

Grade 8 Baseline Annotation – Expository Writing - #811FT

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 - 4

Level 4: Advanced

- A. Focus is narrow and concentrated throughout the paper and centered on a substantive thesis/position.
- B. Reason(s) are significant; fully support the thesis/position.
- C. Elaboration is significant, purposeful, specific and precise, uses combination of details/examples/facts/anecdotes to fully support thesis/reasons; clarifies.
- D. Message is insightful, distinct and/or anticipates questions.
- E. Commentary (8th-HS) tightly connects elaboration, reason(s), and thesis/position to help the reader understand

Focus: The student maintains a **narrow** and **concentrated** focus throughout the paper, **centered on a substantive thesis/position:** “My biggest surprise in life is how truly ignorant and careless the American population is.”

Reasons: The reasons are all **significant and strongly support the thesis** (Americans are careless, they get into car accidents from texting while driving and not expecting it to happen to them; ignorant, because they are surprised by the birth of a baby that is growing inside a woman for 9 months; show a lack of common intelligence: fellow students who don’t know basic grammar and multiplication facts).

Elaboration: The elaboration provided is **precise and is purposefully used to support each reason** given within the middle paragraphs. The student uses specific details and examples to support the claims made (e.g., “I study challenge math with peers who don’t know the times tables up to 10”; “Too many citizens are shocked by events following flirting with danger or dancing with the devil. Thousands of car crashes and accidents in general caused by phones and other distractions”). The student uses elaboration to also make the distinction between low income, English language learners and those who grow up in more affluent communities

Message: The message is **distinct** and leaves an impression with the reader. The student does not settle for the common or anticipated message, but rather goes so far as to surprise the reader with what “surprise” he is experiencing.

Commentary: The student uses significant commentary throughout the paper, showing his/her higher level grasp and understanding of the development of ideas, and how **the elaboration, reasons and thesis tightly connect** (e.g., “The lack of effort, talking and distractions, and lack of common sense cause these”; “The speed of the classes I’ve taken this year has been a slow crawl, thus taking away my motivation”).

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

Organization - 4

Level 4: Advanced

- A. Introduction uniquely presents thesis/position. Uses one or more of the introduction strategies. Creatively engages the reader. Gives a strong sense of direction.
- B. Middle reasons/elaboration are tightly and purposefully arranged in a unified, cohesive and/or logical pattern to develop the thesis/position; has a sense of completeness.
- C. Transitions intentionally signal/imply connections throughout the text; clearly provide a sense of cohesion (between/within-paragraphs).
- D. Conclusion signals a thought-provoking and insightful wrap up that tightly connects to the thesis and body of the paper. Uniquely uses one or more conclusion strategies.

Introduction: The student **uniquely presents** his/her thesis by incorporating the **introduction strategy of taking a stand:** I’d rewrite that sentence to say “can life be full of surprises?” which introduces the view the student has of the “surprises” that mankind claims to experience. This stand leads directly to the thesis, “My biggest surprise in life is how truly ignorant and careless the American population is”. The introduction strongly **engages the reader and gives a very strong sense of direction.**

Middle: The body paragraphs are **purposefully arranged in a pattern** that clearly highlights the different aspects of Americans that show their ignorance (e.g., “To be surprised is to be lacking of preparation for your life’s situation”; “the careless ignorance Americans possess”; “I am surprised by astounding lacks of common intelligence”).

Transitions: The student provides **cohesion within paragraphs**, seamlessly moving from statement to evidence to explanation. Between paragraph transitions are occasionally lower level **telling** transitions (e.g. “Moving on to the last thing that surprises me” and “Then we move on the careless ignorance”). These transitions, though telling, are not the basic “first, next, finally” transitions.

Conclusion: The student uniquely uses the conclusion to respond to the second part of the prompt: “how has the surprise affected you?” Through the response the student signals a thought **provoking and insightful wrap up that connects the paper** as a whole. By using the **conclusion strategies of a generalization from given information as well as a self-reflection**, the student moves from the frustration with American ignorance to the effect of said ignorance (e.g. “This surprise is constantly holding me and other students back from reaching their true potential”).

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Style - 4

Level 4: Advanced

- A. Sentences create a suitable cadence to address a designated audience/purpose/form through an intentional use of beginnings, structures and lengths.
- B. Word Choice is vivid, apt, memorable; is natural and never overdone; uses various active verbs.
- C. Voice uses tone that engages designated audience; may take risks.

Sentences: The student easily **creates a cadence that addresses a designated audience through not only the intentional use of beginnings structures and lengths**, but also through alliteration and risks in sentence structure and content (e.g. “giddily glides across paper”; “gruesome grudge”; “dazzling displays of daft dim wit”).

Word Choice: The student employs a high level vocabulary, much higher than one would expect of an 8th grader. The words are **vivid, apt, memorable**, and although higher than one would expect, it **never feels overdone** (e.g., “careless ignorance”, “oblivious”, “astounding lack”). The student also makes use of various active verbs (e.g., “I can dictate my words properly. I remain speechless to those in their last year of middle school who still can’t write”), as well as making use of passive verbs followed by vivid verbs (e.g., “The driver is surprised they hit someone. Reality says that texting someone led to the accident. Too many citizens are shocked by events following flirting with danger or dancing with the devil”).

Voice: The students **tone is engaging and takes a risk** through the sarcasm and bitterness apparent within the entire essay (e.g. “Unfortunately, I know people who have grown up in this area who have had good strong public schooling for 8 years and still don’t understand your and you’re. I study challenge math with peers who don’t know the times tables up to 10”).

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Conventions - 4

- Level 4: Advanced intentionally applies usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and paragraphs to enhance meaning; may break rules for style purposes; demonstrates good command of conventions.

The student intentionally **applies usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and paragraphs** to enhance the meaning, as well as make a point (e.g. “Now I don’t claim this to be a scholarly scripture of scholastic value, but I can say at least most of it is grammatically correct, and it is understandable. I may have my share of spelling mistakes but I do know my basic English comprehension”). The student uses his/her strong command of conventions to strengthen the point and purpose of the essay. The occasional error is never distracting and can easily be explained as a “typo” due to time constraint (e.g. “posess”; “english as a second language”; “your lifes situation”). Other errors can be considered as the **student breaking rules for style purposes**: sentence fragments for emphasis and pause (e.g. “Thousands of car crashes and accidents in general caused by phones and other distractions”).

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