High School – Expository Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about "green" energy options. You are given four articles about sunflowers and their use as biofuels or alternate fuel sources.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an explanatory essay** about on sunflowers. Using more than one source, craft a thesis to explain the ways in which sunflower seeds can be used to create biofuel and the economic implications of this process.*

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

Ideas and Content: 5

The essay demonstrates a clear and well-developed thesis explaining how sunflower seeds can be used to create biofuel and the economic implications of this process. The writer integrates multiple sources accurately, provides relevant technical and economic details, and offers strong explanatory reasoning. The piece shows conceptual understanding, strong synthesis across sources, and consistent focus. Minor areas for improvement include deeper explanation of economic impacts (beyond reducing fossil fuel use) and a clearer distinction between environmental and economic implications. However, overall, this is a well-developed, source-integrated expository explanation.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear, Accurate, and Relevant Thesis** ○ Thesis establishes both required components: biofuel production and economic implications. ▪ "Sunflowers are a cost effective and environmentally friendly source of energy… help us cut back on other energy sources… boost our economy while doing so…" ○ Addresses the task purposefully and with high-school-level clarity.
✓ **Strong Use of Relevant Information From Multiple Sources** ○ Source #3: Facility uses sunflower hulls to produce heat/electricity. ▪ "The system will eventually produce a third of the electricity and all of the heat needed to run the plant." ○ Source #1: Sunflower-oil powered boat demonstrates real-world viability of biofuel transportation. ▪ "The boat ran fine." ○ Source #2: High school students create biodiesel used to power a hybrid car. ▪ "The bioscience class will make these seeds into biodiesel…" ○ Source #4: Sunflowers help with soil remediation. – "Pull heavy metal contaminants like mercury and lead from the garden's polluted soil." ○ Source use is accurate, well-integrated, and purposeful.
✓ **Well-Developed and Insightful Explanations** ○ Explains why sunflower-based energy matters economically: ▪ Reduces reliance on "resources that cannot be renewed." ▪ Saves money by producing heat and electricity internally. ○ Explains procedural clarity: grinding hulls to pellets to gasifier chamber. ○ Reasoning generally strong and elaborated.
✓ **Effective Synthesis Across Sources** ○ Combines ideas from industrial-scale production, student experimentation, and agricultural innovation into a coherent explanation. ○ Synthesizes energy, environmental, and economic implications across multiple texts.
✓ **Maintains Clear Focus on Explanatory Purpose** ○ Stays focused on how sunflower biofuel works and its implications. ○ Environmental benefits (trash catching, phytoremediation) connect indirectly to economic improvement through land restoration.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Minor Areas for Improvement** ○ Economic implications are mostly implied (savings, renewable energy benefits) rather than fully analyzed (e.g., production cost vs. benefit, scale, feasibility). ○ Occasional overgeneralization ("almost every facility in America") slightly weakens precision.

Organization: 5

The essay is well organized with a purposeful introduction, logical sequencing of ideas, appropriate paragraphing, and a clear conclusion. Transitions support coherence, and ideas build progressively from explanation of biofuel production to broader implications. Minor improvements could enhance cohesion around the economic portion, but overall, the structure is strong and effective.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Clear and Engaging Introduction With a Two-Part Focus** ○ Establishes both how sunflower biofuel works and why it matters economically.
✓ **Logical Sequencing of Ideas** ○ Moves logically through: ▪ sunflower biofuel sources and processes innovations and production methods ▪ community-scale and industrial uses ▪ economic and environmental impacts ○ Sequencing reflects a high-school-level explanatory structure.
✓ **Effective Transitions** ○ Uses transitions like "For example," "Also," and "Another innovative idea…" to connect ideas smoothly.
✓ **Focused Paragraphing** ○ Each paragraph centers on a distinct idea: sunflowers as energy, student biodiesel production, facility-scale models, environmental/economic benefits.
✓ **Conclusion Provides Purposeful Closure** ○ Reiterates the claim and reconnects benefits to future potential.
✓ **Minor Weakness** ○ Some sections shift briefly from economics to environment without fully linking the two.

Voice: 4

The voice is informative, engaging, and appropriate for an expository task. Tone is confident and mostly academic, with moments of stylistic flair. A few statements lean toward conversational or overly enthusiastic phrasing, but overall, the voice enhances clarity and maintains credibility.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Confident, Informative Tone** ○ Presents explanations clearly and directly: "Sunflowers are a cost effective and environmentally friendly source of energy…"
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Explains concepts for a general but educated audience without oversimplifying.
✓ **Appropriate Style for Expository Writing** ○ Describes processes and implications without relying on emotional appeals.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Minor Conversational Phrasing** ○ Phrases like “almost every facility in America” or “pretty cool examples” are less formal.
✓ **Consistent Purposeful Voice** ○ Maintains a clear goal of explaining how sunflower biofuel works and why it matters.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is generally precise, clear, and appropriate for a high school expository task. Technical terms are used correctly, and the vocabulary supports conceptual explanation. Some areas could benefit from more discipline-specific language or reduced repetition, but overall the writing demonstrates control and accuracy.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Effective Use of Technical Terms** ○ “Biofuel,” “gasifier,” “pellets,” “sunflower oil,” “renewable resources,” “hybrid car,” “heating system.”
✓ **Clear Explanations of Processes** ○ Accurately describes how hulls are ground into pellets and used for heat/electricity.
✓ **Appropriate Academic Vocabulary** ○ “Cost effective,” “environmentally friendly,” “innovative,” “community garden.”
✓ **Some Vague or General Phrasing** ○ “Almost every facility in America” lacks precision. ○ Environmental and economic impact explanations sometimes use general terms like “helps” or “boosts” without specificity.
✓ **Minor Repetition** ○ Repeats broad ideas about environmental friendliness without expanding vocabulary.

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are generally varied and smooth, with appropriate pacing and rhythm. Some transitions and sentence structures are basic, and a few sentences combine multiple ideas that could be clearer if split, but overall fluency is controlled and effective.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Varied Sentence Structures** ○ Uses complex, compound, and simple sentences effectively.
✓ **Readable Flow** ○ Sentences move logically through explanations of biofuel processes and examples.
✓ **Effective Use of Examples to Build Momentum** ○ Uses concrete examples (student biodiesel car, industrial plant) to maintain flow.
✓ **Occasional Lengthy or Overloaded Sentences** ○ Some sentences include multiple processes or examples without clear segmentation.
✓ **Minor Repetitiveness in Sentence Starts** ○ Occasional repeat beginnings (“This is…” “Another…”), though not disruptive.

Conventions: 5

Conventions are consistently accurate with few noticeable errors. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are well controlled. Minor issues exist but do not interfere with meaning or readability.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Grammar** ○ Technical vocabulary and general usage are consistently correct.
✓ **Punctuation Used Correctly** ○ Commas and periods placed appropriately in complex sentences.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No run-ons or fragments; sentence structures are controlled.
✓ **Minor Issues Present but Minor** ○ Occasional punctuation improvements could enhance clarity.

Use of Sources: 5

The writer consistently uses multiple sources, accurately integrates details, and synthesizes information across texts. Evidence is used purposefully to support explanations, and attribution is present even when not explicitly labeled with source numbers. Minor improvements could include more consistent attribution phrasing and more direct economic evidence, but overall, source use is strong.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Use of Multiple Sources** ○ Source #1: Sunflower-oil boat demonstration. ○ Source #2: Student biodiesel production. ○ Source #3: Industrial-scale sunflower hull pellet gasification. ○ Source #4: Phytoremediation and sunflower community gardens.
✓ **Effective Synthesis Across Sources** ○ Combines student, industrial, and agricultural uses to demonstrate diverse biofuel applications.
✓ **Appropriate Explanation Following Evidence** ○ Explains why each example is significant economically or environmentally.
✓ **Attribution Mostly Clear** ○ Even when not labeled with “Source __,” context makes source origins clear.
✓ **Minor Gaps** ○ Economic detail from Source #3 could be highlighted more explicitly. ○ Attribution could be more consistent across all integrated examples.