Grade 3 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 3

The opinion is clear and supported with several facts from the sources, but details are basic and development is uneven. The writing demonstrates understanding of cold islands but lacks elaboration and explanation of *why* the listed details make them appealing.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ The writer states a direct opinion: *"My opinion is you should visit the cold islands…"* ○ The purpose is clear, fulfilling "writer's purpose and main ideas are easy to understand." ○ The introduction gives a few brief reasons but lacks elaboration or an engaging lead.	➢ **Include an Engaging Introduction:** ○ Start with a short hook or reason that catches the reader's attention ("Cold islands are full of ice, animals, and adventure!").
✓ **Relevant but Limited Details** ○ Includes accurate facts from the sources: *"More than 1,000 plants… moist soil,"* and *"brightly colored houses that dot the hillside."* ○ These show awareness of key information about Greenland and the Faroe Islands. ○ However, some statements are oversimplified or irrelevant (e.g., *"you can bring coats," "you won't have many hurricanes"*).	➢ **Use Comparison for Strength:** ○ Add one contrasting statement about tropical islands to emphasize your opinion ("Unlike hot islands, cold islands don't have hurricanes.").
✓ **Elaboration and Development** ○ Each paragraph lists facts but does not explain why they make cold islands good to visit. ○ According to the rubric, this fits "details may be listed, but not explained." ○ For example, *"you will live in brightly colored houses"* could be elaborated to explain how this makes island life interesting or beautiful.	➢ **Add Explanation to Each Fact:** ○ After listing a detail, explain why it matters ("Brightly colored houses make the islands cheerful even when it's cold and gray outside.").
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ The writing stays mostly on topic, though some reasoning is loosely connected to the main opinion. ○ Ideas are repetitive ("cold islands" repeated often) and lack connections between reasons.	➢ **Clarify and Focus Reasons:** ○ Remove unrelated ideas ("bring coats," "run out of water") and replace them with details from the sources about cold island life.

Organization: 3

The essay includes an introduction, body, and some sense of conclusion. However, transitions are weak, ideas are loosely grouped, and the ending lacks closure.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Introduction** ○ Opens with a clear opinion but without a hook or preview of reasons.	➢ **Use Paragraph Topic Sentences:** ○ Begin each paragraph with a short sentence that tells what it will be about ("One reason to visit cold islands is their amazing wildlife.").
✓ **Grouping and Order** ○ The second paragraph combines several facts about plants, scenery, and houses but lacks internal organization. ○ Paragraph breaks occur, but information feels listed rather than logically sequenced.	➢ **Group Details Logically:** ○ Combine similar ideas together (e.g., put "plants" and "birds" in the same paragraph about nature).
✓ **Transitions** ○ Minimal transitional phrasing ("Also," "At the cold islands") results in abrupt paragraph changes. ○ Meets "some parts of the writing are not easy to follow."	➢ **Add Transitions:** ○ Use transitions like "Another reason," "In addition," or "Finally" to guide the reader through ideas.
✓ **Conclusion** ○ The essay stops abruptly after the final paragraph; there's no clear closing sentence to restate the opinion.	➢ **End with a Strong Conclusion:** ○ Finish by restating your opinion and summarizing main reasons ("Cold islands are the best because they are peaceful, beautiful, and full of nature.").

Voice: 3

The tone is clear but flat. The writer's interest in the topic shows slightly, but energy and engagement are minimal. The essay lacks the lively personality or persuasive tone typical of stronger opinion writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engagement and Energy** ○ The essay's voice is straightforward and informative but lacks enthusiasm ("you should visit the cold islands because…").	➢ **Use Persuasive Phrasing:** ○ Change "you should visit" to something stronger like "Cold islands are the best places to visit!"
✓ **Sincerity and Interest** ○ The writer seems somewhat interested in cold islands, particularly when describing "brightly colored houses" and "beautiful ice," but doesn't show excitement or personal connection.	➢ **Add Personal Connection:** ○ Include one or two sentences explaining *why you* would want to visit cold islands ("I would love to see the glaciers and the colorful houses.").
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ There's little attempt to engage the reader directly; sentences are factual and lack persuasive appeal.	➢ **Add an Exciting Closing Line:** ○ End with a final persuasive statement that leaves an impression ("Pack your coat and head to the cold islands today!").
✓ **Consistency of Tone** ○ The tone is even and controlled but too neutral for a persuasive piece.	➢

Word Choice: 3

The student uses simple and correct words to express ideas, but vocabulary lacks precision, variety, and descriptive language.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Precision and Variety** ○ Repeated use of "cold islands" and general words like "beautiful," "fun," and "stuff" reduces variety.	➢ **Reduce Repetition:** ○ Replace repeated "cold islands" with "these islands," "Arctic places," or "frozen islands."
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ Includes correct topical terms from the source (e.g., "plants," "birds," "ice," "houses"). ○ Does not use more specific words like "glacier," "Arctic," or "tradition."	➢ **Add Topic Vocabulary:** ○ Include more precise words from the sources (e.g., "glaciers," "icebergs," "Arctic wildlife").
✓ **Accuracy and Clarity** ○ Word meaning is clear but plain; no misused words.	➢ **Use Descriptive Adjectives:** ○ Replace "beautiful" with specific descriptions ("sparkling," "snow-covered," "colorful").
✓ **Appropriate for Purpose** ○ Meets rubric's "words get the message across," but limited sophistication keeps it below "Strong."	➢ **Include Feeling Words:** ○ Add emotional or sensory language ("The ice glimmered in the sunlight.").

Sentence Fluency: 2

The writing is readable but lacks rhythm and variety. Most sentences are short and begin in the same way.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Smoothness and Readability** ○ Sentences are short and complete but often follow a repetitive "At the cold islands…" pattern.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences:** ○ Join related ideas ("The islands are cold and rocky, but they are also beautiful and full of birds.").
✓ **Sentence Variety** ○ Few compound or complex sentences; minimal variation in structure.	➢ **Add One Longer Descriptive Sentence:** ○ Expand a simple sentence with details ("The colorful houses stand out against the white snow and bright blue sky.").
✓ **Flow and Pacing** ○ The text is choppy in places because of repeated beginnings and abrupt shifts between ideas.	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings:** ○ Start some sentences with new openers ("Because," "When," "In the cold islands").
✓ **Natural Rhythm** ○ The writing is understandable but not fluid when read aloud.	➢

Conventions: 2

Frequent spelling and capitalization errors, along with occasional missing words and inconsistent punctuation, interfere with readability.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Errors**	➢ **Use a Spelling Checklist:**

○ Common misspellings include “verity” (variety), “beutiful,” “diffrent,” and “thisty.”	○ Correct frequently misspelled words and verify with classroom resources.
✓ **Capitalization and Punctuation** ○ Errors like “Their are More than 1,000 plants” and missing punctuation marks show inconsistent control.	➢ **Review Capitalization Rules:** ○ Check that each sentence starts with a capital letter and proper nouns (e.g., “Greenland”) are capitalized.
✓ **Grammar and Sentence Structure** ○ Some incomplete sentences and missing words reduce clarity.	➢ **Reread for Missing Words:** ○ Read aloud slowly to catch incomplete or fragmented sentences.

Use of Sources: 3

The writer uses several facts from the cold island source accurately but provides no evidence from the tropical island source for comparison. Citations are absent.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Source Information** ○ Facts about *“moist soil,” “more than 1,000 plants,”* and *“brightly colored houses”* accurately reflect *Source #1*.	➢
✓ **Limited Source Variety** ○ Only the cold island source is used; no information from *Source #2* about hot islands is included.	➢ **Add a Contrast Detail:** ○ Include one fact from *Source #2* (“Hot islands have hurricanes”) to strengthen comparison.
✓ **Integration and Paraphrasing** ○ Facts are paraphrased clearly but without citation or sentence framing.	➢ **Check for Paraphrasing:** ○ Rephrase information fully in your own words to avoid copying too closely.
✓ **Citations** ○ No reference to “Source #1” or “Source #2” appears.	➢ **Use Source References:** ○ Add “According to Source #1…” when using details about cold islands.

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:

"Fact–Why It Matters" Sentence Frame:

- Model how to turn listed facts into elaborated sentences: *Fact:* "Cold islands are covered in ice." → *Why it matters:* "This makes them beautiful places for exploring glaciers."

Source-Based Elaboration Practice:

- Give students one fact from the source and have them write two sentences explaining how it connects to their opinion.

Focused Revision Checklist:

- Have students underline sentences that include a fact and circle the word "because" to ensure each reason is explained.

Organization:

Paragraph Sorting Activity:

- Give students mixed-up sentences from their essay to reorder into a logical sequence, reinforcing grouping.

Transition Word Practice:

- Provide a word bank categorized by purpose (adding, sequencing, concluding) and practice inserting them between ideas.

Guided Conclusion Writing:

- Model writing a final paragraph that restates the opinion in a new way and adds one closing thought.

Voice:

"Voice Switch" Exercise:

- Have students rewrite one paragraph in a more enthusiastic tone, emphasizing energy and audience appeal.

Reader Reaction Reflection:

- Partners share what tone the writing creates (informative, exciting, serious) and suggest ways to make it more persuasive.

"Add Yourself" Activity:

- Ask students to include a personal reaction or sensory statement in each paragraph to make their voice more visible.

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Word Choice:

Word Precision Chart:

- Students list vague words and replace them with more specific or vivid alternatives.

Content Word Wall:

- Create a class wall of topic-specific vocabulary drawn from the sources (e.g., “fjord,” “glacier,” “iceberg”).

Sensory Word Expansion:

- Students choose one object (“ice,” “bird,” “house”) and add adjectives appealing to sight, sound, or touch.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Combining Workshop:

- Have students combine two or more short sentences from their essay using conjunctions.

Sentence Starter Variety Chart:

- Create a list of alternatives to “At the…” or “The cold islands…” to prompt varied openings.

Oral Reading Fluency:

- Students practice reading aloud to hear where sentences sound repetitive or choppy.

Conventions:

Editing Stations:

- Create stations for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, with examples of each type of correction.

Peer Proofreading:

- Have partners find three convention errors each and explain how to fix them.

Spelling Sort Practice:

- Use a weekly sort of commonly misspelled words from student writing for practice and assessment.

Use of Sources:

Two-Source Comparison Chart:

- Students list one fact from each source and write a sentence comparing them.

Sentence Starter Practice:

- Provide source integration starters (“According to Source #1…”) for students to use in their opinion writing.

Fact Accuracy Review:

- Have students highlight all factual details in their essay and verify each against the original text.