Grade 6 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Approaching

Task: Your class is studying about the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 and the remarkable exhibits and inventions that would make history. You are given four articles about the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

*Read the sources carefully to **develop a thesis/controlling idea** to explain the impact of the 1893 World's Fair. Using more than one source, select the most relevant information to support your thesis/controlling idea.*

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

Ideas and Content: 3

The essay communicates a clear controlling idea about the impact of the 1893 World's Fair and includes several relevant examples, but explanations are basic, sometimes inaccurate, and often rely on simplified or repeated source ideas. Development shows partial understanding but lacks the depth and precision needed for a stronger score.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Controlling Idea and Purpose** ○ States a general purpose in the introduction: "The 1893 Chicago World Fair is sure to have impacted many people." ○ Each paragraph attempts to address a different aspect of impact (inventions, lighting, reasons for the fair), but the purpose is broad and not clearly defined.	➢ **Clarify and Strengthen the Controlling Idea** ○ Revise the introduction to clearly state which impacts you will explain, such as inventions, electricity, or Chicago's rebuilding. This will help give your essay a more focused purpose.
✓ **Relevant and Accurate Details** ○ Includes relevant inventions from the sources such as the "dishwasher and zipper" and references well-known inventors like "Milton Hershey" and "HJ Heinz." ○ Mentions the lighting rivalry with Edison, Tesla, and Westinghouse: "Edison…lost the chnce to two other inventors…Nichola Tesla and George Westinghouse." ○ Some details are inaccurate or simplified, such as calling the Ferris wheel "a brand new invention" without noting it was built specifically for the fair, or stating lighting "was the cause of many to come too," which does not appear in the source.	➢ **Add Accurate, Specific Details from the Sources** ○ Correct misunderstandings such as the Ferris wheel description and clarify why electricity was important beyond "impacting visitors." ○ Include one or two more precise source details—such as statistics or descriptions from the primary letter—to strengthen accuracy.
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ Provides minimal explanation after listing inventions, such as saying they "have never been seen before" but not elaborating on their importance or impact on daily life. ○ States impacts in broad terms ("lighting likely impacted many visitors") without explaining how or why electricity was significant at that time. ○ Explanation of the fair's purpose ("Some think the reason of the fair is The Great Chicago Fire") repeats source content without adding commentary about why this mattered.	➢ **Explain the Significance of Each Detail** ○ After listing inventions or describing lighting, add sentences explaining how these developments changed daily life or shaped the future. ○ Expand your discussion of the Chicago Fire by describing how rebuilding influenced the fair's planning and symbolism.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ Stays mostly on topic by discussing inventions, lighting, and historical reasons for the fair. ○ Several sentences are repetitive or loosely connected, such as restating "interesting inventors" or repeating that the fair had "an impact on a great number of people." ○ The conclusion introduces an instructional suggestion to the reader ("You can learn more…by researching"), which shifts away from the informational focus.	➢ **Maintain Topic Focus and Remove Repetition** ○ Eliminate repeated or general phrases and replace them with specific explanations tied to your controlling idea. ○ Revise the conclusion so it restates the essay's key points instead of instructing the reader to research.

Organization: 3

The essay follows a basic, logical sequence with clear paragraph breaks and simple transitions, but the introduction is underdeveloped, transitions are repetitive, some ideas feel loosely connected, and the conclusion shifts away from an informational purpose.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear but Basic Introduction** ○ Opens with: "The 1893 Chicago World Fair is sure to have impacted many people," which introduces the topic but does not preview the essay's structure or specific impacts. ○ The purpose is implied rather than clearly established.	➢ **Strengthen the Introduction** ○ Add a sentence that previews the key impacts you will explain (inventions, lighting, and historical context) to create a stronger roadmap for readers.
✓ **Logical but Simple Sequencing** ○ Paragraphs are arranged in a logical order (inventions, lighting, historical reasons), but internal sequencing is sometimes unclear. ○ For example, the inventions paragraph shifts from inventions to inventors without a clear transition ("And there were also some very interesting inventors…").	➢ **Clarify Sentence and Idea Sequencing** ○ Group related details together in each paragraph and add transition phrases that show relationships (such as causes or results).
✓ **Transitions and Flow** ○ Uses basic transitions such as "First," "Next," and "Finally," but these transitions do not clarify relationships between ideas. ○ Several sentences begin abruptly or repeat similar patterns, making the flow uneven.	➢ **Improve Transition Variety** ○ Replace simple sequencing words with more descriptive transitions like "Another significant development was…" or "In addition to inventions…"
✓ **Conclusion Provides Closure but Shifts Purpose** ○ Attempts to summarize: "So what was so impacting about Chicago World Fair of 1893?" ○ However, the final sentence instructs the reader to "learn more…by researching," which shifts from expository summarizing to giving advice.	➢ **Refine the Conclusion** ○ Summarize the three key impacts more precisely instead of shifting to instructing the reader.

Voice: 3

The writing shows some engagement with the topic but shifts into conversational tone and uses informal language. Awareness of audience is inconsistent, and the informational purpose is weakened in places.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Awareness of Audience Is Inconsistent** ○ Uses casual phrases such as "Well. lets take a look inside the fair and see," which signals a conversational, not informational, voice. ○ Occasional use of second person ("lets take a look") shifts tone.	➢ **Remove Second-Person Address** ○ Avoid phrases like "lets take a look" and "You decide," which make the piece sound more like a presentation than an explanation.
✓ **Formal Style Not Maintained** ○ Informal expressions appear throughout: "a brand new invention," "interesting inventors," "could have greatly impacted people," "definetly had an impact." ○ These weaken the formal tone expected in expository writing.	➢ **Maintain a Formal Tone** ○ Replace conversational expressions with precise academic language to strengthen informational purpose.
✓ **Engagement and Commitment** ○ Shows some enthusiasm for the topic, particularly when describing inventions and lighting. ○ However, enthusiasm is expressed through general statements rather than precise commentary.	➢ **Express Engagement Through Clear Ideas, Not Casual Language** ○ Show interest by providing specific explanations of significance rather than using emotional or general adjectives.
✓ **Tone Shifts in Conclusion** ○ The shift to advising the reader ("You decide…You can learn more…") moves away from an objective, informational voice.	➢ **Align Conclusion to Informational Purpose** ○ Remove directive language and summarize the key insights instead.

Word Choice: 3

The writing uses generally understandable language but relies heavily on general words, repeated expressions, and some inaccurate spelling that affects clarity. Domain-specific vocabulary is limited.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **General and Repetitive Language** ○ Frequent vague terms such as "brand new," "interesting inventors," "impactful piece," and "very exciting." ○ Repetition of "impact/impacting" without specifying the type of impact.	➢ **Replace Vague Language with Specific Terms** ○ Use precise vocabulary from the sources (such as "AC power," "exhibit hall," "manufactured goods") instead of general labels. ➢ **Reduce Repetition** ○ Replace repeated words like "impact" with more specific descriptions of how the fair influenced people.
✓ **Limited Domain-Specific Vocabulary** ○ Refers to "lighting" or "inventions" broadly instead of using precise terms like AC power, Electricity Building, or exhibition.	➢ **Add More Technical Vocabulary When Discussing Inventions** ○ Strengthen explanations by naming technologies more precisely.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Inaccurate or Misspelled Words Affect Meaning** ○ Misspellings include “chnce,” “Nichola,” “Twmr,” “ecectricity,” “definetly,” “yaers.” ○ These distract from clarity and weaken credibility.	➢ **Improve Accuracy in Word Choice** ○ Correct spelling of domain-specific terms like “Tesla,” “electricity,” and “Tower of Light.”
✓ **Some Effective Word Choices** ○ Includes a few precise nouns like “carriages,” “condiments,” or “cradles” when describing exhibits.	➢

Sentence Fluency: 3

The writing includes readable sentences but contains choppy openings, repeated patterns, and run-on or awkwardly joined ideas. These issues disrupt smoothness.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable in Parts but Uneven Flow** ○ Some sentences read smoothly, but others are choppy or disconnected: “Well. lets take a look inside the fair and see.”	➢ **Read Aloud for Smoothness** ○ Practice reading the draft aloud to identify locations where pacing feels uneven.
✓ Repetitive Sentence Beginnings ○ Multiple sentences begin with similar structures (“First,” “Next,” “Finally,” “And there were…”).	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings** ○ Adjust repeated openings and use connecting words that better match the ideas.
✓ **Run-On or Overextended Sentences** ○ Includes extended sentences lacking clarity, such as: “During the time of the fair, electric lighting was fairly new, so the idea of the fair being lit by electricity was very exciting.”	➢ **Split Run-On Sentences** ○ Break long, multi-idea sentences into two clearer statements.
✓ **Inconsistent Rhythm** ○ Short, abrupt sentences (“things like the dishwasher and zipper”) reduce fluency.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences** ○ Merge short, choppy sentences to improve rhythm and flow.

Conventions: 2

Frequent spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors interrupt clarity. Several misspellings and grammatical issues require significant editing to meet grade-level expectations.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Frequent Spelling Errors** ○ Misspellings include: “lets,” “chnce,” “yaers,” “definetly,” “impacting sa,” “thr,” “ecectricity.” ○ Errors interfere with readability and accuracy.	➢ **Correct High-Frequency Spelling Errors** ○ Use a spelling check or read aloud to catch misspelled words, especially domain-specific vocabulary.
✓ **Punctuation and Sentence Boundary Errors** ○ Uses a period incorrectly in “Well. lets take a look…” ○ Several comma and period omissions affect clarity.	➢ **Fix Sentence Boundary Issues** ○ Add missing periods and capitalize the beginning of all sentences.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Capitalization Errors** ○ "world fair," "cities," "industrial revolution," and "inventers" are incorrectly capitalized.	➢ **Review Capitalization Rules** ○ Proper nouns such as "World's Fair," "Industrial Revolution," and names of inventors should always be capitalized.
✓ **Grammar and Agreement Issues** ○ Awkward phrases such as "could have definetly had an impact on a great number of people" show inconsistent grammar.	➢ **Check Grammar and Agreement** ○ Revise awkward or incorrect phrasing for clarity.

Use of Sources: 3

The student uses some information from more than one source but relies heavily on paraphrase without citations, oversimplifies key ideas, and occasionally misinterprets source content.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Use of Multiple Sources** ○ Draws from Source 1 (inventions), Source 3 (lighting competition), and Source 4 (Chicago Fire). ○ Indicates use of more than one source but does not cite them.	➢ **Use More Than One Source Fully** ○ Add one or two details from the primary letter or Source 3 to provide a fuller explanation.
✓ **Relevant but Inaccurately Interpreted Details** ○ Includes correct names of inventors and inventions, but claims such as "lighting…was the cause of many to come too" do not appear in the source. ○ States the Ferris wheel "could have greatly impacted people" but does not accurately explain why it was significant.	➢ **Correct Misinterpretations** ○ Verify details about the Ferris wheel and electricity by rereading the source.
✓ **Lack of In-Text Citations** ○ Uses paraphrased information but provides no citations or attribution phrases.	➢ **Add Citations or Source Signals** ○ Include phrases like "According to Source 1…" or proper in-text citations.
✓ **Limited Explanation of Evidence** ○ Lists inventions or events without connecting them clearly back to the controlling idea.	➢ **Explain Evidence More Clearly** ○ After listing information, add a sentence showing how it supports your main idea about impact.

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:

Detail-to-Impact Sentence Frames

- Students practice writing "fact + why it mattered" pairs using source details.
- Example frames: "This invention mattered because…" or "This helped people at the time by…"

Accuracy and Interpretation Checks

- Students compare their paraphrased statements to the exact sentences from each source to ensure correctness and avoid oversimplification.

Focused Paragraph Development Organizer

- Students use a template with three boxes: detail from source, explanation of detail, connection to controlling idea.

Organization:

Introduction Preview Practice

- Students practice writing two-sentence introductions: topic + preview of major points.

Transition Function Sort

- Students sort transitions by purpose (contrast, example, cause) and revise drafts using more appropriate transitions.

Conclusion Synthesis Frames

- Provide frames such as: "These examples show that the fair impacted people by…" to guide students toward a focused informational conclusion.

Voice:

Formal vs. Informal Language Sort

- Students identify and revise informal phrases pulled from student samples.

Voice Consistency Checks

- Students highlight any sentence that uses conversational tone and revise for academic voice.

Mentor Text Analysis

- Examine excerpts from informational articles to model how writers convey interest without informal language.

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:

Vocabulary Precision Revision Pass

- Students underline general vocabulary in a paragraph and replace it with more specific academic language.

Domain Vocabulary Word Banks

- Build a word bank from the sources for students to use in their writing.

Spelling Accuracy Workshops

- Students review commonly misspelled content-area words and practice proofreading strategies.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Charting

- Students label the first word of each sentence and revise for diversity.

Run-On Repair Practice

- Students rewrite teacher-created run-ons modeled after those in the essay.

Fluency Read-Aloud Stations

- Students mark natural pauses and revise sentences where reading becomes choppy.

Conventions:

Error Pattern Analysis

- Students highlight recurring types of errors and practice correcting them in short sentences.

Capitalization and Convention Stations

- Rotate students through focused centers addressing capitalization, punctuation, and spelling patterns.

Guided Sentence Correction

- Teacher models revising a paragraph containing similar errors.

Use of Sources:

Source Attribution Practice

- Students practice adding “According to Source 2…” to paraphrased statements.

Evidence-Explanation Pairing

- Students create pairs by matching a source detail with a sentence explaining its significance.

Paraphrasing Accuracy Checks

- Students compare their paraphrases to source excerpts to ensure accuracy.