High School – Expository Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about "green" energy options. You are given four articles about sunflowers and their use as biofuels or alternate fuel sources.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an explanatory essay** about on sunflowers. Using more than one source, craft a thesis to explain the ways in which sunflower seeds can be used to create biofuel and the economic implications of this process.*

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

Ideas and Content: 5

The essay demonstrates a clear and well-developed thesis explaining how sunflower seeds can be used to create biofuel and the economic implications of this process. The writer integrates multiple sources accurately, provides relevant technical and economic details, and offers strong explanatory reasoning. The piece shows conceptual understanding, strong synthesis across sources, and consistent focus. Minor areas for improvement include deeper explanation of economic impacts (beyond reducing fossil fuel use) and a clearer distinction between environmental and economic implications. However, overall, this is a well-developed, source-integrated expository explanation.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear, Accurate, and Relevant Thesis** ○ Thesis establishes both required components: biofuel production and economic implications. ▪ "Sunflowers are a cost effective and environmentally friendly source of energy… help us cut back on other energy sources… boost our economy while doing so…" ○ Addresses the task purposefully and with high-school-level clarity.	➢ **Refine and Clarify the Economic Analysis in the Thesis** ○ Strengthen the economic portion of your thesis by identifying specific ways sunflower biofuel affects costs, jobs, or production efficiency.
✓ **Strong Use of Relevant Information From Multiple Sources** ○ Source #3: Facility uses sunflower hulls to produce heat/electricity. ▪ "The system will eventually produce a third of the electricity and all of the heat needed to run the plant." ○ Source #1: Sunflower-oil powered boat demonstrates real-world viability of biofuel transportation. ▪ "The boat ran fine." ○ Source #2: High school students create biodiesel used to power a hybrid car. ▪ "The bioscience class will make these seeds into biodiesel…" ○ Source #4: Sunflowers help with soil remediation. – "Pull heavy metal contaminants like mercury and lead from the garden's polluted soil." ○ Source use is accurate, well-integrated, and purposeful.	➢ **Add More Explicit Economic Explanation From the Sources** ○ Include details from Source #3 about cost savings from using sunflower biomass instead of traditional fuels.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Well-Developed and Insightful Explanations** ○ Explains why sunflower-based energy matters economically: ▪ Reduces reliance on "resources that cannot be renewed." ▪ Saves money by producing heat and electricity internally. ○ Explains procedural clarity: grinding hulls to pellets to gasifier chamber. ○ Reasoning generally strong and elaborated.	➢ **Deepen Analysis of Economic Impact** ○ Go beyond stating that biofuels reduce nonrenewable resource use; explain how this translates into financial or community economic benefits.
✓ **Effective Synthesis Across Sources** ○ Combines ideas from industrial-scale production, student experimentation, and agricultural innovation into a coherent explanation. ○ Synthesizes energy, environmental, and economic implications across multiple texts.	➢ **Reduce Overgeneralizations for Greater Precision** ○ Replace broad statements ("almost every facility in America") with more measured, evidence-based phrasing.
✓ **Maintains Clear Focus on Explanatory Purpose** ○ Stays focused on how sunflower biofuel works and its implications. ○ Environmental benefits (trash catching, phytoremediation) connect indirectly to economic improvement through land restoration.	➢ **Clarify Connections Between Environmental Benefits and Economics** ○ Explicitly explain how phytoremediation or trash-catching could produce economic advantages (e.g., land restoration → more usable farmland).
✓ **Minor Areas for Improvement** ○ Economic implications are mostly implied (savings, renewable energy benefits) rather than fully analyzed (e.g., production cost vs. benefit, scale, feasibility). ○ Occasional overgeneralization ("almost every facility in America") slightly weakens precision.	➢

Organization: 5

The essay is well organized with a purposeful introduction, logical sequencing of ideas, appropriate paragraphing, and a clear conclusion. Transitions support coherence, and ideas build progressively from explanation of biofuel production to broader implications. Minor improvements could enhance cohesion around the economic portion, but overall, the structure is strong and effective.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear and Engaging Introduction With a Two-Part Focus** ○ Establishes both how sunflower biofuel works and why it matters economically.	➢ **Clarify Paragraph Focus on Economics** ○ Strengthen the economic throughline by ensuring each major idea ties back to economic implications.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Logical Sequencing of Ideas** ○ Moves logically through: ▪ sunflower biofuel sources and processes innovations and production methods ▪ community-scale and industrial uses ▪ economic and environmental impacts ○ Sequencing reflects a high-school-level explanatory structure.	➢
✓ **Effective Transitions** ○ Uses transitions like "For example," "Also," and "Another innovative idea…" to connect ideas smoothly.	➢ **Add More Sophisticated Transitions** ○ Use transitions that indicate relationships (e.g., cause/effect, comparison) for smoother flow.
✓ **Focused Paragraphing** ○ Each paragraph centers on a distinct idea: sunflowers as energy, student biodiesel production, facility-scale models, environmental/economic benefits.	➢
✓ **Conclusion Provides Purposeful Closure** ○ Reiterates the claim and reconnects benefits to future potential.	➢ **Refine the Conclusion for Synthesis** ○ Add one sentence that synthesizes the multiple economic benefits demonstrated across the sources.
✓ **Minor Weakness** ○ Some sections shift briefly from economics to environment without fully linking the two.	➢ **Ensure Paragraph Boundaries Are Consistent** ○ Split long paragraphs where multiple major ideas appear together.

Voice: 4

The voice is informative, engaging, and appropriate for an expository task. Tone is confident and mostly academic, with moments of stylistic flair. A few statements lean toward conversational or overly enthusiastic phrasing, but overall, the voice enhances clarity and maintains credibility.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Confident, Informative Tone** ○ Presents explanations clearly and directly: "Sunflowers are a cost effective and environmentally friendly source of energy…"	➢ **Strengthen the Authoritative Tone in Economic Sections** ○ Use more precise language when discussing cost, efficiency, or feasibility.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Explains concepts for a general but educated audience without oversimplifying.	➢ **Increase Use of Discipline-Appropriate Vocabulary** ○ This will build an authoritative voice consistent with technical writing.
✓ **Appropriate Style for Expository Writing** ○ Describes processes and implications without relying on emotional appeals.	➢ **Emphasize Informational Objectivity** ○ Maintain an explanatory tone by reducing value statements and focusing on evidence.
✓ **Minor Conversational Phrasing** ○ Phrases like "almost every facility in America" or "pretty cool examples" are less formal.	➢ **Replace Conversational Phrasing With Academic Alternatives** ○ Avoid casual expressions ("pretty cool") to maintain an expository tone.
✓ **Consistent Purposeful Voice** ○ Maintains a clear goal of explaining how sunflower biofuel works and why it matters.	➢

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is generally precise, clear, and appropriate for a high school expository task. Technical terms are used correctly, and the vocabulary supports conceptual explanation. Some areas could benefit from more discipline-specific language or reduced repetition, but overall the writing demonstrates control and accuracy.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Effective Use of Technical Terms** ○ "Biofuel," "gasifier," "pellets," "sunflower oil," "renewable resources," "hybrid car," "heating system."	➢ **Introduce Additional Technical Concepts** ○ Incorporate more discipline-specific terms from the sources (e.g., "phytoremediation," "biomass gasification efficiency").
✓ **Clear Explanations of Processes** ○ Accurately describes how hulls are ground into pellets and used for heat/electricity.	➢ **Avoid Overgeneralizations** ○ Replace sweeping statements with specific source-supported explanations.
✓ **Appropriate Academic Vocabulary** ○ "Cost effective," "environmentally friendly," "innovative," "community garden."	➢ **Increase Precision in Economic Vocabulary** ○ Use terminology such as "operational cost savings," "energy yield," or "agricultural input efficiency."
✓ **Some Vague or General Phrasing** ○ "Almost every facility in America" lacks precision. ○ Environmental and economic impact explanations sometimes use general terms like "helps" or "boosts" without specificity.	➢ **Replace Vague Language With Specific Descriptions** ○ Clarify how sunflower biofuel "boosts" the economy using evidence-based terms.
✓ **Minor Repetition** ○ Repeats broad ideas about environmental friendliness without expanding vocabulary.	➢

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are generally varied and smooth, with appropriate pacing and rhythm. Some transitions and sentence structures are basic, and a few sentences combine multiple ideas that could be clearer if split, but overall fluency is controlled and effective.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Varied Sentence Structures** ○ Uses complex, compound, and simple sentences effectively.	➢ **Use More Sophisticated Transitions Between Ideas** ○ Transition with discipline-appropriate connectors ("consequently," "specifically," "for instance").
✓ **Readable Flow** ○ Sentences move logically through explanations of biofuel processes and examples.	➢ **Read Aloud to Enhance Rhythm** ○ Identify places where pacing feels rushed or dense.
✓ **Effective Use of Examples to Build Momentum** ○ Uses concrete examples (student biodiesel car, industrial plant) to maintain flow.	➢
✓ **Occasional Lengthy or Overloaded Sentences** ○ Some sentences include multiple processes or examples without clear segmentation.	➢ **Break Up Long, Multi-Idea Sentences** ○ Increase clarity by separating complex explanations into smaller segments.
✓ **Minor Repetitiveness in Sentence Starts** ○ Occasional repeat beginnings ("This is…" "Another…"), though not disruptive.	➢ **Vary Sentence Openers** ○ Introduce phrases or clauses to increase rhythmic variety.

Conventions: 5

Conventions are consistently accurate with few noticeable errors. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are well controlled. Minor issues exist but do not interfere with meaning or readability.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Grammar** ○ Technical vocabulary and general usage are consistently correct.	➢ **Maintain Strong Editing Habits** ○ Continue careful proofreading to sustain accuracy.
✓ **Punctuation Used Correctly** ○ Commas and periods placed appropriately in complex sentences.	➢ **Refine Comma Use in Long Sentences** ○ Add commas to separate clauses in multi-idea sentences.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No run-ons or fragments; sentence structures are controlled.	➢ **Review Parallel Structure** ○ Improve fluency in lists or multi-part explanations.
✓ **Minor Issues Present but Minor** ○ Occasional punctuation improvements could enhance clarity.	➢ **Check for Minor Punctuation Improvements** ○ Strengthen clarity with selective punctuation review.

Use of Sources: 5

The writer consistently uses multiple sources, accurately integrates details, and synthesizes information across texts. Evidence is used purposefully to support explanations, and attribution is present even when not explicitly labeled with source numbers. Minor improvements could include more consistent attribution phrasing and more direct economic evidence, but overall, source use is strong.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Use of Multiple Sources** ○ Source #1: Sunflower-oil boat demonstration. ○ Source #2: Student biodiesel production. ○ Source #3: Industrial-scale sunflower hull pellet gasification. ○ Source #4: Phytoremediation and sunflower community gardens.	➢
✓ **Effective Synthesis Across Sources** ○ Combines student, industrial, and agricultural uses to demonstrate diverse biofuel applications.	➢ **Integrate Source Vocabulary** ○ Include discipline-specific terms present in the sources.
✓ **Appropriate Explanation Following Evidence** ○ Explains why each example is significant economically or environmentally.	➢ **Highlight Key Economic Evidence More Clearly** ○ Emphasize how using sunflower hulls reduces operational costs.
✓ **Attribution Mostly Clear** ○ Even when not labeled with "Source __," context makes source origins clear.	➢ **Add Explicit Attribution for All Source-Based Details** ○ Use consistent signal phrases ("According to Source 3…").
✓ **Minor Gaps** ○ Economic detail from Source #3 could be highlighted more explicitly. ○ Attribution could be more consistent across all integrated examples.	➢ **Ensure All Claims Are Tied to Sources** ○ Reduce general statements not directly supported by the texts.

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:

Economic Reasoning Mini-Lesson

- Teach students how to move from environmental benefits to economic implications using cause-and-effect language and real-world examples.

Source Synthesis Graphic Organizer

- Help students map how multiple sources connect (e.g., industrial biofuel use, student projects, phytoremediation) to build deeper synthesis.

Precision in Explanation Workshop

- Model how to refine broad claims to discipline-appropriate specificity, especially in technical or economic writing.

Thesis Expansion Strategy

- Use templates that require a dual-purpose thesis ("X process + Y impact"), aligning with the task's two-part prompt.

Organization:

Organizational Mapping Strategy

- Teach students to outline explanatory essays using claim → process → implications structure.

Transition Function Lesson

- Provide transition lists grouped by purpose (cause/effect, elaboration, comparison).

Conclusion Synthesis Workshop

- Students practice writing concluding statements that unify the major ideas instead of restating them.

Voice:

Tone Calibration With Mentor Texts

- Compare sections of this draft with high-level informational texts to refine tone.

Academic Voice Mini-Lessons

- Teach strategies for replacing conversational language with discipline-appropriate vocabulary.

Audience Awareness Routines

- Students annotate drafts noting where voice aligns with or diverges from expectations.

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:

Replace-and-Refine Word Choice Activities

- Students revise vague words into precise, technical language.

Science/Industry Vocabulary Banks

- Build shared lists of key terms from the sources.

Definition and Precision Mini-Lessons

- Teach how precise vocabulary influences clarity and credibility.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Combining & Splitting Practice

- Teach students how to adjust pacing using sentence boundaries.

Transition Function Lessons

- Help students apply transitions that clarify relationships among ideas.

Fluency Read-Aloud Activities

- Students listen for awkward or heavy structures and revise accordingly.

Conventions:

Advanced Editing Workshops

- Focus on punctuation in complex sentence structures.

Grammar Mini-Lessons on Parallelism

- Teach students how to align structures in comparisons or lists.

Proofreading Checklists

- Use detailed checklists for conventions accuracy.

Use of Sources:

Signal Phrase Sentence Frame Practice

- Provide students with attribution templates for varied contexts.

Evidence–Explanation Pairing Routine

- Teach students to follow each piece of evidence with explicit explanatory reasoning.

Synthesis Modeling

- Show students how to connect ideas from multiple sources within a single paragraph.