Grade 7 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Meets

Task: Your science class is completing a class project about invasive plants. Your teacher has given you the topic of non-native plants and why some succeed in new environments while others become nuisances.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an explanatory article** to explain why some non-native plants succeed in new environments while others become nuisances. Using more than one source, select the most relevant information to support your thesis/controlling idea about non-native plants.*

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

Ideas and Content: 4

The essay presents a clear controlling idea about how non-native plants can be both beneficial and harmful. The writing includes accurate details from multiple sources and shows a good understanding of ecological interactions. Some explanations remain general, and the controlling idea is not always stated with precision, but overall development is solid and relevant.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Controlling Idea and Purpose** ○ Establishes a clear idea in the introduction: non-native organisms can thrive and "create an invasive species in a foreign ecosystem." ○ Clarifies purpose early in the second paragraph: "Non-native species are not always harmful, and can actually help maintain diversity in ecosystems." ○ Maintains this purpose throughout, presenting both benefits and problems of non-native species.
✓ **Relevant and Accurate Details** ○ Uses Source 1 accurately: "some species do not grow as fast as others, and can easily be managed so that they don't cause issues." ○ Incorporates relevant examples of non-native but non-problematic species: "tulips, wheat, and apples." ○ Uses data from Source 2 correctly: "22,000 non-native plants in New Zealand, but a total of three extinctions," showing low extinction risk. ○ Uses Source 3 accurately: "a man in North Carolina… bought fifty goats to graze his invasive species covered land."
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ Provides some explanation of ecological impact: if a native plant is disrupted, "the animal will have to move to a new ecosystem to find food." ○ Explains pros and cons: non-native species "can actually help maintain diversity," but can "cause a chain reaction of unfortunate events" when overly aggressive. ○ Some reasoning is broad, such as stating non-native species "help maintain diversity" without explaining the ecological process.
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ Stays focused on the prompt by addressing why some non-native species succeed (long presence, slow growth, easy management) and why others become nuisances (aggressive growth, ecosystem disruption). ○ Occasional generalities occur ("help balance ecosystems," "better understand your ecosystem"), but most ideas remain relevant. ○ Conclusion shifts slightly toward an instructional tone ("I hope you have learned…") but still relates to the topic.

Organization: 4

The essay has a clear introduction, logically ordered paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph that restates key ideas. Some paragraphs contain multiple ideas that could be separated for clarity, and transitions are functional rather than precise, but overall structure effectively supports understanding.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Clear and Purposeful Introduction** ○ Opens with an engaging hook about humans unintentionally transporting critters across continents. ○ Establishes the topic and sets up the contrast between helpful and harmful non-native species.
✓ **Logical Sequence of Ideas** ○ Follows a logical structure: introduction, benefits of non-native species, harms of non-native species, solutions, conclusion. ○ Each paragraph builds on the previous one, supporting the reader's comprehension.
✓ **Transitions Support Flow** ○ Uses transitions such as "Although these non-native species can be harmful" and "As non-native species move into new ecosystems…" to guide the reader. ○ Some transitions shift abruptly, such as moving directly from ecosystem damage to goats managing kudzu without signaling the change in focus.
✓ **Conclusion Provides Closure** ○ Concludes by summarizing key ideas: "it is clear the pros and cons of non-native species." ○ Ends with broader statements about understanding ecosystems, which are relevant but less focused.

Voice: 3

The voice is mostly appropriate for informational writing and shows engagement, but conversational phrases and moments of second-person address weaken the formality expected in this mode.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Awareness of Audience and Purpose** ○ Demonstrates interest and investment in the topic. ○ Occasionally shifts to a conversational tone: "you may be carrying over one little critter…" and "I hope you have learned…"
✓ **Consistency of Formal Style** ○ Uses mostly academic language when presenting evidence. ○ Informal language appears in places ("chain reaction of unfortunate events," "great place to be," "with this information presented before you").
✓ **Appropriate Tone for Expository Writing** ○ Shows some authoritative tone when explaining impacts, such as describing food chains being disrupted. ○ The final paragraph shifts toward persuasive or advisory tone.
✓ **Limited Use of Objective Language** ○ Some statements use evaluative language ("little critter," "marvelous lights") that does not match informational expectations.

Word Choice: 4

The essay uses generally clear and accurate vocabulary with some domain-specific terms. Some words are vague or conversational, but overall word choice supports meaning effectively.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Varied and Effective Vocabulary** ○ Uses ecological vocabulary such as “ecosystem,” “balance,” “chain reaction,” “aggressively,” “diversity.”
✓ **Domain-Specific Terms** ○ Includes accurate scientific and ecological terms, such as “non-native species,” “invasive species,” “reproduce,” and “extinctions.”
✓ **Occasional Vague or Informal Language** ○ Uses conversational words like “little critter,” “great place,” and “unfortunate events” that weaken precision.
✓ **Clear but Sometimes General Descriptions** ○ Some descriptions could be more specific, such as “grow too aggressively” without clarifying what “aggressively” means in ecological terms.

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are mostly varied and readable, with a mix of lengths and structures. Some sentences are long or contain multiple ideas, and second-person constructions occasionally disrupt fluency.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable and Smooth Sentences** ○ Many sentences read clearly and naturally, such as: “According to source one, some species do not grow as fast as others…”
✓ **Variety in Structure and Beginnings** ○ Uses different sentence types and openers: “Although…,” “As stated by source two…,” “As non-native species move…”
✓ **Some Sentences Are Overextended** ○ Example: “With this information presented before you, it is clear the pros and cons of non-native species,” which combines too many ideas.
✓ **Conversational Constructions Affect Flow** ○ Sentences beginning with “you” or addressed to the reader sound less formal and can disrupt fluency.

Conventions: 4

The writing demonstrates consistent control of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. A few minor errors appear but do not interfere with understanding.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Accurate Sentence Structure** ○ No run-ons or fragments appear; sentences are complete.
✓ **Correct Spelling of Domain Words** ○ Spells key terms such as “ecosystem,” “diversity,” “extinctions,” and “aggressively” accurately.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Mostly Correct Punctuation** ○ Periods, commas, and introductory phrase punctuation are generally correct.
✓ **Minor Errors Only** ○ A few small errors occur ("the extinction is not a problem," missing comma after "In some cases"), but they do not hinder readability.

Use of Sources: 4

The writer incorporates accurate, relevant details from multiple sources and references them in-text. Some elaboration is general or incomplete, and citations are not fully formatted, but source integration is solid overall.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Uses Multiple Sources Accurately** ○ Draws from Source 1 (growth rates, manageability), Source 2 (New Zealand data), and Source 3 (goat example).
✓ **Relevant Evidence** ○ Includes meaningful examples such as the "22,000 non-native plants in New Zealand" and the goat-grazing solution for kudzu.
✓ **Attribution Is Present but Inconsistent** ○ References "according to source one" and "as stated by source two," but lacks full citation consistency.
✓ **Limited Explanation of Evidence** ○ Some details are stated without expanded reasoning—for example, stating that certain species "help maintain diversity" but without explaining mechanisms.