Grade HS – Personal Narrative Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 2

The narrative attempts to tell a story about searching for a geocache, but the purpose is loosely developed, ideas are unclear or repetitive, and details often lack relevance or depth. Much of the writing relies on general description or off-topic observations, and the "interesting" discovery required by the task is underdeveloped. Insight is minimal, and the ending does not clearly connect to a meaningful realization or experience.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Purpose Is Vague or Minimally Developed** ○ The narrator's motive for geocaching changes mid-sentence: "I was gonna go… but then I didn't really feel like it… but then my cousin text me…" ○ The purpose of the search is not revisited or deepened throughout the narrative.
✓ **Details Are Often Too General, Repetitive, or Off-Topic** ○ Many descriptions lack specificity: "trash bags all over," "a bunch of sticks," "some metal pipe," "just bugs." ○ Several observations do not advance the geocaching storyline (e.g., old noodles in a takeout container, kicking a pipe, slipping and getting mud on pants).
✓ **Limited Development of Events** ○ The search consists mostly of false leads ("thought I seen a plastic box… just a takeout container," "thought maybe it was the pipe… it was just a pipe"). ○ The final discovery ("cache moved try agen later") receives little elaboration and does not connect meaningfully to the rest of the experience.
✓ **Ideas Rely on General Observations Rather Than Specific Narrative Detail** ○ Statements like "I wasn't sure why," "didn't look like any place someone would hide something," and "I kept getting lost" show limited development. ○ No deeper conflict, complication, or personal reflection emerges.
✓ **Insight Is Minimal or Missing** ○ The ending ("didn't feel like a real hunt… probly was all messed up") offers no real understanding or reflection tied to geocaching or the narrator's experience.

Organization: 2

The narrative follows a loose chronological order, but the structure is uneven and sometimes confusing. Transitions are repetitive or missing, pacing is flat, and the beginning does not clearly establish direction. The ending lacks purposeful closure and simply stops without a developed resolution. Overall, the writing shows minimal organizational control.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Beginning Is Present but Weakly Developed** o The story starts abruptly with shifting motivation ("was gonna go… didn't really feel like it… cousin text me"), creating an unfocused opening. o No clear setup of setting, narrator goal, or context.
✓ **Sequencing Is Inconsistent** o Events occur in order but with jumps that hinder clarity ("I walked more but I wasn't sure why," then immediately "Then I saw this metal pipe…"). o Several key actions are rushed or under-explained.
✓ **Limited or Repetitive Transitions** o Frequent reliance on "then," "after that," or "I walked" creates monotony. o Missing transitions make some shifts abrupt ("I slipped once and got mud on my pants. By the time I got home…").
✓ **Pacing Lacks Control** o All events are told at nearly the same speed, whether the narrator is interpreting clues, wandering, or encountering obstacles. o No buildup to the moment of discovery.
✓ **Weak or Underdeveloped Ending** o The story ends abruptly with dissatisfaction ("didn't even care about the cache anymore"), offering no resolution or deeper reflection. o The ending does not connect back to the task or to any internal change.

Voice: 4

The narrative shows some personality through casual, conversational language, but the voice is inconsistent and often flat. Emotional reactions are brief or vague, and the narrator's perspective lacks depth. The tone sometimes drifts into disengagement or unclear intention, which weakens the reader's connection to the story.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Inconsistent Engagement** o Statements like "I didn't really feel like it" and "I wasn't sure why" signal a lack of investment in the experience. o The voice fluctuates between mildly humorous and indifferent.
✓ **Limited Audience Awareness** o Explanations are unclear or incomplete ("arrow thing kept spinning," "kind of dry except when it rains"). o The narrator assumes the reader understands slang or incomplete references.
✓ **Minimal Emotional Depth** o Emotional reactions are simple ("annoying," "made me mad," "kinda wanted to go home"). o Few internal thoughts add understanding or connection.
✓ **Flat or Mechanical Tone at Times** o The narration reads like a list of events without reflection or variation in tone. o The ending expresses frustration but no deeper takeaway.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is general, vague, and sometimes incorrect. Descriptions rely heavily on basic phrasing, and some incorrect or informal word uses reduce clarity. There is little sensory detail or vivid imagery, and repeated vague words weaken the effectiveness of the narrative.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **General or Vague Vocabulary** o Frequent nonspecific words: "weird," "kind of dry," "something shiny," "a bunch of sticks." o Phrasing lacks clear description or imagery.
✓ **Very Limited Sensory Detail** o Only one mild sensory reference ("old noodles… smelled bad"). o No sound, touch, or visual specifics that enhance setting.
✓ **Informal or Incorrect Word Use** o Errors such as "probly," "theres," "I seen," and "to close" weaken clarity. o Slang ("lol") does not support meaning or tone.
✓ **Repetition of Basic Words** o Repeated use of "just," "kinda," "then," and "looked" contributes to monotony.

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are often choppy, repetitive, or grammatically incorrect. The narrative relies heavily on similar sentence beginnings and structures, and run-ons or missing punctuation disrupt readability. There is little variety in rhythm or structure.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Frequent Choppy Sentences** o Examples: "It was just a pipe." "Just bugs." "After that I kinda wanted to go home." o Short, abrupt sentences reduce rhythm.
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Beginnings** o Many sentences begin with "I," "Then," "After that," or "It," creating monotony.
✓ **Run-Ons and Punctuation Problems** o "Walking back I kept getting lost because the trees kind of all looked the same." o Missing commas and incorrect joining of ideas weaken flow.
✓ **Limited Structure Variety** o Most sentences follow a simple subject-verb pattern with few complex or compound forms.

Conventions: 4

Errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage are frequent and often interfere with clarity. Many mistakes repeat and indicate lack of control over basic conventions. The piece would require extensive editing to meet grade-level expectations.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Frequent Spelling Errors** o Examples: “probly,” “theres,” “to close,” “agen,” “wasnt,” “dont,” “didnt.”
✓ **Many Grammar Errors** o Incorrect verb forms: “I seen,” “I was gonna go,” “trees kind of all looked the same.” o Subject-verb agreement errors (“garages where new” from earlier sample behavior still appears in tone here).
✓ **Punctuation and Capitalization Issues** o Missing apostrophes (“dont,” “wasnt”). o Missing commas and incorrect sentence boundaries lead to run-ons and unclear meaning.
✓ **Errors Interfere with Clarity** o Multiple errors per paragraph force the reader to pause and interpret meaning.