CONTENTS

Introduction .......................................................... iv
Thinking About the Writing Prompt ......................... 1
Using Scoring Rubrics .............................................. 5

Writing Prompts, Scoring Rubrics, and Sample Responses

Expository Clarification Essay
  Prompt 1 .......................................................... 7
  Prompt 2 .......................................................... 16
  Prompt 3 .......................................................... 24
  Prompt 4 .......................................................... 25

Expository Point-of-View Essay
  Prompt 1 .......................................................... 26
  Prompt 2 .......................................................... 35
  Prompt 3 .......................................................... 43
  Prompt 4 .......................................................... 44

Personal Narrative Essay
  Prompt 1 .......................................................... 45
  Prompt 2 .......................................................... 54
Overview of the North Carolina Writing Assessment

The North Carolina Writing Assessment is administered to all seventh-grade students. The assessment consists of one prompt that asks students to compose an expository clarification or point-of-view essay. The test is designed to measure core composition skills such as main idea, supportive details, organization, and coherence, as well as grammar and spelling conventions.

The Writing Assessment is administered statewide on a date decided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Students will have 50 minutes to complete their essays. Total administration time of the exam is 65 minutes. Additional time may be allotted to students with special needs.

The writing prompt will ask students to clarify an opinion they have on a non-controversial topic, such as their favorite type of food, or it will ask students to take a position on a general social issue, such as whether or not students should wear uniforms to school. Besides the prompt itself, the assessment page reminds students what they need to do to receive a high score.

The seventh-grade assessment is evaluated with the use of a holistic score scale and a conventions rating. The holistic score scale ranks students’ proficiency in the use of main idea, supporting details, organization, and coherence. Graders of the exam use these four criteria, along with the explanations given in the holistic score scale, to assign each essay a score from four to one, with four being the top score. An additional category of non-scorable exists for those papers that are illegible, incoherent, off-topic, blank, or in a language other than English. The conventions rating further evaluates each paper on the basis of sentence formation, usage, and spelling mechanics. Those essays with a favorable rating receive a (+) while those with a negative rating receive a (−).

Writing Prompts, Scoring Rubrics, and Sample Responses Content

This book is composed of reproducible pages that are designed to help students improve on their basic writing skills as they prepare for the seventh-grade Writing Assessment. In addition to the prompts, rubrics, and sample responses, the book includes an activity for thinking about the writing prompt, an organizer for expository and persuasive writing, an organizer for expressive writing, an explanation of the scoring rubrics and how to use them, and student evaluation sheets for students to evaluate the responses of their peers. These activities are to be used to supplement the writing activities and to help focus students who may be having trouble organizing the writing process.

The prompts are modeled on those in the seventh-grade test. There are four expository clarification, four expository point-of-view, and four narrative prompts. Although narrative writing will not be on the seventh-grade test, it has been included here to allow students practice in this mode and to allow students additional writing practice in a test like environment. Holistic score scales, or rubrics, for each type of prompt are also included, as well as sample responses at various score levels.
How to Use the *Writing Prompts, Scoring Rubrics, and Sample Responses* Content

**Choose a Prompt**

Before you begin working with students, you will need to select a prompt. If you are specifically preparing for the Grade 7 Writing Assessment, it would be best to use one of the expository clarification or point-of-view prompts.

Once you have chosen a prompt, you may wish to use the prewriting activities included in the book.

- **Thinking About the Writing Prompt** This activity gets students thinking about what direction their essay will take. Students are asked first to put the prompt in their own words. Then, after describing an initial reaction and thinking about the reminders listed in the prompt page, students brainstorm for ideas, details, and information that would support their response.

- **Organizers for Expository/Persuasive and Expressive Writing** The two graphic organizers are to be used in conjunction with the Thinking About the Writing Prompt activity. The Organizer for Expository/Persuasive Writing is to be used with the expository clarification and expository point-of-view prompts. This organizer shows one way of graphically representing the thesis statement, supporting details, and concluding statement. Students use their main idea and supporting details from the brainstorming activity and organize them coherently into basic essay form. The Organizer for Expressive Writing is to be used with the narrative prompts. It helps make sure students include a beginning, middle, and end to their narrative and insures there is a main idea to the story.

- **Using Scoring Rubrics** For those students uncomfortable or unfamiliar with scoring rubrics, we have included a basic explanation and exercise to help ease the anxiety of the assessment. These pages explain what exactly the rubrics are, how they are organized, and how students can use them to perform their best on the assessment. A checklist is included that students can use to further clarify the four scoring criteria. Students are directed to customize the checklist to the specific mode of writing they will be creating. This additional reinforcement will help to solidify in students’ minds the requirements of a strong essay.

**Writing the Essay**

Once students have completed their prewriting activities they are ready to begin working. You can either assign essays for homework or you can simulate the test environment by allowing students fifty minutes in-class work time.

**Student Evaluation Sheets**

Student Evaluation Sheets have been included to allow students the opportunity to review the sample responses or to review the writing of their peers. There is a different student evaluation sheet for each type of prompt.
Sample Responses and Rubrics

Two of the four expository clarification prompts and two of the four expository point-of-view prompts have sample responses. Both of the narrative prompts have sample responses. There are three sample responses for each prompt, all of which are modeled after the same basic essay. However each sample response has modifications consistent with the holistic scoring scale to account for the difference in score. For instance the first expository clarification prompt asks students to identify the most enjoyable method of travel. All three sample responses suggest a train as the preferred method of travel, but the first essay has little elaboration. The second response includes some support for the idea of a train, but it is not well organized. The third response is well written. The variety of responses allows students to discern the differences between the various score points. Scoring explanations follow each set of sample responses.

Each prompt type also has a corresponding score scale or rubric. In other words there is one rubric for expository clarification, one for expository point-of-view, and one for narrative writing. There are three main parts to each rubric. The first part of the rubric is the Focused Holistic Score Scale. Here the four score points are broken down into explanations of what each paper should contain to earn a particular score. The score scale is designed to help the grader of the papers, but students will find reviewing the score scale will help them better understand what the intended audience is looking for. The second part of the rubric is the Focused Holistic Scoring Criteria. The scoring criteria contains the same components for all prompt types—main idea, supporting details, organization, and coherence—though they are slightly altered for each of the three modes. The last part of the rubric is the Conventions Rating. This is a simple (+) or (-) system designed to evaluate proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.

Transparencies

The transparencies that accompany the book are designed to show students the difference between writing at each of the score points. Each transparency takes a brief excerpt of one of the sample responses and highlights the excerpted response’s proficiency, or lack thereof, in one of the four holistic scoring criteria. Be sure students have complete copies of the sample responses while the transparencies are reviewed. This way students will better understand the context of the excerpt.

It is important to note that the transparencies do not highlight or note errors in spelling, usage, sentence formation, or usage. You may wish to correct these errors on the transparency with your class while explaining the error.
Thinking About the Writing Prompt

Taking time to think about the prompt and to plan your writing will improve the quality of your final essay. Planning can help you compose a more organized, polished response. Use this guide to plan your composition.

Restate

1. Read the prompt carefully and restate it in your own words. Think specifically about what the prompt is asking you to do (for example, make an argument, tell a story, or explain a process).

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Respond

2. After you have thought about the prompt and it is clear what you’re being asked to do, write one or two sentences describing your initial reaction to the prompt. This may be the basis for your thesis statement, or the main idea of your essay.

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Remember

3. Read the reminder list that follows the prompt. (If you are still unclear about the prompt, the list may help you better understand it.) Think about those items that you have particular trouble with and write them down. Explain how to avoid those mistakes in your writing.

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________
Record

4. Brainstorm ideas, details, or information to support your response to the prompt. You may use a brainstorming technique such as freewriting, making a list, or creating a web. Record anything that comes to mind.

Review

5. Review the things you wrote as you brainstormed. What ideas support your thesis statement? What details add information to those supporting ideas? Underline or highlight the ideas and details you plan to use in your composition.

Represent

6. There are many ways to organize your ideas. You may wish to use a visual representation such as a web, an outline, or a chart. The graphic organizers that follow are some examples of ways to structure your ideas.
Organizer for Expository/Persuasive Writing

This organizer is useful for many types of writing, including expository and persuasive essays. Use the thesis statement from the Respond exercise and the ideas from the Record and Review exercises to complete the graphic organizer. You may add additional Supporting Ideas and Details boxes as necessary.
Organizer for Expressive Writing

This organizer is useful for expressive writing such as narrative essays. Use the main idea from the Respond exercise and the ideas from the Record and Review exercises to complete the graphic organizer. You may add additional Action boxes as necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the central event of your narrative?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is in your narrative?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When and/or where does your narrative take place?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will you begin your narrative?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| What happens next? |

| How will you end your narrative? |
Using Scoring Rubrics

What Are Scoring Rubrics?

Rubrics, or score scales, are one way to evaluate compositions. Rubrics represent a range of quality by showing how weaker essays compare to stronger essays. Using specific characteristics and descriptions, they provide a basic rating scale for writing.

In addition to being useful for those who evaluate essays, rubrics are helpful for writers. Knowing what makes an essay strong before you begin writing will help you produce a better overall composition.

How Are Scoring Rubrics Organized?

Not all rubrics look alike. Some rubrics consist of lists that describe different traits of writing. Others are written in paragraph form. All assign point values based on quality.

The rubrics used here are made up of two descriptive sections, the Score Scale and the Scoring Criteria. The Score Scale outlines the range of possible scores with descriptions of each. The Scoring Criteria details four characteristics that are important in a strong composition. Combined, they illustrate the features of an effective piece of writing.

Different types of writing, such as persuasive, expository, and narrative, have their own rubrics. Although the rubrics have some elements in common—the use of effective sentence structure, for example—they also include traits that are specific to each writing form.

How Can I Use Scoring Rubrics?

As mentioned above, rubrics provide valuable information that can help you focus on the qualities of strong writing. One way to do this is to take information from the Score Scale and Scoring Criteria and make a writing checklist. Use this checklist as follows:

- As you plan your essay, think about how you will meet the criteria on your checklist.
- As you write, refer to your checklist and monitor your work to ensure that your essay meets the criteria.
- When you have completed your essay, review it against the checklist. Reread your essay, looking for examples of each item. As you find them, check off the appropriate box. If you find that you are weak in any area, revise your essay as needed.
Use the appropriate Score Scale and Scoring Criteria for the corresponding type of writing to complete the writing checklist below. Add items that address the specific qualities of this type of writing. For example, with a persuasive essay, you would include under the Main Idea heading “I clearly state my position.”

**Main Idea**
- [ ] The subject matter I chose is appropriate for the prompt.
- [ ] ____________________________

**Supporting Details**
- [ ] The details I include are clearly related to the subject matter.
- [ ] I include enough details to support my main idea.
- [ ] ____________________________

**Organization**
- [ ] My composition has a strong beginning, a well-developed middle, and an effective ending.
- [ ] My essay follows a clear, logical progression.
- [ ] ____________________________

**Coherence**
- [ ] I establish relationships between ideas in my composition.
- [ ] I use transitional words and phrases, parallel structure, and other techniques to connect sentences and paragraphs.
- [ ] I use effective sentence structure and word choice.
- [ ] ____________________________
Expository Clarification Essay: Prompt 1

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Think about the many ways you can get from one place to another. For example, you could travel by bus, car, plane, boat, skateboard, bicycle, or even on foot. Choose the way you find most enjoyable and explain why you like it best.

As you write your paper, remember to:

• Name your favorite way to get from one place to another.
• Give at least two reasons why you enjoy traveling in this particular way. Explain your reasons.
• Write in complete sentences.
• Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
• Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Focused Holistic Score Scale: Expository Clarification Essay

**SCORE POINT 4** The response reflects a strong mastery of expository writing and skill in all four criteria. The writer clearly identifies the subject matter and focuses on it exclusively, providing relevant reasons to support his or her position and elaborating on those reasons with details that are both appropriate and clearly articulated. The response follows a clear, logical organization with a beginning, middle, and end. The writer exhibits an appropriate sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay is coherent and seems complete in all aspects.

**SCORE POINT 3** The response reflects a reasonable mastery of expository writing. There is competency in all four criteria. The response clearly identifies the subject matter; focuses on this topic; and gives reasons, details, and examples to support it. Some responses may include only a few clearly elaborated reasons; others may present more reasons with less elaboration. There may be some minor weaknesses in coherence. Some explanations may be unclear, or transitional links may be missing. However, the response is organized and coherent overall, demonstrating a clear, logical progression. The writing shows an acceptable sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay seems complete, but minor weaknesses may appear.

**SCORE POINT 2** The response reflects a weak sense of expository writing. The response focuses on the subject matter but is deficient in some other major area. Some responses provide only one reason to support the main idea. (The minimum number required is two.) Others may provide two or more reasons but offer little elaboration. The writer makes some effort to include supporting details; but those details are insufficient and not clearly related to the subject matter, requiring the reader to make inferences. The response has some organizational strategy, but the logical progression may be haphazard and occasionally difficult to follow. The writer may lack an appropriate sense of audience. Some aspects of the prompt may not be addressed.

**SCORE POINT 1** The response reflects a lack of understanding of expository writing. It demonstrates an effort to address the prompt but does not sustain consistent focus. The writer made an effort to support ideas but without an overall sense of strategy or control. If the response offers reasons to support the main idea, they are inappropriate or unintelligible. Elaboration is unclear and off-topic. The writer lacks an appropriate sense of audience. Many essays lack an organizing principle or a sense of direction. Others may demonstrate minimal control but are simply too undeveloped to receive a higher score.
**Expository Clarification Essay: Focused Holistic Scoring Criteria**

**Main Idea**

The writer identifies the subject matter and consistently focuses on the main idea while responding to the prompt.

**Supporting Details**

The writer provides sufficient details to explain, develop, and support his or her argument or ideas fully. The writer also provides details that are related to the subject matter and address the inherent question, "Why?"

**Organization**

The writer establishes a sense of beginning, middle, and ending in the composition. The composition shows a logical development from beginning to end and seems complete.

**Coherence**

The writer establishes relationships between the ideas, causes, and/or statements in the composition. Sentences are logically connected. To achieve coherence the writer may use transitions, connectives, parallel structure, repetition, pronouns, and synonyms.

**Conventions Rating**

+ The composition provides evidence that the writer has a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.

− The composition provides evidence that the writer does not have a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.
Expository Clarification Essay

**DIRECTIONS:** After you have read the student essay, fill in this sheet with your observations. Provide thoughtful, thorough responses, and be sure to provide specific references to the essay. Write a response to every question.

1. The introduction of an essay should catch the reader’s attention and let the reader know what the essay will discuss. Evaluate the effectiveness of the introduction in this essay. Then suggest one way the introduction could be improved.

2. When writing a clarification essay, the writer should establish a stance or position and offer reasons to support it. Look over the reasons the writer offers in this essay. Do these reasons clearly support the writer's position? Identify any reasons that are unclear or confusing, and explain why you think they are ineffective.

3. Writers can make an expository essay more interesting by including anecdotes (small accounts of personal experience) and other supporting details. Identify two anecdotes or specific details that make this essay interesting. If the writer did not include anecdotes, identify a place where you think it might have been useful to include one.

4. Precise vocabulary and vivid word choice can make an essay more interesting to read. Identify at least three words in this essay that you think can be replaced with more vivid or accurate language. Use a thesaurus or a dictionary to find synonyms for these words.
Expository Clarification Essay

Score of 1

Trains are the best way to travel. Because they have restaurants and bathrooms.

Trains have come a long way since the time when they built the transcontinental railroad all the way across America.

Last year, we took the train to Nebraska to visit my cousins, they are Jimmy and Alicia. A good thing about that trip was that I could sleep on the train, I can’t sleep when I’m riding in the car with my dad because he always plays the radio too loud. Also I didn’t have to ask Dad to stop to get food.

The train schedule on the wall at the train station was confusion at first. My dad thought the train to Nebraska left at 12 o’clock but it really didn’t leave until 2 o’clock, so we had some time to look around the train station. They had model trains and old photographs of what train travel used to be like years ago.

Trains today are different but still the best way to go somewhere.
Of all the ways to travel, taking the trains are the best. Going by train is more comfortable than going by airplane or bus. Trains are the best way to go when taking a long trip.

On a plane or a bus people move around but where are you going to go? On a train you can get up and walk around more and you can even go from one train car to another. Trains give you much more room to stretch out than planes or buses. The seats go back so you can sleep or you can stay in a sleeper car which is what we did when we went to Nebraska last year.

There’s food and snacks and you can even eat in a restaurant. It’s funny to think about how fast you’re going when you’re just sitting there eating dinner like you would be in a normal restaurant. The menu has all the same things you’d see on a normal menu. The train doesn’t shake too much so you can eat in comfort.

In a car you’re all cramped up and you can’t sleep because you can’t really get that comfortable. In a train you’re up off the ground so the view of the land is better. It gets pretty boring staring out of a car window for hours but you don’t have that problem on a train.

You can read too. You can not get carsick on a train. Some people get carsick if they try to read in a car, but you won’t have that problem if you try taking a long train trip. If you had a choice between a bus and a train you’d be crazy not to take the train because it’s much more comfortable.
Expository Clarification Essay

Score of 4

Of all the ways to travel, taking the train is my favorite. Traveling by train is more efficient, comfortable, and interesting than going by airplane, car, or bus. Overall, trains are the best way to go when taking a long trip.

Passenger trains are a quick and efficient method of travel. Although a train ride is usually not as fast as flying, for long distances it is much faster than taking a bus. For example, the bus from my city stops in five towns before it reaches Charlotte. The train only stops twice. Also, buses can get slowed down by highway traffic, but trains hardly ever face traffic on the railroad tracks.

Train travel is also more efficient because passengers on trains never need to stop for gas or food. In fact, passengers can actually eat and sleep on trains. There is a special car that has the train’s restaurant, and there are special cars for sleeping, too. The sleeper cars have little compartments with bunks. It’s like a moving hotel.

Train travel is also much more comfortable than riding in a car, plane, or bus. On a plane or a bus, people can move around, but there really isn’t anywhere to go. On a train, passengers can get up and walk around more, and they can even go from one train car to another. Trains give people much more room to stretch out than cars, planes, or buses do.

The seats go back so people can sleep, even if they don’t have a bunk. Plus, on a train, passengers don’t have to wear seatbelts because the ride is very smooth.

Another good point about train travel is that it’s not boring. There is a lot to do and see on a train. Since passengers can move around, they can sit at tables and play games, eat, read, or talk. They can also sit quietly by themselves if they like. It’s always fun to look out the windows. When riding on a train, you can see big cities, small towns, and the countryside.
Trains are a great way to see the country.

There are a number of ways to go from one place to another. For many reasons, I believe that the most efficient, comfortable, and interesting way to travel is to go by train.
Scoring Explanation: Expository Clarification Essay

Refer to pages 8–9 for the Focused Holistic Score Scale and the Conventions Rating. These scoring guides help explain how these essays were evaluated.

Essay 1

**Focused Holistic Score: 1**
The writer identifies an enjoyable means of travel. The response attempts to support the main idea, but elaboration is weak and not focused. Some details are inappropriate.

**Conventions Rating:** –
This essay contains a sentence fragment; a run-on sentence; and minor errors in spelling, punctuation, and pronoun usage.

Essay 2

**Focused Holistic Score: 2**
The writer addresses the prompt and includes support for the main idea. However, the details are not always related to the topic, and the organization is somewhat haphazard.

**Conventions Rating:** –
This essay contains several spelling, usage, and punctuation errors, as well as errors in subject-verb agreement and pronoun use.

Essay 3

**Focused Holistic Score: 4**
The writer responds to the prompt by identifying a favorite way to travel. The writer provides several reasons to support his or her choice, and these reasons are well-elaborated and clear. The response is well-organized with a logical progression of ideas.

**Conventions Rating:** +
This essay contains no significant errors.
Expository Clarification Essay: Prompt 2

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Many kinds of animals share the world with humans. Choose your favorite kind of animal and explain why you like it best.

As you write your paper, remember to:

• Name your favorite kind of animal.
• Give at least two reasons why this is your favorite animal. Explain your reasons.
• Write in complete sentences.
• Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
• Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Focused Holistic Score Scale: Expository Clarification Essay

**SCORE POINT 4** The response reflects a strong mastery of expository writing and skill in all four criteria. The writer clearly identifies the subject matter and focuses on it exclusively, providing relevant reasons to support his or her position and elaborating on those reasons with details that are both appropriate and clearly articulated. The response follows a clear, logical organization with a beginning, middle, and end. The writer exhibits an appropriate sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay is coherent and seems complete in all aspects.

**SCORE POINT 3** The response reflects a reasonable mastery of expository writing. There is competency in all four criteria. The response clearly identifies the subject matter; focuses on this topic; and gives reasons, details, and examples to support it. Some responses may include only a few clearly elaborated reasons; others may present more reasons with less elaboration. There may be some minor weaknesses in coherence. Some explanations may be unclear, or transitional links may be missing. However, the response is organized and coherent overall, demonstrating a clear, logical progression. The writing shows an acceptable sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay seems complete, but minor weaknesses may appear.

**SCORE POINT 2** The response reflects a weak sense of expository writing. The response focuses on the subject matter but is deficient in some other major area. Some responses provide only one reason to support the main idea. (The minimum number required is two.) Others may provide two or more reasons but offer little elaboration. The writer makes some effort to include supporting details; but those details are insufficient and not clearly related to the subject matter, requiring the reader to make inferences. The response has some organizational strategy, but the logical progression may be haphazard and occasionally difficult to follow. The writer may lack an appropriate sense of audience. Some aspects of the prompt may not be addressed.

**SCORE POINT 1** The response reflects a lack of understanding of expository writing. It demonstrates an effort to address the prompt but does not sustain consistent focus. The writer made an effort to support ideas but without an overall sense of strategy or control. If the response offers reasons to support the main idea, they are inappropriate or unintelligible. Elaboration is unclear and off-topic. The writer lacks an appropriate sense of audience. Many essays lack an organizing principle or a sense of direction. Others may demonstrate minimal control but are simply too undeveloped to receive a higher score.
**Expository Clarification Essay: Focused Holistic Scoring Criteria**

**Main Idea**
The writer identifies the subject matter and consistently focuses on the main idea while responding to the prompt.

**Supporting Details**
The writer provides sufficient details to explain, develop, and support his or her argument or ideas fully. The writer also provides details that are related to the subject matter and address the inherent question, “Why?”

**Organization**
The writer establishes a sense of beginning, middle, and ending in the composition. The composition shows a logical development from beginning to end and seems complete.

**Coherence**
The writer establishes relationships between the ideas, causes, and/or statements in the composition. Sentences are logically connected. To achieve coherence the writer may use transitions, connectives, parallel structure, repetition, pronouns, and synonyms.

**Conventions Rating**

+ The composition provides evidence that the writer has a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.

− The composition provides evidence that the writer does not have a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.
Expository Clarification Essay

I’m tall and I’ve got a long neck so what do you know I like giraffes. Yes I know it sounds funny. Being tall means you can reach the top shelf in the kitchen or high up books in the library, or if you’re a giraffe you can reach the leaves at the very top of the trees.

Besides the long neck there’s the long tongue that giraffes have. I got a normal size tongue but I can still be quiet like a giraffe. You wouldn’t know it but they’re really quiet. They say “quiet as a mouse” but they should say “quiet as a giraffe.” Like me a giraffe has a voice but mostly stays quiet.

Living in Africa they don’t kill other animals. They just eat leaves, giraffes are vegetarian like my sister is, but giraffes don’t complain about the food in the kitchen like my snobby sister. So there’s ways that giraffes are like me, tall and quiet. There’s ways that giraffes are like my sister, the foods they’re eating. But being like a giraffe but in different ways is practically the only thing my sister and I have in common.

Giraffes are the best animals of all. I can relate to them because of their height and the way they’re quiet. You never hear of a sports team called the giraffes but it would be a cool name. If I could name a basketball team it would be the Carolina Giraffes.
In all of wildlife, my favorite animal is the giraffe. I like giraffes best because they are beautiful and peaceful. They never attack other animals, but they will defend themselves with kicking if they have to. Usually, if a danger comes they run away. In my opinion, giraffes are the most beautiful of all the animals on Earth. They're extremely tall, but they are not clumsy. They use their height to get food, and they always manage to look beautiful when they're eating the leaves at the top of the trees. Giraffes look like they are moving in slow motion when they run. I got to see giraffes at the zoo, and it was amazing to watch them run.

Their coats is the main thing that makes giraffes beautiful. There's so many great nature documentaries on giraffes. I always stop flipping the tv channels if I see a giraffe on a show.

Giraffes are also my favorite animal because they are peaceful and gentle animals. They don't hunt and kill any other animals. They also are quiet. They can make some quiet sounds but they don't do it often.

Some people think they're funny looking but they're wrong in my opinion. Different animals are beautiful to different people. Some people might think a bear is beautiful, but the beauty that I see is in the giraffe. I wouldn't want to see a bear, but different people have different opinions. Nature is full of surprises.
Humans share the world with many other forms of life, including thousands of species of animals. Every species has qualities that make it special, but my favorite animals are giraffes. I like giraffes best because they are beautiful, peaceful, and unusual.

In my opinion, giraffes are the most beautiful animals on Earth. Even though giraffes are extremely tall, they are not at all clumsy. They use their height to get food, and they always manage to look graceful as they are reaching for the leaves at the top of the trees. Giraffes’ height also makes them look as if they are moving in slow motion when they run. I got to see giraffes at the zoo, and it was amazing to watch them gallop.

Their coloring is the main thing that makes giraffes beautiful. Even though giraffes have only two colors in their coats, they have striking patterns of squares, patches, or leaf-shaped spots. There are no two giraffes with exactly the same pattern, just like there are no two people with the same fingerprints. Giraffes’ coats make it harder for them to be seen as they stand next to trees; their coats help to keep them safe.

Another reason that giraffes are my favorite animals is that they are peaceful, gentle animals. In the wild, they live quietly in herds. They are herbivores, which means they eat plants, so they don’t hurt and kill any other animals. Usually, if a predator attacks a giraffe, the giraffe will try to run away. However, it will defend itself by kicking if it has to.

I also think that it’s impressive that giraffes take care of their young in groups. When a baby giraffe, or calf, is born, the other members of the herd will help take care of it. The mothers care for the young giraffes and teach them all that they need to know in order to survive.

Finally, I like the fact that giraffes are so unusual and interesting. Although a
Giraffe’s neck is very long; it has the same number of bones as a human’s neck. Giraffes’ tongues are also very long. Just as their necks help them reach the tops of trees, their tongues help them reach new leaves and branches. Another unusual feature of giraffes is that they are very quiet. People used to think that giraffes didn’t have voices, but now we know that they can make some soft sounds. They communicate in ways we don’t really understand. All of these qualities make giraffes unique.

Giraffes are my favorite animals because they are beautiful, peaceful, and unusual. They add to the beauty of our world with their grace and their amazing behavior.
Scoring Explanation: Expository Clarification Essay

Refer to pages 17–18 for the Focused Holistic Score Scale and the Conventions Rating. These scoring guides help explain how these essays were evaluated.

Essay 1

**Focused Holistic Score: 1**
The writer responds to the prompt by identifying a favorite animal. Although many of the details support the main idea, the response lacks structure and organization and frequently digresses to other topics. In addition, the writer lacks an appropriate sense of audience.

**Conventions Rating: –**
This essay contains run-on sentences and several errors in spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

Essay 2

**Focused Holistic Score: 2**
The writer focuses on a topic and attempts to address the prompt. The writer supplies sufficient reasons for his or her choice but does not provide sufficient support for the reasons given. The organization is weak, and the response is difficult to follow at times.

**Conventions Rating: +**
This essay contains minor errors in spelling, punctuation, and agreement.

Essay 3

**Focused Holistic Score: 4**
The writer provides a strong thesis statement that addresses the prompt and provides clear reasons. The response is well organized. Each reason is clearly elaborated with relevant and appropriate details and examples, and the essay shows an appropriate sense of audience.

**Conventions Rating: +**
This essay contains no significant errors.
Expository Clarification Essay: Prompt 3

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Think about your favorite form of exercise. It could be playing a team sport, swimming, dancing, biking, skateboarding, or other physical activity. Name your favorite way to get exercise and explain why it is your favorite.

As you write your paper, remember to:

• Name your favorite form of exercise.
• Give at least two reasons why this is your favorite form of exercise. Explain your reasons.
• Write in complete sentences.
• Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
• Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Expository Clarification Essay: Prompt 4

**DIRECTIONS:** Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Think about all the movies you have enjoyed. These could include movies that you saw recently or movies that you saw long ago. Name one of your favorite movies and explain why it is one of your favorites.

**As you write your paper, remember to:**

- Name one of your favorite movies.
- Give at least two reasons why this is one of your favorites. Explain your reasons.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Expository Point-of-View Essay: Prompt 1

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

As you write your paper, remember to:

• Clearly state your position.
• Include at least two points that support your position.
• Use examples and specific details to support each point.
• Write in complete sentences.
• Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
• Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Take a position on whether students should be allowed to eat in class. State your position and explain why students should or should not be allowed to eat in class.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Focused Holistic Score Scale: Expository Point-of-View Essay

**SCORE POINT 4** The response reflects a strong mastery of expository writing. There is skill in all four criteria. The writer clearly states a position, provides reasons to support this position, and supports these reasons with details that are both appropriate and clearly articulated. The overall argument is thoughtful and convincing. The response follows a clear, logical progression with a beginning, middle, and end. The writer shows an appropriate sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay seems complete in all aspects.

**SCORE POINT 3** The response reflects a reasonable mastery of expository writing. There is competency in all four criteria. The writer clearly states a position; focuses on this position; and gives reasons, details, and examples to support it. Some responses may present a few clearly elaborated reasons; others contain more reasons but with less elaboration. There may be minor weaknesses in coherence. The writer may not explain some reasons sufficiently, and a few transitional links may be missing. However, the response is organized and coherent overall, demonstrating a clear, logical progression. The writing shows an acceptable sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay seems complete, but minor weaknesses may appear.

**SCORE POINT 2** The response reflects a weak sense of expository writing. The writer has focused on a position, but the response is deficient in some other major area. Some responses provide only one reason to support a position. (The minimum number required is two.) Others may provide reasons that are unclear, inadequately developed, or tangential to the argument. The response clearly has some kind of organizational strategy, but the logical progression may be haphazard and occasionally difficult to follow. The writer may lack an appropriate sense of audience. Some aspects of the prompt may be missing, or the essay may seem incomplete.

**SCORE POINT 1** The response reflects a lack of understanding of expository writing. The response demonstrates an effort to address the prompt; however, the response does not sustain focus. The writer may have made an effort to support his or her points, but there is little or no sense of strategy or control. Reasons offered by the writer may not satisfactorily support the main idea, and support for reasons is weak or nonexistent. Many responses might lack any organizing principle or sense of direction. Others may demonstrate minimal control but are extremely sparse.
**NON-SCORABLE** The composition is entirely illegible, incoherent, off-topic, blank, or written in a language other than English.

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**Expository Point-of-View Essay: Focused Holistic Scoring Criteria**

**Main Idea**
The writer clearly states the issue and his or her position on the topic.

**Supporting Details**
The writer provides sufficient details to explain, develop, and support his or her position fully. The writer also provides details that are related to the subject matter and address the inherent question, “Why?”

**Organization**
The writer establishes a sense of beginning, middle, and ending in the composition. The composition shows a logical development from beginning to end and seems complete.

**Coherence**
The writer establishes relationships between the ideas, reasons, and/or statements in the composition. Sentences are logically connected. To achieve coherence the writer may use transitions, connectives, parallel structure, repetition, pronouns, and synonyms.

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**Conventions Rating**

+ The composition provides evidence that the writer has a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.

− The composition provides evidence that the writer does not have a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.
Expository Point-of-View Essay

DIRECTIONS: After you have read the student essay, fill in this sheet with your observations. Provide thoughtful, thorough responses, and be sure to provide specific references to the essay. Write a response to every question.

1. The thesis statement of an essay is a statement of the topic and main idea. In a point of view essay, the thesis statement communicates the writer's opinion on a given topic. Identify the thesis statement in this essay. Is it clearly expressed? Explain.

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

2. Does each paragraph directly relate to the main idea of the essay? If so, explain your answer. If not, identify one or two places where the writer seems to digress (move away from the main point) and offer suggestions for how this essay could be improved.

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

3. A point of view essay should explain the writer's position on a subject. However, in some cases, a writer might use strong language to try to convince readers to agree with his or her point of view. Identify words in this essay that emphasize the writer's conviction or feeling. If you think the language is too strong, suggest one or two places where the writer could state his or her point of view in a different manner.

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

4. The conclusion of an essay should restate the writer's thesis and sum up the main points in the essay. Does the conclusion in this essay do that? If yes, explain why. If not, identify one way the writer could make the conclusion of this essay clearer or more effective.

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expository Point-of-View Essay</th>
<th>Score of 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It should be allowed because different people get hungry at different times in the day and are eating different amounts of food depending on metabolism. Some people just can’t eat right after they get up, so they get hungry late in the morning. Also, some people get to feeling sick if they don’t have a snack at the right time. Why should they have to leave class to eat, or worse, feel sick in class? Being hungry in class when you’re trying to concentrate on a test is the worst situation. Are you punishing kids who are trying to do their best? Other people don’t like to eat large meals. Doctors say eat smaller meals throughout the day. This makes sense. We can eat at our lockers if we don’t get caught but it’s not healthy to try to eat food too fast between classes. My Mom can eat at her desk at work. Kids should be treated like adults. Starving us is not the answer to this problem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I think that when students get hungry, they should be allowed to eat. That includes in class. There are many reasons to allow students to eat during class. Special occasions in class are a time when students should be allowed to eat. If special occasions are okay then why not other times.

For example, as students study world cultures, they may have a special day when items from different countries are brought to class. These classes often include foods from different cultures. In Spanish class we learned that a tortilla in Spain is not the same food as what we call a tortilla in America. Many people learn better by experiencing things instead of reading about them. Would you learn better by reading about two kinds of tortillas or by seeing them and eating them? When food can improve test scores, it should not be kept out of the classroom.

Also, there’s celebrations. If a class wins recognition or wins a competition of some kind, students should be able to celebrate during school. If you work hard, you should get recognized. With everybody’s busy schedule it’s difficult to arrange to have a cake after school. Some students practice sports because they’re on teams, and some clubs meet after school. If you ride the bus, it leaves right after school. If the students have done something great, food should be allowed as part of the celebration.

Another reason to allow students to eat in class is that not everybody has the same schedule for eating. I just can’t eat right after I get up, so I get hungry late in the morning. I can’t concentrate when I’m hungry. Isn’t it better to allow me to eat during class than to have me miss out on learning because I’m too hungry to do anything?

Everybody is an individual. We don’t all like the same thing. You can’t really force people to eat when they’re not hungry, and that’s just as much torture as not eating when you’re hungry, which usually happens during class anyway. Let’s have a choice in when we eat, and we’ll all be in a better mood.
I think that when students get hungry, they should be allowed to eat, even if they are in class. There are several reasons to allow students to eat during class. First, some students have diabetes or other health conditions that make it necessary to eat at times besides lunch period. Special occasions in class are another time when students should be allowed to eat. Finally, not everyone gets hungry at the same time, so people should be allowed to eat when it’s right for them.

Many students have medical conditions that require them to eat at times other than regular meal times. For example, students with diabetes or hyperglycemia need to eat when their blood sugar levels get out of balance. If this happens during class time, the student should be allowed to have a snack so that he or she doesn’t miss the lesson. A student can easily take care of his or her medical problem while remaining in class. To deny them food or to send them out of the room is a kind of discrimination.

There are also special times during class that might include food. For example, as students study world cultures, they may have a special day when items from different countries are brought to class. These cultural activities often include foods from different cultures. In these cases, students should be allowed to eat during class because it is a part of the learning process.

Other special occasions include rewards and celebrations, and having a special snack adds to the fun. If a class earns recognition or wins a competition of some kind, students should be able to celebrate during school. It’s often impossible to get the same group of people together for a celebration after school because everyone has other activities, so a party during class time is sometimes necessary.

A final reason to allow students to eat in class is that not everyone gets hungry at the same time. Some people just can’t eat right after they get up, so they get hungry late in the morning. These students have a very difficult time concentrating because their bodies need fuel. I think it is better to allow these students to eat during class than to have them miss out on learning because they’re too hungry to think well. Other people
Expository Point-of-View Essay (continued)  

Score of 4

don’t like to eat large meals, so they feel better when they eat smaller meals throughout the day. It’s important for those students to be able to eat in class. They often can’t wait until they get home to eat again. It’s not fair to force everybody to eat at the same time.

Food is an important part of life. It provides fuel for our bodies and is an important part of celebrations. It can even help learning. As long as students act responsibly, they should be allowed to eat in class.
### Scoring Explanation:
#### Expository Point-of-View Essay

Refer to pages 27–28 for the Focused Holistic Score Scale and the Conventions Rating. The following scoring guides help explain how these essays were evaluated.

**Essay 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused Holistic Score: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer attempts to address the prompt and takes a position but provides no clear statement of his or her position. The reasons given in support of the position are poorly organized and elaborated, leaving the reader to make inferences. In addition, the writer has a poor sense of audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conventions Rating:** +

This essay contains minor errors in punctuation.

**Essay 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused Holistic Score: 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer addresses the prompt and clearly states his or her position. The essay contains some organizational structure. The response provides reasons to support the position, but those reasons are not always well developed, and the writer digresses in several paragraphs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conventions Rating:** +

This essay contains minor errors in spelling and punctuation.

**Essay 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused Holistic Score: 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer states a clear position. The response includes thoughtful, well-articulated support for the stated position. The writer stays focused on the topic and presents a straightforward explanation of his or her position.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conventions Rating:** +

This essay contains no significant errors.
Expository Point-of-View Essay: Prompt 2

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Take a position on whether parents should pay their children for doing chores such as washing the dishes, mowing the lawn, or babysitting. State your position and explain why parents should or should not pay their children for doing chores.

As you write your paper, remember to:

- Clearly state your position.
- Include at least two points that support your position.
- Use examples and details to support each point.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Focused Holistic Score Scale: Expository Point-of-View Essay

**SCORE POINT 4** The response reflects a strong mastery of expository writing. There is skill in all four criteria. The writer clearly states a position, provides reasons to support this position, and supports these reasons with details that are both appropriate and clearly articulated. The overall argument is thoughtful and convincing. The response follows a clear, logical progression with a beginning, middle, and end. The writer shows an appropriate sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay seems complete in all aspects.

**SCORE POINT 3** The response reflects a reasonable mastery of expository writing. There is competency in all four criteria. The writer clearly states a position; focuses on this position; and gives reasons, details, and examples to support it. Some responses may present a few clearly elaborated reasons; others contain more reasons but with less elaboration. There may be minor weaknesses in coherence. The writer may not explain some reasons sufficiently, and a few transitional links may be missing. However, the response is organized and coherent overall, demonstrating a clear, logical progression. The writing shows an acceptable sense of audience. All aspects of the prompt are addressed, and the essay seems complete, but minor weaknesses may appear.

**SCORE POINT 2** The response reflects a weak sense of expository writing. The essay focuses on a position, but the response is deficient in some other major area. Some responses provide only one reason to support a position. (The minimum number required is two.) Others may provide reasons that are unclear, inadequately developed, or tangential to the argument. The response clearly has some kind of organizational strategy, but the logical progression may be haphazard and occasionally difficult to follow. The writer may lack an appropriate sense of audience. Some aspects of the prompt may be missing, or the essay may seem incomplete.

**SCORE POINT 1** The response reflects a lack of understanding of expository writing. The response demonstrates an effort to address the prompt; however, the response does not sustain focus. The writer may have made an effort to support his or her points, but there is little or no sense of strategy or control. Reasons offered by the writer may not satisfactorily support the main idea, and support for reasons is weak or nonexistent. Many responses might lack an organizing principle or a sense of direction. Others may demonstrate minimal control but are extremely sparse.
**Non-scorable** The composition is entirely illegible, incoherent, off-topic, blank, or written in a language other than English.

---

**Expository Point-of-View: Focused Holistic Scoring Criteria**

**Main Idea**

The writer clearly states the issue and his or her position on the topic.

**Supporting Details**

The writer provides sufficient details to explain, develop, and support his or her argument or ideas fully. The writer also provides details that are related to the subject matter and address the inherent question, “Why?”

**Organization**

The writer establishes a sense of beginning, middle, and ending in the composition. The composition shows a logical development from beginning to end and seems complete.

**Coherence**

The writer establishes relationships between the ideas, reasons, and/or statements in the composition. Sentences are logically connected. To achieve coherence the writer may use transitions, connectives, parallel structure, repetition, pronouns, and synonyms.

---

**Conventions Rating**

+ The composition provides evidence that the writer has a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.

− The composition provides evidence that the writer does not have a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.
I feel that kids should be paid for the work they do. Some kids get an allowance for doing nothing at all or their parents just give them money. It’s not fair. All kids should get paid for the work they do. That would help even it out. Kids will do a better job doing the dishes if they get paid.

High school students save money for prom or some other big event, but sixth graders want to save money for stuff too. Everybody knows we can’t drive yet but that doesn’t mean we don’t need money to go to the movies or buy our own CD’s. I collect CD’s and I could get more of them if I had more money.

The price of CD’s are going to go up so making money off chores at home would be a good way to help me keep up. You can’t get hired as a sixth grader so parents should help out with this kind of thing. It helps with responsibility.

Parents are always telling kids to be more responsible and money should be a part of it. And if you do more chores, you should get more money. We live in a capitalism society. Money makes the world go around my grandfather says.
Expository Point-of-View Essay

Score of 2

Kids should be paid for the work they do. Paying kids for doing their chores is a good idea for many reasons. The first reason is the chores will get done better. The second is that it's better to have your own money.

Kids who get paid for jobs around the house will make sure to do their chores, and they will try to do a good job. Kids will do a better job if they know they’re going to get paid for a job done right. Our parents work and get money. Kids should get money, too.

Most kids want money so they can go places and do things with their friends. Plus, it can be like a real job because, if a kid works extra hard or does a great job, the kid gets a raise?

Kids should have their own money so they don’t have to ask for it. I’m too young to get a job so paying me for chores makes sense. If a kid needs more money for something, he or she might be able to do extra chores to earn more money or wait for the next pay day. Kids can’t learn how to save money and spend money wisely if they’re not getting paid in the first place.

A birthday comes once a year. For my last birthday I wanted some CDs. I didn’t get what I wanted, but I’m willing to work and save up for the CDs. Getting paid for chores is a good idea.
In many families today, parents work full time, and children are expected to do chores at home. I feel children should be paid for the chores they do. Paying kids for doing their chores is a good idea for several reasons. First, it will guarantee that the chores get done properly. Getting paid for work also teaches children valuable lessons about money. Finally, rewarding children for their work will strengthen the family.

First, kids who get paid for jobs around the house will make sure to do their chores, and they will try to do a good job. Money is a great way to motivate a person. Most young people want extra money so they can go places and do things with their friends. Payment for chores can (and should) depend on the quality of the work. With this arrangement, if a job isn’t done properly, the person won’t get paid. Plus, it can even be like a real job where, if a kid works extra hard or does the work especially well, he or she might even earn a raise!

Second, paying children for doing chores teaches them valuable lessons about making and having money. The only way kids will learn about financial responsibility is if they earn their own money. After they get paid for working, they can decide how they want to spend their pay. If a person needs more money for something, that person has a couple of choices. He or she might be able to do extra chores to earn more money or save up and wait for the next pay day. Learning how to save and spend money wisely is important for young people. Earning money for chores is a good way to learn these lessons.

Finally, when parents pay their children for doing chores, the entire family benefits. Parents tell kids what they expect them to do and then reward them for living up to those expectations. As a result,
Expository Point-of-View Essay (continued)  

Score of 4

Kids feel appreciated and trusted by their parents. Kids feel like their parents value their hard work and trust them to take care of things. Most kids and parents get along better when this happens.

There are many reasons to pay children for doing work around the house. Kids will do their chores and do them well if they earn money. Paying children also teaches them valuable lessons about finances. Most importantly, though, it helps parents and children establish better relationships. Everybody wins.
Scoring Explanation: Expository Point-of-View Essay

Refer to pages 36–37 for the Focused Holistic Score Scale and the Conventions Rating. These scoring guides help explain how these essays were evaluated.

**Essay 1**

**Focused Holistic Score: 1**
The writer clearly states a position. Although there is some attempt at organization, support for the position is weak, and the essay lacks a clear direction. In addition, the writer lacks an appropriate sense of audience.

**Conventions Rating: –**
This essay contains spelling errors, run-on sentences, and errors in subject-verb agreement.

**Essay 2**

**Focused Holistic Score: 2**
The writer clearly responds to the prompt and states a position. There is an attempt at overall organization, but a reasonable conclusion is missing, and paragraphs lack focus and coherence. At times the writer does not provide enough elaboration for the reasons given.

**Conventions Rating: +**
This essay contains no significant errors.

**Essay 3**

**Focused Holistic Score: 4**
The writer clearly states a position and responds to the prompt, providing appropriate details that support the writer’s position. The response is well organized with a beginning, middle, and end, and uses transitions to direct the reader.

**Conventions Rating: +**
This essay contains no significant errors.
Expository Point-of-View Essay: Prompt 3

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Take a position on whether parents should allow children to stay up as late as they choose on weeknights. State your position and explain why you think parents should or should not allow their children to stay up as late as they choose on weeknights.

As you write your paper, remember to:

- Clearly state your position.
- Include at least two points that support your position.
- Use examples and specific details to support each point.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Expository Point-of-View Essay: Prompt 4

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Take a position on whether girls should be allowed to try out for contact sports such as hockey and football. State your position and explain why you think girls should or should not be allowed to try out for such sports.

As you write your paper, remember to:

- Clearly state your position.
- Include at least two points that support your position.
- Use examples and specific details to support each point.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your paper. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Narrative Essay: Prompt 1

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Think of a time in your life when you were frightened. Tell the story of what happened to frighten you.

As you write your paper, remember to:

- Include the time and place of the story.
- Tell a story that has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Use strategies to maintain the reader's interest, such as dialogue or description.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your paper. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Focused Holistic Score Scale:
Narrative Essay

**SCORE POINT 4** The response reflects a strong mastery of narrative writing. There is skill in all four criteria. The writer has chosen a subject appropriate to the prompt, addresses all aspects of the prompt, and focuses on the subject throughout the narrative. The writer's organization progresses logically from beginning to end, so that the reader easily grasps the chronological sequence of events, and the story seems complete. The writer supplies appropriate details, such as descriptions of characters and settings, that contribute to the story, and employs literary devices such as dialogue and suspense to maintain the reader's interest. The composition is coherent, vivid, and engaging.

**SCORE POINT 3** The response reflects a reasonable mastery of narrative writing. The writer focuses on a subject appropriate to the prompt, with perhaps slight digression, and touches on all aspects of the prompt. The story has a clear beginning, middle, and end. It flows with only minor breaks in progression. The writer has attempted to make the composition interesting through the use of descriptive detail, dialogue, and/or suspense. Although some minor weaknesses are present, the response is thorough, coherent, and complete.

**SCORE POINT 2** The response reflects a weak sense of narrative writing. The writer responds to the prompt but may not focus on the subject throughout the narrative. The writer attempts to tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end. There may be some ambiguity involving the setting, sequence of events, or characters. Some responses may make a cursory attempt to engage the reader's interest, but much of the story is told in a flat, factual way, with little attempt at dramatization. Other responses might be creative but confusing, with missing transitions and other flaws in coherence. The narrative may seem incomplete.

**SCORE POINT 1** The response reflects a lack of understanding of narrative writing. It demonstrates an effort to address the prompt. However, the response may be sparse, digressive, or confusing. The writer may attempt to tell a story, but critical information is missing. Some responses may not clearly introduce characters or situations; others may begin to tell a story but fail to finish it. The writer employs literary devices sparingly, in a way that is ineffective or confusing. Many responses exhibit a minimal sense of organization but are simply too sparse to warrant a higher score.
Non-scorable
The composition is entirely illegible, incoherent, off-topic, blank, or written in a language other than English.

Personal Narrative Essay: Focused Holistic Scoring Criteria

Main Idea
The writer identifies the subject of the narrative and consistently focuses on the main idea while responding to the prompt.

Supporting Details
The writer provides sufficient details to fully explain, develop, and support the events in the narrative. The writer also provides details that enhance the story, such as details about characters and setting.

Organization
The writer establishes a sense of beginning, middle, and ending in the composition. The composition shows a logical development from beginning to end and seems complete.

Coherence
The writer establishes relationships between the events in the narrative. Sentences are logically connected. To achieve coherence the writer may use transitions, connectives, parallel structure, repetition, pronouns, and synonyms.

Conventions Rating
+ The composition provides evidence that the writer has a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.
- The composition provides evidence that the writer does not have a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and mechanics.
Narrative Essay

DIRECTIONS: After you have read the student essay, fill in this sheet with your observations. Provide thoughtful, thorough responses, and be sure to provide specific references to the essay. Write a response to every question.

1. Does this essay tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end? When you finished reading this story, did you feel satisfied? If so, explain why. If not, identify points in the narrative where you wish the writer had supplied more information.

2. Has the writer used narrative strategies such as description and dialogue to make the story interesting? If so, identify points where the writer used such strategies effectively. If not, explain how the writer could revise the story to make it more dramatic.

3. Were there any places in the essay where you became confused or uninterested? Identify a specific place where you lost interest or you had an unanswered question.

4. Reread the final paragraph of this essay. How successful do you think it is as an ending? If you feel it is successful, explain why. If you feel it is unsatisfying in some way, also explain why.
Narrative Essay

There was this one time at the hospital when I was totally scared. It wasn’t me in the hospital, it was my friend. On the way to the hospital nobody talked and that made me more scared.

In the emergency room the nurses and doctors were running around everywhere. I was terrified. It wasn’t like on tv because the blood you saw was real and the hurt people were really hurt. There were people in wheel chairs and on beds that rolled. One doctor looked like a doctor on tv but his hair was darker. Stuff that you see on tv isn’t nearly as scary as when you actually see the real thing. A car accident can be another example of that.

When we finally saw Amanda she had tubes in her arms. I tried to tell her about the book but she was asleep or she just had her eyes closed. They were going to move her and her eyes came open.

Her parents were hurt but they got better too. When she opened her eyes, I wasn’t as scared. They all recovered but it was scary at the hospital.
The most scared I’ve ever been was when Amanda got hurt. She was going on a trip to Raleigh to visit her grandparents. After she left a couple of hours later the hospital called. My mom said there was an accident. My parents and I went to the hospital, and I was so scared.

We went into the emergency room and saw all the nurses and doctors rushing around. I was terrified. My parents talked to the nurse behind the desk. Another nurse took us back to see Amanda, but he said we couldn’t stay very long.

Amanda was all bruised and hooked up to machines. I cried because I was so scared. The nurse who brought us to Amanda’s room saw me crying. He said that Amanda was going to be fine because her injuries aren’t serious. That made me feel a little better, but I was still scared.

Then they came into the room to take Amanda to another floor. She opened her eyes at that moment. Amanda squeezed my hand and that made me not as scared.

Amanda was in the hospital for a few days, but she and her parents are completely recovered now. I’ll never forget how frightened I was that day.
I don’t usually get scared easily, but last summer one event terrified me more than anything ever has before.

Amanda Brownly is my next-door neighbor and my best friend. We’ve known each other since kindergarten. We got through our first day of school together, we celebrate our birthdays together, and hardly a day goes by that we don’t see each other. Even our parents are good friends! One Friday afternoon, Amanda and her parents went to visit Amanda’s grandparents in Raleigh. I was sitting at the kitchen table, staring at the ceiling, trying to think of something to do that weekend.

Then the phone rang. My mom picked it up and I heard her gasp. I looked up and saw that she had turned very pale. She hung up the phone and said in a low, strange voice, “Honey, go get your dad. We need to get to the hospital right away.” I didn’t know what had happened, but I ran upstairs to get my dad.

When we came down to the kitchen, mom was still very pale. I ran up to her and asked, “What is it? Why do we have to go to the hospital?”

Mom looked away at first, but then she looked at me and said, “The Brownlys have been in an accident.” I felt like I couldn’t breathe. I don’t remember speaking, thinking, or even seeing as we rode to the hospital. The next thing I remember is walking into the emergency room and seeing the nurses and doctors rushing around. I was terrified. They were talking, but I couldn’t understand what they were saying. I just stood there while my parents talked to the nurse behind the desk. Another nurse took us back to see our friends, but he said we couldn’t stay very long.

I looked at Amanda and I couldn’t believe what I saw. Her eyes were swollen shut, and her face was bruised and purple. There were tubes coming out of her arms, and all kinds of machines beeped and blinked around her. She looked like some horrible experiment in a science fiction movie. That’s when I started to cry. I was frightened for Amanda, and I was frightened for Mr. and Mrs. Brownly. I was even frightened for myself.

The nurse who brought us to Amanda’s room saw me crying. He explained that Amanda
was going to be fine. “She’s pretty banged up,” he said, “but her injuries aren’t serious.”
That made me feel a little better, but I was still scared.

A few minutes later, some nurses came into the room. They were going to take Amanda to
another floor of the hospital. As they were getting her ready to go, she opened her eyes!
When Amanda squeezed my hand and tried to smile at me, I knew she was going to be all
right. I wasn’t afraid any more.

Amanda was in the hospital for a few days, but she and her parents are completely
recovered now. Luckily, no one was seriously hurt in the accident. I’ll never forget how
frightened I was that day. There’s nothing scarier than finding out that someone you care
about has been hurt.
Scoring Explanation: Narrative Essay

Refer to pages 46–47 for the Focused Holistic Score Scale and the Conventions Rating. These scoring guides help explain how these essays were evaluated.

**Essay 1**

**Focused Holistic Score: 1**
The writer attempts to address the prompt. The response is confusing and digressive. The chronology is fairly clear, but there are insufficient details to support the narrative, and many of the details provided do not relate to the subject.

**Conventions Rating: –**
This essay contains errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure.

**Essay 2**

**Focused Holistic Score: 2**
The writer focuses on a subject appropriate to the prompt. There is an attempt to tell a story, but the transitions are weak, and the narrative reads like a list of events. There is little dramatization, and the tone is flat.

**Conventions Rating: +**
This essay contains minor errors in usage and sentence structure.

**Essay 3**

**Focused Holistic Score: 4**
The writer tells a compelling story from beginning to end. The narrative effectively uses literary devices such as dialogue and description to create an engaging story. The narrative is vivid and complete.

**Conventions Rating: +**
This essay contains no significant errors.
Narrative Essay: Prompt 2

DIRECTIONS: Write a well-organized composition on the topic below.

Name a person you know who did something kind for you or for someone else. Write a story about this person’s act of kindness.

As you write your paper, remember to:

• Name the person and describe his or her act of kindness.
• Include the time and place of the story.
• Tell a story that has a beginning, middle, and end.
• Use strategies to maintain the reader’s interest, such as dialogue and description.
• Write in complete sentences.
• Write well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences.
• Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You may use scratch paper to plan your essay. When you are finished planning, write the final copy of your essay on a separate sheet of paper.
Focused Holistic Score Scale: Narrative Essay

**SCORE POINT 4** The response reflects a strong mastery of narrative writing. There is skill in all four criteria. The writer has chosen a subject appropriate to the prompt, addresses all aspects of the prompt, and focuses on the subject throughout the narrative. The writer’s organization progresses logically from beginning to end, so that the reader easily grasps the chronological sequence of events, and the story seems complete. The writer supplies appropriate details, such as descriptions of characters and settings, that contribute to the story, and employs literary devices such as dialogue and suspense to maintain the reader’s interest. The composition is coherent, vivid, and engaging.

**SCORE POINT 3** The response reflects a reasonable mastery of narrative writing. The writer focuses on a subject appropriate to the prompt, with perhaps slight digression, and touches on all aspects of the prompt. The story has a clear beginning, middle, and end. It flows with only minor breaks in progression. The writer has attempted to make the composition interesting through the use of descriptive detail, dialogue, and/or suspense. Although some minor weaknesses are present, the response is thorough, coherent, and complete.

**SCORE POINT 2** The response reflects a weak sense of narrative writing. The writer responds to the prompt but may not focus on the subject throughout the narrative. The writer attempts to tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end. There may be some ambiguity involving the setting, sequence of events, or characters. Some responses may make a cursory attempt to engage the reader’s interest, but much of the story is told in a flat, factual way, with little attempt at dramatization. Other responses might be creative but confusing, with missing transitions and other flaws in coherence. The narrative may seem incomplete.

**SCORE POINT 1** The response reflects a lack of understanding of narrative writing. It demonstrates an effort to address the prompt. However, the response may be sparse, digressive, or confusing. The writer may attempt to tell a story, but critical information is missing. Some responses may not clearly introduce characters or situations; others may begin to tell a story but fail to finish it. The writer employs literary devices sparingly, in a way that is ineffective or confusing. Many responses exhibit a minimal sense of organization but are simply too sparse to warrant a higher score.
Non-scorable  The composition is entirely illegible, incoherent, off-topic, blank, or written in a language other than English.

Personal Narrative Essay: Focused Holistic Scoring Criteria

Main Idea
The writer identifies the subject of the narrative and consistently focuses on the main idea while responding to the prompt.

Supporting Details
The writer provides sufficient details to fully explain, develop, and support the events in the narrative. The writer also provides details that enhance the story, such as details about characters and setting.

Organization
The writer establishes a sense of beginning, middle, and ending in the composition. The composition shows a logical development from beginning to end and seems complete.

Coherence
The writer establishes relationships between the events in the narrative. Sentences are logically connected. To achieve coherence the writer may use transitions, connectives, parallel structure, repetition, pronouns, and synonyms.

Conventions Rating
+ The composition provides evidence that the writer has a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.
- The composition provides evidence that the writer does not have a reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency in sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.
Conflict resolution is like when you break up a fight. Or prevent a fight. That's even better. Ms. Mitchell taught us not to fight. She made the school a better place. Kids used to fight all the time, especially after school. Bullies can pick on smaller kids and Ms. Mitchell wanted to stop all of it.

We learned how to show people how to talk through it. We were all tired of all the conflict. Student peers are better because kids sometimes listen better to other kids than to teachers who are always telling us what to do. Ms. Mitchell is a volunteer at our school and one of the nicest teachers at the school. She broke up a fight and that made her want to make a difference with the conflict resolution program. “Let’s make a difference” is the thing she always says. Our lives are better even though some of the training sessions were way too long. But we know talking through it and having peace makes the school better. Everybody can contribute and Ms. Mitchell did a kind thing by starting the program.

Kids sometimes see movies or videogames where people fight and they think that fighting is the answer to the problems. But fighting is not the answer. People can get in trouble, or even worse somebody could wind up in the hospital. Ms. Mitchell said that life is not like a videogame where you can hit reset and all the injuries go away. She said that fighting in a videogame is one thing, but fighting in real life is something totally different. I’m glad that Ms. Mitchell didn’t say that she hated all videogames, just the ones that she thinks have too much violence in them.
Ms. Mitchell did a great act of kindness at our school. She changed the lives of many kids and made the school environment better by starting the conflict resolutions program.

A few months ago, Ms. Mitchell had to break up a fight among several students. After that, she talked to our principle about the way some students were fighting. She thought we should learn how to work out conflict peacefully. She wanted students to act as peer counselors. Most of the students didn't like all the fights and arguments, and we wanted to do something to help.

Before long, lots of people were talking about conflict resolutions. Everyone was saying that it would be great for the students to help each other solve problems. We would be taking responsibility for our own actions. We talked about the problem at the first meeting. Ms. Mitchell said, “Helping people solve their problems isn’t always easy, but I know you all have what it takes to make a difference at this school.” We were working together. Ms. Mitchell is so kind. Mrs. Moore told us a story about how she stopped a fight between two older kids, and how they ended up becoming friends later. During our meetings, we learned how to help people find conflict resolutions to their problems. Ms. Mitchell and Mrs. Moore are a good team because they have different ways of looking at a situation.

Now there’s less referrals to the principle’s office and less fights. Students are more willing to try to talk through their problems before they fight. Students should try to get along because we all go to the same school. Aggression should be saved for sports or some other healthy outlet so that people don’t get hurt. Some of the football players were saying that as long as people follow the rules and wear the right equipment then even playing football is a way to exercise and not get hurt.

People talk about the things that have bothered them thanks to Ms. Mitchell.
“It will never work,” some of our teachers said to Ms. Mitchell. “The students won’t be interested.” Ms. Mitchell wanted to start a conflict resolution program at our school, but some people thought it was a waste of time. Ms. Mitchell proved them wrong, and, in the process, she changed the lives of many kids at my school.

Ms. Mitchell volunteers at my school, doing whatever is needed. Sometimes she helps in the library or the cafeteria. Sometimes she spends time with kids who need extra help with schoolwork, or who just need to talk to somebody. Ms. Mitchell is a familiar face around our school, and everyone likes her.

My school is similar to many other schools in this country. We have kids from all kinds of backgrounds, and sometimes students have disagreements that end up in fights. A few months ago, Ms. Mitchell had to break up a fight among several students. After that, she talked to our principal about the way some students were handling conflict. She thought we should learn how to resolve conflict peacefully, and she wanted students to act as peer counselors. Many people thought that a program like this wouldn’t work at our school, but they were wrong.

Ms. Mitchell began by talking to students one at a time and in small groups. She would talk to us in the cafeteria, at basketball games, or whenever she saw a chance to start a conversation. She asked us how we felt about problems at our school, and she showed us that she really cared about what we thought. Most of us didn’t like all the fights and disagreements, and we wanted to do something to help.

Before long, lots of people were talking about conflict resolution. Everyone was saying that it would be great for the students to help each other resolve problems. We would be taking responsibility for our own actions.

One day at lunch, Ms. Mitchell met with a group of kids who wanted to be peer counselors. There were fifteen of us at the meeting! We talked about what it would mean to take on the responsibility of being peer counselors. I still remember what Ms. Mitchell said to us at that meeting: “Helping people solve their problems isn’t always
easy, but I know you all have what it takes to make a difference at this school.” No one had ever really told us that we could do something like this! Ms. Mitchell made us feel great.

In order to become peer counselors, we would have to spend time learning about conflict resolution. Ms. Mitchell brought in Mrs. Moore, an expert in peer counseling and conflict resolution. She is a small woman with a soft, gentle voice. She told us a story about how she stopped a fight between two older kids, and how they ended up becoming friends later. During our training sessions, we learned how to listen without taking sides, how to paraphrase what we heard, and how to help people find a peaceful solution to their problems. Ms. Mitchell and Mrs. Moore showed us that we have the power to solve our own problems.

Since the conflict resolution program began at our school, there have been fewer referrals to the principal’s office and fewer fights. Students are more willing to try to talk through their problems before they fight. Conflict resolution has been a big success at my school, and it’s all because Ms. Mitchell believed in us. The people who doubted Ms. Mitchell in the beginning now see what we can do. She has been an inspiration and a role model for all of us.

Many people do kind things for others. Some people give money to charity and some donate blood, but when I think of an act of kindness, I think of Ms. Mitchell. Her actions and her attitude toward young people have changed the lives of many kids at my school.
Scoring Explanation: Narrative Essay

Refer to pages 55–56 for the Focused Holistic Score Scale and the Conventions Rating. These scoring guides help explain how these essays were evaluated.

Essay 1

Focused Holistic Score: 1
The response is appropriate to the prompt. The writer includes effective descriptions and dialogue. The narrative also follows a well-organized structure; however, some details are digressive and unnecessary for the narrative.

Conventions Rating: –
This essay contains errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure.

Essay 2

Focused Holistic Score: 2
The response is appropriate to the prompt. The writer includes effective descriptions and dialogue. The narrative also follows a well-organized structure; however, some details are digressive and unnecessary for the narrative.

Conventions Rating: +
This essay contains minor errors in punctuation and usage.

Essay 3

Focused Holistic Score: 4
The response is appropriate to the prompt. The narrative has a strong and effective opening and makes good use of details, dialogue, and description. The narrative is organized, with a logical progression, and the writer effectively uses transitions to move the narrative along.

Conventions Rating: +
This essay contains no significant errors.