Grade HS – Personal Narrative Writing Work Sample: Approaching

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: 3

The narrative presents a clear sequence of events and a general purpose, but development is limited and details are often vague or repetitive. While the writer includes basic geocaching actions, the ideas remain surface-level, with minimal elaboration, unclear insight, and occasional off-topic or loosely connected details. The writing shows a basic attempt at storytelling without deeper development.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Purpose and Main Idea Are Present but Not Well Developed** o The narrator's goal ("a new cache popped up… I figured why not") establishes purpose but with minimal context or motivation. o The main idea of searching for a cache remains consistent but does not expand meaningfully.
✓ **Details Are Present but Often General, Limited, or Repetitive** o Many descriptions are vague: "old garages," "trash cans," "cloudy but also bright," "pieces of wood everywhere." o Key elements like the hiding spots, containers, and environment are mentioned but not meaningfully developed.
✓ **Some Relevant Details, but Development Is Uneven** o Mentions of "GPS kept jumping around," "plastic container taped with black tape," and geocaching notes show relevance. o However, the significance of clues ("look down not up") or the "meeting spot for kids" is not explored or connected to the narrator.
✓ **Predictable and Surface-Level Plot** o Events follow a simple pattern with minimal complexity: walk to location, find container, follow note, find second container. • No deeper conflict, obstacle, or emotional layer elevates the storyline.
✓ **Limited or Shallow Insight** o Reflection at the end is brief and general: "it felt like it had a story I didn't know before." o Insight is not connected to character growth or a broader idea.

Organization: 3

The narrative is organized in a generally logical order and can be followed without confusion, but the structure feels basic and sometimes uneven. Transitions are simple or missing, pacing is flat, and the beginning and ending are present but minimally developed. The narrative shows an attempt at organization, but it lacks the smooth flow and crafted structure found in higher-scoring work.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Recognizable Beginning** ○ Opens with the narrator explaining why they tried the cache: "I wasn't planning to go geocaching that day…" ○ Introduction is clear but lacks engaging context or setup.
✓ **Basic Sequencing** ○ Events occur in chronological order: walking to the alley to finding the first container to following the note to finding the second tin. ○ Sequencing is simple and occasionally abrupt ("When I finally got within about 10 meters…").
✓ **Limited Transitions** ○ Some transitions are present ("When I got there," "When I finally got within about 10 meters"), but others rely on simple progression or lack connective tissue. ○ Frequent use of "when" and "I" creates redundancy.
✓ **Pacing Is Flat and Predictable** ○ Events unfold at a steady pace without variation, tension, or emphasis. ○ Key discoveries (like the second container) are delivered quickly without buildup.
✓ **Ending Offers Minimal Closure** ○ Final reflection ("still ugly and muddy… but it felt like it had a story") provides closure but lacks depth or thematic connection.

Voice: 3

The voice is partially present but inconsistent. While the narrator tells the story in a conversational tone, the writing lacks emotional depth, clarity of point of view, and strong engagement with the audience. Moments of personality appear, but they are limited, and the tone sometimes drifts toward flat or mechanical phrasing.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Mostly Consistent Point of View** ○ First-person narration is steady ("I wasn't planning to go geocaching…"). ○ Perspective is consistent, but personal insight is limited.
✓ **Some Awareness of Audience** ○ Simple explanations of clues and objects show a basic awareness of what readers need. ○ However, meaning is sometimes vague ("weather was kind of weird").
✓ **Limited Expressiveness** ○ Tone is casual but not strongly engaging; language is plain ("nothing dramatic about it," "kind of annoying"). ○ Few moments reveal deeper emotions or thoughts.
✓ **Underdeveloped Emotional Connection** ○ Reactions to events are brief ("I kind of hesitated," "I had nothing else to do"). ○ Lack of internal thinking restricts connection with the reader.

Word Choice: 3

Vocabulary is functional but imprecise. Many words are general or repetitive, and sensory or vivid language is limited. Errors in spelling and word use further weaken clarity. The narrative communicates meaning but lacks precision, imagery, and deliberate phrasing.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **General, Imprecise Words** o Frequent use of vague words: "weird," "kind of dramatic," "something shiny," "pieces of wood everywhere." o Word choice often relies on general language rather than specific description.
✓ **Limited Sensory Detail** o Some visual details appear ("rust around the edges"), but sensory coverage is minimal.
✓ **Frequent Clichés or Basic Phrasing** o Expressions like "figured why not," "nothing dramatic," and "I had nothing else to do" feel generic.
✓ **Incorrect or Inconsistent Word Use** o Errors weaken word choice clarity ("where" instead of "were," "theres"). o Missing words or incorrect forms limit precision.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are understandable but often choppy, repetitive, or awkward. The narrative relies heavily on similar sentence beginnings and structures. Frequent grammatical errors and run-ons disrupt fluency, and the rhythm lacks variety. While readable, the writing shows limited control.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Structure** o Many sentences begin with "I," "It," or "When," creating monotony. o Few complex or varied structures are used.
✓ **Frequent Awkward or Choppy Sentences** o Examples include: "The weather was kind of weird," and "It got narrower, and the ground dipped lower…" o Run-ons appear ("Walking home I kept thinking… still ugly and muddy…").
✓ **Limited Rhythm and Flow** o Sentences do not build momentum or tension; pacing feels flat. o Lack of syntactic variety reduces expressiveness.
✓ **Errors Impact Fluency** o Missing commas and capitalization errors create uneven reading.

Conventions: 2

Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage occur throughout the narrative. While meaning is generally understandable, the frequency of errors disrupts clarity. The writing demonstrates limited control of conventions and does not meet the expectations of consistent accuracy.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Frequent Errors in Spelling** o Examples include "theres," "dont," "go to close," "where new." o Errors recur and distract the reader.
✓ **Inconsistent Grammar Usage** o Missing commas and run-on sentences ("Walking home I kept thinking… still ugly and muddy"). o Incorrect verb forms and inconsistent phrasing ("the garages where new").

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Weak Punctuation Control** o Missing apostrophes (“theres,” “dont”). o Some sentences contain splice-like constructions.
✓ **Errors Affect Readability** o The frequency of mistakes requires the reader to slow down to interpret meaning.