Grade HS – Personal Narrative Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task Prompt: Your class has been discussing different types of adventurous activities: kayaking, surfing, hiking, and many other hobbies. You are given three resources about geocaching, a hobby described as involving hiking and treasure hunting.

Write a story about your own adventures of geocaching. In your story, tell what happens when you find something interesting during one of your treasure hunts. When writing your story, find ways to use information and details about geocaching from the sources to improve your story.

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

Ideas and Content: 5

The narrative is clear, focused, and well-developed, with purposeful details that create a strong sense of place, character motivation, and geocaching-specific actions. The storyline contains meaningful insight beyond the sequence of events.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear, Focused Purpose** ○ The story establishes a coherent narrative goal ("log one geocache before meeting friends for lunch") and sustains focus. ○ The narrator's motivation ("curiosity grabbed me immediately") provides a clear through-line.
✓ **Well-Chosen, Relevant Details** ○ Geocaching terminology and processes appear naturally: "GC77KD1," "muggles," "GPS… jittered," and coded clues. ○ Details such as the "scratched-in date: 1978" and the hidden canister contribute directly to plot movement.
✓ **Strong Development of Setting, Plot, and Character** ○ The setting is developed with purposeful description ("drooping tomato cages… rusty fence"). ○ Plot unfolds logically through sequential discoveries: the birdhouse, the knot-hole, the hidden plank.
✓ **Insight Beyond Surface-Level Events** ○ The reflection ("a different way of looking at the world") extends meaning beyond the physical search. ○ Insight gives the experience relevance beyond the literal events.
✓ **Effective Use of Narrative Techniques** ○ Pacing builds with each clue ("'You are within 10 meters.' Game on."). ○ Reflection at the end reinforces the narrator's understanding.

Organization: 5

The narrative is well-structured, easy to follow, and uses meaningful sequencing, transitions, and closure. The beginning is inviting, pacing is controlled, and the ending provides a satisfying sense of resolution.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Strong Beginning that Establishes Context** ○ The opening situates the narrator, task, and motivation clearly: "I didn't expect anything unusual… My goal was simple: log one geocache…" ○ The introduction invites the reader into the story with curiosity built around the new listing "The Silent Watcher."
✓ **Logical Progression of Events** ○ Events unfold in a coherent, chronological sequence: opening the app, walking to the garden, noticing the birdhouse, solving clues, and discovering the final insight. ○ Clue-based movement ("You are within 10 meters") acts as natural structural markers.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Effective Transitions** ○ Transitional phrasing moves the reader smoothly: “At first glance,” “My phone buzzed,” “Turning slowly,” “Opening the canister,” “Walking home…” ○ These transitions clarify relationships between steps in the search.
✓ **Pacing Supports the Plot** ○ Shorter action-focused lines (“Game on.”) increase pacing during moments of tension. ○ Descriptive lines slow the pace during clue analysis, keeping the narrative balanced.
✓ **Satisfying Closure** ○ The ending connects the experience to personal meaning: “I found myself studying the neighborhood in a new way.” ○ Reflection ties back to the task and reinforces a logical ending point.

Voice: 6

The voice is expressive, consistent, and well-suited to the narrator’s experience. Tone is engaging, sincere, and aware of audience.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Consistent, Engaging Point of View** ○ First-person narration remains steady and clear throughout: “My pulse jumped,” “I couldn’t help smiling.” ○ The narrator’s personality emerges through reactions and observations.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ The narrative anticipates what readers need to understand (e.g., explaining muggles, describing the GPS arrow). ✓ The tone is inviting and conversational without being overly casual.
✓ **Expressive and Lively Style** ○ Phrases like “curiosity grabbed me,” “Game on,” and “quiet thrill” add energy and personal voice. ○ Details reflect emotional involvement in the search process.
✓ **Appropriateness of Tone** ○ Suspense and discovery are supported through tone choices—curiosity, amusement, and reflective insight.

Word Choice: 5

Vocabulary is specific, vivid, and well-chosen, enhancing description and clarity without overpowering the narrative.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Specific and Accurate Word Choice** ○ Words like “jittered,” “wedged,” “narrow door,” and “camouflaged film canister” clearly describe the scene. ○ Terminology such as “muggles,” “coordinates,” and “vantage point” is used correctly.
✓ **Sensory and Descriptive Language** ○ • Descriptions such as “sky hung low and gray,” “drooping tomato cages,” and “peeling paint” evoke strong visuals.
✓ **Figurative or Fresh Expression** ○ Phrases like “curiosity grabbed me” and “quiet thrill” demonstrate expressive, original language.
✓ **Effective Use of Narrative Vocabulary** ○ Word choice supports mood and pacing, especially during clue discovery and suspense.

Sentence Fluency: 5

Sentences flow smoothly with varied structure, natural rhythm, and well-controlled transitions.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Smooth, Fluent Rhythm** ○ Sentences glide naturally: "My phone buzzed: 'You are within 10 meters.' Game on." ✓ The narrative is easy to read aloud.
✓ **Varied Sentence Structures** ○ Uses a mix of complex, simple, and descriptive sentences: "Turning slowly, I tried to imagine what the birdhouse 'gazed' at."
✓ **Control of Complex Syntax** ○ Multi-clause sentences are handled clearly and cleanly without confusion.
✓ **Effective Combinations of Short and Long Sentences** ○ Short sentences increase tension ("Game on."), while longer ones build description and mood.

Conventions: 4

Conventions are strong and errors are minimal. Grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling support clarity and flow.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Strong Command of Conventions** ○ Sentences are complete and punctuated correctly, including dialogue and internal thoughts.
✓ **Accurate Punctuation** ○ Commas, dashes, and quotation marks are used effectively: "'You are within 10 meters.'"
✓ **Correct Spelling and Capitalization** ○ Proper nouns ("GC77KD1," "GPS") and general vocabulary are spelled accurately.
✓ **Grammar Supports Meaning** ○ Verb tenses are consistent; pronouns are used correctly.