Sample Paper #1: My Most Unforgettable Teacher

Trait: Organization

Key Quality: Structuring the Body

Paper #1

Mrs H., that's one teacher I'll never forget. Just the thought of her makes me feel warm and happy inside. She's the kind of person that you always want to be around. Happy, nice, rarely ever got mad. She was great!

One thing that was especially hard to forget about her was her patience. She was so patient that even if the class had gone mad, I mean people running on desks, spraying silly string everywhere, ripping papers to shreds, she would be sitting there – calmly, totally relaxed. She had a way of doing things without getting mad, and that's one thing I really admired about her.

Second of all, she understood kids and it really showed. She always knew what we liked to do and what we didn't like to do. I can recall that every art project we did I enjoyed. Every writing assignment was on the best topic. Plus, she celebrated every holiday by some decoration. Like on Christmas, she brought in a fake tree to put up and decorate. Or in March, we made lions to go with the saying, goes in like a lamb, out like a lion. Or the other way around. She really knew us well.

Plus, she enjoyed every gift we gave to her. I mean, she never put us down saying stuff like, "Oh, that is the dumbest thing I ever saw." Or, "I hate it. Get it away before it affects my beauty." No, she always said nice things, never put downs, she always admired it even if it was some scrap off the playground.

She was bright, happy, fun to be around, caring, special, and the greatest, most unforgettable teacher I ever had!

Sample Paper #2: My Most Unforgettable Teacher

Trait: Organization

Key Quality: Structuring the Body

My best teacher was in my old school. He was awesome. He used to play college football. One time we took a "Mini field" trip and we got to sit outside and have class outside instead of at our desks. He could build things too. He'd read us funny books. Sometimes he would tell us jokes and we would crack up laughing. My favorite part of the field trip was riding on the bus. He read a lot of books and liked comic books with superheroes and monsters, just like me. His bookshelves were full. He knew a lot about sports. When we built the Mayan pyramid in class—that was my favorite thing, ever.

The next year we would go visit him in his classroom after school. We would tell him we wished he was still our teacher and that he should move up a grade. I miss my old school.

Projection

Key Qualities of the Organization Trait

- Creating the Lead
- Using Sequence and Transition Words
- Structuring the Body
- Ending With a Sense of Resolution

Projection

Think About:

- Have I shown the reader where to slow down and where to speed up?
- Do all the details fit where they are placed?
- Will the reader find it easy to follow my ideas?
- Does the organization help the main idea stand out?

Scoring Guide: Ideas

The piece's content—its central message and details that support that message.

HIGH

6

EXCEPTIONAL

A. **Finding a Topic:** The writer offers a clear, central theme or a simple, original story line that is memorable.

B. **Focusing the Topic:** The writer narrows the theme or story line to create a piece that is clear, tight, and manageable.

C. **Developing the Topic:** The writer provides enough critical evidence to support the theme and shows insight on the topic. Or he or she tells the story in a fresh way through an original, unpredictable plot.

D. **Using Details:** The writer offers credible, accurate details that create pictures in the reader's mind, from the beginning of the piece to the end. Those details provide the reader with evidence of the writer's knowledge about and/or experience with the topic.

5

STRONG

MIDDLE

4

REFINING

A. **Finding a Topic:** The writer offers a recognizable but broad theme or story line. He or she stays on topic, but in a predictable way.

B. **Focusing the Topic:** The writer needs to crystallize his or her topic around the central theme or story line. He or she does not focus on a specific aspect of the topic.

C. **Developing the Topic:** The writer draws on personal knowledge and experience, but does not offer a unique perspective. He or she does not probe deeply, but instead gives the reader only a glimpse at aspects of the topic.

D. **Using Details:** The writer offers details, but they do not always hit the mark because they are inaccurate or irrelevant. He or she does not create a picture in the reader's mind because key questions about the central theme or story line have not been addressed.

3

DEVELOPING

LOW

2

EMERGING

A. **Finding a Topic:** The writer has not settled on a topic and, therefore, may offer only a series of unfocused, repetitious, and/or random thoughts.

B. **Focusing the Topic:** The writer has not narrowed his or her topic in a meaningful way. It's hard to tell what the writer thinks is important since he or she devotes equal importance to each piece of information.

C. **Developing the Topic:** The writer has created a piece that is so short the reader cannot fully understand or appreciate what he or she wants to say. He or she may have simply restated an assigned topic or responded to a prompt without devoting much thought or effort to it.

D. **Using Details:** The writer has clearly devoted little attention to details. The writing contains limited or completely inaccurate information. After reading the piece, the reader is left with many unanswered questions.

1

RUDIMENTARY

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Scoring Guide: Organization

The internal structure of the piece—the thread of logic, the pattern of meaning.

HIGH

6 EXCEPTIONAL

A. **Creating the Lead:** The writer grabs the reader's attention from the start and leads him or her into the piece naturally. He or she entices the reader, providing a tantalizing glimpse of what is to come.

B. **Using Sequence Words and Transition Words:** The writer includes a variety of carefully selected sequence words (such as *later*, *then*, and *meanwhile*) and transition words (such as *however*, *also*, and *clearly*), which are placed wisely to guide the reader through the piece by showing how ideas progress, relate, and/or diverge.

C. **Structuring the Body:** The writer creates a piece that is easy to follow by fitting details together logically. He or she slows down to spotlight important points or events, and speeds up when he or she needs to move the reader along.

D. **Ending With a Sense of Resolution:** The writer sums up his or her thinking in a natural, thoughtful, and convincing way. He or she anticipates and answers any lingering questions the reader may have, providing a strong sense of closure.

5 STRONG

MIDDLE

4 REFINING

A. **Creating the Lead:** The writer presents an introduction, although it may not be original or thought-provoking. Instead, it may be a simple restatement of the topic and, therefore, does not create a sense of anticipation about what is to come.

B. **Using Sequence Words and Transition Words:** The writer uses sequence words to show the logical order of details, but they feel obvious or canned. The use of transition words is spotty and rarely creates coherence.

C. **Structuring the Body:** The writer sequences events and important points logically, for the most part. However, the reader may wish to move a few things around to create a more sensible flow. He or she may also feel the urge to speed up or slow down for more satisfying pacing.

D. **Ending With a Sense of Resolution:** The writer ends the piece on a familiar note: "Thank you for reading…," "Now you know all about…," or "They lived happily ever after." He or she needs to tie up loose ends to leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction or closure.

3 DEVELOPING

LOW

2 EMERGING

A. **Creating the Lead:** The writer does not give the reader any clue about what is to come. The opening point feels as if it were chosen randomly.

B. **Using Sequence Words and Transition Words:** The writer does not provide sequence and/or transition words between sections or provides words that are so confusing the reader is unable to sort one section from another.

C. **Structuring the Body:** The writer does not show clearly what comes first, next, and last, making it difficult to understand how sections fit together. The writer slows down when he or she should speed up, and speeds up when he or she should slow down.

D. **Ending With a Sense of Resolution:** The writer ends the piece with no conclusion at all—or nothing more than "The End" or something equally bland. There is no sense of resolution, no sense of completion.

1 RUDIMENTARY

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Scoring Guide: Voice

The tone and tenor of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer, which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

HIGH

6 EXCEPTIONAL

A. Establishing a Tone: The writer cares about the topic, and it shows. The writing is expressive and compelling. The reader feels the writer's conviction, authority, and integrity.

B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer makes clear his or her reason for creating the piece. He or she offers a point of view that is appropriate for the mode (narrative, expository, or persuasive), which compels the reader to read on.

C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer speaks in a way that makes the reader want to listen. He or she has considered what the reader needs to know and the best way to convey it by sharing his or her fascination, feelings, and opinions about the topic.

D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer expresses ideas in new ways, which makes the piece interesting and original. The writing sounds like the writer because of his or her use of distinctive, just-right words and phrases.

5 STRONG

MIDDLE

4 REFINING

A. Establishing a Tone: The writer has established a tone that can be described as "pleasing" or "sincere," but not "passionate" or "compelling." He or she attempts to create a tone that hits the mark, but the overall result feels generic.

B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer has chosen a voice for the piece that is not completely clear. There are only a few moments when the reader understands where the writer is coming from and why he or she wrote the piece.

C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer keeps the reader at a distance. The connection between reader and writer is tenuous because the writer reveals little about what is important or meaningful about the topic.

D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer creates a few moments that catch the reader's attention, but only a few. The piece sounds like anyone could have written it. It lacks the energy, commitment, and conviction that would distinguish it from other pieces on the same topic.

3 DEVELOPING

LOW

2 EMERGING

A. Establishing a Tone: The writer has produced a lifeless piece—one that is monotonous, mechanical, repetitious, and/or off-putting to the reader.

B. Conveying the Purpose: The writer chose the topic for mysterious reasons. The piece may be filled with random thoughts, technical jargon, or inappropriate vocabulary, making it impossible to discern how the writer feels about the topic.

C. Creating a Connection to the Audience: The writer provides no evidence that he or she has considered what the reader might need to know to connect with the topic. Or there is an obvious mismatch between the piece's tone and the intended audience.

D. Taking Risks to Create Voice: The writer creates no highs and lows. The piece is flat and lifeless, causing the reader to wonder why he or she wrote it in the first place. The writer's voice does not pop out, even for a moment.

1 RUDIMENTARY

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Scoring Guide: Word Choice

The specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning and enlighten the reader.

HIGH

6 EXCEPTIONAL

A. **Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer uses many "action words," giving the piece punch and pizzazz. He or she has stretched to find lively verbs that add energy to the piece.

B. **Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer uses many finely honed words and phrases. His or her creative and effective use of literary techniques such as alliteration, simile, and metaphor makes the piece a pleasure to read.

C. **Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer uses words with precision. He or she selects words the reader needs to fully understand the message. The writer chooses nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and so forth that create clarity and bring the topic to life.

D. **Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer uses words to capture the reader's imagination and enhance the piece's meaning. There is a deliberate attempt to choose the best word over the first word that comes to mind.

5 STRONG

MIDDLE

4 REFINING

A. **Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer uses the passive voice quite a bit and includes few "action words" to give the piece energy.

B. **Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer provides little evidence that he or she has stretched for the best words or phrases. He or she may have attempted to use literary techniques, but they are clichés for the most part.

C. **Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer presents specific and accurate words, except for those related to sophisticated and/or content-related topics. Technical or irrelevant jargon is off-putting to the reader. The words rarely capture the reader's imagination.

D. **Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer fills the piece with unoriginal language rather than language that results from careful revision. The words communicate the basic idea, but they are ordinary and uninspired.

3 DEVELOPING

LOW

2 EMERGING

A. **Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer makes no attempt at selecting verbs with energy. The passive voice dominates the piece.

B. **Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer uses words that are repetitive, vague, and/or unimaginative. Limited meaning comes through because the words are so lifeless.

C. **Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer misuses words, making it difficult to understand what what he or she is attempting to convey. Or he or she uses words that are so technical, inappropriate, or irrelevant that the average reader can hardly understand what he or she is saying.

D. **Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer uses many words and phrases that simply do not work. Little meaning comes through because the language is so imprecise and distracting.

1 RUDIMENTARY

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Scoring Guide: Sentence Fluency

The way words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it's "read" with the ear as much as the eye.

HIGH

6 EXCEPTIONAL

A. **Crafting Well-Built Sentences:** The writer carefully and creatively constructs sentences for maximum impact. Transition words such as *but*, *and*, and *so* are used successfully to join sentences and sentence parts.

B. **Varying Sentence Types:** The writer uses various types of sentences (simple, compound, and/or complex) to enhance the central theme or story line. The piece is made up of an effective mix of long, complex sentences and short, simple ones.

C. **Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow:** The writer thinks about how the sentences sound. He or she uses phrasing that is almost musical. If the piece were read aloud, it would be easy on the ear.

D. **Breaking the "Rules" to Create Fluency:** The writer diverges from standard English to create interest and impact. For example, he or she may use a sentence fragment, such as "All alone in the forest," or a single word, such as "Bam!" to accent a particular moment or action. He or she might begin with informal words such as *well*, *and*, or *but* to create a conversational tone, or he or she might break rules intentionally to make dialogue sound authentic.

5 STRONG

MIDDLE

4 REFINING

A. **Crafting Well-Built Sentences:** The writer offers simple sentences that are sound but no long, complex ones. He or she attempts to vary the beginnings and lengths of sentences.

B. **Varying Sentence Types:** The writer exhibits basic sentence sense and offers some sentence variety. He or she attempts to use different types of sentences, but in doing so creates an uneven flow rather than a smooth, seamless one.

C. **Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow:** The writer has produced a text that is uneven. Many sentences read smoothly, whereas others are choppy or awkward.

D. **Breaking the "Rules" to Create Fluency:** The writer includes fragments, but they seem more accidental than intentional. He or she uses informal words such as *well*, *and*, and *but* inappropriately to start sentences, and pays little attention to making dialogue sound authentic.

3 DEVELOPING

LOW

2 EMERGING

A. **Crafting Well-Built Sentences:** The writer's sentences, even simple ones, are often flawed. Sentence beginnings are repetitive and uninspired.

B. **Varying Sentence Types:** The writer uses a single, repetitive sentence pattern throughout or connects sentence parts with an endless string of transition words such as *and*, *but*, *or*, and *because*, which distracts the reader.

C. **Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow:** The writer has created a text that is a challenge to read aloud since the sentences are incomplete, choppy, stilted, rambling, and/or awkward.

D. **Breaking the "Rules" to Create Fluency:** The writer offers few or no simple, well-built sentences, making it impossible to determine whether he or she has done anything out of the ordinary. Global revision is necessary before sentences can be revised for stylistic and creative purposes.

1 RUDIMENTARY

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Scoring Guide: Conventions

The mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar and usage) guides the reader through the text easily.

HIGH

6 EXCEPTIONAL

A. **Checking Spelling:** The writer spells sight words, high-frequency words, and less familiar words correctly. When he or she spells less familiar words incorrectly, those words are phonetically correct. Overall, the piece reveals control in spelling.

B. **Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately:** The writer handles basic punctuation skillfully. He or she understands how to use periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points to enhance clarity and meaning. Paragraphs are indented in the right places. The piece is ready for a general audience.

C. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer uses capital letters consistently and accurately. A deep understanding of how to capitalize dialogue, abbreviations, proper names, and titles is evident.

D. **Applying Grammar and Usage:** The writer forms grammatically correct phrases and sentences. He or she shows care in applying the rules of standard English. The writer may break from those rules for stylistic reasons, but otherwise abides by them.

5 STRONG

MIDDLE

4 REFINING

A. **Checking Spelling:** The writer incorrectly spells a few high-frequency words and many unfamiliar words and/or sophisticated words.

B. **Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately:** The writer handles basic punctuation marks (such as end marks on sentences and commas in a series) well. However, he or she might have trouble with more complex punctuation marks (such as quotation marks, parentheses, and dashes) and with paragraphing, especially on longer pieces.

C. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer capitalizes the first word in sentences and most common proper nouns. However, his or her use of more complex capitalization is spotty when it comes to dialogue, abbreviations, and proper names ("*aunt Maria*" instead of "*Aunt Maria*" or "*my aunt*," for instance).

D. **Applying Grammar and Usage:** The writer has made grammar and usage mistakes throughout the piece, but they do not interfere with the reader's ability to understand the message. Issues related to agreement, tense, and word usage appear here and there, but can be easily corrected.

3 DEVELOPING

LOW

2 EMERGING

A. **Checking Spelling:** The writer has misspelled many words, even simple ones, which causes the reader to focus on conventions rather than on the central theme or story line.

B. **Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately:** The writer has neglected to use punctuation, used punctuation incorrectly, and/or forgotten to indent paragraphs, making it difficult for the reader to find meaning.

C. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer uses capitals inconsistently, even in common places such as the first word in the sentence. He or she uses capitals correctly in some places but has no consistent control over them.

D. **Applying Grammar and Usage:** The writer makes frequent mistakes in grammar and usage, making it difficult to read and understand the piece. Issues related to agreement, tense, and word usage abound.

1 RUDIMENTARY

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Scoring Guide: Presentation

The physical appearance of the piece. A visually appealing text provides a welcome mat. It invites the reader in.

HIGH

6 EXCEPTIONAL

A. **Applying Handwriting Skills:** The writer uses handwriting that is clear and legible. Whether he or she prints or uses cursive, letters are uniform and slant evenly throughout the piece. Spacing between words is consistent.

B. **Using Word Processing Effectively:** The writer uses a font style and size that are easy to read and are a good match for the piece's purpose. If he or she uses color, it enhances the piece's readability.

C. **Making Good Use of White Space:** The writer frames the text with appropriately sized margins. Artful spacing between letters, words, and lines makes reading a breeze. There are no cross-outs, smudges, or tears on the paper.

D. **Refining Text Features:** The writer effectively places text features such as headings, page numbers, titles, and bullets on the page and aligns them clearly with the text they support.

5 STRONG

MIDDLE

4 REFINING

A. **Applying Handwriting Skills:** The writer has readable handwriting, but his or her inconsistent letter slanting, spacing, and formation distract from the central theme or story line.

B. **Using Word Processing Effectively:** The writer uses an easy-to-read font but formats it in a way that makes the piece cluttered and distracting. His or her choice of font style and/or size may not match the writing's purpose. He or she may use color with varying degrees of success.

C. **Making Good Use of White Space:** The writer creates margins but they are inconsistent or ineffective as a frame for the piece. Spacing between letters, words, and lines makes reading difficult at times. An occasional cross-out or smudge blemishes the piece.

D. **Refining Text Features:** The writer includes complex text features such as charts, graphs, maps, and tables, but not clearly or consistently. However, he or she does a good job with less complex features such as the size and placement of the title, bullets, sidebars, subheadings, illustrations, and page numbers.

3 DEVELOPING

LOW

2 EMERGING

A. **Applying Handwriting Skills:** The writer forms letters and uses space in a way that makes the piece virtually illegible. The handwriting is a visual barrier.

B. **Using Word Processing Effectively:** The writer creates a dizzying display of different font styles and sizes, making the piece virtually unreadable. The misuse of color also detracts.

C. **Making Good Use of White Space:** The writer formats margins inconsistently and uses white space ineffectively, making the piece hard to read. Space between letters, words, and lines is nonexistent, or there is so much space it's distracting.

D. **Refining Text Features:** The writer does not include features or includes features that are confusing or indecipherable rather than useful to the reader. The paper is seriously marred with cross-outs, smudges, and/or tears.

1 RUDIMENTARY

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Key Qualities

Ideas

- Finding a Topic
- Focusing the Topic
- Developing the Topic
- Using Details

Organization

- Creating the Lead
- Using Sequence Words and Transition Words
- Structuring the Body
- Ending with a Sense of Resolution

Voice

- Establishing a Tone
- Conveying the Purpose
- Creating a Connection to the Audience
- Taking Risks to Create Voice

Word Choice

- Applying Strong Verbs
- Selecting Striking Words and Phrases
- Using Specific and Accurate Words
- Choosing Words that Deepen Meaning

Sentence Fluency

- Crafting Well-Built Sentences
- Varying Sentence Types
- Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow
- Breaking the "Rules" to Create Fluency

Conventions

- Checking Spelling
- Punctuating Effectively
- Capitalizing Correctly
- Applying Grammar and Usage

Presentation

- Applying Handwriting Skills
- Using Word Processing Effectively
- Making Good Use of White Space
- Refining Text Features

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