Grade 7 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 2

The essay demonstrates a general awareness of the prompt by discussing positive and negative effects of non-native plants. However, the controlling idea is vague and unfocused, details are mostly generalized opinions rather than source-based evidence, and explanations often rely on repetition instead of ecological reasoning. The writing shows limited use of sources and does not clearly explain why some non-native plants succeed while others become nuisances.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Controlling Idea and Purpose** ○ Attempts a controlling idea through repeated questions ("why are they good," "why are they a nuisances," "are they good or bad"), but does not clearly articulate a thesis. ○ The purpose remains broad—evaluating whether they are "good or bad"—rather than explaining *why* outcomes differ across environments. ○ Controlling idea shifts from neutral ("positive, or negative effects") to personal opinion ("for me I personally think they are worse").
✓ **Relevant but Generalized Details** ○ Provides broad statements with no source attribution: "non-native plants kill the native plants around them," "consume too much space," "cost… 1,000's of dollars to get rid of." ○ Positive claims are also generalized: "create a new food chain," "allowing more resources for food," "creating a better future for the world." ○ No evidence is tied directly to specific source information, examples, or mechanisms.
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ Explanations are mostly repetitive ("This shows that…this shows that…") without adding new insight. ○ Reasons provided for harm ("kill native plants," "cost money," "harm the area itself") are not grounded in ecological explanation or source-based facts. ○ Claims about benefits ("researchers would be able to continue their profession") are speculative and unrelated to the sources. ○ Lacks explanation of *why* certain non-native plants succeed (adaptation, human cultivation, slow growth) or *why* others become invasive (rapid reproduction, competition, lack of predators).
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ Focus drifts between informative explanation and personal argument ("I personally think they are worse," "should be exterminated quickly"). ○ Conclusion repeats opinion rather than synthesizing ecological reasons. ○ Most content is loosely related to the prompt but lacks relevancy because it is disconnected from source materials.

Organization: 2

The essay has a recognizable structure with an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion. However, paragraphs are loosely connected, transitions are minimal or missing, and ideas are sequenced more by listing than by purposeful explanation. The conclusion repeats opinions rather than providing synthesis.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Introduction Identifies Topic but Lacks Focus** ○ Begins with a general statement about "non-native plants" but does not preview the explanation required by the prompt. ○ Repeated rhetorical questions ("why are they good," "why are they a nuisances") signal uncertainty rather than clear direction.
✓ **Loose and Repetitive Sequencing** ○ Body paragraphs repeat the same idea—plants "hurt the area," "kill native plants," or "harm the plants and animals"—in multiple places without adding new reasoning. ○ Ideas appear in list form rather than following a clear logic.
✓ **Weak or Missing Transitions** ○ Transitions such as "the reason for this is" and "what this means" repeat without adding clarity. ○ Paragraphs often begin abruptly and do not connect logically to one another.
✓ **Conclusion Restates Opinion Without Synthesis** ○ Returns to the writer's personal view: "for me I personally think they are worse," which shifts away from the requirement to explain ecological reasons. ○ Does not summarize why some non-native plants succeed or become invasive.

Voice: 2

The writer shows interest in the topic but relies heavily on conversational language, second-person address, and personal opinion. These choices weaken the informational tone expected for expository writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Inconsistent Awareness of Audience and Purpose** ○ Uses second-person frequently ("when you look at non-native plants…," "this is what you should do"). ○ Shift to persuasive or advisory tone ("should be exterminated quickly") is not appropriate for informational writing.
✓ **Informal and Opinion-Based Voice** ○ Strong personal statements appear: "for me I personally think they are worse" and "I personally think they should be exterminated." ○ Uses conversational tone rather than objective explanation.
✓ **Limited Use of Academic Voice** ○ Very few sentences maintain a neutral, scientific tone; most rely on emotional or judgmental phrasing.
✓ **Tone Shifts Reduce Clarity** ○ Moves between attempts at explanation and personal judgment, creating inconsistency.

Word Choice: 2

Vocabulary is often general, repetitive, or informal. The writing lacks domain-specific ecological terms needed for clarity and accuracy. Several words reflect emotional judgment rather than scientific explanation.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **General and Vague Vocabulary** ○ Uses broad terms like “hurt the area,” “harm,” “bad,” “good,” “worse,” “better future,” “costs money,” which lack precision.
✓ **Informal or Conversational Words** ○ Repeated use of “for me,” “I think,” “should be exterminated,” and “look around” shifts tone away from informational writing.
✓ **Limited Domain Vocabulary** ○ Does not use important ecological terms such as competition, biodiversity, resource availability, adaptation, reproduction rate, or invasive spread.
✓ **Repetition Without Added Meaning** ○ Repeats phrases like “this shows…” and “this means…” but does not provide additional explanation.

Sentence Fluency: 2

Sentences are often repetitive, choppy, or awkwardly constructed. Many sentences begin with the same pattern and rely on generic starters (“this means,” “this shows”). Several long sentences contain multiple ideas without clear structure.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Beginnings** ○ Multiple sentences begin with “This can…,” “This shows…,” “This means…,” creating monotony.
✓ **Choppy or Fragmented Structure** ○ Short, abrupt sentences appear throughout: “Some plants have positive effects. Others have negative effects.”
✓ **Long Sentences With Multiple Ideas** ○ Example: “They are worse because they hurt the area itself and make it difficult for the native plants to grow and because they cost 1,000’s of dollars to get rid of…” ○ Difficult to follow due to lack of breaks.
✓ **Inconsistent Rhythm** ○ Mixes very long sentences with very short ones, disrupting flow.

Conventions: 2

Frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar interfere with clarity. Several sentence structures are incorrect or incomplete.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Issues Affect Meaning** ○ Words such as “nuisances,” “beneficial,” and “ecosystem” are misspelled or inconsistently spelled.
✓ **Punctuation Errors** ○ Missing commas in compound sentences; inconsistent end punctuation. ○ Some sentences run together without proper punctuation.
✓ **Capitalization Errors** ○ Errors such as “native plants,” “non native plants,” and “american” appear without proper capitalization or consistency.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Grammar and Agreement Issues** ○ Run-ons such as “they kill the native plants around them and consume space and cost thousands to get rid of…” ○ Some sentences lack subjects or verbs.

Use of Sources: 1

The essay includes almost no evidence from the provided sources. All examples are general, repeated, or invented. No citations or source-based details appear, and no attempts are made to integrate factual information.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **No Direct Use of Sources** ○ The essay contains no references to source numbers, titles, or specific details.
✓ **Generalized or Inaccurate Claims** ○ Examples such as “cost 1,000’s of dollars to get rid of” or “create a new food chain” are not supported by sources.
✓ **No Evidence Integration** ○ No quotations, paraphrases, or attribution phrases are included.
✓ **No Explanation of Source-Based Examples** ○ Explanations are hypothetical and unrelated to the specific examples from the articles.