Grade HS – Personal Narrative Writing Work Sample: Meets

Task Prompt: Your class has been discussing different types of adventurous activities: kayaking, surfing, hiking, and many other hobbies. You are given three resources about geocaching, a hobby described as involving hiking and treasure hunting.

Write a story about your own adventures of geocaching. In your story, tell what happens when you find something interesting during one of your treasure hunts. When writing your story, find ways to use information and details about geocaching from the sources to improve your story.

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 4

The narrative has a clear purpose and relevant details, with a logical sequence of events. Development is sufficient but remains general in places, with moments that could be expanded for deeper insight or complexity.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear, Understandable Purpose** ○ The narrator establishes the purpose early: trying a new cache called "Skyline Box." ○ The story maintains focus on a single geocaching experience from start to finish.	➢ **Strengthen the Clear, Understandable Purpose** ○ Add one or two sentences about why the narrator geocaches or what they hoped to gain from this hunt.
✓ **Relevant but Underdeveloped Details** ○ Geocaching elements appear, such as "coordinates," "logbook," and the clue "Look up before you leave." ○ However, several details stay general and could be expanded (e.g., "old concrete pieces," "small opening under it," "a short plastic tube").	➢ **Enrich Relevant Details** ○ Expand descriptions of the hiding spots, container types, or how the narrator interprets the clues to build stronger reader engagement.
✓ **Some Development of Plot, Setting, and Characters** ○ The setting is described through quick snapshots ("dry grass," "chain-link fence," "peeling paint"), but not deeply developed. ○ Plot events follow a predictable pattern: go to location, then find cache, then follow clue, then find bonus, then reflect.	➢ **Deepen Plot, Setting, and Character Development** ○ Include specific sensory details or brief internal thoughts that reveal how the narrator feels during key discoveries.
✓ **Limited Insight** ○ The narrator reflects mildly at the end ("turns places you think you know into something slightly new"), but the reflection is brief and not fully explored.	➢ **Expand the Insight** ○ Add a short explanation of what the narrator learned about themselves, their town, or geocaching as a hobby.
✓ **Some Use of Narrative Techniques** ○ Pacing is steady but mostly linear. ○ Clues ("Look up before you leave") add mild intrigue but do not create substantial tension or complexity.	➢ **Enhance Narrative Techniques** ○ Increase suspense (e.g., uncertainty, hesitation, or a false lead) to make the progression more engaging and less predictable.

Organization: 4

The narrative follows a clear and predictable structure. Events unfold in a logical sequence with transitions that make the story easy to follow. The pacing is steady but mostly linear, and the ending provides closure without adding significant depth. Overall, the organization is coherent but lacks the complexity or sophistication seen in higher-scoring narratives.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Beginning That Establishes Context** ○ The introduction sets up the narrator's purpose: trying a new cache called "Skyline Box." ○ The setting and situation are immediately understandable ("old water tower," "hill behind the library").	➢ **Strengthen the Beginning** ○ Add a detail about the narrator's expectations or mindset to create a stronger hook.
✓ **Logical Order and Sequencing** ○ The story progresses chronologically: approaching the tower to discovering the cache to following the clue to finding the bonus. ○ No major jumps, gaps, or confusing shifts.	➢ **Improve Sequencing Depth** ○ Introduce a small complication or moment of uncertainty to make the sequence less predictable.
✓ **Adequate Transitions** ○ Phrases like "At the bottom of the hill," "When I reached the fence line," and "About twenty steps down the path" guide the reader. ○ Transitions keep the narrative coherent but remain basic and predictable.	➢ **Expand Transitional Variety** ○ Use transitions that show emotional or cognitive shifts (e.g., hesitation, curiosity, surprise).
✓ **Consistent but Predictable Pacing** ○ Movement through each stage of the hunt is even and clear, but rarely varied for tension or emphasis. ○ Scenes progress without noticeable acceleration or slowing for effect.	➢ **Adjust Pacing for Effect** ○ Slow down one key moment (such as spotting the cloth on the tower) to build tension.
✓ **Controlled but Limited Closure** ○ The ending restates the insight from the note ("Look up before you leave") and offers a simple reflection about noticing familiar places. ○ Closure is clear but not layered or strongly resonant.	➢ **Deepen the Closure** ○ Extend the final reflection by adding one sentence that connects the experience to a broader personal realization.

Voice: 4

The voice is generally consistent and appropriate for a personal narrative. The narrator shows some engagement with the experience, but the tone remains steady and somewhat plain. While moments of personality and sincerity appear, the voice does not fully develop a distinctive or expressive style across the narrative.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Consistent Point of View** ○ First-person narration is steady: "I had only been geocaching for a short time…" ○ The perspective never shifts, and the narrator's viewpoint is clear.	➢ **Strengthen Point of View** ○ Add one or two internal thoughts that show how the narrator feels about the search experience.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Some Sense of Audience** ○ The narrator explains unfamiliar details in simple terms, such as how they interpret clues ("a small opening under it—just big enough to hide something"). ○ Tone is accessible and straightforward.	➢ **Increase Audience Awareness** ○ Include a brief explanation of why the clue "Look up before you leave" matters within geocaching traditions.
✓ **Occasional Expressive or Engaging Moments** ○ Lines like "I wasn't looking for anything complicated" add personality. ○ Curiosity appears mildly when noticing the cloth on the tower.	➢ **Build Expressiveness** ○ Use one moment of stronger descriptive or reflective language to create more personality.
✓ **Limited Emotional Depth** ○ Emotional reactions are present but brief ("I wasn't about to climb the tower"). ○ Internal thinking is minimal, which limits the sense of intimacy or strong connection.	➢ **Add Emotional Depth** ○ Include a line showing excitement, uncertainty, or surprise when the narrator finds the bonus cache.

Word Choice: 4

The wording is clear and functional, offering enough detail for readers to visualize events. Some descriptive language strengthens key moments, but vocabulary remains mostly straightforward. While a few sensory details appear, the narrative lacks the vivid, precise, or original language expected at higher levels.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Functional but General Vocabulary** ○ Many words are clear but basic: "dry grass," "old concrete pieces," "small plastic tube." ○ Descriptions provide clarity but not strong imagery.	➢ **Strengthen Functional Vocabulary** ○ Replace a few basic adjectives (e.g., "old," "small," "dry") with more specific descriptors.
✓ **Occasional Sensory Detail** ○ "Warm but breezy" and "peeling paint" help readers picture the setting. ○ Sensory language is limited and could be expanded.	➢ **Add Sensory Detail** ○ Include at least one sound or movement detail during the search sequence.
✓ **Mostly Literal Language** ○ Figurative or vivid expression is minimal; the narrative relies on direct description. ○ No strong metaphors or images enhance meaning.	➢ **Introduce Figurative Language** ○ Add one simile or metaphor to enhance a key moment, such as spotting the cloth or the bonus cache.
✓ **Appropriate Use of Geocaching Terms** ○ Terms like "coordinates," "logbook," and "micro-caches" are used correctly.	➢ **Refine Technical Vocabulary** ○ Briefly explain how the narrator interprets the clue "Look up before you leave" to show understanding of geocaching conventions.

Sentence Fluency: 4

The writing is generally smooth and readable, with mostly clear sentence structure. Some variation in length and structure supports the flow, though overall fluency remains basic. Moments of awkwardness or simplicity prevent the narrative from achieving the sophistication seen in higher-scoring pieces.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Mostly Smooth Flow** ○ Sentences read easily and consistently: "At the bottom of the hill, my phone buzzed…" ○ Few disruptions to readability.	➢ **Smooth Flow Enhancements** ○ Revise one or two sentences to add rhythm (e.g., combining short related ideas).
✓ **Some Variation in Sentence Structure** ○ Mix of shorter action sentences and longer descriptive ones ("I wasn't about to climb the tower…"). ○ Variation is present but not extensive.	➢ **Increase Variety** ○ Add one compound-complex sentence to elevate fluency.
✓ **Limited Complexity** ○ Complex sentences appear but remain straightforward without layering ideas. ○ No advanced stylistic control or expressive rhythm.	➢ **Build Complexity** ○ Use a transition phrase or contrasting structure to join related thoughts.
✓ **Clear Dialogue and Phrasing** ○ Internal messages like "You are 35 meters away" are formatted correctly.	➢ **Strengthen Phrasing** ○ Experiment with breaking one long sentence into two for clarity and pacing.

Conventions: 4

The student demonstrates general control of conventions. Errors are minimal and do not impede meaning. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are mostly correct, though the writing lacks the stylistic manipulation or flawless accuracy expected at higher levels.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Mostly Correct Grammar and Usage** ○ Verb tenses remain consistent; pronouns and agreement are correct.	➢ **Strengthen Grammar and Usage** ○ Review long sentences to ensure no subtle run-ons or missing commas.
✓ **Generally Accurate Punctuation** ○ Commas, quotation marks, and internal punctuation ("You are 35 meters away") are used correctly. ○ No major errors affecting readability.	➢ **Improve Punctuation Variety** ○ Practice using colons, semicolons, or dashes in a way that enhances style.
✓ **Correct Spelling and Capitalization** ○ All geocaching terms ("coordinates," "micro-caches") are spelled correctly. ○ Capitalization of proper nouns is accurate.	➢ **Double-Check Spelling** ○ Run a final review for homophones or commonly confused words.
✓ **Limited Range of Demonstrated Skills** ○ The writing does not attempt complex punctuation structures or show sophisticated command.	➢ **Increase Demonstrated Range** ○ Attempt one moment of more complex punctuation to show readiness for higher-level writing skills.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Ideas and Content:

Purpose Expansion Workshop

- Guide students to write a short paragraph explaining their character's motivation and revise the opening to include it.

Detail-Development Mini-Lesson

- Model how to expand general nouns (e.g., "trees," "concrete pieces") into more vivid, narrative-rich descriptions.

Internal Thinking Practice

- Provide sentence stems ("I wondered if…," "I wasn't sure whether…") to help students add thoughts that deepen character.

Insight-Building Activity

- Have students add a final "lesson learned" using prompts like "This made me realize…" or "Now I understand…"

Narrative Pacing Routine

- Teach students how adding tension or small obstacles improves pacing and creates interest.

Organization:

Hook-Building Mini-Lesson

- Teach students to craft openings that hint at conflict, emotion, or curiosity.

Narrative Complication Exercise

- Have students add a small obstacle or twist to increase depth in sequencing.

Transition Variety Practice

- Provide a set of emotional and reflective transitions and model how they shift meaning.

Pacing Through Detail Workshop

- Show how expanding one moment with sensory detail can slow pacing for emphasis.

Reflection and Resolution Routine

- Guide students to write a two-sentence reflection: one literal, one interpretive.

Voice:

Internal Voice Modeling

- Demonstrate how to include internal thoughts to reveal personality and emotion.

Audience Clarity Routine

- Practice explaining key geocaching terms to an unfamiliar reader in one concise sentence.

Voice-Specific Mini-Lesson

- Use mentor texts to show how a narrator's unique word choices and reactions shape voice.

Emotion-on-the-Page Activity

- Have students revise one moment by adding a feeling, memory, or question to deepen connection.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Word Choice:

Precision Word Choice Mini-Lesson

- Have students revise sentences by replacing vague words with more exact verbs or nouns.

Sensory Language Brainstorm

- Use a five-senses chart to help students identify potential moments for stronger description.

Figurative Language Modeling

- Share examples of simple, effective metaphors/similes from grade-level mentor texts.

Technical Vocabulary Integration

- Teach students how to introduce and clarify hobby-specific terms within narrative writing.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence-Combining Routine

- Provide practice combining related ideas to improve rhythm and meaning.

Advanced Structure Mini-Lesson

- Teach compound-complex patterns using models from narrative texts.

Contrast and Shift Sentence Stems

- Use stems such as “Although…,” “Even though…,” “While…” to help students build complexity.

Read-Aloud Fluency Checks

- Have students read aloud to identify choppy, run-on, or overly long sentences.

Conventions:

Targeted Grammar Review

- Provide mini-lessons on comma placement, clause joining, and run-on avoidance.

Punctuation Extension Practice

- Show students how semicolons or colons can support narrative pacing.

Editing Stations

- Rotate students through grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling review stations.

Complexity Demonstration Tasks

- Have students revise a simple sentence into multiple versions with varied punctuation for practice.