Grade 3 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about different places people visit. You are given two sources about the life of an astronaut and the type of training that astronauts receive in order to do their job.

Read the sources carefully to **write an opinion essay** in which you give your opinion about which type of island would be better to visit—a hot island or a cold island. Make sure you clearly state your opinion and write several paragraphs supporting your opinion with reasons and details from the sources.

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

Ideas and Content: 5

The essay demonstrates strong writing skills. The writer's opinion is clear and thoroughly supported with relevant, accurate details from the source about tropical islands. Each reason is well-developed and on-topic, showing strong understanding and enthusiasm for the topic.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ The writer's opinion—*"tropical islands are a much better place to go on vacation"*—is stated clearly in the introduction and maintained consistently throughout. ○ The essay fulfills the rubric's "writer's purpose and main ideas are interesting and easy to understand." ○ The opinion is reinforced in the conclusion with statements like *"This is why I think tropical islands are the best place to visit."*	➢ **Add a Comparison for Depth:** ○ Include one fact or sentence from *Source #1* about cold islands (e.g., "Cold islands are rocky and icy") to contrast with warm islands and show complete understanding of both sources.
✓ **Relevant and Accurate Details** ○ The essay integrates accurate information from *Source #2* (e.g., *"tropical islands are near the equator," "houses are built for high winds,"* and *"2,600 kinds of palm trees"*). ○ Each body paragraph focuses on one reason, meeting the rubric's expectation that "specific details are on-topic and support main ideas." ○ The essay's details are purposeful and mostly accurate, showing comprehension of the source.	➢ **Tighten Accuracy and Language:** ○ Correct small factual or number errors ("2,6000" → "2,600") and avoid repeated phrasing like "tropical islands" by using pronouns or synonyms.
✓ **Elaboration and Development** ○ Each reason—warm weather, interesting plants, strong houses, unique wildlife, and entertainment—is elaborated with examples and explanations. ○ Statements like *"You can probably just pick a banana or a coconut right off its tree!"* show understanding and enthusiasm. ○ The writing reflects "many strong, specific details that are good choices for the purpose and the reader."	➢ **Refine Elaboration with Explanation:** ○ After each example, add one short "why it matters" sentence ("Because tropical islands are near the equator, visitors can enjoy swimming all year long.").

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Insight and Connection to Reader** ○ The writer adds a personal and persuasive touch by inviting the reader into the experience (*"What an experience that would be!"*). ○ The paper connects factual detail with opinion, a hallmark of strong opinion writing. ○ Occasional overuse of exclamations slightly affects formality but does not reduce clarity or engagement.	➢ **Balance Enthusiasm and Formality:** ○ Limit exclamation marks and replace some with descriptive sentences or transitions for a more polished tone.

Organization: 5

The writing is very easy to follow, showing strong control of structure and sequencing. The introduction captures interest and clearly states the opinion, body paragraphs are grouped by reason, and the conclusion restates the opinion with clear closure.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear and Engaging Introduction** ○ The essay begins with a hook and clear statement of opinion: *"Have you ever gone on a trip to the tropical islands? They are much better than the cold islands…"* ○ This opening identifies the topic and makes the reader want to keep reading, meeting the rubric's "introduction identifies the topic, is interesting, and makes the reader want to keep reading."	➢
✓ **Logical Grouping of Information** ○ Each body paragraph develops a single reason: escape from the cold, interesting plants, safe houses, unique wildlife, and entertainment. ○ The order is logical, matching the rubric's "information is grouped to make sense."	➢ **Vary Transition Words:** ○ Replace repetitive sequencing transitions with alternatives like "In addition," "Another reason," or "Finally" for smoother flow.
✓ **Effective Transitions and Sequencing** ○ The writer uses transitions such as *"To begin with," "Second," "Third," "Fourth," "Lastly"* that guide the reader clearly through the reasons.Paragraph breaks are appropriately placed and easy to follow.	➢ **Add Linking Sentences Between Paragraphs:** ○ Create short bridges that connect ideas (e.g., "Warm weather also helps many plants grow, which makes the island more beautiful.").
✓ **Concluding Section and Closure** ○ The essay ends with strong closure: *"That is why I think tropical islands are a better place to go on vacation than cold islands."* ○ This reinforces the opinion and provides a sense of completion consistent with the rubric's "concluding section is about the opinion or information presented."	➢ **Condense the Conclusion:** ○ Combine the final two sentences into one clear, memorable closing line to avoid redundancy while strengthening closure.

Voice: 5

The writing is lively, sincere, and engaging. The tone captures the reader's interest and reflects the writer's genuine enthusiasm for tropical islands.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Expressive and Engaging Tone** ○ Phrases such as *"You can probably just pick a banana or a coconut right off its tree!"* and *"What an experience that would be!"* invite the reader into the experience. ○ This matches the rubric's "writing is lively, sincere, exciting, or honest."	➢
✓ **Sincerity and Personal Connection** ○ Frequent use of personal pronouns and exclamations gives the essay warmth and authenticity, consistent with "the writing allows the reader to engage and pay attention."	➢ **Add Reflective Language:** ○ Include one sentence showing a personal reaction ("Visiting a tropical island would make me feel relaxed and amazed.").
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ The writer speaks directly to readers and anticipates their interest through rhetorical questions and enthusiastic expressions.	➢ **Balance Enthusiasm with Formality:** ○ Maintain excitement but limit exclamation points and rhetorical questions to one per paragraph for a more polished, persuasive tone.
✓ **Consistent Enthusiasm** ○ The energy level stays high from the introduction through the conclusion, sustaining reader attention throughout.	➢ **Conduct a Tone Read-Aloud:** ○ Read your essay aloud to make sure it sounds confident and persuasive, not overly casual.

Word Choice: 4

The writing uses many interesting and precise words, though repetition and small inaccuracies prevent it from reaching the "Strong" level. Vocabulary is generally varied and appropriate.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
○ **Variety and Precision** ○ The student uses expressive language: *"beautiful coral reefs," "thick, green, beautiful rain forests,"* and *"terrifyingly big spiders."* ○ Words are descriptive but some (e.g., "beautiful") are repeated frequently.	○ **Replace Repetition:** ○ Use synonyms or pronouns instead of repeating "tropical islands."
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ Words such as "equator," "palm trees," and "lagoon" show understanding of topic-specific vocabulary.	➢ **Add Stronger Verbs:** ○ Use vivid verbs (e.g., "soar," "shine," "glimmer") to make sentences more energetic.
✓ **Accuracy and Clarity** ○ Most word choices are correct, though one factual error appears ("2,6000 kinds of palm trees").	➢ **Check Accuracy:** ○ Verify numbers and scientific details against the source before publishing.
✓ **Appropriate for Audience and Purpose** ○ Language matches opinion writing expectations: clear, direct, and reader-friendly.	➢

Sentence Fluency: 4

The essay reads smoothly and is easy to follow. Sentences are complete and coherent, though patterns and transition styles are somewhat repetitive.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Smooth and Natural Flow** ○ Sentences read easily and sound natural aloud. ○ The variety in length is limited, but rhythm is generally pleasant.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences:** ○ Merge related ideas to improve flow and reduce repetition.
✓ **Variety in Sentence Beginnings** ○ Most paragraphs start with transition words like "To begin with," "Second," "Third," etc., creating a predictable pattern.	➢ **Vary Sentence Starters:** ○ Begin some sentences with clauses or prepositional phrases ("Because tropical islands are warm…").
✓ **Balanced Sentence Lengths** ○ Most are medium-length, with few short or complex sentences for contrast.	➢ **Add One Short Impact Sentence:** ○ Use an occasional short, emphatic line ("That's paradise!") to enhance rhythm and reader interest.
✓ **Readable and Fluent** ○ The writing maintains a conversational rhythm, aligning with the rubric's "writing is smooth and very easy to read out loud."	➢

Conventions: 4

The paper demonstrates adequate control of grade-level conventions. Most punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are correct, and errors do not interfere with meaning.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Sentence Endings and Punctuation** ○ Sentences end correctly; higher-level punctuation (commas, apostrophes) are mostly accurate. ○ Overuse of exclamation marks slightly affects polish.	➢ **Limit Exclamation Points:** ○ Replace some with descriptive statements or commas.
✓ **Spelling and Capitalization** ○ Most words are spelled correctly, though minor issues appear ("cant," "source#2" needs spacing). ✓ Capitalization is correct for proper nouns ("Faroe," "Greenland").	➢ **Edit Citations:** ○ Standardize to "Source #2" with correct spacing and capitalization.
✓ **Grammar and Usage** ○ Grammar is correct, and sentence structure supports clarity. ○ Minor spacing and formatting errors remain.	➢ **Proofread for Small Errors:** ○ Correct contractions ("can't") and ensure spacing after punctuation.

Use of Sources: 4

The student effectively uses accurate information from one source (*Source #2*) but does not reference *Source #1*. Integration is appropriate, but source variety could be improved.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Use of Source Information** ○ The essay includes correct facts from *Source #2* about tropical islands (e.g., "near the equator," "built for high winds").	➢
✓ **Integration and Paraphrasing** ○ The writer paraphrases rather than copies, blending facts smoothly into original sentences.	➢ **Paraphrase Practice:** ○ Rephrase sentences from sources in your own words while keeping facts accurate.
✓ **Limited Source Variety** ○ All evidence comes from *Source #2*, with no information drawn from *Source #1 (cold islands)*.	➢ **Include a Fact from Source #1:** ○ Add one contrast detail about cold islands ("Cold islands are rocky and icy") to strengthen comparison.
✓ **Citation Clarity** ○ References to "Source #2" are used but formatted inconsistently ("source#2" vs. "Source #2").	➢ **Check and Correct Source Formatting:** ○ Use consistent citation format every time you reference a source.

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:

Two-Source Comparison Chart:

- Students use a T-chart to collect facts from both sources (Hot vs. Cold Islands) and then write one contrast statement per row to strengthen balance and synthesis.

Reason–Evidence–Explanation Frames:

- Model how to expand each body paragraph by completing frames: *Reason → Evidence from Source → Explanation of Why It Matters.* Students practice this with their own essays.

Fact Accuracy Check Routine:

- During revision, pairs of students verify each factual detail against the source text, highlighting accurate information and correcting or clarifying inaccuracies before final drafts.

Organization:

Paragraph Mapping Activity:

- Have students label each paragraph by its purpose (introduction, reason 1, reason 2, etc.) to visually confirm logical flow and transitions.

Transition Variety Anchor Chart:

- Develop a classroom chart showing sequencing, addition, and contrast transitions. Have students replace overused transitions during revision.

Strong Conclusion Workshop:

- Share examples of effective closing statements that restate the opinion in new words. Students practice revising their own conclusions to sound confident and polished.

Voice:

Tone Spectrum Activity:

- Students label example sentences as formal, conversational, or persuasive, then practice adjusting tone to suit purpose.

Reader Connection Reflection:

- Ask students to write a short reflection: “What do I want my reader to feel or think?” before revising their voice.

“Voice Audit” Peer Review:

- Partners highlight parts of the essay that sound lively and authentic, helping each other identify areas where voice could be strengthened.

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:

Synonym Brainstorm:

- Have students list synonyms for repeated words and choose one that best fits tone and context.

Topic Vocabulary Chart:

- Display island-related vocabulary with pictures to reinforce accurate use of key terms.

Verb Revision Exercise:

- Students underline all verbs in one paragraph and replace at least two with more descriptive or specific alternatives.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Starter Chart:

- Provide a list of alternative openers ("While…," "Although…," "Because…") and practice rewriting sentences with variety.

Sentence Combining Practice:

- Give students two or three short sentences and model how to merge them into one fluent, compound or complex sentence.

Oral Reading Fluency Check:

- Students read their drafts aloud while peers mark places that sound repetitive or choppy, then revise for smoother rhythm.

Conventions:

Editing Station Rotation:

- Set up stations for punctuation, capitalization, and spelling so students can focus on one convention at a time.

Peer Editing Checklist:

- Pairs use a checklist to check endings, commas, and capitalization in each other's drafts.

Mini-Lesson on Citation Formatting:

- Model proper formatting for source references ("Source #1," "Source #2") and provide a practice sentence activity.

Use of Sources:

Two-Source Evidence Chart:

- Students collect one piece of evidence from each source for each paragraph to ensure balanced source use.

Paraphrasing Mini-Lesson:

- Model paraphrasing by taking a source sentence and rewriting it in simpler, student-friendly language.

Source Integration Sentence Starters:

- Provide sentence stems such as "According to Source #1…" or "One article explains that…" for students to use in opinion writing.