwater home.

The writer establishes a setting in the second paragraph where the narrator describes the town of Coral City ("The lively colors are very eye catching. The creatures here in coral city have so much vivid color."). References to the underwater setting are incorporated elsewhere in the narrative as well ("...I saw a whale pass by.").

The writer maintains a consistent organizational structure by presenting background information in the first paragraph ("Since today is my first day to live here, I have just been unpacking my things. Tomorrow I shall explore."), describing the narrator's exploration of the city in subsequent paragraphs (She meets Anthony, a boy living in the town, plays with dolphins, and eats seafood at a diner.), and completing the day's activities and incorporating future events in the conclusion ("Twenty years later we got married..."). Transitions connect ideas ("I carried on with my journey." "After we left the dolphins...").

The writer establishes the central idea that the narrator's experience in Coral City is pleasant. This idea is illustrated through dialogue ("This boy looked at me & said 'hi.' I said, 'Hi, my name's Loraine.' 'Nice to meet you,' he responded."), explanation ("I had a blast playing with the dolphins."), and some descriptive detail ("I had some shrimp and a salad. Anthony had crab legs & a potatoe.").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

Commentary

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including simple sentences (“I have just moved to a city under the sea.”), complex sentences (“Since today is my first day to live here, I have just been unpacking my things.”), and compound sentences (“We finished our meals, and it was about 9:15 p.m.”).

This story contains some errors in the conventions of the English language, including capitalization errors (“coral city” and “reverend Killer Whale”), a comma between two independent clauses (“While I was exploring, I saw a jellyfish, it was very cool.”), a spelling error (“potatoe”), and missing commas after subordinate clauses (“After this night we hung out more often....”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

"Oh wow mom. We are moving to a city under the sea!" exclaimed Johnny.

"We are already moved in. I just thought that I would surprise you. You start school tomorrow morning!" mom said while walking away.

"What?!? I start school tomorrow in a place that I didn't even know about? What if I have to go to school with sea monsters or fish or something?"

"That is very inapropriate Johnny, I can't believe you just said that!" mom said dissapointed.

Okay let me get this strait. I am moving to a city under the sea! Wow, it sounded like it was going to be real awesome until I found out that I have to go to school with very abnormal people.

"Time for bed, Johnny!" mom yells.

"Okay mom!" I yell back.

So there I am brushing my teeth, almost ready for bed, and it hits me! How am I gonna walk out of my front door and not drown? Am I going to have to wear some kind of space suit or something? Am I going to float or sink? Are they going to turn my family and me into fish so we fit in better? All these questions are still running through my head as I lay in my bed.

"Johnny. Johnny! wake up son. It is time for school," my mom says tugging at my shirt.

"Oh mom I don't want to go. Don't make me please!" I say in horror.

"Come on Johnny, lets go. It won't be that bad. You will get use to it. I promise." says mom.

So there I am again standing in my bathroom. I just got done brushing my teeth, and now I am brushing my hair. I hear something stop outside of my house, so I look out the window to see what it is. It's this big long snake looking thing and there are kids sitting on it. There is a funny looking guy telling this snake thing where to go.

"Johnny! Come on! Your ride his here to take you to school." mom yells.

So I take off, and I pause before I open the door.

"Bye mom!" I yell.

"Have fun at school Johnny," she replied.

I open the door and step outside, and my heart just stops, and I am so scared I can hardly move.

"Come on! We don't have all day!" the snake driver says.

There is water all around me. Fish swimming between my legs. I start running towards the snake so that the guy doesn't leave me.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a story by adequately developing a narrative about the anxiety Johnny, the narrator and major character, experiences when he learns he will attend school in an underwater city.

The writer establishes a setting in Johnny's home ("So there I am brushing my teeth, almost ready for bed...") and in the sea that surrounds him ("There is water all around me. Fish swimming between my legs.").

The writer uses a first-person point of view and maintains a mostly consistent organizational structure. The introduction illustrates the narrator's anxiety at having to attend his new school, the middle section concentrates mostly on his first ride to school, and a brief conclusion focuses on his time after school.

The story conveys the central idea that the narrator's transition to a new school is initially unsettling but, except for his ride to school, uneventful. The narrator's anxiety is illustrated through dialogue with his mother, a minor character. ("What?!? [the narrator responds to his mother] I start school tomorrow in a place that I didn't even know about? What if I have to go to school with sea monsters or fish or something?' 'That is very inapropriate Johnny, I can't believe you just said that!' mom said disappointed.").

The plot is developed mainly through the narrator's thoughts ("Am I going to have to wear some kind of space suit or something? Am I going to float or sink?") and through dialogue between the narrator and his mother ("Johnny. Johnny! Wake up son. It is time for school,' my mom says tugging at my shirt. 'Oh mom I don't want to go. Don't make me please!'"). The writer thoroughly illustrates the

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

*"Ho How How do you get on this thing?" I asked nervously.
"Oh just jump. The water will help you some. Then, just climb on," The driver exclaimed.
So I jumped as high as I could, and I didn't think that I was ever going to come back down. Finally I am on the snake and we are going so fast it doesn't feel like we are ever going to stop.
"Everybody off," the driver says.
Now the rest of the day was really boring, and we didn't really do much.
"So how was your first day?" asked mom as I walked in the door.
"It was so boring!" I exclaimed.
"Well did you like it? Did you get along with everybody?" mom asked.
"It was okay!" I said.
That is all we said for the rest of the night because I was so exhausted from the snake ride. I went strait upstairs and went to bed.*

Commentary

narrator's anxiety and experience on the snake ride to school but summarizes the rest of the school day only briefly ("Now the rest of the day was really boring, and we didn't really do much.") and concludes with an equally brief summary of the narrator's return home ("Did you get along with everybody?" mom asked. 'It was okay!' I said. That is all we said for the rest of the night because I was so exhausted from the snake ride. I went strait upstairs and went to bed.").

The writer uses a combination of sentence types, including simple sentences ("We are moving to a city under the sea!" "You will get use to it.") and compound sentences ("I just got done brushing my teeth, and now I am brushing my hair." "I hear something stop outside of my house, so I look out the window to see what it is.").

This story contains some errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in capitalization ("mom said"), a missing hyphen between a two-word adjective ("snake looking thing"), spelling errors ("inapropriate," "dissappointed," and "strait" for "straight"), errors in contractions ("lets" for "let's"), usage errors ("lay" for "lie," and "use to it"), and an unjustified shift from the present tense of the verb in the first four paragraphs to the past tense in the last paragraph. These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

"The city looks great under here," I say to my parents, "I think I am going to look around for a little while." "Okay" says your mom. I'm outside, "Wow", I say surprisingly. The sky is all just water and the best thing is I can breath and talk down hear without drowning. I turn to the right, and I see a sign that says "Downtown." I turn to the left, and I see a sign that says "Market Place." In front of me is a theme park kalled "Atlantis." "I think I will go downtown first, that way if I get tired I can go to the theme park.

I'm on my way downtown until I see some kids. I thought they'd say something to me but instead they just said move. After that I kept on walking. When I got there I saw a lot of things. I decided to go to a restaurant called "Hungry Hamburgers." I went in there and ordered a burger fries and a milk shake. When I received my order, I left. I went to a card shop. There I saw cards comics and statues of heroes and villains." I bought a comic book called "Little Heroes and Villains." After that, I took the bus back home. In the bus I ate my food and read the comic book I had bought.

When I got back home, it was around 6:00 p.m. I got in the house and watched T.V. for about an hour. After that I was too tired to go to the theme park so I stayed in to play some videogames. At around 8:00 a.m. I ate dinner and then go to sleep I knew that tommorrow would be a good day to go to "Atlantis."

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of the purpose of a story, enumerating the narrator's experiences during a day in a city under the sea and minimally developing a plot line. The writer includes a major character, the narrator, and refers to minor characters, "mom" and "some kids," none of whom are developed. The narrator suggests that the setting is under the sea, but development of the setting is minimal ("The city looks great under here," and "The sky is all just water..."). There is no sense of an undersea setting after the beginning of the first paragraph.

The writer maintains a focus on the narrative sequence and a first-person point of view. The organization includes a clear introduction in which the narrator prepares to explore the underwater city, a middle in which the narrator explores the city, and a conclusion in which the narrator returns home. The plot, however, is minimally developed. The writer suggests the central idea that the narrator is excited by the city ("Wow", I say surprisingly. The sky is all just water and the best thing is I can breath and talk down hear without drowning.") but provides only a list of the narrator's experiences that fails to support this idea. During his exploration of the town, for example, the narrator "see(s) some kids," visits a restaurant and a card shop, returns home to watch television and play video games, and goes to bed. The narrative is enlivened at points with concrete description (at "Hungry Hamburgers," the narrator orders "a burger fries and a milk shake" and at the card shop the narrator buys a comic book named *Little Heroes and Villains*.) These details, however, are marginal to any central idea.

The writer uses some sentence variety, including compound sentences ("I turn to the

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

Commentary

right, and I see a sign that says 'Downtown.'") and complex sentences ("When I received my order, I left." "When I got back home, it was about 6:00 p.m.").

This story contains several errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in usage ("breath" for "breathe" and "hear" for "here"), missing commas between items in a series ("I saw cards comics and statues of heroes and villains." "I went in there and ordered a burger fries and a milk shake."), improper shifts in verb tense ("I ate dinner and then go to sleep"), and errors in spelling ("kalled" for "called" and "tomorrow"). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

My family moved to a city under the sea. When we got there, we settled into our new house. I started setting up my room the way I wanted it to be. My sisters were meeting the neighbors. Finally the day was done, and I went to bed.

The next morning, I woke up and decided to explore. I started by going to the sea bank to get money. When I got to the sea bank, I gave the eels that worked there my account number. "I'm sorry. I don't have an account for you." said the eel. He gave me some shells that had numbers on it. I asked him what they were. "It's what you people call money, but down here it's called shellbers." So, I left the sea bank.

I wanted to meet some new friends, so I went to the Mer Mall. I didn't see many people, but I saw a lot of fish and merpeople. I asked a fish how they get around the city. She said that they mostly swim. I wondered if they had cars. So, I left the MerMall to find a car shop.

I was thinking of buying a car for my mom and dad. I couldn't find a car shop. All I saw was banks, malls, food markets, but no car shop. I just kept walking.

There was fish, eels, merpeople, and clams passing by me. I was getting tired of walking, so I stopped to rest. I didn't realize I was sitting on a big generator. I look at the generator very closely. That's how humans live down here. I thought. It was a huge bubble maker, that helped humans breath.

It was getting late and I wanted to get home, but I still hadn't found a car shop. I'll look tomorrow I thought to myself. On my way home I saw boats falling from the top of the water. I wondered if that was how humans came down. I kept watching. Then I saw humans come out of the boat.

I decided to ask an older man what they were doing. It turned out to be that they lived under the water. I made new friends and went to their houses. They went to school above water and lived under water. I thought it was strang before my parents told me that's what I had to do, because there were no schools under water. My family live under water for 10 ages and decided to move back above water.

Commentary

This response demonstrates some understanding of the purpose of a story by describing in sequential order the narrator's day in an underwater city. The story includes a major character, the narrator, and minor characters (the bank-teller eel at the "sea bank," a fish the narrator questions, and "an older man"), but these characters are not developed. The writer notes in the opening paragraph that the setting is "a city under the sea," but the rest of the paragraph is too general to suggest an undersea setting ("When we got there, we settled into our new house. I started setting up my room the way I wanted it to be. My sisters were meeting the neighbors.").

In subsequent paragraphs, the writer incorporates imaginative incidents, objects, and references that resume the underwater motif (the narrator's visit to the sea bank with the eel teller, a visit to a Mer Mall populated with "fish and merpeople", and the discovery of the generator that makes bubbles for breathing), but most events are conveyed with explanation at a general level. Looking for a car shop, for example, the narrator relates, "I was thinking of buying a car for my mom and dad. I couldn't find a car shop. All I saw was banks, malls, food markets, but no car shop. I just kept walking."

The narrative lacks any central idea other than the suggestion that the narrator is disappointed in not finding a car shop. The writer maintains a consistent first-person point of view and sequential organization, but events are inserted abruptly rather than smoothly. The narrator's observation that "boats [are] falling from the top of the water," for example, seems arbitrarily inserted. Moreover, the story does not make clear why the narrator's family "decided to move back above the water" after "10 ages" under it. When transitions are used to connect events,

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

Commentary

they tend to be repetitive in style (“So, I left the sea bank.” “So, I left the MerMall to find a car shop.”).

The writer uses some variety of sentence types, including compound sentences (“It’s what you people call money, but down here it’s called shellbers.” “I didn’t see many people, but I saw a lot of fish and merpeople.”) and complex sentences (“The next morning, I woke up and decided to explore.”). For the most part, however, sentences are repetitive in length and rhythm (“I decided to ask an older man what they were doing. It turned out to be that they lived under the water. I made new friends and went to their houses.”).

This story contains several errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in pronoun agreement (“...shells that had numbers on it”), errors in verb agreement (“All I saw was banks, malls, food market...” “There was fish, eels, merpeople, and clams...”), improper shifts in verb tense (“I look” for “I looked”), missing apostrophes in contractions (“thats” for “that’s”), and errors in spelling (“acount,” “breath” for “breathe,” “genirator,” and “strang” for “strange”). These errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

Have you you ever moved to a new house in a new town were every one is very differnt from you? I have, I just moved to Sea Star Hawii, and the weirdest thing is its not on an island, its under the sea.

It all started one day when my mom came home and said "guess what? were moving in to a under water city with no mall, no high school, and no land!" She didn't realy say all that, just the part about moving. So we moved the next week and here I am, one of three teenagers in this underwater city.

The view is like nothing Ive ever seen. The fish swim rite past like we arent there. My new world is coverd in glass that is 10 ft thick. Its so blue its like having the best sun set in the world all day. I met Kyle and Kristy yesterday. We will most likely be good freinds.

So I moved to a underwater human tank but hey, its not as bad as I expected. I have two good friends and no enemys. Only bummer, theres no mall.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of the purpose of a story, briefly describing the narrator's new home under the sea and events that occurred before and after the family's move. The story revolves around the narrator and mentions, without developing, the narrator's "mom" and two friends.

The writer develops an inconsistent organizational structure, devoting twice as much time to the two introductory paragraphs as to the narrator's exploration of the city. The organization also is marred by inclusion of a quotation from the narrator's mother, followed immediately by the narrator's statement that the quotation is erroneous ("It all started one day when my mom came home and said 'guess what? were moving in to a under water city with no mall, no high school, and no land!' She didn't realy say all that, just the part about moving.>").

The narrative contains no plot; rather, the narrator's exploration of the city consists of a brief description of the view in the city and mention that the narrator met friends Kyle and Kristy. The writer suggests the central idea that the new city was better than the narrator expected, but the supporting evidence (the pleasant view and the narrator's new friends) is limited.

The writer attempts to use dialogue when the mother talks to the narrator, but the dialogue does not advance the plot. Descriptive detail is limited to the city's name ("Sea Star Hawii") and two sentences in paragraph three ("My new world is coverd in glass that is 10 ft thick. Its so blue its like having the best sun set in the world all day.>").

The response demonstrates some variety in sentence types, including simple sentences

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

Commentary

("The view is like nothing I've ever seen") and compound sentences ("So we moved the next week and here I am, one of three teenagers in this underwater city."). The compound sentences, however, are awkwardly structured.

This story contains several errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in usage ("were" for "where"), a lack of commas when separating city from state ("Sea Star Hawii"), lack of apostrophes in contractions ("its" for "it's," "arent," "were" for "we're," and "theres"), missing capitalization ("guess what?" [the first word in a quote is not capitalized]), inaccurate articles ("a under water city"), and errors in spelling ("Hawii," "realy," "rite" for "right," "coverd," and "enemys"). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

I think living in a city under the sea is kind of fun. But living in the real world like, no. water, is better. Because I dont have to be worried getting killed by a shark. But its cool to live diffrent expiriences and diffrent life-style.

Living in the sea is nice and fun. I met new people and animals that I didn't know they exist.

The second day, I went to explore. I made new friends, there names are Jessica and Shane. I think and I know that Shane is a weirdo. He dosen't get enough oxygen under water. Jessica is a good friend. She is not as much as a weirdo than Shane.

We all live in diffrent tank like bubble for we wont drown.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of the purpose of a story. Although the narrator introduces minor characters, there is no discussion of the narrator's experiences with them. The writer hints at a plot ("The second day, I went to explore.") but does not develop one. The response is more expository than narrative.

This response lacks a clear focus, transitions, and a sequential organization. In the first paragraph, for example, the narrator attempts to provide information about living under the sea ("I think living in a city under the sea is kind of fun.") but immediately switches the focus to the "real world." In the second paragraph, the writer suggests the central idea that "living in the sea is nice and fun" but supports it with only a marginally related generalization ("I met new people and animals that I didn't know they exist."). In the third paragraph, the writer begins to describe "the second day" without having described a first day. The final paragraph introduces new information about life under the sea without providing a conclusion. Lacking a focus and transitions that might suggest a sequence and organizational structure and marred by incoherent sentences ("But living in the real world like no. water, is better."), the narrative appears random.

The response contains no plot and demonstrates little evidence of narrative strategies. The writer attempts to use narrative action to explain that the narrator "went to explore" but immediately abandons this strategy and returns to the expository mode that characterizes most of the response ("I think I know that Shane is a weirdo. He dosen't get enough oxygen under water. Jessica is a good friend.>").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

Commentary

In the third paragraph, the writer uses a complex sentence (“The second day, I went to explore.”). The rest of the response, however, is marred by sentence fragments (“Because I dont have to be worried getting killed by a shark.”), comma splices (“I made new friends, there names are Jessica and Shane.”), and incoherent sentences (“We all live in diffrent tank like bubble for we wont drown.”).

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language, including failure to capitalize the first word of a sentence, (“water, is better.”), lack of apostrophes in contractions (“dont,” “its,” “wont”), errors in usage (“than” for “as”), errors in spelling (“diffrent,” “experiences,” and “enogh”), errors in number agreement (“diffrent experiences and diffrent life-style”), and errors in pronoun usage (“I met new people and animals that I didn’t know they exist.”). These errors interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

I go to explore the things they leve in the sea like sharke and fish's and other things I see a octapas then I run in to the rocks. I stop in the rocks they are some butifall rocks. I see a rock he was red then I grabed was a crab. I see a big fish. I leve under the sea in City other people leve to. I leve with my mom and dad.

Commentary

This response demonstrates no understanding of the purpose of a story, listing marginally related details and explanations and failing to develop a plot line.

The response consists of a single paragraph that lacks a central idea, introduction, and conclusion. The writer begins by explaining that the narrator will explore life under the sea and continues by listing what the narrator sees ("sharke," "fish's," and "octapas"). The writer attempts to tell a story by explaining that the narrator sees a rock, grabs it, and discovers that it "was a crab," but this incident does not involve other characters, and it is not developed into a plot. Background information that would be more appropriate early in the response ("I leve with my mom and dad.") is not provided until the end of the paragraph.

The response demonstrates no variety in sentence structure. Sentences consist of run-ons that lack coordinating conjunctions, require partition into separate sentences, or are connected by "then" ("I go to explore the things they leve in the sea like sharke and fish's and other things I see a octapas then I run in to the rocks." and "I leve under the sea in City other people leve to.").

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in spelling ("leve" for "live," "butifall," "grabed"), errors in pronoun agreement ("I see a rock he was red..."), errors in capitalization ("I leve under the sea in City..."), incorrect articles ("I see a octapas"), and errors in usage ("in to" for "into," "to" for "too"). These errors seriously interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on March 1 and 2, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

If I move to a city under the sea it would be cool. It would be cool because it would be safe because there no car down there and you can't get runover and there wouldn't be earth quicks. If I move to a city I won't to live in a Manchin and have a good job. If I live under the sea I think it would be better then earth. It would be better because then you don't need to pay for taxes and gas, new cloths because then your a fish so you don't need any cloths.

Commentary

This response fails to address any part of the writing task and demonstrates no understanding of the purpose of a story. Rather than a narrative, the writer produces a one-paragraph expository essay that lists opinions and contains marginally related information about living under the sea.

The response does not tell a story. It fails to relate events that occur when a character explores a city under the sea. In the first sentence, the writer suggests the central idea that moving to a city under the sea “would be cool” and supports it with general statements (“...it would be safe.” “...you don’t need to pay for taxes and gas...” “you don’t need any cloths.”). The writer also explains the style of living to which the narrator aspires (“I won’t to live in a Manchin and have a good job.”). The writer fails to employ strategies, such as dialogue, suspense, and narrative action, that would create a story and does not include descriptive detail to help the reader visualize events.

The writer uses complex sentences but fails to separate subordinate clauses with commas (“If I move to a city under the sea it would be cool.” “If I live under the sea I think it would be better then earth.”). The majority of the paragraph consists of run-on sentences connected with “because” and “and” (“It would be cool because it would be safe because there no car down there and you can’t get runover and there wouldn’t be earth quicks.”).

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in spelling (“earth quicks,” “won’t” for “want,” “Manchin,” and “cloths”), errors in usage (“there” for “there are” and “then” for “than”), and errors in capitalization (“better then earth”). These errors interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task

Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

The writing task below was administered to students who took the CST in writing on April 26 or 27, 2005. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries are presented on pages 36 through 61.

Fictional Narrative Writing Task

Directions:

- In this writing test, you will respond to the writing task on the following page.
- You will have time to plan, write, and proofread.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.
- Use only a No. 2 pencil to write your narrative.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you

- develop a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- develop a setting and character(s)
- use appropriate strategies, for example: dialogue, suspense, narrative action
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

Read the following writing task. You must write a fictional narrative about this topic.

Writing the Fictional Narrative:

Imagine that you are an artist (for example, a musician, a writer, a dancer, or a sculptor). One day, you wake up with an idea for a new work of art that you feel will be your best. Write a story about the creation of that work.

When you write about this experience, remember

- to develop a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- to develop a setting and character(s)
- to use appropriate strategies, for example: dialogue, suspense, narrative action
- to use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

Splash! I'm swirling through the icy darkness and suddenly an eye appears. An enormous yellow eye showing not anger, but curiosity. Beep, beep, beep. "Oh, it was just a dream!" I turn my alarm clock off and start to take a warm, soothing shower. Today is the day that I'm starting a new painting, and I need an inspiration that is magnificent. An idea starts itching at my brain, and the idea is itching so horribly that I must sit down in the slippery shower to think. What did I dream last night? Cold, dark, and oh yes, the eye! My painting shall be of the very bottom of the ocean, but wait, no one has ever seen the bottom of the ocean. I must find an ingenious way to travel to the depths of the sea.

The marketplace is bustling and colorful on Saturdays so everyone in town is there. For breakfast, I will have fish and eggs, which is my utmost favorite delicacy. As the cook of my breakfast is about to put the glittering silver fish into the vat of oil the fish yells, "Save me and I will tell you how to get to the bottom of the sea!" I leap over the counter to the cook and grab the slimy fish. "Where, how, how do I get there?" I whisper while the cook looks at me suspiciously. "Go to 173 Cloud Nine Lane, and she will help you," says the little fish who is now gasping. Quickly I put the fish back in the bucket and leave the marketplace with my stomach growling.

Crunch, crunch. It is autumn and my feet crush the dead leaves with even the lightest steps. Cloud Nine Lane is an ordinary street with houses on either side and cats sunbathing on fenceposts. "171, 172, 173!" I murmur as I walk down the street. The house is plain enough with its plaster covered walls and black mailbox, but when I knock on the door, I notice that the door lights up blue whenever I knock. This was so fun that I kept knocking to see the light then I hear, "All right; all right! I'm coming just hold your horses for goodness sakes!"

"Uh oh," I think as I step back from the door. Suddenly the door bursts open and here before me stands an old woman with bright green hair. Her eyes are the deepest blue you could imagine and her skin was as wrinkly as unironed linen.

"Hello young lady and how can I help you today?" the woman said in a glorious musical voice.

"To put it plain and simple m'am, I was told to come here by a fish," I stated.

"Come in, come in," she sang and so I had no choice but to follow. "Now what did this fish look like?" she said casually. For a moment I couldn't answer because sitting in the old woman's livingroom was a pond filled with sparkling shells and jewel colored

Commentary

This response demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a story. It establishes a definite setting and develops a plot line that consists of a series of events focused on the narrator's search for artistic inspiration. The writer incorporates a minor character, an old mermaid, who guides the narrator to the ocean where the narrator finds inspiration for her painting of life on the ocean floor.

The writer establishes various settings (the narrator's bedroom, a marketplace that is "bustling and colorful on Saturdays," the old mermaid's house, the bottom of the sea, and the narrator's kitchen). The plot begins when the narrator is faced with the problem of traveling to the bottom of the sea, continues as the problem is resolved with the help of the mermaid, and concludes when the narrator completes her work of art.

The writer conveys the central idea that the narrator is inspired to create art by the exotic setting under the sea. This idea is developed with a consistent focus and organizational structure and with effective transitions that connect the beginning (the narrator's dream and visit to the marketplace), the middle (the narrator's visit with the mermaid who guides her to the ocean floor), and the end (the narrator's completion of the painting and her reflection on its meaning).

The central idea is developed through the selection of relevant and specific details, lively description, and explanation. The writer vividly describes the dream that stimulates her curiosity about the ocean ("I'm swirling through the icy darkness and suddenly an eye appears. ...showing not anger, but curiosity... . Cold, dark, and oh yes, the eye!"), the "bustling and colorful" marketplace

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

fish. "Is, is...that a pond?" I whispered in awe.

"Oh no dear. That is a door, rather a gateway, to the ocean." she smiled as though she had just asked me about the weather. "Now tell me about this fish," she said.

"Well, he was very small but as shiny silver as the moonlight on water," I answered but with much difficulty because I am very hungry. "Ah yes, well I suppose you were going to eat him," she said matter-of-factly. She told me how she herself was an old mermaid who helped the creatures of Thesea from human brutality.

"Now, you do want to travel to the bottom of the ocean, don't you?" She said as she stepped up to the pond. As she motioned me to follow she jumped into the pond and disappeared without a splash. Uncertainly, I too jumped and found myself swirling, swirling into the depths.

Thump! As the murky water settles around me the old mermaid shows me that I can breath water now. With much difficulty I suck in the icy water and find it tasty. Right beside the spot where I landed is a blank canvas, paintbrushes, and paints. "Now you can paint the bottom of the ocean!" the mermaid giggled as she shoved me toward the supplies. I sat down and took the paintbrush then I started to paint. All around me were worms with red heads and lava peeking out from crevices. A fish swam by me, and its curious yellow eye inspired me to paint it in my landscape. After I was finished with my watery creation, I told the old mermaid thank you and I was instantly back in my home with my work of art.

As I stood there in my kitchen holding a soaking wet canvas, I started to laugh. Everything that had happened was just like the stories that I read when I was a child. The extrodinary dream, talking fish, and old mermaid seemed as though they did not exist, I took my painting and stared at the almost barren landscape. Even though the bottom of the ocean did not turn out to be beautiful, it was an emotional piece of art. When you look at it, it makes your heart fill with wonder and awe that there might actually be a place such as that depicted with just simple colors. As I think about my piece I reach out to touch it. Splash! I am falling, swirling yet again through the icy darkness.

Commentary

where she encounters a "glittery silver fish" about to be plunged into a "vat of oil," and the streets on the way to the mermaid's house ("Crunch, crunch. It is autumn and my feet crush the dead leaves with even the lightest steps.").

The ocean floor is described with further details ("All around me were worms with red heads and lava peeking out from crevices" and a fish with a "curious yellow eye" that, says the narrator, "inspired me to paint it in my landscape."). Dialogue adds to the characterization ("Hello young lady and how can I help you today?" the [old mermaid] said in a glorious musical voice. 'To put it plain and simple m'am, I was told to come here by a fish,' I stated. 'Come in, come in,' she sang....").

The writer uses an array of sentence types, including simple sentences ("I turn my alarm clock off and start to take a warm, soothing shower."), complex sentences ("As I stood there in my kitchen holding a soaking wet canvas, I started to laugh."), and compound sentences ("Today is the day that I'm starting a new painting, and I need an inspiration that is magnificent.").

This story contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. In the middle of the story, the writer often neglects to use paragraphing to indicate changes in speakers. Other errors include lack of commas ("Her eyes are the deepest blue you could imagine and her skin was as wrinkly as unironed linen."), inappropriate shifts in verb tense ("I answered but with much difficulty because I am very hungry."), and errors in spelling ("breath" for "breathe"). These errors are to be expected in first draft writing and do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

"Whoa! What just happened? Oh, it was only a dream."

I jumped out of bed that morning and changed into my dirty uniform. My feet rushed out the house and ran to the school bus.

"I'm glad I got ready quick enough or else I could have missed the bus," I said taking deep breaths between each word.

When I arrived at school, Fred was there, leaning against a fence, like he always does.

"Hi Ben. Did you get up late again?"

"Yeah," I said lazily. "I had a dream that I drew the best picture ever and I started to paint it. Then—"

"Then, then what?" Fred interrupted.

"I didn't finish talking. Then I just woke up," I said.

"Ring, ring!" The bell rung and everyone went inside the Middle School. Fred and I walked down the hall to the second door to the left where we went to take our first period class, English.

Every period seemed to be four hours long before my art class. It was my last one of each day.

When the class and I took our seats, Mrs. Apple, the one who teaches art, announced to us all if we had any ideas for next month's painting contest.

I shot my hand up. "I got one!" I called out anxiously.

"Okay, Ben. I didn't know you were going to find something so soon. Most of the time you are the last one," Mrs. Apple replied, looking at me with an odd face.

"Oh, yeah. Well my idea would be a painting of the three letters of my name with animals, people, and designs in the background. Doesn't that sound great?" I asked.

At that moment, nothing seemed to happen but the tapping and fiddling of papers.

Inside of me, I started to become nervous. My body felt like the burning sun.

Suddenly, kids around me began to crack up. Some snorted, and others cried with rude laughter. I didn't see anything wrong with my idea. I looked around the room. Only Mrs. Apple, Fred, and I weren't giggling.

"Quiet!" Mrs. Apple shouted. "That is very hurtful. Do anyone of you realize how you are treating Ben." The class was silent.

That afternoon, Fred and I slowly walked home. He was the first one to talk.

"You know Ben, don't feel bad. Ignore the fact that almost all 30 students laughed at you. Show them that it was a good idea and start working on it tonight. When you bring it in this Friday, show that

Commentary

This writer demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a story, thoroughly developing a plot line that illustrates how the narrator's determination to paint a picture he believes in overcomes the mockery of his classmates. Fred, a minor character, encourages Ben, the narrator, to believe in his idea when no one else seems to.

The writer establishes definite settings (the narrator's school, his art classroom, the dinner table at home) and develops a plot with conflict (the mockery of Ben's classmates) and suspense (The scene in which Ben presents his painting to the class).

The story is organized with a clear beginning (the dream that sparks Ben's idea for a painting), middle (Ben's presentation of his idea to the class and his effort to produce the painting), and end (Ben gains the approval of his classmates and wins the school art contest.). Effective transitions connect events ("The next morning, I found myself on the floor." "When the class and I took our seats...").

The plot is developed through effective use of explanation, narrative action, dialogue, and suspense. In the beginning, the writer establishes the mood for the subsequent action when he explains Ben's dream ("I had a dream that I drew the best picture ever and I started to paint it."). Narrative action helps develop the plot ("Fred and I walked down the hall to the second door to the left where we take our first period class, English." "...Mrs. Apple [the art teacher]...announced to us all if we had any ideas for next month's painting contest.").

Dialogue is used to characterize Fred ("When you bring [the artwork] in this Friday, show

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

you are actually talented.”

“You’re right.” I said with some relief. “I’ll start on it in my room as soon as I finish my homework.”

So when we stopped at the corner, Fred crossed the street to his house, and I walked up my driveway with confidence.

At dinner, my mom asked all of us how our day went. When it was my turn, I replied, “Not so well.”

“How come?” My little brother said.

“When I mentioned that I had the best idea ever, everyone laughed. But I’m going to ignore that and start on it anyways.” I said.

I ate my bean tacos and corn on my plate. I excused myself and ran upstairs to my room. The paint was already set up. A piece of paper was on my wooden bed. I grabbed it, put it on my desk, got a brush, and started my artwork with no hesitation. Hours passed and I looked at my digital watch. “12 o’clock. What? That seemed too fast. I might be done tonight.”

“Time to go to bed!” My dad hollered.

I stopped what I was doing and leaped into bed.

The next morning, I found myself on the floor. I was late again! Everything I did yesterday morning, I repeated again. But this time I was excited. Fred was at school again. We talked. He told me to ignore whatever someone said to me and I would be fine.

During the rest of the week the days went fast. But Thursday night, minutes seemed like years. I just had a corner of the painting left to do. As soon as I completed it, I jumped with joy.

“Hurray, hurray!” I yelled.

I was also tired. It was two in the morning. I was anxious to sleep.

The next morning, I woke up early. I rushed to be the first person on the school bus. No one noticed me when they walked on, and I was glad. I was the last off. Surprised, I looked around. I realized that I came before Fred. I decided that dropping my painting off in Mrs. Apple’s classroom early would be a good idea. I jogged through the hallway, looking all around me to see if anyone was following. She was at her front desk, working on some paperwork. I stepped in. She looked up.

“Hello Ben. Why have you come so early.” Mrs. Apple asked.

“I came to drop off my painting,” I said.

“Let me see. Wow this is nice. I have never seen anything like this before.”

“But Mrs. Apple, please don’t show it to anyone. Don’t even mention about my painting. Please!” I desperately pleaded.

Commentary

that you are actually talented.”). Suspense heightens interest (“Then it was my turn. I walked to the back of the room. My picture was hidden behind a cabinet. I picked it up... ‘This is my painting,’ I said very quietly.”).

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including simple sentences (“I came to drop off my painting.”), complex sentences (“When it was time for the last period, I was the first to sit down.”), compound sentences (“Kids shared their paintings, but I didn’t hear any laughs, just compliments.”), and compound-complex sentences (“So when we stopped at the corner, Fred crossed the street to his house, and I walked up my driveway with confidence.”).

This story contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. These include errors in usage (“the bell rung”), errors in capitalization (“...everyone went inside the Middle School”), errors in punctuation (“Do anyone of you realize how you are treating Ben.”), and errors in spelling (“payed” and “cabinet”). These errors are to be expected in first draft writing and do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven

Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

"Sure, I won't," Mrs. Apple agreed.

I went out, back into the hallway. I ran outside. Fred was there. He asked me where I was. I told him and asked if he could also keep a secret.

When it was time for the last period, I was the first to sit down. No one paid attention to me. Kids shared their paintings, but I didn't hear any laughs, just compliments. I sure hope they will do the same with me, I thought to myself. Fred's turn was next. He presented a picture of a flying airplane soaring above the countryside. Everyone clapped when he was done.

Then it was my turn. I walked to the back of the room. My picture was hidden behind a cabinet. I picked it up. I only showed the back side of it until I went to the front.

"This is my painting," I said very quietly.

Everyone stared with astonishment. I was amazed, they liked it. Fred's hands started to clap. He stood up. People followed him. They all smiled.

"Nice job," Someone said.

"I've never seen anything like it!" Another student said.

"Congratulations," Fred complimented.

That was the best day of my life. I won the contest and I got an A+.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

"It can't just be any song mom, it has to be a song that means something, and is important to me," said sixteen year old Lauren Nalasco as she sat anxiously at her kitchen table debating what she was going to sing at her school's year end concert. "Honey, why do you have to worry so much? Why don't you just pick a song and sing it?"

"Mom, it's more important than that. I need something special, something inspiring, something that will amaze the judges."

"I just don't see what your getting all worked up about. It's just a talent show sweetie. I don't believe that anyone, not even the judges take this song business so seriously."

"You don't understand Mom! Just wait until the concert. You'll see why I'm so nervous and excited. You'll see!", Lauren spoke loudly as she ran up the stairs of her house.

It was late in the night. Lauren layed there frustrated and cried herself to sleep. The dream she had that night would haunt her for a long time to come. She, at this time, was not sure it was a dream, but it was, however, exactly the inspiration she was looking for. It was a magical dream, filled with magical creatures. She was in the woods, and surrounded by a power that she had never felt before. She walked for awhile, and then saw a gathering of humans in the woods. She recognized them instantly. They were the spirits of the great musicians that had come before her. These were spirits of Bach, Shubert, Behtoven, and many more. They spoke to her in calm beautiful voices saying "you child, have the magic inside you to pave the way of music even further than we have. So go, and play your music."

Suddenly the softest of beautiful music began playing on the piano. She knew this song, not that she had ever heard it before, but she knew it. As quickly as the music had started, it stopped, and Lauren was thrown back into reality. She thought of words to the song as soon as she awoke. She ran down the stairs into the living room where the piano was, and though it was in the very early hours of the morning, she played the song.

It was just as beautiful as it sounded in the dream. She played until the sun shone through the windows, and still she would not stop playing.

"Lauren, what are you doing up so early on a Saturday?" Lauren's mother asked as she walked down the stairs into the living room. Lauren was in a trance. She continued playing. She was possessed by her song, and she couldn't see or hear anything outside of her music. "Lauren, I'm talking to you." Lauren's mother

Commentary

This response demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of a story by thoroughly developing a plot line that focuses on the efforts of the main character, Lauren Nalasco, to create a song that "means something" for her school's year-end concert. The lack of understanding demonstrated by her mother, a minor character, helps fuel Laura's determination to write the "perfect" song ("You don't understand Mom! Just wait until the concert. You'll see why I'm so nervous and excited. You'll see!"). Historical figures (Bach, Schubert, and Beethoven) appear in Lauren's dream to encourage her to create her music.

The writer provides settings in Lauren's home ("...she sat anxiously at her kitchen table debating what she was going to sing...") and school ("Lauren made her way onto the stage. She looked at the audience. There were so many people."). The plot is developed with events that progress from the narrator's desire to create a song that "will amaze the judges," to her inspirational dream, to winning an award at the school's year-end concert.

The story is told from the third-person point of view. It is consistently focused on the central idea that Lauren's hard work is rewarded as she overcomes her mother's irritation and her own doubts. The writer provides a clear beginning (Lauren's explanation to her mother of the importance of her song), middle (the influence of Lauren's dream and her effort to create the song), and end (Lauren's performance and her appreciation of the significance of the experience). Transitions effectively connect major sections ("It was late in the night ..." "When it came time for the awards...").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

practically screamed above the music. "Lauren!" she shouted one more time, and this time, she broke the trance. "What," Lauren asked startled by her mother's scream.

"I asked, what are you doing up so early on a Saturday?"

"Oh, I have a new song," Lauren replied, "Well, could you try to keep it down? There are people trying to sleep in this house," she snapped.

"Sorry", Lauren said, a little annoyed by her mother's grouchiness. As her mother stomped back upstairs, Lauren continued to play. She played for the rest of the day, and on for the rest of that week. Nothing else crossed her mind. All she thought about was her song. All day and all night, in school, and at home, she played until she thought her song was perfect. Then she continued playing to make it more than perfect.

The night of the concert arrived, and Lauren was more nervous than she had ever been. She was third from the last, and she could not concentrate on any of the other acts. She was trying to convince herself that this was her best work, that she would remember all of the notes and all of the words. She was shaken when the announcer called, "Next, performing a song she wrote herself, here is Lauren Nalasco performing "Dancing with Angels!"

Lauren made her way onto the stage. She looked at the audience. There were so many people. She let her fear go to the back of her mind as she began to play. She sung with all of her heart and played with all of her might. When she was finished, the audience clapped and cheered. She was on the top of the world.

When it came time for the awards, Lauren told herself it didn't matter if she won or lost. She was just happy for what she had accomplished. She heard the award for third runner up, and then the second runner up. Then she heard "And the grand prize winner is Lauren Nalasco for her song, "dancing with angels". Everyone cheered. Lauren was overjoyed.

Even if Lauren had not have won, she would have still been happy. Her song was a major accomplishment. Her hard work had paid off.

Commentary

The writer develops the story with a variety of narrative strategies. Dialogue, for example, illustrates the mother's inability to understand Lauren's dedication to her song ("Honey, why do you have to worry so much? Why don't you just pick a song and sing it?' 'Mom, it's more important than that. I need something special, something inspiring, something that will amaze the judges.'"). Narrative action helps illustrate Lauren's "magical dream" ("She was in the woods, and surrounded by a power that she had never felt before. She walked for awhile, and then saw a gathering of humans in the woods. She recognized them instantly. They were the spirits of Bach, Shubert, Beethoven, and many more.") and her excitement as she creates ("She ran down the stairs into the living room where the piano was, and though it was in the very early hours of the morning, she played the song.").

Descriptive detail and explanation illustrate the tension between Lauren and her mother ("Well, could you try to keep it down? There are people trying to sleep in this house,' she snapped. 'Sorry', Lauren said, a little annoyed by her mother's grouchiness. As her mother stomped back upstairs,..."). Dialogue helps illustrate the central idea ("And the grand prize winner is Lauren Nalasco for her song, 'dancing with angels.'").

The story demonstrates a variety of sentence types, including complex sentences ("When she was finished, the audience clapped and cheered."), compound sentences ("She played until the sun shone through the windows, and still she would not stop playing."), and compound-complex sentences ("As quickly as the music had started, it stopped, and Lauren was thrown back into reality.").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

Commentary

This story contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. Errors include missing hyphens (“sixteen year old Lauren Nalasco” and “year end concert”), a missing question mark (“‘What,’ Lauren asked”), errors in spelling (“Shubert,” “Behtoven,” “possesed”), errors in usage (“your” for “you’re,” “layed” for “laid,” and “she sung”), lack of capitalization (“...her song, ‘dancing with angels’ ”), and lack of paragraphing when dialogue is used to indicate a change in speaker. These errors are to be expected in first draft writing and do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

One morning I woke up and it hit me. A brilliant idea for a sculpture. I quickly got out of bed, and I wrote it down so that I wouldn't forget. Being the sculptor I was, I sat down and started drawing little sketches of exactly what it would look like and be made out of. I was on my way to a new masterpiece!

As I was working on my sketches, the phone rang. I answered and it was my best friend Elizabeth. I told her about my new idea and she quickly demanded that she come over to help me with it. I automatically said yes and she was there before you knew it. She was so excited when she saw some of my sketches that she couldn't wait to get to work. We briefly figured out what we needed to get and headed toward the craft store.

Once we arrived, we jumped out of the car and walked in the store. We grabbed the essentials clay, paint, sponges, sparkles, and of course paper towels. As we went to check out Elizabeth noticed a flier on a message board about an art competition. She immediately snatched it off of the board and grabbed an entry form. I told her, "I don't know Beth, I'm not really the competitive type." She replied, "Come on Chrissy, it's only a tiny competition. And besides you'll probably win anyway." I sighed, paid for the supplies and walked out of the store.

When we got home, we instantly went to work. Actually making the sculpture is the funnest part of the whole thing. We mix and match colors of paint and sparkles and mold the clay into things you've never seen before. The most fun is when we have left over supplies. Then we cover each other in whatever we have. After a couple of hours of working on the sculpture we were done. We were sitting admiring the beautiful image when Beth said, "Okay, now that we're done where is that entry form?"

I looked over at Beth and then to my desk where I had placed the neglected form. She ran over, picked it up, and started to fill it out. There was no use arguing with her so I watched. When she finished we took a picture of my sculpture and mailed the entry form in.

For the next couple of weeks, life went on as usual, and I had yet to receive my letter from the contest. On the Friday exactly two weeks after I mailed it in, I went home and there was a letter for me from the contest. I opened it to find a certificate and a letter saying that I had won 1st place and that my work had won a special award because it was so good. I called Beth and told her the good news. She immediately said, "I told you that you would win! Congratulations. Now I'm coming to pick you up, and I'm taking you out to dinner to celebrate!"

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a story, by focusing mostly on the narrator's attempt to create a winning sculpture. A minor character, the narrator's best friend Elizabeth (Beth), helps the narrator, Chrissy, sculpt her work of art and encourages Chrissy to enter an art contest.

The writer establishes settings in the narrator's home and in an art supply store and maintains a mostly consistent first-person point of view. The story conveys the central idea that, with the help of her friend, Chrissy can create a masterpiece. The story presents an adequate plot that proceeds from the narrator's idea for a sculpture, to her work on the sculpture, to winning an art contest. The organizational structure reflects the plot. The organization includes a beginning (the narrator's dream and contacting her friend Elizabeth), middle (the creation of the sculpture), and end (the narrator's mailing of the contest form and winning of an award). In the fourth paragraph, the organization becomes inconsistent when the focus shifts from creating the sculpture to the characters' delight in mixing and playing with the paints ("Actually making the sculpture is the funnest part of the whole thing. We mix and match colors of paint and sparkles and mold the clay into things you've never seen before. The most fun is when we have left over supplies. Then we cover each other in whatever we have."). Transitions are used effectively to link sections of the story ("As I was working on my sketches, the phone rang." "Once we arrived, we jumped out of the car...").

Dialogue illustrates the narrator's initial lack of interest in the art competition ("I don't know Beth, I'm not really the competitive type.") and Elizabeth's encouragement ("Come on Chrissy, it's only a tiny competition... you'll

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

Commentary

probably win anyway.”). The plot is developed mainly through narrative action. In the beginning, for example, Chrissy describes Beth’s enthusiasm about working on the sculpture (“She was so excited when she saw some of my sketches that she couldn’t wait to get to work.”).

Descriptive detail also helps develop the plot (“...Elizabeth noticed a fliar on the message board about an art competition. She immediately snatched it off of the board and grabbed an entry form.”). Dialogue helps illustrate Elizabeth’s decisive personality (“I called Beth and told her the good news. She immediately said, ‘I told you that you would win! Congradulations. Now I’m coming to pick you up, and I’m taking you out do dinner to celebrate!’”).

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including compound sentences (“I quickly got out of bed, and I wrote it down so that I wouldn’t forget.”), complex sentences (“Once we arrived, we jumped out of the car and walked in the store.”), and compound-complex sentences (“For the next couple of weeks, life went on as usual, and I had yet to recieve my letter from the contest.”).

This story contains some errors in the conventions of the English language. In the third paragraph, for example, the writer omits a colon before a list (“We grabbed the essentials clay, paint, spunges, sparkles, and of course paper towels.”). Other errors include errors in usage (“funnest”), lack of commas following introductory subordinate clauses (“As we went to check out Elizabeth noticed a...”), and errors in spelling (“fliar,” “payed,” “argueing,” “recieve,” and “congradulations”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

It all starts on a Monday morning at 7:30 a.m. and all of a sudden I wake up. At first I don't know why I woke up, but then it comes to mind. "I thought of a new dance routine I could do at the show!" I exclaimed to no one in particular. Oh by the way I share my apartment with three other people. Well back to why I woke up.

Next thing I know is that I am flying down the stairs and getting in my car. I go straight to my dance teacher. When I get there, he is pretty surprised to see me. I am not supposed to be here till 9:00 a.m.

He said, "Sydney, what in the world are you doing here. You are not supposed to be here yet."

I say, "I just came up with this really great idea for a new dance routine. See, you all start in the middle of the floor."

"Yes that sounds great I think. Why don't you show me instead of telling me, OK?" my teacher says.

"Well, OK I guess I could do that," I concluded.

So next thing you know is that I am doing the dance routine I thought of. It turns out that he really enjoyed it and said I could perform it tonight at the show. I could not believe it. He said I could do it tonight because I thought maybe in a couple of weeks or so. Well he is my teacher, and he knows what he is doing. So all day I practice until I know it all by heart and it is actually really good.

Tonights the night I thought as I was getting ready for the show. Next thing I know is they come and tell me I have ten minutes. For a dancer ten minutes is not a very long time at all. So I go up on the side of the stage and wait my turn. I am doing my exercises that I am supposed to do, but I am so nervous to really get stretched out. My coach comes up to me and tells me I will do fine. I don't really believe him though.

Well, they announce that I am next. I have giant butterflies in my stomach right now. I get out there and dance perfectly. I couldn't believe my eyes. Then I was done and everyone clapped so loud that I bet you could have heard them in Africa. People also gave me lots of flowers. They were very beautiful too. There was roses and even some carnations.

Then my teacher came up to me and said that I was wonderful. He was very proud of me and even said I could have two weeks vacation since I danced so well. I was very thankful of that, but I was more happy that I danced so well that night.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a story, adequately developing a narrative that focuses on the narrator, Sydney, who creates a routine for a dance performance. The writer includes a minor character, Sydney's dance teacher, who encourages her to perform her routine.

The story is set in the dance teacher's studio and on the stage. The setting is most identifiable when the narrator is preparing to perform ("So I go up on the side of the stage and wait my turn."). The writer adequately develops a plot line that proceeds from the narrator's creation of a new dance, to showing the dance to her dance teacher, to performing it on stage.

The story is told from the narrator's point of view, but occasionally slips into the second-person point of view ("So next thing you know is that I am ..."). The organization is mostly consistent, moving from a beginning where the narrator explains her idea to her dance teacher, to a middle where she perfects her dance routine, to an end where the narrator performs her routine and wins praise for it. The organization is inconsistent in the introduction, however, when the writer introduces irrelevant information ("Oh by the way I share my apartment with three other people. Well back to why I woke up.").

The story demonstrates the central idea that through encouragement and effort the narrator can overcome self-doubt and succeed. The writer uses transitions, but they are often imprecise and repetitive ("Next thing I know is that..." "So next thing you know..." "Next thing I know is they come..." "So all day I practice..." "So I go up..." "Well, they announce...").

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

Commentary

The story demonstrates a variety of narrative strategies. Dialogue, for example, helps characterize the dance teacher (“Yes [your idea] sounds great I think. Why don’t you show me instead of telling me, OK?”), and narrative action and explanation help develop the plot (“...I am flying down the stairs and getting in my car. I go straight to my dance teacher.” “It turns out that [my dance teacher] really enjoyed [my routine] and said I could perform it tonight at the show. I could not believe it... . So all day I practice until I know it all by heart...”). The writer introduces suspense before the narrator’s performance (“...they announce that I am next. I have giant butterflies in my stomach right now.”) and conveys the narrator’s relief and appreciation following her performance (“[My teacher] was very proud of me.... I was very thankful of that, but I was more happy that I danced so well that night.”). Details help describe the final scene (“...everyone clapped so loud that I bet you could have heard them in Africa. People also gave me lots of flowers.... There was roses and even some carnations.”).

The writer uses a variety of sentence types, including simple sentences (“Well, they announce that I am next.”), compound sentences (“At first I don’t know why I woke up, but then it comes to mind.”), and complex sentences (“When I get there, he is pretty surprised to see me.”).

This story contains some errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in punctuation (“...what in the world are you doing here.”), errors in contractions (“tonights” instead of “tonight’s”), errors in usage (“...I am to nervous...”), errors in subject-verb agreement (“There was roses...”), and errors in spelling (“suprised,” “sopposed,” and “beutiful”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

Suddenly I woke from my sleep (I had a wonderful idea for a new part to my Bass solo which I was working on a couple of days ago). I quickly sat down at my breakfast table, and wrote my parts of music I had just come up with so I would not forget.

After I got hungry I made myself some breakfast. When I was done eating, I started to look over my paper. It seemed like it would be a great solo, perhaps one of the best yet. I went into my basement (where I kept all my instruments). I grabbed my Bass and began to play the song I came up with. It was great, amazing! It was everything I wanted it to be. I started to play the song over and over again, but wait, the second maybe third time I played it something was missing! I did not know why, for when I played it before, it sounded great, but now, oh, it just sounded awful.

I placed my beautiful Bass down, and started for the kitchen (for food always helped me think). I sat down at the table with a pen and paper in my hand, and began to write. When I finished this time, I thought to myself, "This is it, this is your best work yet."

I again climbed down to play my new work. I picked up my Bass and sat on the stool. I began to play. Right away something did not sound right. I was growing angry!

I went back inside my kitchen, and I sat down and wrote. One paper after another would be thrown away in the trashcan. My hand was getting tired. Finally! I found it, the best song ever!

This time skipping (because I was so happy) I went down to the basement. Again I began to play. Oh! It sounded awful! I was furious! I was moronic to think that today I would write my best solo.

I went back upstairs this time into my room. I lay down in my bed and fell asleep. I woke up about two hours later. I had a new idea. "Oh, no" I thought "I'm not going to write another song today" but, then I thought "why not, it's not going to hurt." So, I went into the kitchen. This time if it did not, work I was just going to give up.

I sat inside my basement, with the Bass placed on my lap. I started to play. Great! This one was just great. I loved it! I played it over and over again to myself. This was honestly my best work yet! I quickly sat down and played again this time I was recording it. I played the C.D. over and over again, and I enjoyed it more each time. This was clearly my best solo. I was glad I finally got it right. I loved my new solo, I wanted to share it with everyone!

I went back upstairs into my room. I lay on my bed thinking of all the wonderful things that might happen to me because of this solo. I was thinking of all the people I will tell the next day.

Commentary

This response demonstrates a general understanding of the purpose of a story, adequately developing a plot with events that illustrate the narrator's determination to create the "best" bass solo. The story includes a single character, the narrator, and a definite setting – the home where the narrator creates a new bass solo.

The story is told from the narrator's point of view. The writer illustrates the central idea that determined effort is necessary to achieve a work of art. The story is organized with a beginning (the narrator has an idea for the bass solo), middle (the narrator makes repeated attempts to create the solo), and end (the narrator is elated at finally getting it "right"). The writer uses transitions that effectively connect events ("When I was done eating..." "When I finished this time..." "Again I began to play.>").

The plot is developed mostly through narrative action ("I sat down at the table with a pen and paper in my hand, and began to write... I picked up my bass and sat on the stool. I began to play.") that illustrates the narrator's attempts to write a solo. The plot progresses through a sequence of clear but repetitive events in which the narrator writes and then plays the solo, thinks it is excellent, is subsequently dissatisfied with it, rewrites it, likes it, is again unhappy with it, and finally "[gets] it right." After the narrator's repeated efforts, the plot reaches a climax when the narrator finally succeeds ("I started to play. Great! This one was just great... This was honestly my best work yet!").

The narrative contains a variety of sentence types, including simple sentences ("I woke up about two hours later."), compound sentences ("I went back inside my kitchen, and I sat down and wrote." "I played the C.D. over and over

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

Commentary

again, and I enjoyed it more each time.”) and complex sentences (“When I was done eating, I started to look over my paper.”).

This story contains some errors in the conventions of the English language. In several places, the writer uses parentheses to set off information that would be better set off by a semicolon (“Suddenly I woke from my sleep [I had a wonderful idea for a new part to by Bass solo which I was working on a couple of days ago].”), or puts parentheses in places where they do not belong (“I went into my basement [where I kept all my instruments].”). Other errors include mistakes in capitalization (“my Bass solo”), a missing question mark (...then I thought, “why not it’s not going to hurt.”), and errors in spelling (“aweful,” “buetiful,” and “glade” for “glad”). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

Hi, my name is Robert Callinoto I am a professional sculptor. I will tell you about when I woke one day and thought of a sculptor. It would be a great sculpter. I would make money off of it, lots of money. My sculpture is an about 1/100th size of the twin towers. A mini twin towers for a monument. It would sit were the twin towers were.

It all started when I woke up. I jumped out of bed and had a great Idea. So I ran to the phone to call my friend, and he thought it was a good idea. So I called the president. He said it was O.K. but it better be good.

So I got my crew together and we started making it. It took us forever. It kept falling apart. We started over three times. My third partner quit. Me and my other partner did not care that was just more money for us.

We had finished it. We hadn't slept for two days. We slept and we let it dry over night. In the morning the president called and said that if it was not done we could not do it but it was done. So we put it on a traler and drove it to the site. We set it down and it was great. We were proud. Our third wanted back in the group but we laughed in his face.

Well thats it. I hoped you liked my story. I'm going to play tennis in my manchens backyard tennis court with my partner. We made two million dollars of that statue. So that's million for me and million for him. Oh yaeh, My partner that Quit is begging for money at the front door.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of the purpose of a story. The writer provides limited details and explanation about how the narrator, Robert Callinoto, creates a sculpture of New York's Twin Towers. The writer mentions but does not develop minor characters, including "the president" and the narrator's assistants.

The writer addresses part of the task by explaining the narrator's idea for a new work of art but describes the creation of the work in a summary manner ("...we started making it. It took us forever... We had finished it."). The writer implies some conflict when describing the difficulties the narrator overcame ("[The sculpture] kept falling apart." "My third partner quit."). Overall, however, development of a plot line is minimal.

The writer suggests the central idea that the sculpture will earn the narrator lots of money and says at the end of the story that it did so. The organizational structure consists of a limited beginning (the narrator "woke one day and thought of a sculptor"), a middle (the narrator's work on the sculpture), and an end (completion of and payment for the project).

The organization is inconsistent. Not only does the narrator only briefly refer to the creation of the sculpture, but the narrator's call to "the president" is inserted abruptly and information that appears irrelevant is included in the conclusion ("I'm going to play tennis... with my partner."). Transitions are awkward ("I will tell you about when I woke one day and thought of a sculptor." "Oh yaeh, My partner that Quit is begging for money at the front door."). "So" is used repeatedly for transitional purposes.

The writer does not use descriptive details or

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

Commentary

other narrative strategies except for narrative action at a very general level (“So I got my crew together and we started making it. It took us forever. It kept falling apart. We started over three times. My third partner quit.”).

The story demonstrates little variety in sentence types. The writer includes an occasional compound sentence (“So I ran to the phone to call my friend, and he thought it was a good idea.” “We slepped and we let it dry over night.”) but relies mainly on simple sentences (“We had finished it. We hadn’t sleped for two days... . We were proud.”).

This story contains several errors in the conventions of the English language, including errors in usage (“sculptor” for “sculpture” and “of” for “off”), pronoun case errors (“Me and my other partner did not care...”), errors in capitalization (“My partner that Quit is...”), errors in punctuation (“Well thats it.”), and spelling errors (“sleped” and “traler”). These errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

There was a boy named John. He was an artist. He lived in New York. One day John was in his house and he was watching t.v. He suddenly got an idea (a picture). A picture of an hockey player popped up in his head and he thought that might be a good idea to make a painting of that. So John went to a national art instructor and told him about his idea. The art instructor (Tommy) said that was a great and cool idea. It was nothing that no one else would do Tommy thought. So John went home and started, but first he needed some stuff. He had to go get pencils, erasers, paints, and pastels with big sheets of paper. After he got his stuff, he started working on it. He started out by doing an outline of what he was going to draw. Then John made a scetching of the hockey player it was buitiful already. The day ended so John went to bed and the next morning the mayor was at his house he heard that he was doing something new. So then eventually it spreaded across the Nation and everyone new. So John started working on his painting. The next part of his painting he did was a thick seeable drawing over the sketch. Finally he started to paint over it. It took him 2 weeks to finish it not including the weak and 1/2 it took him to draw and sketch it. After he was done He gave it to his art instructor and he gave it to the mayor wich thought it was so good he declared it the best art work of the century and hung it up in the presidents office. John was happy and felt proud about his painting. He lived happily.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of the purpose of a story. The writer identifies but does not develop a setting (a house in New York belonging to the main character, John) and includes John's art instructor and the mayor, whose characters are not developed.

The writer suggests the central idea that gaining recognition for an exceptional work of art brings the artist happiness and pride. The story possesses an implicit organizational structure, consisting of a beginning (John's idea and presentation of his plan to his art instructor, Tommy), a middle (the process of completing the picture), and an end (the mayor's admiration for John's picture); these features, however, are not readily discernable because the story is confined to a single paragraph. Moreover, the organization becomes inconsistent when, in the midst of explaining John's painting process, the writer abruptly inserts the mayor's visit to John's house. Some transitions are used to unify ideas, but they consist primarily of "so" or "then" ("So John went home...." "Then John made a scetching....").

Use of facts and details is limited. The story is told through narrative action but on a very general level ("A picture of an hockey player popped up in his head and he thought that might be a good idea to make a painting of that. So John went to a national art instructor and told him about his idea. The art instructor [Tommy] said that was a great and cool idea. It was nothing that no one else would do Tommy thought.").

The writer occasionally uses complex sentences ("After he got his stuff, he started working on it."), but for the most part the story is written with simple sentences ("There was a

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

Commentary

boy named John. He was an artist. He lived in New York.) and run-on sentences ("Then John made a scetching of the hockey player it was buitiful already. The day ended so John went to bed and the next morning the mayor was at his house he heard that he was doing something new.").

This story contains several errors in the conventions of the English language. These include a double negative ("It was nothing that no one else would do..."), errors in capitalization ("spreaded across the Nation," "After he was done He gave it to..."), errors in usage ("weak" for "week" and "new" for "knew"), errors in punctuation ("the presidents office"), and errors in spelling ("spreaded," "wich"). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

I got ready to start the sculpture that came in my dreams. I got the clay that I will be working with out. My friend Leo came from his house. We went to the backyard so we don't make a mess inside. Leo just stood there and watched.

I molded the clay into a ball. I got my sculpting knife out and started making lines on top. I put the clay on the table. The top would be the hair. I started on the eyes. I made them look mad and raged. I made out the mouth and lips. Finally, the ears and all the detail. Finally Leo, that was looking confused said, "What is it?"

I just said, "You!"

Leo just smiled a shy smile. Then said, "Okay then I'll sculpt you!"

With that he got a chunk of clay and started sculpting with it, or so he said. He looked like a little child playing with playdough.

Finally after some time he finished. I looked at it. It was sloppy. He certainly thought it was good. Then he said "You know what's missing?" Then suddenly he threw the wet clay to my face!

"It being it on your face!"

We just laughed.

Commentary

This response demonstrates little understanding of the purpose of a story. The story focuses on the sculptures the narrator and his friend Leo create. The writer addresses only part of the writing task by briefly describing the narrator's creation of a sculpture and focusing the remainder of the story on the interaction between the narrator and Leo.

The writer faintly suggests the central idea that creating art with a friend can be fun. This idea is suggested with a minimally developed sequence of events (the narrator prepares to sculpt, the narrator creates his sculpture, Leo creates his sculpture, and the two characters play with the clay) and is supported with limited details and explanation ("[Leo] looked like a little child playing with playdough...suddenly he threw the wet clay to my face!... We just laughed.").

The narrative is organized into a first paragraph that explains the writer's preparation for his work, subsequent paragraphs that describe the narrator and Leo's work on their sculptures, and a final, three-word paragraph that creates a brief sense of completion ("We just laughed."). The organizational structure, however, is inconsistent. The first two sentences of the response, for example, plunge into the topic without any effort to orient the reader ("I got ready to start the sculpture that came in my dreams. I got the clay that I will be working with out."). In the second paragraph, the writer disrupts the story's unity by shifting the focus from the narrator's sculpture to Leo's sculpture. Transitions are limited mainly to the use of "finally" and "then."

Much of the story is related through explanation and narrative action at a general level ("My friend Leo came from his house.... Leo

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

Commentary

just stood there and watched.”), but dialogue is used effectively to emphasize significant moments (“Finally Leo, that was looking confused said, ‘What is it?’ I just said, ‘You!’ Leo just smiled a shy smile. Then said, ‘Okay then I’ll sculpt you!’”).

The response demonstrates little variety in sentence types. The writer occasionally uses complex sentences (“Finally after some time he finished.”), but the story is told mostly with simple sentences (“I put the clay on the table. The top would be the hair. I started on the eyes.”).

This story contains several errors in the conventions of the English language. The first paragraph contains inconsistent verb tenses (“I got out the clay that I will be working with....” “We went to the backyard so we don’t make a mess inside.”). Other errors include mistakes in spelling (“sclupt” and “tought”), errors in capitalization (“...a child playing with playdough”), errors in usage (“Finally Leo, that was looking confused...”), and a sentence fragment (“Finally, the ears and all the detail.”). These errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 1

My job is a sculpture. I have the best Idea for my sculpture. I will carve a goddess of my own dessire. I don't know what her name is but I will come up with one after Im done with the hole thing.

First I will start from the beautiful legs and work my way around & up the arms & head then that took about 2 months of countinussly hard work. Its really hard work & so much paitence I barly had enough paitence for I but I somehow got It done. I don't know how.

Now here comes the name the most diffecult part of the whole sculpture. The problem is I can't think of what the name should be. I guess that will just have to stay a secret.

Commentary

This response demonstrates very little understanding of the purpose of a story. It briefly explains that the narrator is going to create a sculpture and that the sculpture is eventually completed. The response lacks minor characters, a setting, a plot line, and transitions.

The response lacks a central idea, except for the suggestion that naming the sculpture poses a dilemma. The response moves abruptly from the narrator's statement of his idea ("I will carve a goddess of my own dessire.") to exposition summarizing his process ("...I will start from the beautiful legs and work my way around & up the arms & head...") and back to a more narrative summary of that process ("...that took about 2 months of continussly hard work. Its really hard work & so much paitence I barly had enough paitence for I but I somehow got It done.").

The response is divided into beginning, middle, and ending paragraphs, but the opening sentence introduces the topic abruptly and awkwardly ("My job is a sculpture. I have the best Idea for my sculpture."). Transitions are few and ineffective ("First I will start from the beautiful..." "Now here comes the name the most diffecult...").

The writer briefly summarizes events rather than employing details and storytelling strategies to develop a plot line. The writer does present specific information in noting that he "will start from the beautiful legs and work my way around & up the arms & head," but in the absence of a plot line these details appear marginal.

The response consists mainly of simple and run-on sentences ("Its really hard work & so

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 1 (continued)

Commentary

much paitence I barly had enough paitence for I but I somehow got it done.”). The writer includes a compound sentence in the first paragraph (“I don’t know what her name is but I will come up with one after Im done with the hole thing.”) but, in general, the writer’s lack of control over sentence structure impedes the reader’s understanding.

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language. These include failure to use apostrophes in contractions (“Im” and “Its really hard work...”), failure to use commas (“Now here comes the name the most diffecult part of the whole sculpture”), errors in usage (“sculpture” for “sculptor” and “hole” for “whole”), errors in capitalization (“...but I somehow got It done.”), and errors in spelling (“dessire,” “countinussly,” “paitence,” “barly,” and “diffecult”). These errors seriously interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 2

If I was a dancer I would be a break dancer beacuse it looks cool but it is hard to Learn and if I Learn I will be happy and then I will get a brake dancing class and teach People how to break danc and then I will becam relly popular and I will teach gymnastics so I could get payed more and if I have enogh mony I will buy a nice house and a nice car and a turntable and contuniu to watch my students break dance but I might Retire From teaching people how to brake dance and beacome a street Racer for a while and might go and be a dJ at a rave party and dance their.

Commentary

This response demonstrates no understanding of the purpose of a story. Rather than relating events about the narrator's experience with break dancing, the writer produces an expository passage about the life the narrator anticipates as a break dancer.

The response lacks a setting. The writer suggests minor characters (the narrator's potential students), but because the response is expository rather than narrative these characters do not contribute to a plot line. The response lacks a central idea and focus, a consistent organizational structure, and transitions that would develop the ideas into a story. Instead, most of the response lists the narrator's activities as a break dancer ("get a brake dancing class," "teach People how to break danc," "teach gymnastics," and "buy a nice house...") and speculates about the writer's life after break dancing ("but I might Retire From teaching people how to brake dance and beacome a street Racer for a while and might go and be a dJ at a rave party and dance their"). Since the response never focuses on the creation of a work of art, all explanation and details are marginal. Structurally, the response consists of a single expository paragraph that lacks an introduction, middle, and conclusion.

This response consists of a single run-on sentence. Although this sentence contains occasional transitions ("then" and "so"), these do little to improve coherence because of the writer's random joining of ideas. The response contains no periods or other punctuation that would separate the ideas into sentences. This lack of sentence control creates serious confusion for the reader.

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language, includ-

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 2 (continued)

Commentary

ing errors in verb tense (“If I was” instead of “If I were”), errors in usage (“brake” for “break,” and “their” for “there”), errors in capitalization (“hard to Learn,” “teach People,” “and...Retire From teaching...,” and “dJ”), and errors in spelling (“beacuse,” “danc,” “becam,” “rely,” “payed,” “enogh,” “mony,” “contuniu,” and “beacome”). These errors seriously interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 3

When I got up I went to a big Bob houes. I had a idea for a new rap. I feel that this can be my Best work. I have not work it out with Chris yet but I no he will like it. Hoad up you have not told Chris. Man he is the boss. Man as long as my has been Big Bob and It has Been Big Bob for a long time. The Boss will not let you sing that song If you Did not tell him as soon as It pop in your head. He is going to Be mad. Wher is he I have to get this to him. Well he is in NYC. Call It and have him get me the way out of hear. OK he said that you have to be ther in 2 min. OK Let go Let go no Let you go you are not going to come with me. no I am not will I have to go I have 1 min. I am gone all right. Hi I am Tom Seether. How can I help you I need a 1 roud tick to NYC. OK what your name Mushroom Head. OK MushRoom Head you do not have to pay It pay For you OK what gnant gnut 2 1/2 gnat 2 1/2 is gone all man no I sofly that was 2 2 1/2 has 1 min to bord. Is this 2 1/2 yes may I get on bord no the plan as just late but you can take 40. It goaes to the same plac OK. When I get on plan 40. It lives me in I Dont no wher It dorp me of at but ther is no one aroud hear. But I see a car Pine a combus In It so I go East and I Fine make to NYC to give Him the song But It is at big bob houes.

Commentary

This response addresses only one part of the writing task, omitting any narration that focuses specifically on the creation of a work of art. The writer attempts to tell a story, but lack of explanation, unclear sentences, errors in conventions, and a lack of transitional material result in a confusing narrative.

The writer fails to provide a central idea but does convey the impression that the narrator's effort to present his rap song to Chris, who was in "NYC," was frustrating. The writer attempts to convey this idea using a sequential organizational structure that includes a beginning (the narrator has an idea for a rap song.), a middle (the narrator tries to present his idea to the boss.), and an end (the narrator apparently presents his song to the boss). The introductory sentences, however, are abrupt and fragmented ("When I got up I went to a big Bob houes. I had a idea for a new rap."), the middle is rambling, and the ending consists of an abrupt stop rather than a conclusion. Moreover, the response is confined to a single paragraph.

The writer attempts to present facts, details, and explanations, but the sentences are so disjointed that the information is confusing. The writer tries to incorporate dialogue, but the lack of punctuation makes it unclear where dialogue begins and ends.

The response demonstrates no control over sentence structure. The writer begins with simple sentences ("I had a idea for a new rap. I feel that this can be my Best work.") and continues with occasional compound sentences (I have not work it out with Chris yet but I no he will like it."). Many of the sentences are run-ons without punctuation ("OK MushRoom Head you do not have to pay It pay For you OK what gnant gnut 2 1/2 gnat 2 1/2 is gone all man no I sofly that was 2 2 1/2 has 1 min to bord. Is this 2 1/2 yes may I get on bord no the plan as just late but you can take 40. It goaes to the same plac OK. When I get on plan 40. It lives me in I Dont no wher It dorp me of at but ther is no one aroud hear. But I see a car Pine a combus In It so I go East and I Fine make to NYC to give Him the song But It is at big bob houes.")

Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Fictional Narrative Writing Task Administered on April 26 and 27, 2005

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work Sample 3 (continued)

Commentary

1/2 is gone all man no I softly that was 2 2 1/2 has 1 min to bord.”).

The response contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language. When employing dialogue, the writer fails to use quotation marks, commas, and paragraphing to indicate a speaker. Other errors include inappropriate articles (“a idea”), mistakes in capitalization (“...can be my Best work...” “...and It has Been Big Bob for a long time” “If you Did not tell him...”), errors in usage (“no” for “know,” “hear” for “here,” “all right” for “alright”), and errors in spelling (“houes,” “wher,” “ther,” “bord” for “board,” and “plan” for “plane,” “goaes” for “goes,” “plac” for “place,” and “aroud”). These errors seriously interfere with the reader’s understanding of the story.

2001–05 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 English-language arts academic content standards for Writing Strategies and Written Conventions of English. These criteria are used to evaluate written responses in all genres 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 academic content standards for Writing Applications for these genres, are used to evaluate student writing in the specific genres to which they apply.

On pages 64 through 71, 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.

4

The writing—

- *Clearly* addresses all parts 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 a *variety* of sentence types.
- 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 position with precise and relevant evidence and *convincingly* addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and *significant* details.

3 **The writing—**

- Addresses all parts of the writing task.
- Demonstrates a *general* understanding of purpose and audience.
- Maintains a *mostly consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the *effective* use of some transitions.
- Presents a central idea with *mostly relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes a *variety* of sentence types.
- 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—

- Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and *significant* details.

2 **The writing—**

- Addresses *only parts* 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* variety in sentence types.
- 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—

- Is characterized by *substantial* copying of key phrases and *minimal* paraphrasing.

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—

- Is characterized by substantial copying of *indiscriminately selected* phrases or sentences.

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 academic content standards for Writing Strategies and Written Conventions as well as those derived from the academic content standards for Writing Applications—are applied to student responses in each genre.

The column under “Genre” contains the scoring criteria derived from the grade seven academic 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 academic content standards for Writing Strategies. The column under “Sentence Structure” contains the scoring criterion derived from the Sentence Structure standard within the grade six academic 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 academic 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 those with fewer. References to the writing standards from which each scoring criterion is derived are presented in coded form following each criterion for score point four.

2001–05 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Fictional or Autobiographical Narrative Writing

Genre <i>(Fictional Narrative Writing)</i>	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>4 ■ 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)</p> <p>■ Includes <i>appropriate</i> strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action). (Gr. 7 WA 2.1 c)</p>	<p>■ <i>Clearly</i> addresses all parts of the writing task.*</p> <p>■ Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.**</p> <p>■ 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)</p> <p>■ Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)</p>	<p>■ Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)</p>	<p>■ 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>

* 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 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 all parts 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 <i>effective</i> use of some transitions. ■ Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types. 	<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. ■ Attempts to use strategies but with <i>minimal</i> effectiveness (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Addresses <i>only parts</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. ■ Suggests a central idea with <i>limited</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Includes <i>little</i> variety in sentence types. 	<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"> ■ Lacks a developed plot line. ■ Fails 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. ■ Lacks a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas. ■ Lacks 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.

2001–05 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Response to Literature Writing □

Genre (Response to Literature Writing)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>4 ■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a <i>thoughtful</i>, comprehensive grasp of the text. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 a) □</p> <p>■ 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)</p> <p>■ Provides <i>specific</i> textual examples and details to □ support the interpretations. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 c)</p>	<p>■ <i>Clearly</i> addresses all parts of the writing task.*</p> <p>■ Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.**</p> <p>■ Maintains a <i>consistent</i> point □ of view, focus, and organiza- □ tional structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1) □</p> <p>■ Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)</p>	<p>■ Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)</p>	<p>■ 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>
<p>3 ■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the text. □</p> <p>■ Organizes accurate and <i>reasonably</i> coherent interpretations around <i>clear</i> ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.</p> <p>■ Provides textual examples and details to support the interpretations. □</p>	<p>■ Addresses all parts of the □ writing task. □</p> <p>■ Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience.</p> <p>■ Maintains a <i>mostly consistent</i> □ point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of □ some transitions. □</p> <p>■ Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations.</p>	<p>■ Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types.</p>	<p>■ 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>
<p>2 ■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a <i>limited</i> grasp of the text. □</p> <p>■ Includes interpretations that <i>lack</i> accuracy or coherence as related to ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.</p> <p>■ Provides <i>few, if any,</i> textual □ examples and details to □ support the interpretations. □</p>	<p>■ Addresses <i>only parts</i> of the □ writing task. □</p> <p>■ Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience.</p> <p>■ 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.</p> <p>■ <i>Suggests</i> a central idea with <i>limited</i> facts, details, and/or explanations.</p>	<p>■ Includes <i>little</i> variety in sentence types.</p>	<p>■ 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>

* 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 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
1	<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. ■ 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.

2001–05 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Persuasive Writing

Genre (<i>Persuasive Writing</i>)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions□
<p>4 ■ <i>Authoritatively</i> defends a position with precise and relevant evidence and <i>convincingly</i> addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.□ (Gr. 7 WA 2.4 a, b, c)</p>	<p>■ <i>Clearly</i> addresses all parts of the writing task.*</p> <p>■ Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.**</p> <p>■ 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)</p> <p>■ Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)</p>	<p>■ Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)</p>	<p>■ 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>
<p>3 ■ <i>Generally</i> defends a position with relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.□</p>	<p>■ Addresses all parts of the writing task.□</p> <p>■ Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience.</p> <p>■ Maintains a <i>mostly consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of some transitions.</p> <p>■ Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations.</p>	<p>■ Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types.</p>	<p>■ 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>
<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>	<p>■ Addresses <i>only parts</i> of the writing task.□</p> <p>■ Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience.</p> <p>■ 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.</p> <p>■ Suggests a central idea with <i>limited</i> facts, details, and/or explanations.</p>	<p>■ Includes <i>little</i> variety in sentence types.</p>	<p>■ 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>

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Genre (<i>Persuasive Writing</i>)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
<p>1 ■ <i>Fails</i> to defend a position with <i>any</i> 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.

2001–05 Grade Seven Scoring Rubric: Summary Writing

Genre (Summary Writing)	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions□
<p>4 ■ Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and <i>significant</i> details. (Gr. 7 WA 2.5 a, b, c)</p>	<p>■ □Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.*</p> <p>■ □Demonstrates a <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience.**</p> <p>■ □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)</p> <p>■ □Includes a <i>clearly presented</i> central idea with <i>relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)</p>	<p>■ □Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)</p>	<p>■ □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>
<p>3 ■ Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and <i>significant</i> details.</p>	<p>■ □Addresses all parts of the writing task.</p> <p>■ □Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience.</p> <p>■ □Maintains a <i>mostly consistent</i> point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the <i>effective</i> use of some transitions.</p> <p>■ □Presents a central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> facts, details, and/or explanations.</p>	<p>■ □Includes a <i>variety</i> of sentence types.</p>	<p>■ □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>
<p>2 ■ Is characterized by <i>substantial</i> copying of key phrases and <i>minimal</i> paraphrasing.</p>	<p>■ □Addresses <i>only parts</i> of the writing task.</p> <p>■ □Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience.</p> <p>■ □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.</p> <p>■ □Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.</p>	<p>■ □Includes <i>little</i> variety in sentence types.</p>	<p>■ □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>

* 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 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
<p>1 ■ Is characterized by substantial copying of <i>indiscriminately selected</i> phrases or sentences.</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.