

Grade 8 Baseline Annotation – Expository Writing - #811HB

Prompt: Life can be full of surprises that have an effect on our lives. Identify a time when you experienced this type of surprise. Write a multiple-paragraph essay to a teacher explaining how the surprise affected your life in either a positive or negative way.

Content - 3

Level 3: Proficient

- A. Focus is maintained and consistent throughout the paper centered on a manageable thesis/position.
- B. Reason(s) are relevant and support the thesis/position.
- C. Elaboration is meaningful, relevant and specific; uses details/examples/ facts/anecdotes to support thesis/reasons; explains reasons.
- D. Message is present, interesting or important; goes beyond the obvious although may be anticipated.
- E. Commentary (8th-HS) connects elaboration, reason(s), and thesis/position.

Focus: **Focus is consistent and maintained** throughout the paper. The introduction starts with the surprise of getting the cats and goes on to tell of the effect the cats have had on the writer's life: "They have taught me responsibility and they are always there to make me feel happy." The thesis is somewhat formulaic, but avoids the pitfall of "My three reasons are..."

Reasons: Reasons are **relevant and support the thesis**: "being responsible for living animals has led to a drastic improvement in my personal responsibility" and "my cats constantly make me happy". The student does not use the standard three reasons, however, this paper is a good model to show that you do not have to have three reasons if two are sufficient.

Elaboration: Elaboration is **meaningful and relevant** to the topic with the use of **examples and details** (e.g., "It is my job to care for them daily, kitty litter and all", "When my dad was in the hospital [...], my cats would curl up next to me in bed, as if they knew that something was wrong.", "[...]even it is just a quick scratch behind the ear."), and how they affected the student – changing kitty litter teaches responsibility.

Message: The message is **important and present** in the story, and although it **may be anticipated**, it does go beyond the simple to touch on the importance of the surprise when she connects to caring for another person and to her future family.

Commentary: The student uses commentary **to connect the elaboration, reasons and thesis**, as well as to point out the significance of the evidence. (e.g., "Cats may not be quite the same as human children, but they still are a wonderful example of having someone dependent on you").

***Bold** text in descriptions indicates language from the rubric.

Organization - 3

Level 3: Proficient

- A. Introduction presents thesis/position. Effectively uses one or more of the introduction strategies. Engages the reader. Gives a sense of direction.
- B. Middle reasons/elaboration are arranged in a unified, cohesive and/or logical pattern to develop the thesis/position; has a sense of completeness.
- C. Transitions show, signal, or maintain connections (between/within-paragraphs).
- D. Conclusion provides a strong wrap up that effectively connects to the thesis and body of paper, more than a summary. Effectively uses at least one or more of the conclusion strategies.

Introduction: The introduction presents **the thesis by engaging the audience through** a descriptive anecdote: "The bitter cold nipped at my finger tips [...] on that winter day, we picked out 2 furry balls of joy [...] have taught me responsibility, and they are always there to make me feel happy" (Intro strategy: anecdote).

Middle: The supporting ideas/reasons are arranged **cohesively, and show the thesis with a sense of completion**: the supporting ideas follow the foundation set by the thesis.

Transitions: The transitions **maintain connections between paragraphs** and the paper as a whole. (e.g., between 2nd and 3rd paragraph, the student transitions with the concept of responsibility: "Not only does caring for a living creature teach responsibility, but my cats constantly make me happy). Although the transitions are borderline "telling", the student does attempt to **signal connections** between **and within paragraphs**.

Conclusion: The conclusion provides a **wrap up** of the main points and the connection to the thesis (e.g., "the surprise of our Christmas cats definitely affected my life in a positive way"). In an attempt to use a **conclusion strategy**, the student tries to make a connection to the broader in the last sentence: "all the difference in my life", but it stays surface level.

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Style - 3

Level 3: Proficient

- A. Sentences create an appropriate cadence for a designated audience/purpose/form through a variety of beginnings, structures and lengths.
- B. Word Choice is specific, precise and persuasive/compelling; strengthens writing, and shows use of active verbs.
- C. Voice uses tone that is appropriate for designated audience. Writing conveys the person behind the words

Sentences: The sentences have an **appropriate cadence** with a variety of **structures, lengths and beginnings** (e.g., “Not only does caring for a living creature teach responsibility, but my cats constantly make me happy” and “It is my job to care for them daily, kitty litter and all”).

Word Choice: The word choice is **specific and purposeful** and it **strengthens the writing** (e.g., balls of joy, confines of the basement, bitter cold). The student also frequently makes use of **various active verbs** (e.g., shuffled, nipped, trudging).

Voice: The student uses a tone that is **appropriate for the designated audience**. From the start, the student invites the reader in, and **conveys the individual behind the words**, with the engaging and descriptive stories and details.

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Conventions - 3

Level 3: Proficient

lower grade level expectations must have been met. Accurately applies grade-level usage, spelling, punctuation and paragraph expectations; errors do not interfere with meaning and/or readability; has competent use of conventions.

The student **accurately applies grade-level punctuation, spelling, usage** (e.g., “Everett Animal Shelter – definitely not where we expected to go” an ellipse in the introduction, correctly uses semi-colons, and correct word usage: affect). Student makes a few stylistic choices as well: underlining for emphasis. The student clearly shows **competent use of conventions, and the errors made do not interfere with the readability**.

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