Grade 3 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Meets

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: 4

The essay demonstrates adequate writing skills. The writer clearly states an opinion, supports it with several relevant reasons, and uses accurate information from the sources. The writing fulfills the task and stays on topic, but ideas could be elaborated with more detailed explanations and connections between facts and opinions.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ The opinion—*"I think that warm islands are better to visit than cold islands"*—is clearly stated at the start and maintained throughout. ○ The introduction meets the rubric's expectation that "the writer's purpose and main ideas are easy to understand." ○ However, the introduction repeats "I think" multiple times without previewing the key reasons, which limits reader engagement.	➢ **Strengthen the Introduction:** ○ Combine your opinion and main reasons in one clear statement (e.g., "Warm islands are better than cold ones because they have delicious food, warm weather, and beautiful nature.").
✓ **Relevant and Accurate Details** ○ The paper uses information that aligns with the sources, such as *"people there can't plant crops on the cold, hard, frozen ground"* (from Source #1) and *"they have all that heat because they are near the equator"* (from Source #2). ○ These accurate statements meet the rubric's criteria that "specific details support main ideas." ○ However, the reasons and facts are presented without deeper explanation or additional evidence.	➢ **Include More Descriptive Detail:** ○ Add sensory phrases that show what makes warm islands appealing ("You can feel the soft sand under your feet and hear the ocean waves.").
✓ **Elaboration and Development** ○ Each paragraph focuses on a clear reason—food, warmth, and nature—which shows logical grouping of ideas. ○ Supporting details like *"you can pick a banana or a coconut right off a tree"* are engaging but surface-level. ○ According to the rubric, at the "Meets" level, "the writer includes accurate facts and concrete details," but the paper could move toward "Strong" by explaining *why* those details matter.	➢ **Add Explanation to Facts:** ○ After each fact, include one sentence explaining *why* that fact supports your opinion ("Because warm islands are near the equator, visitors can enjoy sunny weather year-round.").

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ All ideas are on-topic, and no unrelated or confusing details appear. ○ The essay avoids drift but relies on a formulaic paragraph structure, lacking links that tie reasons back to the opinion. ○ The rubric's "details are on-topic and support main ideas" is met, though connections could be more explicit.	➢ **Connect Each Paragraph Back to the Opinion:** ○ End each body paragraph with a linking sentence ("That's why warm islands are the best places to visit.") to remind the reader of your main idea.

Organization: 4

The writing is easy to follow, showing a clear structure with an introduction, body paragraphs organized by reason, and a conclusion that restates the opinion. Transitions connect ideas, though repetitive sequencing and minimal linking between paragraphs keep it at the Meets level.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction** ○ The essay opens with *"I think that warm islands are better to visit than cold islands. You want to know why? Well, I'll tell you why."* ○ This introduction identifies the topic and opinion, fulfilling the rubric's "introduction identifies the topic." ○ However, it could preview the main reasons more directly instead of relying on conversational phrasing.	➢ **Refine the Introduction:** ○ Add a preview of your three main reasons to strengthen focus and guide the reader.
✓ **Logical Grouping of Information** ○ Each paragraph develops one reason (food, warmth, nature), matching the rubric's "information is grouped to make sense." ○ The order is logical and easy for readers to follow.	➢ **Add Linking Sentences Between Paragraphs:** ○ Connect your ideas by showing how one reason leads to the next ("Because warm islands have great food, they also attract many visitors who enjoy the warm weather.").
✓ **Effective Transitions** ○ Transitional words like *"The first reason," "The second reason,"* and *"The third reason"* guide the reader through the essay. ○ These transitions meet the rubric's "transition words and phrases connect ideas," but the overuse of the same format limits variety.	➢ **Vary Transition Phrases:** ○ Replace repeated transitions with others like "Another reason," "In addition," or "Finally."
✓ **Concluding Section** ○ The essay ends with *"So, now do you want to visit a warm or cold island?"* which restates the opinion in a conversational style. ○ While engaging, the conclusion could be more formal and summarizing, consistent with "the concluding statement or section is about the opinion presented."	➢ **Strengthen the Conclusion:** ○ Replace the question ending with a firm statement that restates your opinion and main reasons ("That's why warm islands are better places to visit than cold ones.").

Voice: 4

The writing is sincere, engaging, and enthusiastic. The tone shows interest in the topic and invites readers in, though it sometimes leans conversational rather than persuasive.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Expressive and Engaging Tone** ○ The friendly tone in *"You want to know why? Well, I'll tell you why."* and *"Keep reading to know more…"* makes the piece lively and approachable.	➢
✓ **Sincerity and Personal Connection** ○ Frequent use of "I think" and "I want to visit" gives authenticity and aligns with "writing helps the reader engage and pay attention."	➢ **Limit Overuse of "I Think":** ○ Replace with stronger statements ("Warm islands are better because…") to sound more confident.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ The writer directly addresses the reader and ends with a rhetorical question, demonstrating awareness of audience interaction.	➢ **Add Emotion or Reflection:** ○ Include a short reflection on how warm islands would make you feel ("I would feel relaxed and amazed by the ocean views.").
✓ **Consistency of Tone** ○ The enthusiasm is consistent throughout but could be more persuasive with confident statements instead of repeated questions.	➢ **Balance Conversational and Formal Tone:** ○ Keep your excitement but use persuasive sentences ("Warm islands are clearly the best!") rather than repeated questions.

Word Choice: 4

The writer uses clear, relevant vocabulary and some descriptive phrases that show understanding of the topic. Some repetition and simple language limit precision and variety.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Variety and Precision** ○ Words like "soft, sandy beaches," "frozen ground," and "great view" show variety and sensory awareness.	➢ **Add Descriptive Words:** ○ Replace "better nature" with more precise phrases ("beautiful beaches," "green forests," "colorful wildlife").
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ The essay uses appropriate topic terms such as "equator," "seafood," and "frozen ground," showing understanding of content.	➢ **Use Stronger Verbs:** ○ Change "have" to more active verbs like "offer," "grow," or "shine" for energy.
✓ **Repetition and Simplicity** ○ The phrase "warm island" appears many times, and words like "better" and "good" are used instead of more vivid choices.	➢ **Reduce Repetition:** ○ Use pronouns or synonyms ("these islands," "tropical places") instead of repeating "warm islands."
✓ **Appropriate for Audience** ○ The language is grade-appropriate and matches an opinion essay.	➢

Sentence Fluency: 4

The essay is easy to read aloud with logical flow. Sentences are complete, but patterns and transitions are repetitive, limiting rhythm and variety.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Smooth Flow** ○ The writing sounds natural when read aloud and matches "the writing is easy to read out loud" from the rubric.	➢ **Add Transition Variety:** ○ Replace some repetitive transitions with smoother linking phrases like "In addition" or "Also."
✓ **Repetition in Beginnings** ○ Paragraphs often begin with "The first reason," "The second reason," and "The third reason," which creates predictable rhythm.	➢ **Vary Sentence Starters:** ○ Begin sentences with words other than "The" or "I" ("Because," "After," "While") for variety.
✓ **Sentence Length and Pattern** ○ Most sentences are medium-length, with few short or complex ones to add rhythm variation.	➢ **Mix Sentence Lengths:** ○ Add a few shorter sentences for emphasis or combine similar ideas to avoid monotony.
✓ **Readable and Cohesive** ○ Sentences connect logically, maintaining fluency even without much structural variety.	➢

Conventions: 4

The writing shows control of grade-level conventions. Minor spelling, spacing, and grammar issues appear but do not disrupt understanding.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Punctuation and Capitalization** ○ Sentences end correctly, and commas are used in a few appropriate places. ○ Occasional spacing issues appear around parentheses ("(for planting crops and building animal farms)and").	➢ **Check Spacing and Punctuation:** ○ Add missing spaces after parentheses and commas for clean formatting.
✓ **Spelling Accuracy** ○ Common words are spelled correctly, though "your" appears instead of "you're."	➢ **Fix Common Word Mix-Ups:** ○ Correct "your" to "you're" and double-check other common homophones.
✓ **Grammar and Sentence Control** ○ Sentences are complete and easy to understand, meeting the rubric's "grammar is usually correct."	➢ **Proofread for Grammar Consistency:** ○ Read aloud to catch small agreement errors or missing words.

Use of Sources: 4

The writer accurately uses facts from both sources but does not explicitly cite them. Source material is paraphrased correctly and supports the opinion effectively.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Information** ○ Facts such as *"people there can't plant crops on the cold, hard, frozen ground"* (Source #1) and *"they have all that heat because they are near the equator"* (Source #2) are factual and appropriate.	➢

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Integration and Paraphrasing** ○ The writer blends facts smoothly without copying text verbatim, showing comprehension.	➢ **Paraphrase Confirmation:** ○ Check that each fact is written in your own words, not too close to the original text.
✓ **Balanced Source Use** ○ The writer draws on both sources but relies more heavily on warm island information from Source #2.	➢ **Balance Evidence:** ○ Add one or two details about cold islands (e.g., icy climate, glaciers) to show comparison and full understanding.
✓ **Citations** ○ Sources are not referenced explicitly by number, which limits clarity of attribution.	➢ **Add Source References:** ○ Use "According to Source #1…" or "In Source #2…" to show where facts come from.

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:

"Reason–Evidence–Explanation" Sentence Frame Practice:

- Teach students to expand each paragraph using this model:
  - Reason: Warm islands have better food.
  - Evidence: People can grow crops and pick fruit like coconuts.
  - Explanation: This makes warm islands more enjoyable because visitors have many choices to eat.

Source-Linked Detail Hunt:

- Students highlight details in their drafts that come from Source #1 and Source #2, then add one "why this matters" sentence for each highlighted fact.

Paragraph Linking Routine:

- Have students reread each paragraph and write a one-sentence summary linking it to their opinion. Use color-coding to show where reasoning connects back to the main idea.

Organization:

Paragraph Mapping Routine:

- Students label each paragraph by purpose (introduction, reason 1, reason 2, reason 3, conclusion) to visually check organization.

Transition Variety Anchor Chart:

- Create a class chart of sequencing and connecting transitions. Students replace repetitive transitions during revision.

Strong Conclusion Modeling:

- Show examples of effective closing statements that restate the opinion without repeating wording. Have students write their own revised endings.

Voice:

Tone Ladder Exercise:

- Have students rewrite sentences in more formal or persuasive tones to see how word choice changes impact voice.

"Reader Reaction" Peer Review:

- Students read each other's writing aloud and share what emotions or impressions the tone creates.

Confidence through Word Choice:

- Model replacing "I think" or "I believe" with assertive sentence openings to strengthen conviction in opinion writing.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

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Word Choice:

Synonym Brainstorm Challenge:

- Students find three replacements for common repeated words like “good” or “better.”

Word Wall of Content Vocabulary:

- Create a visual word wall with terms from the sources (e.g., “lagoon,” “reef,” “equator”) and model their use in writing.

Descriptive Expansion Mini-Lesson:

- Have students take a simple phrase and expand it with sensory adjectives or figurative language for richer detail.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Sort:

- Provide examples of simple, compound, and complex sentences. Students label and then imitate each type.

Read-Aloud Rhythm Check:

- Students record themselves reading and note where sentences sound repetitive or choppy.

Transition Swap Game:

- In groups, students replace overused transitions in a paragraph with creative, logical alternatives.

Conventions:

Conventions Checklist Routine:

- Provide a checklist for students to verify sentence endings, commas, and capitalization before submitting drafts.

Peer Editing Circles:

- Pairs exchange papers to find spacing and punctuation errors, using editing marks to note corrections.

Homophone Practice Chart:

- Create a quick-reference chart for commonly confused words (your/you’re, their/there/they’re) and have students review it during revision.

Use of Sources:

Source Integration Frames:

- Model how to use sentence starters for citing sources naturally in opinion writing.

Evidence Balance Chart:

- Students track which source each fact came from to ensure both are used.

Paraphrase Practice Workshop:

- Provide sentences from the sources and have students rewrite them using their own vocabulary and structure.