High School – Expository Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 2

The essay presents a general topic focus on sunflowers, communities, and farmers, but it does not clearly address the two required components of the task: (1) explaining how sunflower seeds can be used to create biofuel, and (2) explaining the economic implications of that process. The writing relies heavily on unsupported assumptions, partial references, and misinterpretations of the sources. Explanations are vague, focus on community gardening more than biofuel production, and lack clarity about how biofuel is actually made. Source use is present but often incomplete or inaccurate, and the economic discussion consists mostly of speculation. Overall, ideas are loosely related to the prompt but not sufficiently explained, developed, or supported.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Thesis Is Unclear and Does Not Address Both Task Components** ○ Opening paragraph mentions communities planting sunflowers and "cheaper ways to produce fuel," but does not: ▪ identify how sunflower seeds become biofuel ▪ identify specific economic implications ○ The essay reads more like a general overview of enthusiasm for sunflowers rather than an explanatory essay.	➢ **Clarify and Strengthen the Thesis** ○ Clearly state *how* sunflower seeds produce biofuel and *what economic effects* this process creates.
✓ **Key Concept Biofuel Production Is Not Explained** ○ The essay never describes: ▪ oil extraction ▪ pressing seeds ▪ the pellet/gasifier system ▪ biomass conversion ○ These core processes are required for explanatory clarity.	➢ **Explain the Biofuel Production Process Accurately** ○ Include source-based details such as: ➢ – pressing seeds for oil (Source 2) ➢ – pelletizing hulls and using a gasifier (Source 3) ➢ – student biodiesel production (Source 2)
✓ **Economic Implications Are Implied but Not Explained** ○ States farmers "were promised a chance at being paid more," but does not explain: ▪ how income changes ▪ what economic risks exist ▪ how fuel production affects local or national economy ○ Mentions "cheaper, cleaner… healthier ways to produce things" with no source evidence or economic reasoning.	➢ **Develop Economic Reasoning With Source Support** ○ Use Source #3 to explain farmer income, energy cost savings, and facility-scale efficiency. ○ Explain community-level implications using Source #4.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Inaccurate or Speculative Use of Source Information** ○ The Dove Creek section is based on Source #3 but: ▪ misrepresents the timeline ▪ omits the actual biofuel production process ▪ exaggerates risk ("lose it all") not stated in the source ○ Phoenix community garden example is used, but the essay: ▪ does not explain how the garden's oil is processed ▪ incorrectly claims they "create oil and then produce a biofuel" without citing any methods or factual details.	➢ **Avoid Speculation and Unsupported Claims** ○ Replace statements like "lose it all" or "something very great" with source-accurate explanations.
✓ **Vague, General Statements Replace Explanation** ○ "People are beginning to take on this 'green' thinking." ○ "Sunflowers are showing signs of becoming something very great." ○ These statements do not advance understanding.	➢ **Stay Focused on Explanatory Purpose** ○ Remove opinion-based or persuasive language and replace it with clear, factual explanation.
✓ **Minimal Synthesis Across Sources** ○ The essay mentions community gardens and farmers but does not explain relationships among the sources or connect them to biofuel creation.	➢ **Expand and Clarify Source Integration** ○ Integrate multiple sources within each major idea rather than summarizing them separately.

Organization: 2

The essay includes an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion, but the structure lacks a clear organizational plan aligned to the task. Ideas are loosely grouped, sequencing is inconsistent, transitions are basic or missing, and paragraphs blend unrelated or partially developed ideas. The piece does not present a logical explanatory progression.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Introduction Does Not Preview the Required Concepts** ○ Mentions community gardens and cheaper energy but does not introduce: ▪ how sunflower seeds become biofuel ▪ what economic implications will be explained	➢ **Add a Clear Preview to the Introduction** ○ Identify the two explanatory components: biofuel process + economic implications.
✓ **Body Paragraphs Are Loosely Structured** ○ The Dove Creek section mixes farmer risk, community identity, and speculative outcomes without explaining the pellet or gasifier system (Source 3). ○ The Phoenix garden paragraph jumps between sunflowers as art, community gatherings, and claims about biofuel creation without process details.	➢ **Organize Body Paragraphs by Concept** ○ Group information into sections such as "How Sunflower Biofuel Is Produced," "Economic Impacts," and "Community Examples."

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Transitions Are Minimal or Missing** ○ Many paragraphs begin abruptly with no link to previous ideas. ○ The shift from Dove Creek to Phoenix is sudden and not framed as connected examples.	➢ **Add Purposeful Transitions** ○ Use transitions that signal relationships ("for example," "economically," "in contrast").
✓ **Ideas Lack Logical Sequencing** ○ The essay mentions sunflower fields, then farmer stress, then community gathering, then "farmers being paid more," without organizing around clear explanatory categories.	➢
✓ **Conclusion Restates Personal Support Rather Than Synthesizing Explanatory Points** ○ Closes with, "Sunflowers are something every community should consider planting…" which is persuasive and not explanatory.	➢ **Revise the Conclusion for Synthesis** ○ Summarize how examples from the sources demonstrate the biofuel process and related economic implications.

Voice: 2

The voice is sincere but inconsistent with expository expectations. Tone frequently becomes persuasive, emotional, or speculative. Audience awareness is limited, and the writer relies on unsupported predictions and personal judgments rather than objective explanation.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Conversational and Emotional Tone** ○ Uses expressions like "lose it all," "quite stressful," "the future for sunflowers looked bright," which reflect personal response rather than neutral explanation.	➢ **Use an Objective, Neutral Tone** ○ Remove rhetorical or persuasive statements and rely on source-based explanation.
✓ **Shifts Between Modes** ○ At times the writing aims to persuade communities to plant sunflowers: "Sunflowers are something every community should consider planting."	➢ **Maintain Expository Purpose** ○ Focus on explaining, not convincing or evaluating.
✓ **Limited Audience Awareness** ○ Focuses on personal impressions ("Something every community should consider…") instead of presenting research-based information.	➢ **Increase Audience Awareness** ○ Write as though informing readers who want to understand the biofuel process and economic implications.
✓ **Speculative and Unsupported Assertions** ○ Predicts disaster outcomes, high financial risk, and future potential with no source grounding.	➢ **Eliminate Unsupported Predictions** ○ Replace speculative claims with evidence from the sources.

Word Choice: 2

Word choice is frequently vague, informal, or exaggerated. Some technical vocabulary is present, but inaccurate or unsupported terms undermine clarity. Language does not consistently meet high school expectations for precision in explanatory writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Vague and General Language** ○ "Better ways to create cheaper ways to produce fuel," "something very great," "cheaper and healthier," "change their world."	➢ **Replace Vague Words With Specific Details** ➢ • Avoid generalities like "something great" and use concrete information from sources.
✓ **Informal or Conversational Wording** ○ "This could be quite stressful," "lose it all," "something… every community should consider."	➢ **Remove Informal or Emotional Wording** ○ Maintain an academic tone appropriate for expository writing.
✓ **Incorrect or Unsupported Word Use** ○ Claims about pollution, health, or safety not supported by sources.	➢ **Correct Misused Terms** ○ Check claims about pollution and crop risk against source information.
✓ **Limited Discipline-Specific Vocabulary** ○ Little use of terms such as "gasification," "biofuel conversion," "operational costs," or "energy output."	➢ **Use Precise Technical Vocabulary** ○ Incorporate terms like "biodiesel," "pressing," "pelletization," "gasifier," "energy output."

Sentence Fluency: 2

Fluency is weakened by repetitive structures, awkward phrasing, and frequent run-on tendencies. Sentences combine unrelated ideas or rely on simple constructions without variation. Pacing is uneven and occasionally confusing.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Structures** ○ Multiple sentences begin with the same pattern ("Sunflowers can…," "It is…").	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings** ○ Use introductory phrases, clauses, or transitions to diversify rhythm.
✓ **Awkward or Unclear Constructions** ○ "Creating a biofuel, making it cheaper and healthier," "Farmers were promised a chance at being paid more… then forced to retire."	➢ **Revise Awkward Phrasing** ○ Rework unclear or overloaded constructions.
✓ **Run-on Sentences** ○ Several sentences combine multiple unrelated clauses without clear boundaries.	➢ **Break Up Long Sentences** ○ Separate multi-idea or run-on sentences to strengthen clarity.
✓ **Limited Use of Internal Transitions** ○ Few transitions clarify relationships among ideas within paragraphs.	➢ **Add Internal Transitions for Clarity** ○ Use transitions that articulate cause/effect, contrast, or examples.

Conventions: 2

Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar reduce clarity. While meaning is still understandable, the number and variety of errors significantly weaken the professionalism of the writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Errors** ○ "Continuation," "sustainabley," "harstested," "consistency," "bio-fuel" (inconsistently hyphenated).	➢ **Correct Spelling Errors** ○ Use spellcheck and proofreading routines to correct high-frequency mistakes.
✓ **Punctuation Errors** ○ Missing commas, run-ons, and incorrect sentence boundaries.	➢ **Review Punctuation Rules** ○ Ensure correct comma placement in complex sentences.
✓ **Grammar Issues** ○ Incorrect verb forms and agreement issues ("farmers were promised… then forced to retire" used inaccurately).	➢ **Fix Sentence Boundary Issues** ○ Break fused sentences into clear, complete sentences.
✓ **Capitalization Inconsistencies** ○ Inconsistent capitalization of "Sunflower."	➢ **Check Grammar and Capitalization** ○ Maintain consistent and standard usage throughout.

Use of Sources: 2

The essay references multiple sources, but use is incomplete, inaccurate, or poorly integrated. Many claims misrepresent or only loosely connect to the sources. Key information about the biofuel production process is missing, and economic reasoning is mostly speculative.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Some Referencing of Sources, but Inaccurate or Incomplete** ○ Mentions Dove Creek (Source 3) but does not describe pelletization, hull processing, or the gasifier system. ○ Mentions Phoenix community garden (Source 4) but incorrectly states they "produce biofuel" with no supporting details.	➢ **Correct Misinterpretations** ○ Revisit Source 3 to ensure your claims about Dove Creek farmers are accurate.
✓ **Missing Core Production Details From Sources** ○ No mention of seed pressing, oil extraction, or biodiesel process (Sources 1 and 2). ○ No accurate use of energy output or facility-scale data (Source 3).	➢ **Use Accurate, Detailed Information From All Four Sources** ○ Include seed pressing, biodiesel creation, pellet fuel production, and energy output.
✓ **No Explicit Attribution** ○ Sources appear indirectly but are never identified or referenced using attribution phrases.	➢ **Increase Explicit Attribution** ○ Use signal phrases to introduce source-based evidence consistently.
✓ **Little to No Synthesis** ○ Sources appear separately and are not connected to each other in explanation.	➢ **Build Synthesis Across Sources** ○ Connect community gardens, industrial processes, and agricultural economics to form a cohesive explanation.

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-Part Thesis Workshop

- Teach students to include both *biofuel process* and *economic implications* explicitly.

Biofuel Process Modeling

- Use diagrams or short texts to help students explain pressing, pelletizing, and gasification clearly.

Economic Reasoning Mini-Lessons

- Model how to explain cost savings, farmer incentives, and community-level benefits using evidence.

Evidence Mapping Routine

- Have students match every claim in their drafts to the specific source lines they come from.

Expository Purpose Clarification

- Practice distinguishing between “explaining” and “persuading” using examples from the draft.

Organization:

Body Paragraph Mapping

- Use graphic organizers to help students align paragraphs with the task structure.

Transition Function Mini-Lesson

- Teach how transitions can clarify logical relationships rather than simply connect sentences.

Conclusion Synthesis Workshop

- Practice summarizing the conceptual relationships among main ideas.

Voice:

Tone Calibration Using Mentor Texts

- Compare this draft with sample expository texts to highlight shifts away from neutrality.

Purpose Check Routine

- Teach students to label each sentence as “explain,” “persuade,” or “speculate.”

Audience Awareness Lessons

- Practice revising sentences for an academic audience.

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 Workshop

- Students revise vague statements using discipline-specific vocabulary.

Source Vocabulary Extraction

- Pull key terms from Sources 1–4 to support precise wording.

Semantic Accuracy Instruction

- Teach the difference between scientific terminology and general language.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Boundary Workshop

- Practice identifying and fixing run-ons and fused sentences.

Sentence Variety Exercises

- Students rewrite sentences using different structures and openers.

Transition Function Lessons

- Teach students how transitions improve clarity and coherence.

Conventions:

Targeted Conventions Mini-Lessons

- Focus on common errors seen in this piece (spelling, run-ons, capitalization).

Proofreading Stations

- Students rotate through punctuation, spelling, and grammar correction tasks.

Grammar Modeling & Practice

- Provide examples of corrected sentences for revision practice.

Use of Sources:

Source-Evidence Mapping Routine

- Students practice locating each claim in the sources to ensure accuracy.

Attribution Sentence Frame Practice

- Provide students with “According to Source __…” templates.

Synthesis Modeling

- Guide students in combining multiple sources within a paragraph to deepen explanation.