High School – Expository Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 2

The essay presents a general topic focus on sunflowers, communities, and farmers, but it does not clearly address the two required components of the task: (1) explaining how sunflower seeds can be used to create biofuel, and (2) explaining the economic implications of that process. The writing relies heavily on unsupported assumptions, partial references, and misinterpretations of the sources. Explanations are vague, focus on community gardening more than biofuel production, and lack clarity about how biofuel is actually made. Source use is present but often incomplete or inaccurate, and the economic discussion consists mostly of speculation. Overall, ideas are loosely related to the prompt but not sufficiently explained, developed, or supported.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Thesis Is Unclear and Does Not Address Both Task Components** ○ Opening paragraph mentions communities planting sunflowers and "cheaper ways to produce fuel," but does not: ▪ identify how sunflower seeds become biofuel ▪ identify specific economic implications ○ The essay reads more like a general overview of enthusiasm for sunflowers rather than an explanatory essay.
✓ **Key Concept Biofuel Production Is Not Explained** ○ The essay never describes: ▪ oil extraction ▪ pressing seeds ▪ the pellet/gasifier system ▪ biomass conversion ○ These core processes are required for explanatory clarity.
✓ **Economic Implications Are Implied but Not Explained** ○ States farmers "were promised a chance at being paid more," but does not explain: ▪ how income changes ▪ what economic risks exist ▪ how fuel production affects local or national economy ○ Mentions "cheaper, cleaner… healthier ways to produce things" with no source evidence or economic reasoning.
✓ **Inaccurate or Speculative Use of Source Information** ○ The Dove Creek section is based on Source #3 but: ▪ misrepresents the timeline ▪ omits the actual biofuel production process ▪ exaggerates risk ("lose it all") not stated in the source ○ Phoenix community garden example is used, but the essay: ▪ does not explain how the garden's oil is processed ▪ incorrectly claims they "create oil and then produce a biofuel" without citing any methods or factual details.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Vague, General Statements Replace Explanation** ○ "People are beginning to take on this 'green' thinking." ○ "Sunflowers are showing signs of becoming something very great." ○ These statements do not advance understanding.
✓ **Minimal Synthesis Across Sources** ○ The essay mentions community gardens and farmers but does not explain relationships among the sources or connect them to biofuel creation.

Organization: 2

The essay includes an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion, but the structure lacks a clear organizational plan aligned to the task. Ideas are loosely grouped, sequencing is inconsistent, transitions are basic or missing, and paragraphs blend unrelated or partially developed ideas. The piece does not present a logical explanatory progression.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Introduction Does Not Preview the Required Concepts** ○ Mentions community gardens and cheaper energy but does not introduce: ▪ how sunflower seeds become biofuel ▪ what economic implications will be explained
✓ **Body Paragraphs Are Loosely Structured** ○ The Dove Creek section mixes farmer risk, community identity, and speculative outcomes without explaining the pellet or gasifier system (Source 3). ○ The Phoenix garden paragraph jumps between sunflowers as art, community gatherings, and claims about biofuel creation without process details.
✓ **Transitions Are Minimal or Missing** ○ Many paragraphs begin abruptly with no link to previous ideas. ○ The shift from Dove Creek to Phoenix is sudden and not framed as connected examples.
✓ **Ideas Lack Logical Sequencing** ○ The essay mentions sunflower fields, then farmer stress, then community gathering, then "farmers being paid more," without organizing around clear explanatory categories.
✓ **Conclusion Restates Personal Support Rather Than Synthesizing Explanatory Points** ○ Closes with, "Sunflowers are something every community should consider planting…" which is persuasive and not explanatory.

Voice: 2

The voice is sincere but inconsistent with expository expectations. Tone frequently becomes persuasive, emotional, or speculative. Audience awareness is limited, and the writer relies on unsupported predictions and personal judgments rather than objective explanation.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Conversational and Emotional Tone** ○ Uses expressions like "lose it all," "quite stressful," "the future for sunflowers looked bright," which reflect personal response rather than neutral explanation.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Shifts Between Modes** ○ At times the writing aims to persuade communities to plant sunflowers: "Sunflowers are something every community should consider planting."
✓ **Limited Audience Awareness** ○ Focuses on personal impressions ("Something every community should consider…") instead of presenting research-based information.
✓ **Speculative and Unsupported Assertions** ○ Predicts disaster outcomes, high financial risk, and future potential with no source grounding.

Word Choice: 2

Word choice is frequently vague, informal, or exaggerated. Some technical vocabulary is present, but inaccurate or unsupported terms undermine clarity. Language does not consistently meet high school expectations for precision in explanatory writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Vague and General Language** ○ "Better ways to create cheaper ways to produce fuel," "something very great," "cheaper and healthier," "change their world."
✓ **Informal or Conversational Wording** ○ "This could be quite stressful," "lose it all," "something… every community should consider."
✓ **Incorrect or Unsupported Word Use** ○ Claims about pollution, health, or safety not supported by sources.
✓ **Limited Discipline-Specific Vocabulary** ○ Little use of terms such as "gasification," "biofuel conversion," "operational costs," or "energy output."

Sentence Fluency: 2

Fluency is weakened by repetitive structures, awkward phrasing, and frequent run-on tendencies. Sentences combine unrelated ideas or rely on simple constructions without variation. Pacing is uneven and occasionally confusing.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Structures** ○ Multiple sentences begin with the same pattern ("Sunflowers can…," "It is…").
✓ **Awkward or Unclear Constructions** ○ "Creating a biofuel, making it cheaper and healthier," "Farmers were promised a chance at being paid more… then forced to retire."
✓ **Run-on Sentences** ○ Several sentences combine multiple unrelated clauses without clear boundaries.
✓ **Limited Use of Internal Transitions** ○ Few transitions clarify relationships among ideas within paragraphs.

Conventions: 2

Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar reduce clarity. While meaning is still understandable, the number and variety of errors significantly weaken the professionalism of the writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Errors** ○ "Continuation," "sustainabley," "harstested," "consistency," "bio-fuel" (inconsistently hyphenated).
✓ **Punctuation Errors** ○ Missing commas, run-ons, and incorrect sentence boundaries.
✓ **Grammar Issues** ○ Incorrect verb forms and agreement issues ("farmers were promised… then forced to retire" used inaccurately).
✓ **Capitalization Inconsistencies** ○ Inconsistent capitalization of "Sunflower."

Use of Sources: 2

The essay references multiple sources, but use is incomplete, inaccurate, or poorly integrated. Many claims misrepresent or only loosely connect to the sources. Key information about the biofuel production process is missing, and economic reasoning is mostly speculative.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Some Referencing of Sources, but Inaccurate or Incomplete** ○ Mentions Dove Creek (Source 3) but does not describe pelletization, hull processing, or the gasifier system. ○ Mentions Phoenix community garden (Source 4) but incorrectly states they "produce biofuel" with no supporting details.
✓ **Missing Core Production Details From Sources** ○ No mention of seed pressing, oil extraction, or biodiesel process (Sources 1 and 2). ○ No accurate use of energy output or facility-scale data (Source 3).
✓ **Economic Claims Not Grounded in Sources** ○ Assertions about stress, retirement, high risk, or wage promises are not supported by Source 3. ○ No mention of source-based economic details (e.g., cost savings, local energy independence).
✓ **No Explicit Attribution** ○ Sources appear indirectly but are never identified or referenced using attribution phrases.
✓ **Little to No Synthesis** ○ Sources appear separately and are not connected to each other in explanation.