High School – Expository Writing Work Sample: Meets

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: 4

The essay presents a clear explanatory purpose, uses multiple sources accurately, and demonstrates solid understanding of how sunflower seeds can be used to create biofuel. The writer explains the biofuel production process, includes meaningful source-based details (biomass pellets, gasifier chamber, hybrid vehicles), and begins to address economic implications (renewable resource, job creation, higher income for farmers). Reasoning is generally clear and developed, though at times it leans into persuasive language, overgeneralization, or unsupported environmental claims. While the essay demonstrates strong potential, greater depth and precision—especially in economic analysis and in distinguishing fact from opinion—would elevate the response.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear, Relevant Thesis and Purpose** ○ Establishes a two-part purpose aligning to the task: explaining sunflower-based biofuel and its implications. ▪ "…sequestered a source worthy of consideration for a bio-fuel: sunflowers." ○ The paper maintains this explanatory focus throughout most sections.	➢ **Strengthen the Thesis With Clear Economic Focus** ○ Clarify what specific economic implications (jobs, energy savings, farmer income) will be explained to guide the structure. ➢ **Maintain Expository Purpose** ○ Remove persuasive language ("time to take action," "facts speak for themselves") to preserve informational tone.
✓ **Accurate and Relevant Use of Multiple Sources** ○ Source #1: Sunflowers as a promising biofuel crop and research institutions exploring cost-effective, green energy. ○ Source #3: ▪ Accurate mention of hulls and biomass: "machines that would grind up this biomass and press it into little fuel pellets… fed into a special gasifier chamber." ▪ Correctly notes the facility producing one-third of its own power. ○ Source #3 again for agricultural adoption: ▪ "Several agriculturalists are beginning to implement sunflower fields… as a product of higher income…" (accurate context). ○ Incorporates relevant details, though occasionally mixed with assertions not found in sources.	➢

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Solid Explanation of Biofuel Production** ○ Describes the process clearly: harvesting oil from seeds to converting to biodiesel; pelletizing hulls to gasification for energy. ○ Shows understanding of industrial and agricultural components.	➢
✓ **Developing but Incomplete Economic Analysis** ○ Notes higher income for farmers from sunflower cultivation (Source #3). ○ Suggests job creation in biofuel facilities. ○ Identifies renewable nature as an economic advantage (reduced reliance on finite fuel). ○ However, explanations are sometimes vague or overgeneralized ("hundreds if not thousands of optimal job opportunities"). ○ Does not fully examine cost-benefit, scale, or feasibility.	➢ **Deepen Economic Explanation Using Source Evidence** ○ Use Source #3 to explain operational cost savings and energy independence more explicitly. ○ Connect higher income for farmers to broader economic effects.
✓ **Some Overgeneralized or Unsupported Claims** ○ "Emissions… would not damage the atmosphere or destroy the ozone." (Sources do NOT make this claim.) ○ Significant environmental claims are made without source support. ○ Uses persuasive, evaluative language common in argument writing ("the facts speak for themselves," "time to take action").	➢ **Clarify and Correct Overgeneralizations** ○ Avoid sweeping statements about job creation or global transformation unless directly supported by the sources. ➢ **Eliminate Unsupported Environmental Claims** ○ Replace statements about ozone protection and guaranteed "eco-friendliness" with accurate, source-based information.
✓ **Mostly Accurate but Not Fully Synthesized** ○ Source details appear primarily in separate paragraphs rather than blended or compared. ○ Does not integrate community garden or phytoremediation information (Source #4), missing synthesis opportunities.	➢ **Increase Synthesis Across Sources** ○ Integrate ideas from Source #4 or connect information from multiple sources within single explanations.

Organization: 4

The essay follows a clear organizational structure with a purposeful introduction, logically ordered body paragraphs, and a strong conclusion. The writer groups ideas meaningfully—first explaining sunflower biofuel processes, then discussing broader implications. Transitions support coherence, though some shifts could be smoother, particularly when moving between environmental claims and economic points. A few paragraphs contain blended ideas lacking a clear internal structure, but overall the organizational control is solid.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear, Engaging Introduction With Defined Focus** ○ Introduces sunflowers as a promising biofuel source and frames the essay as explanatory.	➢ **Separate Economic and Environmental Points More Clearly** ○ Place each category in its own paragraph to strengthen focus.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Logical Sequencing of Main Ideas** ○ Follows a reasonable progression: ▪ biofuel production process (gasifier and biodiesel) ▪ agricultural advantages ▪ economic/job implications ▪ environmental considerations ○ Shows intentional structure.	➢
✓ **Effective Paragraph Grouping** ○ Production steps are kept together; economic and environmental implications follow with some separation.	➢
✓ **Functional Transitions** ○ Uses transitions like "In the midwest region…" and "From a non-technological perspective…" to move between ideas.	➢ **Add More Explicit Organizational Signals** ○ Use transitions like "economically," "environmentally," or "at the industrial scale" to clarify shifts.
✓ **Conclusion Provides Closure** ○ Summarizes key points and emphasizes future potential: "renewable approach… that transforms acres of land into self sustainable, renewable energy."	➢ **Enhance Conclusion With Synthesis** ○ Summarize how biofuel production connects to both economic and environmental implications, not just future potential.
✓ **Minor Structural Weaknesses** ○ Some paragraphs mix unrelated ideas (e.g., ozone claims with cost and job creation). ○ Occasional sudden shifts disrupt flow slightly.	➢ **Refine Internal Structure of Paragraphs** ○ Start each paragraph with a clear topic sentence that previews its main idea.

Voice: 3

The voice is engaged and at times compelling, but it shifts inconsistently between explanatory and persuasive tones. Some statements adopt an advocacy stance ("it's unmistakably time to take action"), and other moments rely on dramatic language or unverified claims. Although the writer's enthusiasm is clear, the tone occasionally undermines the objective, academic purpose of expository writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Clear Engagement With Topic** ○ Expression such as "highly diverse plant" and "source worthy of consideration" show interest.	➢
✓ **Inconsistent Explanatory Tone** ○ Persuasive or evaluative phrases appear: ▪ "The facts speak for themselves…" ▪ "It's unmistakably time to take action…" ▪ "Hundreds if not thousands of job opportunities…"	➢ **Maintain a Consistent Expository Tone** ○ Replace persuasive or emotional phrasing with factual, evidence-based statements.
✓ **Overly Dramatic or Emotional Phrasing** ○ Claims like "would not damage the atmosphere or destroy the ozone" are not sourced and add dramatic flair rather than informational tone.	➢ **Remove Unsupported Assertions** ○ Statements about ozone or dramatic environmental effects should either be removed or grounded in evidence.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Some Academic Voice Present** ○ Provides accurate explanations of biomass pellet production and energy output.	➢ **Increase Use of Academic Language** ○ Keep explanations objective and neutral.
✓ **Audience Awareness Uneven** ○ Some explanations are clearly aimed at informing, while others shift toward convincing or warning the reader.	➢ **Strengthen Audience Awareness** ○ Write for an educated audience seeking understanding, not to be convinced.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is generally clear, academic, and context-appropriate. The writer uses technical vocabulary accurately ("gasifier," "fuel pellets," "biomass"), and employs a formal register for most of the essay. However, occasional exaggeration, broad claims, and unsupported environmental terminology weaken precision.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Appropriate Use of Technical Terms** ○ "Fuel pellets," "biomass," "gasifier chamber," "sunflower seed oil," "harvest season."	➢
✓ **Mostly Precise Academic Language** ○ "Higher income," "renewable resource," "self-sustainable energy."	➢
✓ **Some Vague or Exaggerated Phrasing** ○ "Hundreds if not thousands of optimal job opportunities." ○ "Eco-friendly… would not destroy the ozone." ○ Phrases like "the facts speak for themselves" reduce precision.	➢ **Refine Exaggerated Statements** ○ Replace speculative or dramatic phrases with precise, evidence-supported language.
✓ **Mostly Clear, Targeted Vocabulary** ○ Correctly describes agricultural and technological processes.	➢ **Use More Specific Connective Language** ○ Clarify relationships with terms like "therefore," "consequently," or "in contrast."
✓ **Limited Integration of Discipline-Specific Economic Terms** ○ Could include more terminology such as "operational costs," "energy production output," "cost-benefit," or "market demand."	➢ **Increase Precision in Economic Vocabulary** ○ Add terms tied to production costs, energy conversion efficiency, and farmer income.

Sentence Fluency: 4

The writing flows smoothly for the most part, with a mix of sentence structures and generally appropriate pacing. Some sentences are overly long or contain multiple embedded ideas, but overall fluency supports readability.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Strong Variety of Sentence Structures** ○ Mix of simple, compound, and complex sentences, including multi-clause structures.	➢ **Vary Sentence Openers** ➢ • Use adverbial or prepositional openers to add rhythmic variety.
✓ **Generally Smooth Flow** ○ Explanations of biofuel production are clear and well-paced.	➢

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Occasional Dense, Multi-Idea Sentences** ○ Some sentences combine environmental and economic claims in ways that reduce clarity.	➢ **Break Long Sentences Into Clearer Units** ○ Improve pacing by separating multi-idea sentences.
✓ **Transitions Between Sentences Usually Effective** ○ Uses transitional phrasing to connect examples and concepts.	➢ **Use More Specific Internal Transitions** ○ Clarify explanatory relationships by using transitions like “as a result,” “specifically,” “in addition.”
✓ **Minor Areas for Improvement** ○ Breaking up long sentences would improve clarity; a few sentences are wordy or overly complex.	➢ **Simplify Wordy Constructions** ○ Revise overly complex sentences to maintain clarity.

Conventions: 4

Conventions are mostly accurate with only minor errors. Grammar, punctuation, and capitalization are generally correct. Some complex sentences require additional commas, and a few awkward constructions appear, but meaning remains consistently clear.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Grammar** ○ No significant spelling errors; academic vocabulary is correctly used.	➢ **Continue Developing Proofreading Habits** ○ Maintain high level of conventions accuracy but check for consistent comma use.
✓ **Mostly Strong Sentence Boundary Control** ○ Only a few sentences feel overly long or uneven.	➢ **Add Commas to Improve Clarity in Complex Sentences** ○ Review multi-clause sentences for appropriate punctuation.
✓ **Minor Punctuation Errors** ○ Occasional missing commas after introductory elements or before conjunctions.	➢
✓ **Clear Meaning Throughout** ○ Even with small errors, the writing remains understandable and coherent.	➢ **Revise Awkward Phrasing** ○ Adjust wordy or unclear constructions to improve accuracy.

Use of Sources: 4

The essay uses multiple sources accurately and purposefully. Most source details are correct and relevant, and the writer provides explanation following evidence. However, attribution is not always explicit, some claims mix source facts with unsupported statements, and opportunities for deeper synthesis remain.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Use of Multiple Sources** ○ Source #1: Sunflower oil research and cost-effective energy exploration. ○ Source #3: Facility's biomass pellet system, gasifier chamber, and energy output. ○ Source #3: Farmer income and agricultural adoption. ○ The writer integrates these details effectively.	➢
✓ **Explanation Follows Evidence** ○ After describing pellet fuel production, the writer explains why it reduces reliance on nonrenewable fuels.	➢ **Clarify Economic Evidence** ○ Use Source #3's details on operational cost savings to strengthen analysis.
✓ **Missing or Inconsistent Attribution** ○ Evidence appears without clear signal phrases ("According to Source __").	➢ **Add Explicit Attribution** ○ Use signal phrases consistently to identify source-based evidence.
✓ **Some Unsupported Claims Mixed With Source Details** ○ Statements about ozone safety and "hundreds of job opportunities" are not grounded in sources.	➢ **Ensure All Claims Are Source-Supported** ○ Remove or revise assertions not grounded in the texts.
✓ **Limited Use of Source #4** ○ The essay omits phytoremediation and community garden details, which could strengthen synthesis.	➢ **Incorporate Missing Sources** ○ Integrate relevant information from Source #4 to deepen synthesis.

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 Enhancement

- Teach students how to expand economic implications using cost/benefit analysis, production efficiency, and community-level impacts.

Evidence Accuracy & Verification Routine

- Students cross-check environmental and economic claims with source text to avoid unsupported assertions.

Purpose and Mode Clarity Mini-Lesson

- Compare expository vs. argumentative tone; highlight how language choices shift purpose.

Source Synthesis Practice

- Guide students in merging two or more sources within a paragraph to show relationships and deepen explanation.

Precision Language Workshop

- Encourage replacing broad phrases ("hundreds of jobs," "eco-friendly") with discipline-specific terminology from the sources.

Organization:

Expository Blueprint Lesson

- Teach students to plan essays using explicit categories (process → economic impact → community implications).

Topic Sentence + Transition Workshop

- Model how topic sentences signal organizational structure.

Conclusion Synthesis Routine

- Practice crafting conclusions that unify both elements of the task.

Voice:

Voice Calibration Using Mentor Texts

- Compare segments of this essay to high-quality informational texts to show tone differences.

Purpose-Focused Revision Exercises

- Students practice turning persuasive statements into explanatory ones.

Academic Voice Mini-Lesson

- Teach strategies for maintaining objectivity and professionalism.

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 Workshops

- Students revise sentences using more discipline-specific vocabulary.

Source Vocabulary Extraction

- Pull key economic and technical terms from the sources for accurate integration.

Semantic Accuracy Mini-Lesson

- Teach how imprecise vocabulary alters scientific credibility.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Combining and Splitting Practice

- Teach students how to restructure sentences for clarity and flow.

Fluency Read-Aloud Routine

- Students listen for places where sentence rhythm breaks down.

Transition Function Lessons

- Teach varied types of transitions to strengthen explanatory clarity.

Conventions:

Advanced Punctuation Mini-Lesson

- Focus on comma placement in adverbial clauses and compound sentences.

Proofreading Stations

- Students rotate through tasks focused on punctuation, grammar, and clarity.

Sentence Boundary Workshop

- Practice identifying and correcting overly long or fused sentences.

Use of Sources:

Attribution Sentence Frame Practice

- Teach students consistent signal-phrase patterns for source use.

Evidence Verification Routine

- Students trace each claim back to the source to ensure accuracy.

Synthesis Paragraph Modeling

- Demonstrate multi-source integration within a single explanatory paragraph.