

# For the student

## Exemplary student essays

At the end of most Amplify units, you will take a few days to dig in and write a longer, more thought-out essay. In these essays you will discuss many different topics and write about many different types of texts. Each essay you write will also help you develop different writing skills. Once you master some skills, you will go on to focus your energy on learning new ones. This means that your teacher will be scoring you in different sets of skills on all of your different essays. You can look at the rubric for each of these skills below.

Also, included you can find examples of great essays from grades 6, 7, and 8. These essays score 4s in every category. Find your grade and read each of the essays there. The highlighted places are where these students did an excellent job in each skill. This will give you a real-life look at the quality of writing you'll be working to create this year.

## Rubrics

### Focus

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Almost none of the sentences develop one overall idea.	Some sentences develop one overall idea.	Most sentences develop one overall idea.	All sentences develop one overall idea.

### Use of Evidence: Describing

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
You do not describe what you notice in textual evidence.	You describe what you notice in some pieces of textual evidence.	You describe what you notice in most pieces of textual evidence.	You describe what you notice in all pieces of textual evidence.

### Use of Evidence: Explaining

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
You do not explain the connection between the evidence and the overall idea.	You explain the connection between some of the evidence and the overall idea.	You explain the connection between most of the evidence and the overall idea.	You explain the connection between all of the evidence and the overall idea.

### Logical Structure: Paragraphs

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Almost none of the paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea.	Some paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea.	All paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea.	All paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea and build on or refer to the ideas in other paragraphs.

**Logical Structure: Introduction**

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
You do not include an engaging lead that is connected to the overall idea. You have not written a claim statement that articulates one overall idea.	You include a lead that is somewhat connected to the overall idea. You have written a claim statement that somewhat articulates one overall idea.	You include a lead that is connected to the overall idea. You have written a claim statement that articulates one overall idea.	You include an engaging lead that is closely connected to the overall idea. You have written a claim statement that skillfully articulates one overall idea.

**Logical Structure: Conclusion**

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Your conclusion does not follow from the overall idea. Your conclusion does not include a final thought.	Your conclusion somewhat follows from the overall idea and includes a final thought.	Your conclusion follows from the overall idea and includes a final thought.	Your conclusion clearly follows from the overall idea and includes a final thought.

**Conventions: Sentence Completion and Punctuation**

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
There are many fragments and/or run-ons that prevent the reader from understanding the writing.	Most of your sentences are complete. Errors do impede the reader's ability to understand the writing.	Most of your sentences are complete and punctuated correctly. Errors might distract the reader but do not impede the reader's ability to understand the writing.	Almost all of your sentences are complete and punctuated correctly.

**Conventions: Punctuation and Citation of Direct Quotes**

1 Needs improvement	2 Developing proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds expectations
Your quotes are not punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.	Some of your quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.	Most of your quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.	All of your quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.

**Sixth grade****Dahl & Narrative essay****Scored in:**

- Focus
- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Introduction
- Conventions: Sentence Completion and Punctuation

Throughout the book *Boy*, by Roald Dahl, Dahl describes the adventures of his childhood, which often include mischief and the consequences that come from it. Although the adults are not always perfect angels in the way they behave, it is the boys who cause the most trouble. The interactions between the boys and Mrs. Pratchett show that the boys are the bigger trouble makers.

During the "Great Mouse Plot," Dahl and his friends discover a dead mouse, where they usually hide their candy. Dahl develops a sinister idea when he says to the others, "Why don't we... slip it into one of Mrs. Pratchett's jars of sweets? Then when she puts her dirty hand in to grab a handful, she'll grab a stinky dead mouse instead!" (The Great Mouse Plot, 7). This plan is very cruel and mischievous. Finding the dead mouse would really scare Mrs. Pratchett, and touching it could even make her sick, and all the other kids who eat the candy it touches. The fact that Dahl wants to do this plan shows that he wants to cause trouble and upset people. The other boys jump right on board and cheer Dahl and even think that the plan is "sheer genius" (The Great Mouse Plot, 8). This means the other boys want to cause trouble just as much Dahl.

As the students head towards the sweet-shop, Dahl also says that they were, "tremendously jazzed up. We felt like a gang of desperados setting out to rob a train or blow up the sheriff's office" (The Great Mouse Plot, 9). Saying that they are "jazzed up" means that the boys are actually very excited to be causing this trouble for the adults. Also "desperados" are criminals, and robbing a train or blowing up a building are both very serious crimes, so if the boys are excited about doing something like this, that means they are even bigger trouble makers than we think at first.

These actions show that the boys cause more trouble than the adults. They go out of their way to cause mischief and work to make sure they cause the most harm. This desire to scare and shock their enemies means that the boys are the biggest trouble makers.

- Jean, Grade 6

- Jean writes an **engaging lead** that is closely connected to his overall idea and a **claim statement** that skillfully articulates this idea.
- He includes several pieces of textual **evidence**, **describes** what he notices in each piece, and **explains** the connection between each piece and his idea.
- All of Jean's sentences develop one overall idea.
- Almost all of his sentences are complete and punctuated correctly.

**Tom & Sherlock essay****Scored in:**

- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Introduction
- Logical Structure: Paragraphs
- Conventions: Punctuation and Citation of Direct Quotes

Have you ever read a story that kept you kind of confused right up to the very end? Well, "The Red-Headed League" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is a tricky story that keeps you guessing about the case. In fact, all the details about the Red-Headed League in the story are red herrings to make you predict a different ending than the author wants you to.

The first false clue I noticed in "The Red-Headed League" was the whole story of the league itself. It seemed really strange to me that there would be this great-paying job for "All red-headed men who are sound in body and mind and above the age of twenty-one years (29). It seems odd for anyone to hire people just based on their hair color and this makes it seem like the red hair is important to the job. The red hair seems even more important when Doyle talks about all the men who showed up to try and get the job. He says "Fleet Street was choked with red-headed folk. Every shade of colour they were straw, lemon, orange, brick, Irish-setter, liver, clay" (57). Seeing all this detail about the different colors of red hair makes me predict that whatever this person wants these people to do, their hair has to look just right. It makes me think that maybe they are looking for someone to be a look-alike for some crime they might be planning.

But this isn't the truth about the Red-Headed league at all. Sherlock Holmes says at the end of the story that "the only possible object of this rather fantastic business of the advertisement of the League, and the copying of the Encyclopaedia, must be to get this not over-bright pawnbroker out of the way for a number of hours every day" (206). This means that the Red-Headed League really had nothing to do with red hair and it wasn't important that Mr. Wilson had red hair. His assistant was just trying to get him out of the shop every day and making up this job for a red-haired man was an easy way to do that. This was a real red herring because it made me believe that Mr. Wilson's hair was very important to the plot but really the assistant just needed time to dig his tunnel to the gold.

- Raul, Grade 6

- Raul writes an **engaging lead** that is closely connected to his overall idea and a **claim statement** that skillfully articulates this idea.
- He includes several pieces of textual **evidence**, **describes** what he notices in each piece, and **explains** the connection between each piece and his idea.
- Each paragraph focuses on a **clearly defined idea** and builds on the ideas in the other paragraph.
- All of Raul's quotes are **punctuated and cited according** to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.

## The Greeks essay

### Scored in:

- Focus
- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Introduction
- Conventions: Sentence Completion and Punctuation

Pride can be a very dangerous thing and get you into a lot of trouble. The humans in Prometheus, and Odysseus are both characters who come very close to being destroyed by their pride but are not actually destroyed in the end. Zeus almost destroys the humans for acting like gods and the Cyclops almost kills Odysseus and his men for boasting and taunting him, but the gods allow these humans to live in both cases.

In the story "Prometheus" pride is very dangerous to the humans. Zeus says that if man is given fire, "He will grow big and poisoned with pride and fancy himself a god" (Prometheus 9). This means that Zeus believes being proud, and seeing themselves as gods will be as destructive to the humans as poison. This destruction almost happens when Zeus sees the humans using fire and acting proudly "like the gods themselves" and he becomes so angry that he wants to "turn their miserable little ball of earth into a cinder" but stops himself before he does (Prometheus, 14-15). Zeus only does this to see if the humans will eventually destroy themselves. Here, the humans' pride angered the gods so much they were almost turned into ash.

Odysseus's pride brings him just as close to destruction as the humans' did in the story of Prometheus. When Odysseus and his men are escaping from the Cyclops, Odysseus keeps taunting the Cyclops and boasting. This makes the Cyclops so angry that he "tore the top off a great pinnacle of rock and hurled it at us. The rock fell just ahead of our blue-painted bows" (The Cyclops 45). The giant rock that the Cyclops throws, lands just in front of Odysseus's boat which means it was extremely close to killing Odysseus and his men just because of Odysseus's pride. But even almost dying doesn't stop Odysseus from being overly proud and he yells back, "I only wish I could make as sure of robbing you of life and breath and sending you to Hell," taunting the Cyclops even more and making him throw an even bigger boulder at their ship "narrowly missing the tip of the rudder" (The Cyclops 49,51). So twice in the story, Odysseus's pride almost gets him and his men killed, and they only escape because the gods protected them.

Pride can be very dangerous for humans as we see in the stories of Prometheus and Odysseus and the Cyclops. Both of these characters act proudly, and come very close to being destroyed because of it. Hopefully these stories can remind others, just how dangerous pride can be in our lives.

- Kylie, Grade 6

- Kylie writes an **engaging lead** that is closely connected to her overall idea and a **claim statement** that skillfully articulates this idea.
- She includes several pieces of textual **evidence**, **describes** what she notices in each piece, and **explains** the connection between each piece and her idea.
- Each paragraph focuses on a **clearly defined idea** and builds on the ideas in the other paragraphs.
- All Kylie's quotes are **punctuated and cited according** to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.
- Kylie's conclusion clearly follows from her overall idea and includes a **final thought**.



**Seventh grade****Red Scarf Girl & Narrative essay****Scored in:**

- Focus
- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Introduction
- Conventions: Sentence Completion and Punctuation

Have you ever loved something more than anything, and then suddenly realized that it was a bad thing to love? Well that's how Ji-li Jiang felt about the Cultural Revolution and Chairman Mao in her memoir *Red Scarf Girl*. For most of her childhood she felt happy to take part in the Cultural Revolution and do what Chairman Mao wanted, but after being hurt and humiliated by the Red Guards, she began to feel very differently. Two scenes in Ji-li's home show how her feelings about Mao and the revolution changed from positive to negative during the book.

"I loved our top-floor room" (*The Liberation Army Dancer*, 66), Ji-li said at the beginning of the book. Although she says it was just one room other than a bathroom, Ji-li felt very lucky about her home and life over all before the Cultural Revolution really took flight. "The kitchen on the landing outside the room was small, but I didn't mind. Our room was ten times as big as many of my classmates' homes, and a hundred times brighter" (*The Liberation Army Dancer*, 66). As shown in the last quote, Ji-li always looked at the positive things in her life and did not have to experience the negative side of the Cultural Revolution that would later be turned against her.

That is until later on in her life when she began to feel very unlucky and disrespected. Ji-li began to feel this because of her family's "bad class status" according to the Cultural Revolution (*A Search in Passing*, 132). Their lives would be horrible as long as they had the name Jiang. The night the Cultural Revolution turned on her and the red guards came to search her home she felt not only scared, but also full "with embarrassment and anger" (*A Search in Passing*, 124). She had felt like the Red Guards had looked through all of her personal and secret belongings and not respected any of them. "I felt as if I had been stripped naked in public" (*A Search in Passing*, 125). She did not feel respected at all to the extent that she felt like she deserved and this disrespect by the Red Guards made her doubt and dislike Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution.

- Damian, Grade 7

- Damian writes an **engaging lead** that is closely connected to his overall idea and a **claim statement** that skillfully articulates this idea.
- He includes several pieces of textual **evidence**, **describes** what he notices in each piece, and **explains** the connection between each piece and his idea.
- All of Damian's sentences develop one overall idea.
- Almost all of his sentences are complete and punctuated correctly.

## Character & Conflict essay

### Scored in:

- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Introduction
- Logical Structure: Paragraphs
- Conventions: Punctuation and Citation of Direct Quotes

*A Raisin in the Sun* is a story about a poor, black family living in Chicago and the many challenges they face. One member of this family, Walter, wants to be the head of his family and he faces challenges to this goal himself throughout the story. Early in the story, Walter reacts to obstacles by being defiant to his wife and thinking selfishly. At the end of the story Walter has changed, and he stands up to an obstacle facing the whole family and makes the choice that's best for all of them.

When Travis asks Ruth for money and she says no, Walter wants to show that he can make the decisions in the house but he is also trying to make Ruth angry. He sees her making decisions as an obstacle to his goal and wants to defy her. Hansberry says "He hands the boy the coin, but his eyes are directed to his wife's" (Act I, Scene One, 76). His eyes are looking at Ruth because he is making the point that he is the man of the house and will do what he thinks is right even if she doesn't think so. This is when "RUTH watches both of them with murder in her eyes. WALTER stands and stares back at her with defiance" (Act I, Scene One, 78). The evidence here shows that Ruth is very, very mad because there was "murder" in her eyes. This is because Walter is being defiant to her and he is trying to be in charge just because he wants to be, not because he thinks it is the right thing for the whole family. This was the first obstacle for Walter to get past and he doesn't do it in a great way. But now he is ready to step up and do things for the rest of the family.

At the end of the story Walter decides to take charge and make a decision that will help the whole family. When Lindner asks Walter to take the money and not move to Clybourne Park, Walter makes the choice that was better for the family, not just for himself. Even though Walter could use the money towards buying the liquor store and be in charge of his own business, he says no. He does this because Big Walter "earned it for us brick by brick" (Act III, 147). This means that Walter's father worked hard so his family could have a good place to live, and Walter knows they deserve a house in Clybourne Park. This could also mean that Walter wants to earn respect like Big Walter did. Mama shows that she trusts Walter to be in charge when she tells Lindner, "I am afraid you don't understand. My son said we was going to move and there ain't nothing left for me to say" (Act III, 151). If there's nothing left for Mama to say, that means Walter is the head of the family, and he got there by caring about all of them and not just himself.

- Ming, Grade 7

- The student writes an **engaging lead** that is closely connected to the overall idea and a **claim statement** that skillfully articulates one overall idea.
- The student includes several pieces of textual **evidence**, **describes** what she notices in each piece, and **explains** the connection between each piece and her idea.
- Each paragraph focuses on a **clearly defined idea** and builds on and refers to the ideas in the other paragraph.
- All quotes are **punctuated and cited according** to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.

**Poetry & Poe essay****Scored in:**

- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Introduction
- Logical Structure: Paragraphs
- Logical Structure: Conclusion
- Conventions: Punctuation and Citation of Direct Quotes

Isn't the purpose of a narrator to tell us what is happening? Not in every story! Readers cannot trust the narrator in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" to accurately describe events in the story because his account shows that he is delusional. The narrator provides a very detailed description of killing an old man, but many of the details show a mindset that is totally irrational and crazy.

The narrator's reasons for killing the old man don't make any sense. Before the narrator even describes why he killed the man, he lists the reasons he didn't kill him. He wasn't interested in the old man's money, he didn't hate him, and he wasn't angry about something the man had done. The narrator tells us all this when he writes "Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire" (2). So the narrator is saying he had no logical reason to kill the man. He killed him simply because the old man's eye bothered him. "He had the eye of a vulture a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees very gradually I made up my mind to take the life of the old man..." (2). No sane person would ever think about killing someone just because they had a weird-looking eye but the narrator says this like it makes perfect sense. This illogical explanation shows the narrator's insanity and makes his account untrustworthy.

Even though the narrator says he has "proof" of his sanity, his version of events shows that he is definitely imagining some of the things he says are happening. He says "But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me the sound would be heard by a neighbour!" (11). This is clearly not really happening because you can't hear someone's heartbeat outside of his or her body. Doctors have to use a stethoscope just to hear it, so a neighbor in another room or building definitely could not. If the narrator believes this he must be delusional. The narrator keeps exaggerating about the heartbeat when he says "It grew louder-louder-louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!-no, no! They heard!-they suspected!-they knew!-they were making a mockery of my horror!" (17). This time, the narrator has to be even more delusional to think the officers can hear the man's heartbeat, because the old man is already dead and would not have any heartbeat at all.

The M'Naghten Rule rule states that to be legally insane, "The party accused was laboring under such a defect of reason, from disease of the mind, as to not know the nature and quality of the act he was doing." This definitely applies to the narrator in this story because he seems to think that taking someone's life just because their eye creeps you out is a reasonable thing to do. Also, if he's hearing and believing things that aren't happening, he clearly doesn't know what he is doing.

It's clear that the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is not accurately describing events because he does not have a firm grip on reality, and therefore could be considered insane. Even though we usually count on a narrator's perspective for a reliable description, this is not the case in this story. Instead, readers need to trust their own instincts about what is really going on.

- Sarah, Grade 7

- The student writes an **engaging lead** that is closely connected to the overall idea and a **claim statement** that skillfully articulates one overall idea.
- The student includes several pieces of textual **evidence**, **describes** what she notices in each piece, and **explains** the connection between each piece and her idea.
- Each paragraph focuses on a **clearly defined idea** and builds on and refers to the ideas in the other paragraph.
- All quotes are **punctuated and cited according** to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.
- The student's conclusion clearly follows from the overall idea and includes a **final thought**.

**Eighth grade****World War II & Narrative essay****Scored in:**

- Focus
- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Introduction
- Logical Structure: Conclusion
- Logical Structure: Paragraphs
- Conventions: Sentence Completion and Punctuation

Everyone has their own quirks and odd behaviors, but some people's quirks are far stranger than others. In his story, *Going Solo*, Roald Dahl describes the quirky behaviors of several of the people he meets while traveling in Africa. Two of these odd characters are U.N. Savory and Major Griffiths. Dahl describes both of these men as behaving so strangely that most people would think they were completely insane. Running naked around a ship, sprinkling salt on their shoulders, these men are, as Dahl would say, "completely dotty" (*The Voyage Out*, 33).

Dahl first encounters Major Griffiths early in the morning, running completely naked around the deck of the ship. Dahl writes, "Suddenly, the figure of a naked man, naked as a jungle ape, went swooshing past the port-hole," not just telling us that Major Griffiths is naked, but also comparing him to an ape (*The Voyage Out*, 5). Usually, when a writer compares a character to an ape, they are describing that person as weird, uncivilized, or wild. Dahl certainly goes on to describe Major Griffiths in all of these ways. On Major Griffiths' next naked lap around the ship he actually invites Dahl to join him saying, "Come along, my boy! Come and join me in a canter! Blow some sea air into your lungs!" (*The Voyage Out*, 8). Now, it's strange enough for this man to be running around naked, but for him to think that it's so normal that a stranger would be comfortable joining him, shows that he is borderline crazy, and acting in a way civilized people would not. But the craziest thing about Major Griffiths is that even though he expects everyone to be comfortable with him being so odd, he is totally offended by something very normal that Dahl does. Dahl writes that when he slightly insults the game of polo, "The Major's stare switched suddenly to a fierce glare and he stopped chewing. He glared at me with such contempt and horror, and his face went so crimson, I thought he might be going to have a seizure" (*The Voyage Out*, 30). Usually a "fierce glare" and "contempt" would only be reactions to something really awful, like insulting someone's family, but Major Griffiths gets this angry over Dahl not respecting a sport that he likes. Combined with the Major's other behaviors, this clearly shows that he is entirely crazy.

The other entirely weird and crazy character Dahl encounters is his roommate, U.N. Savory. While Dahl and U.N. Savory are dressing for dinner one night Dahl writes that he watched U.N. Savory reach "into his sponge-bag and take out a small carton" and that he "took the lid off the carton and dipped his fingers into it. The fingers came out with a pinch of white powder or crystals, and this stuff he proceeded to sprinkle very carefully over the shoulders of his dinner-jacket" (The Voyage Out, 86). It is clear that Dahl finds this behavior extremely strange and surprising when he describes his reaction saying, "Suddenly I was fully alert. What on earth was the man up to?" (The Voyage Out, 87). The fact that Dahl's reaction comes in the form of a question shows that he is very confused and sees this man as a mystery. Now it would seem that U.N. Savory has a pretty good explanation of why he sprinkles powder on his shoulders when it later turns out he wears a wig and he says "No one's going to suspect me of wearing a wig if I've got dandruff, are they?" (The Voyage Out, 128). But again we can tell by Dahl's thoughts and reactions that he thinks U.N. Savory is totally crazy to go through all this trouble of tricking people. Dahl writes, "I stared at him. The man was stark raving barmy" which means Dahl thinks he is absolutely crazy (The Voyage Out, 140). He also says "I flew out of the cabin and shut the door" (The Voyage Out, 142). The fact the Dahl "flew" out of the cabin, and didn't just walk casually, shows that he wants to get away from this crazy person as fast as he can.

Both of these characters, along with many others Dahl meets, show some extremely strange behavior. U.N. Savory's and Major Griffiths's quirks are so strange, that they cross the line to total weirdness and craziness. It seems like Dahl wants to tell the stories of these odd people, to make his readers think about the totally weird, quirky things they do, and how other people might think that they are totally dotty.

- Miguel, Grade 8

- Miguel writes an **engaging lead** that is closely connected to his overall idea and a **claim statement** that skillfully articulates this idea.
- He includes several pieces of textual **evidence**, **describes** what he notices in each piece, and **explains** the connection between each piece and his idea.
- Each paragraph focuses on a **clearly defined idea** and builds on and refers to the ideas in the other paragraph.
- All of Miguel's sentences develop one overall idea.
- Almost all of his sentences are complete and punctuated correctly.
- Miguel's conclusion clearly follows from the overall idea and includes a **final thought**.



**Biography & Literature essay****Scored in:**

- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Paragraphs
- Conventions: Punctuation and Citation of Direct Quotes

Ben Franklin was a brilliant writer with important messages, but he had to be very clever to get his writing published and to get people to listen to what he had to say. He knew he needed to be likable to his audience so he created an alter ego (Isaacson, "Introducing Silence Dogood" 1). The article tells us that, "By creating Mrs. Silence Dogood, Franklin invented what became the quintessential genre of American folksy humor" (Isaacson, "Introducing Silence Dogood" 6). That word "quintessential" means that Franklin's writing was pretty much perfect and that even now his writing is an example of great American humor. The author again says how great and clever Franklin's style with Silence Dogood was when they write that her "wicked little insights poke through the pretensions of the elite and the follies of everyday life" (Isaacson, "Introducing Silence Dogood" 6). This evidence shows that Franklin managed to write as a funny character who could still say important things. Franklin also created Silence Dogood out of a need to trick his brother into publishing his papers. The article says that "Franklin knew that his brother would never knowingly print his pieces. So one night he invented a pseudonym, disguised his handwriting, and slipped an essay under the printing house door" (Isaacson, "Introducing Silence Dogood" 4). This shows us that beyond just writing with a great style, Franklin could also think of clever ways to get his writing out there. He knew that his brother was another major obstacle to people seeing his writing, so he did what he had to to overcome that obstacle.

Franklin's ability to find clever ways to overcome obstacles also helped him become a great scientist. He became very interested in electricity after seeing the demonstration of a "scientific showman" who "performed electricity tricks, by creating static electricity by rubbing a glass tube and drawing sparks from the feet of a boy hanging by silk cords from the ceiling" (Isaacson, "Franklin the Scientist" 1). Franklin was smart enough to see that electricity could be much more important than just "tricks" and so he set out to learn more. He said himself, "I never was before engaged in any study that so totally engrossed my attention" (Isaacson, "Franklin the Scientist" 3). Saying this shows that Franklin was very committed to learning everything he could about electricity and just like he did when he was committed to getting his writing published, he found clever ways to

study electricity. The author of the article, Walter Isaacson, says that "Franklin was the perfect person to turn electricity from a parlor trick into a science. That task demanded not a mathematical or theoretical scholar, but instead a clever and ingenious person who had the curiosity to perform practical experiments" (Isaacson, "Franklin the Scientist" 2). This evidence describes Franklin as "clever," "ingenious," and "practical," showing again that he was a very intelligent man, who found creative ways to achieve his goals in many fields.

We usually think of writing and science as very different fields and don't think of people being really great in both of them. But Benjamin Franklin managed to excel in both of these fields. Walter Isaacson even says that "Part of Franklin's importance as a scientist was the clear writing he employed" showing that the two things can be very related (Isaacson, "Franklin the Scientist" 6). Franklin was a great writer because of his witty style, and the likable character he created. He was a great scientist because he was "ingenious" and very committed to his studies. But the reason he managed to be great at both was that he always found a clever, practical way to accomplish his goals.

- Robert, Grade 8

- Robert includes several pieces of textual evidence, describes what he notices in each piece, and explains the connection between each piece and his idea.
- Each paragraph focuses on a clearly defined idea and builds on the ideas in the other paragraphs.
- All of Robert's quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.

**Science & Science Fiction essay****Scored in:**

- Focus
- Use of Evidence: Describing
- Use of Evidence: Explaining
- Logical Structure: Paragraphs
- Conventions: Punctuation and Citation of Direct Quotes

In the graphic novel *Frankenstein* by Gris Grimly, based on the original book by Mary Shelley, the creature can be considered human, despite some definite differences from other humans, because Victor Frankenstein designed him that way. When Victor planned his creation, he aspired to "give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man," so he "began the creation of a human being" (Grimly 36). Victor wanted to create a "complex" being that could think, feel, and accomplish all of the "wonderful" things that a human can do. Although he used unusual methods and disgusting materials, his intention was to create an actual human being. Later, when Victor reflects on this decision, he is upset that "in a fit of enthusiastic madness" he "created a rational creature" (Grimly 188). By making the creature rational, Victor successfully made the creature as complex as a human being. Even though the creature's ability to think for himself would eventually become the thing that Victor finds most horrifying about him, it's the thing that most clearly makes him human. No matter how others view him, and no matter how much Victor regrets his creation, the creature is undoubtedly as intelligent and independent as a natural-born person.

There are some reasons that the creature could be considered less than human because both he and Victor repeatedly point out how different he is from the rest of humanity. When Victor first beholds his creation, he calls him inhuman names like "wretch," "monster," and "diabolical corpse"—and describes the unnatural appearance of the creature's eyes saying "if eyes they may be called" (Grimly 44-45). By refusing to give his creation a name, or even to refer to him as a man, Victor tries to assert that the creature is not human. Furthermore, by repeatedly describing the creature as disgusting and unnatural, Victor continues to make him sound inhuman. Later, when the creature has learned enough to compare his life to the lives of humans he's encountered, he declares himself "deformed and horrible" and requests that Victor create a companion "of the same species" with "the same defects" (Grimly 114). By defining his "species" as separate from Victor's, the creature is essentially denying his own humanity. When he describes himself in such negative terms, the creature shows that he thinks of himself not only as separate, but as inferior. After so many negative encounters with men, it makes sense that the creature begins to view himself

as his creator and the people around him do: as an inhuman "monster."

But the creature is ultimately human because he thinks, feels, and makes mistakes just like a human. When the creature first speaks with Victor, he defends his own character as "benevolent" and declares that his "soul glowed with love and humanity" (Grimly 83). The creature says that when he first developed consciousness, he displayed kindness, compassion, and the morals of a humane person. If the difference between man and beasts is strong morals, then the creature was every bit as human as any natural-born man. As the creature continues to learn about mankind, however, he realizes that for every cottager with "gentle manners" there are also "barbarous villagers" who are very cruel to others (Grimly 95). If being compassionate defines a person's humanity, then very few people in the story can really be called human. In fact, the men the creature encounters are all just as flawed as he eventually becomes. Just like the people around him, the creature's "heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy," but when he encounters "misery" and "violence," he finds himself "filled with an insatiable thirst for vengeance" (Grimly 190). This is how the creature displays man's best sides and his worst. He has the ability to love and the ability to hate. In this way, he is just like his creator, who is kind at some moments and cruel at others. In the end, the creature's dreams and his limitations make him just as human as Victor, or any other character in the book.

-Triana, Grade 8

- All of Triana's sentences focus on and develop one overall idea.
- She includes several pieces of textual evidence, describes what she notices in each piece, and explains the connection between each piece and her idea.
- Each paragraph focuses on a clearly defined idea and builds on and refers to the ideas in the other paragraph.
- All of Triana's quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines Citing and Punctuating a Direct Quote.

## Rubrics and exemplars: Sixth grade

### Amplify Focus rubric

**Definition of Focus:** To select one specific moment or idea, and to exclusively write about this moment or idea.

### Responses to Dahl & Narrative

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and almost none of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 50 words and some of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 85 words and most of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 120 words and all your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.

**Note:** In your Amplify classes, you will be practicing writing in class for 10–15 minutes a couple times a week. Your teacher will score this writing from time to time to check in on how well you are doing and where you may need some help.

## Focus score of 1

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and almost none of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 50 words and some of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 85 words and most of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 120 words and all your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 42

Roald Dahl is so funny and I wish I had been alive when he was a kid. He pulls great pranks and has a ton of fun with his friends.

I agree that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror. She has dirty clothes and uses dirty hands to take the candy out of the jars. It says her apron was grey and greasy. Her appearance is horrible, and her behavior is even worse.

- Aaron, Grade 6

- Aaron only writes 42 words and can only score a 1 in Focus.
- When a student writes so little, there is just not enough writing to really see how well they are doing.
- He introduces his idea that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror.
- Aaron writes additional sentences that support his idea, but he does not fully develop his idea.

## Focus score of 2

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and almost none of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 50 words and some of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 85 words and most of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 120 words and all your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 67

I agree that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror, because she is disgusting and mean. It says she has "a moustache on her upper lip and a mouth as sour as a green gooseberry." She was always frowning with her sour mouth. She works at a candy store so she should smile, not frown. She also had hands that were disgusting. They were black with dirt and grime.

- Maya, Grade 6

- Maya writes 67 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Focus.
- She receives a score of 2 because all the sentences she writes refer to her idea that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror.
- Maya states her idea.
- She includes two quotes that support her idea.
- She writes more sentences that support her idea.

## Focus score of 3

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and almost none of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 50 words and some of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 85 words and most of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 120 words and all your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 104

I believe Mrs. Pratchett is a horror because it says “Her apron was grey and greasy. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it,” She doesn't care about the way she looks even though she is working at a store. Another reason I believe Mrs. Pratchett is a horror is because her hands were dirty. “They looked as though they had been putting lumps of coal on the fire all day long.” Her job is to touch the candy that people buy so her hands should be spotless. She is also mean. Instead of being friendly to her customers, she yells at everyone. Once I was at a store where the worker was being rude. I was trying to buy sneakers but she wouldn't bring the right size so I left.

– Hank, Grade 6

- Hank writes 104 words and can score a 3, 2, or 1 in Focus.
- He receives a score of 3 because he states his idea about Mrs. Pratchett, and every sentence he writes explains his idea.
- He clearly states his idea.
- He includes two quotes that support his idea.
- Hank writes additional sentences that support his idea.



## Focus score of 4

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and almost none of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 50 words and some of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 85 words and most of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 120 words and all your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 180

I agree with the idea that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror because she is filthy in the way she looks and she is also nasty with the boys who come into her shop. First of all, she has a greasy apron and food all over her blouse. She had “toast-crumbs and tea stains and splashes of dried egg-yolk” on her apron. Can you imagine going to get a treat at the store and seeing the worker looking like that? Then, she uses dirty hands to get the candy for the boys. It even says she has “black fingernails” and she uses those nails to touch all the candy. She should wash her hands or use gloves. After all, candy is something you eat and you don't want it to be all dirty. Finally, she is so mean she won't even give the kids a bag unless they “spent a whole sixpence,” otherwise, she puts the candy in dirty newspaper. A sixpence was probably a lot of money and who wants newspaper all over their candy? She was clearly a horror.

– Carla, Grade 6

- Carla writes 180 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Focus.
- She receives a score of 4 because every sentence she writes helps to develop her idea about Mrs. Pratchett.
- She clearly states her idea.
- She includes three quotes that support her idea.
- Carla writes additional sentences that support her idea.

**Amplify Evidence rubric**

**Definition of Use of Evidence:** Selecting and describing quoted or paraphrased details from a text to develop and support an idea.

**Responses to Dahl & Narrative**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and almost none of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 50 words and some of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 85 words and most of your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.		You write a minimum of 120 words and all your sentences talk about the same moment or idea.

**Note:** In your Amplify classes, you will be practicing writing in class for 10–15 minutes a couple times a week. Your teacher will score this writing from time to time to check in on how well you are doing and where you may need some help.

**Use of Evidence score of 1**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and you do not describe what you notice in the pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 50 words and you describe what you notice in some pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 85 words and you describe what you notice in most pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 120 words and you describe what you notice in all the pieces of evidence that you include.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** Boy: Tales of Childhood, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 61

I think that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror because she had a “filth that clung around her.” Also, she had a “mustache on her upper lip and a mouth as sour as a green gooseberry.” And it said she “she never smiled.” Also her apron had “bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk.”

– Dan, Grade 6

- Dan writes 61 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- He receives a score of 1 because he does not describe what he notices in any of the evidence that he includes.
- Dan includes four quotes, but does not describe what he notices in any of them.

## Use of Evidence score of 2

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and you do not describe what you notice in the pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 50 words and you describe what you notice in some pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 85 words and you describe what you notice in most pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 120 words and you describe what you notice in all the pieces of evidence that you include.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 114

I agree that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror. She clearly is a horror because “Her apron was grey and greasy.” She also served the candy with dirty hands. She didn't even care that she was giving children candy with germs all over her hands. It says it looked like she had been picking up coal all day. Coal is black and dirty and should not be eaten along with candy. The kids might get really sick, but she doesn't even care. Also, “Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk.” He also said, “She never smiled. She never welcomed us when she went in.”

– Sara, Grade 6

- Sara writes 114 words and can score a 3, 2, or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- She receives a score of 2 because she describes what she notices in only one piece of evidence that she includes.
- She includes a paraphrase, then describes what she notices in this paraphrase.
- Sara does not describe what she notices in the three quotes that she includes.

## Use of Evidence score of 3

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and you do not describe what you notice in the pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 50 words and you describe what you notice in some pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 85 words and you describe what you notice in most pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 120 words and you describe what you notice in all the pieces of evidence that you include.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 140

It is easy to agree with Dahl that Mrs. Pratchett is a horror because of the way he describes her.

She doesn't care that her "apron is grey and greasy." I mean, really, how does she even get grease all over herself? She's is not a mechanic. She is getting candy! If it's grey, she probably doesn't even wash it either. Secondly, her hands were "black with dirt and grime." She should be washing them because signs always say that employees should wash hands. I think if you are scooping out candy without gloves, you should definitely wash your hands, but I guess she does not think so. Also, "Unless you spent a whole sixpence all in one go, she wouldn't give you a bag. Instead you got your sweets twisted up in a small piece of newspaper."

- Benjamin, Grade 6

- Benjamin writes 138 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- He receives a score of 3 because he explains the importance of words and phrases in two of the three pieces of evidence he includes.
- He includes a direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.
- He adds another direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.
- Benjamin does not describe what he notices in the last quote that he includes, and does not make it clear to the reader why this quote is important.

**Use of Evidence score of 4**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	You write a minimum of 25 words and you do not describe what you notice in the pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 50 words and you describe what you notice in some pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 85 words and you describe what you notice in most pieces of evidence that you include.		You write a minimum of 120 words and you describe what you notice in all the pieces of evidence that you include.

**Writing Prompt:** Dahl says that Mrs. Pratchett is “a horror.” Do you agree or disagree? Describe 2–3 details from the passage to show why.

**Text:** *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Roald Dahl

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 188

Considering all the details Dahl uses, I agree that Mrs. Pratchett was a 'horror.' First of all, the ways she looked was like something out of a horror movie. "She was a small skinny old hag with a moustache on her upper lip." A hag is horrible because when you picture her she looks like a witch. Also, she had a moustache. Also she is skinny, but she works at a candy shop so she should be jolly and round. Next, Dahl says she had an apron that was "grey and greasy. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk." So now you have a witch with dirty clothes and stinky old breakfast food all over. That is unsanitary because her egg yolk could fall in the clean candy jars. If you are still not horrified, think about this stinky old witch having dirty hands to get you your candy. It also says she had "black fingernails" and her hands were "disgusting." Remember these are the hands that are taking out the candy you really want to buy.

- Kara, Grade 6

- Kara writes 188 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- She receives a score of 4 because she draws the reader's attention to important words and phrases in all of the evidence she includes.
- She includes a quote, then describes what she notices in this quote.
- She adds another quote, then describes what she notices in this quote.
- Kara includes paraphrases and quotes and describes what she notices in the paraphrased evidence.

## Rubrics and exemplars: Seventh grade

### Amplify Focus rubric

**Definition of Focus:** To select one specific moment or idea, and to exclusively write about this moment or idea.

### Responses to Red Scarf Girl & Narrative

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Note:** In the Amplify classroom, students frequently practice writing in class for 10–15 minutes. Amplify teachers periodically score this low-stakes writing and use the results of these formative assessments to adjust and differentiate instruction. In order for a student to be considered proficient, he or she must demonstrate proficiency across a variety of writing assignments.

## Focus score of 1

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 74

Before the search of her house by the Red guards, Ji-li felt very lucky. "Until the audition I felt like the luckiest girl in the world" (The Liberation Army Dancer, 70). After the search, she felt terrible. Another time Ji-li felt terrible was when her father told her she could not audition for the Central Liberation Army Arts Academy. She was most upset when she found out her grandfather was a landlord.

- Lindsay, Grade 7

- Lindsay writes 74 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Focus.
- She receives a score of 1 because almost none of her sentences talk about the same moment or idea.
- Lindsay introduces her idea about Ji-li's feeling about her home before and after the search, but she does not develop this idea.
- She includes one direct quote that supports her idea.
- Lindsay adds sentences that do not talk about her idea about Ji-li's feelings.



## Focus score of 2

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 80

At the start of the Cultural Revolution, Ji-Li feels happy about her home, whereas after the search, she felt as if her beautiful home was destroyed. Before the search, Ji-li says, "I loved our top-floor room" (*The Liberation Army Dancer*, 66). Ji-li feels very proud that they live at the top of the building. After the search she complains, "The apartment was a mess. The middle of the floor was strewn with the contents of the overturned chests and drawers..." (*A Search in Passing*, 119).

- Patrick, Grade 7

- Writes 80 words and is eligible for a score of 2 or 1 in Focus.
- Receives a score of 2 because all the sentences he writes refer to his idea regarding Ji-li's feelings about her home before and after the search.
- Clearly states his idea.
- Includes two direct quotes that clearly support his idea.
- Writes additional sentences that support his idea.

## Focus score of 3

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 143

Before the search Ji-li was proud of how special her house was, after the search she feels vulnerable and exposed. Ji-li is proud of her house because its clean and its bigger than a lot of peoples houses at school "Many did not have a bathroom at all or even a flush toilet and very few had a full-size bathrooms that they did not have to share with other families" (The Liberation Army Dancer, 66). After the search, she feels like her privacy has been violated. She feels embarassed that they ransacked all her private belongings. She feels sad that her treasures have been destroyed. She feels like nothing is safe anymore. I once had a friend who had her house broken into when she wasn't home and she felt violated too. She lives on Robin Road and 5 houses on her street got broken into.

-Amanda, Grade 7

- Amanda writes 109 words and can score a 4, 3, 2 or 1 in Focus.
- She receives a score of 3 because she states her idea regarding Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search, and most sentences talk about and develop this idea.
- Amanda clearly states her idea.
- She includes one direct quote that supports her idea.
- She writes additional sentences that support her idea.
- Amanda adds sentences that do not develop her idea regarding Ji-li's feelings about her home.

## Focus score of 4

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 180

At the start of the cultural revolution, Ji-li felt proud of her home. After the search, however, she felt scared and sad. She was appreciative of her house because she knew it was better than other people's: "I loved our top-floor room. A huge French window and a high ceiling made it bright all year round, warmer during the winter and cooler in the summer. [...] our room was ten times as big as many of my classmates' homes." She loved the fact that her house was the top floor, had so much sunlight, was the perfect temperature year round, and was spacious. But her feelings greatly contrast from this after the search. "The apartment was a mess. The middle of the floor was strewn with the contents of the overturned chests and drawers. [...] And the stamp album was gone forever." (A Search in Passing, 119) She is upset that her usually clean house is now ruined. She is sad that the Red Guards would destroy their possessions. She is very distraught that her stamp book, which she called her "treasure," was taken.

- Steven, Grade 7

- Steven writes 180 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Focus.
- He receives a score of 4 because every sentence refers back to and helps to develop his idea about Ji-li's feelings about her home before and after the search.
- Steven clearly states his idea.
- He includes two direct quotes that support his idea.
- He writes additional sentences that support his idea.

**Amplify Use of Evidence rubric**

**Definition of Use of Evidence:** Selecting and describing quoted or paraphrased details from a text to develop and support an idea.

**Responses to Red Scarf Girl & Narrative**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and student describes what he or she notices in most pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Note:** In the Amplify classroom, students frequently practice writing in class for 10–15 minutes. Amplify teachers periodically score this low-stakes writing and use the results of these formative assessments to adjust and differentiate instruction. In order for a student to be considered proficient, he or she must demonstrate proficiency across a variety of writing assignments.

**Use of Evidence score of 1**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and student describes what he or she notices in most of the pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Writing Prompt:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 76

Ji-li talks a lot about her house and her family. She says, "I love our top-floor room." (The Liberation Army Dancer, 66) "Many did not have a bathroom at all or even a flush toilet and very few had a full-size bathrooms that they did not have to share with other families" (The Liberation Army Dancer, 66) She also says, "My family was also special in another way." (The Liberation Army Dancer, 67). In paragraph 70 she says, "I felt like the luckiest girl in the world".

- Rebecca, Grade 7

- Rebecca writes 76 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- She receives a score of 1 because she does not describe what she notices in any of the quotes she includes.
- Rebecca strings her quotes together without describing what she notices in any of them.

## Use of Evidence score of 2

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and student describes what he or she notices in most of the pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Assignment:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 76

Before the search Ji-li said, "I loved our top-floor room" (*The Liberation Army Dancer*, 66). "I felt like the luckiest girl in the world" (*The Liberation Army Dancer*, 70). But after the search, Ji-li felt violated. "I felt as if I had been stripped naked in public" (*A Search in Passing*, 125). She uses the strong phrase, "stripped naked," which shows that she felt extremely exposed. She had no privacy, they went through everything in her house, no matter how special it was to her.

- Jeremy, Grade 7

- Jeremy writes 76 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- He receives a score of 2 because he describes what he notices in one of the quotes he includes.
- He includes a quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.
- Jeremy misses the opportunity to do better because he does not describe what he notices in the two other quotes he includes.

## Use of Evidence score of 3

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and student describes what he or she notices in most of the pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Assignment:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 180

Before the search Ji-li said, "I loved our top-floor room. A huge French window and a high ceiling made it bright all year round... our room was ten times as big as many of my classmates homes, and a hundred times brighter." (The Liberation Army Dancer, 66) She felt that her house was a lot better than everyone else's house because she doesn't just say that her house was bigger or brighter, she says it was "ten times as big" and "one hundred times brighter." She felt she was rich and lucky to have a house like that because most people lived in small, crowded, and dark houses.

After the search she says, "the apartment was a mess (A Search in Passing, 119)." She adds, "the stamp album was gone forever (A Search in Passing, 121)," meaning that it was ruined. She had already said that her stamp collection was very special to her and now it is trash. She uses the word "forever" to show that this is permanent, she is very upset that her precious stamps will never be the same.

- Sarah, Grade 7

- Sarah writes 180 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- She receives a score of 3 because she draws the reader's attention to particular words and phrases in two out of three pieces of evidence she includes.
- She includes a direct quote, then describes what she notices in this quote.
- She adds another direct quote, then describes what she notices in this quote.
- Sarah misses the opportunity to do better in Use of Evidence because she does not describe what she notices in one of the quotes that she includes.

## Use of Evidence score of 4

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 95 words and student describes what he or she notices in most of the pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 130 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Assignment:** Describe Ji-li's feelings about her house before and after the search.

**Text:** *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji-li Jiang

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 194

At the start of the Cultural Revolution Ji-li felt proud of her home, but after the search, she felt ashamed. In the beginning, Ji-li raved about her house- "Best of all, we had a private bathroom." Ji-li was especially proud of the bathroom in their house, as is shown by her use of the phrase, "best of all". Many people did not have bathrooms so they had to share with other families. She knows that her family is privileged that they only share their bathroom with each other, and she appreciates this luxury. After the search, Ji-li says, "All my treasures were scattered on the floor," meaning the things that are the most special to her are broken and gone for good. She also says, "I loved my collection, even though I knew I should not." By writing, "even though" Ji-li shows that she feels ashamed. Collecting things was considered bourgeois and she should not even have had treasures in the first place. She feels embarrassed for collecting them and even more ashamed for being upset that they are gone. Ji-li's pride for her home before the search turns to shame after the search.

- Sean, Grade 7

- Sean writes 194 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- He receives a score of 4 because he describes what he notices in every piece of evidence he includes; he points out particular phrases from the text and explains the importance of those words.
- He includes a direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.
- He adds another direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.
- Sean selects a third direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.



## Rubrics and exemplars: Eighth grade

### Amplify Use of Focus rubric

**Definition of Focus:** To select one specific moment or idea, and to exclusively write about this moment or idea.

### Responses to Biography & Literature

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Note:** In the Amplify classroom, students frequently practice writing in class for 10–15 minutes. Amplify teachers periodically score this low-stakes writing and use the results of these formative assessments to adjust and differentiate instruction. In order for a student to be considered proficient, he or she must demonstrate proficiency across a variety of writing assignments.

## Focus score of 1

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 105

I can tell that Franklin was trying to make a more likable character because he was trying to sound like a woman in his stories. He wrote a letter to the author of the New-England Courant to tell their readers, that he intends to present them stories to entertain them. He was describing how the people are unwilling either to commend or dispraise what they read. People don't care what they read or who the author is. Like if the author is rich, poor, old, young, a scholar, or a leather apron man. Ben grew up with a minister after his parents went to Boston.

- Victoria, Grade 8

- Victoria writes 105 words and can score a 3, 2, or 1 in Focus.
- She receives a score of 1 because almost none of her sentences talk about the same moment or idea.
- Victoria introduces her idea about Ben Franklin's character being likable because she is a woman, but she does not go into more detail about this idea.
- Victoria adds sentences that do not talk about her main idea, like mentioning readers not caring about who the author is or including background information about Ben Franklin.

## Focus score of 2

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 97

I know Franklin was trying to make a likeable character because he tells us about his past experiences. He says that "my entrance into this troublesome world was attended with the death of my father..." (Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" 5). He says this so the readers will have some sympathy for Silence and like his character more. When the readers hear this it will almost play on their emotions and they will be more compelled to read. This will also make the readers like the character more. This is how we know that Franklin was trying to create a likeable character.

-Hector, Grade 8

- Hector writes 97 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Focus.
- He receives a score of 2 because all the sentences he writes talk about his idea that Franklin created a likable character by writing about Silence Dogood's past so readers will feel bad for her.
- Hector clearly states his idea.
- He includes one direct quote that supports his idea.
- He writes more sentences that support his idea.

## Focus score of 3

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 142

We know Franklin was trying to make a likeable character because of the humor he put into his work. Franklin says "in the meantime desiring your readers to exercise their patience, and bear with my humors now and then..."(Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" 9). He is making this statement implying that he is trying to entertain by being humorous. Franklin also tells a kind of funny story that makes readers feel bad for him. "My entrance into this troublesome world was attended with the death of my father, a misfortune..."(Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" 5). This is funny and entertaining because it's unexpected for the dad to die right when he was born but it also makes the readers feel bad for him. When the readers feel bad for him it makes them want to keep reading. Franklin was trying to create a likeable character by using humor, intelligence, and life stories.

- Cecilia, Grade 8

- Cecilia writes 142 words and can score a 4, 3, 2 or 1 in Focus.
- She receives a score of 3 because she clearly states her idea about Franklin's character being likable, and most of her sentences elaborate on her idea.
- Cecilia clearly states her idea.
- She includes two direct quotes that support her idea.
- She writes more sentences that support her idea.
- Cecilia includes some details and sentences that are not related to her idea.

## Focus score of 4

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 224

Franklin made Dogood a likable character by allowing "her" readers to feel sympathetic toward her in her writing. While she says "My entrance into this troublesome world was attended with the death of my father, a misfortune, which though I was not then capable of knowing, I shall never be able to forget"(Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" 5) she makes the mood of her letter sorrow. This allows me to be able to tell Franklin is trying to create a likable character because if the readers feel bad for her they might just listen to what she has to say. Also when she states "...that I might no longer be a charge to my indigent mother, who was put to hard shifts for a living"(Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*"6) that makes the reader feel that she has had a rough life and her mom has to work extra hard to make a living. She explains through her letter that she had to work hard and readers like a character who works for what they deserve, not who have it handed to them. So through Franklins words of Dogood's life the reader can tell he was trying to create a likable character for the readers to relate with.

-James, Grade 8

- Hector writes 97 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Focus.
- He receives a score of 2 because all the sentences he writes talk about his idea that Franklin created a likable character by writing about Silence Dogood's past so readers will feel bad for her.
- Hector clearly states his idea.
- He includes one direct quote that supports his idea.
- He writes more sentences that support his idea.

**Amplify Use of Evidence rubric**

**Definition of Use of Evidence:** Selecting and describing quoted or paraphrased details from a text to develop and support an idea.

**Responses to Biography & Literature**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and student describes what he or she notices in most pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Note:** In the Amplify classroom, students frequently practice writing in class for 10–15 minutes. Amplify teachers periodically score this low-stakes writing and use the results of these formative assessments to adjust and differentiate instruction. In order for a student to be considered proficient, he or she must demonstrate proficiency across a variety of writing assignments.

## Use of Evidence score of 1

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and student describes what he or she notices in most pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 60

You can tell he was trying to make a likable character because, You can tell he was trying to relate too people. Talking about problems from her childhood like when her dad died, and stuff that bothers everyone. I think he was trying to Make points so people would stand up and take a stand in what they believe in.

-Annabelle, Grade 8

- Writes 60 words and is eligible for a score of 2 or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- Receives a score of 1 because she does not describe what she notices in the piece of textual evidence she includes.
- Only includes a vague paraphrase from the text and does not describe what she notices about that paraphrase.

## Use of Evidence score of 2

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and student describes what he or she notices in most pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 87

Franklin wanted people to like the character Silence Dogood. Silence Dogood told about her life from when she was born and in the text it says "Thus, was the first day which I saw, the last that was seen by my father..." (Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" 5). I think losing her father like this means her life is very sad and would make people feel sorry for her and people would start thinking she is a nice character. This is one reason why people would think Silence Dogood was a likable character.

-Jerome, Grade 8

- Jerome writes 87 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- He receives a score of 2 because he describes what he notices in the direct quote he includes.
- He includes a direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.
- Jerome misses the chance to do better with Use of Evidence because he only writes 87 words and does not include more evidence or explain more about what he notices.



## Use of Evidence score of 3

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and student describes what he or she notices in most pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 130

Franklin was trying to make a likable character by giving her a sad backstory and likable personality so that people would sympathize with her and like her. The story was, "My entrance into this troublesome world was attended with the death of my father..." (Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" 5). The fact that Silence's father died when she was born means that her life was very sad, and this will make the readers feel bad for her and listen to her. He made Silence to be polite by saying, "I will not abuse your patience with a tedious recital of all the frivolous accidents of my life..." (Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" 8). This means that Silence didn't want the reader to take too much time reading about her and more time reading the important things she had to say.

- Trina, Grade 8

- Trina writes 130 words and can score a 3, 2, or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- She receives a score of 3 because she draws the reader's attention to important details in both of the quotes she includes.
- She includes a direct quote, then describes what she notices in this quote.
- She adds another direct quote, then describes what she notices in this quote.
- Trina misses the opportunity to do better with Use of Evidence because she does not write more or more thoroughly explain what she notices in the quotes she includes.

## Use of Evidence score of 4

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and student does not describe what he or she notices in pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and student describes what he or she notices in some pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and student describes what he or she notices in most pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and student describes what he or she notices in all pieces of textual evidence that he or she includes.

**Assignment:** How can you tell that Franklin was trying to create a likable character?

**Text:** "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*," Benjamin Franklin

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 12

**Word count:** 205

Franklin created a likable character, Silence Dogood. I can tell by how in the letter Franklin seems to create a sob story almost, as shown in the following, "Thus, was the first day which I saw, the last that was seen by my father; and thus was my disconsolate mother at once made both a parent and a widow. (Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" " 5). The story of how her father got thrown overboard by a rather large wave and how that day her mother became both a mom and a widow, pulls at the audiences heartstrings. Franklin wants the readers to be engrossed with feeling of sympathy for Silence Dogood, and he also achieves this as shown in, "I will not abuse your patience with a tedious recital of all the frivolous accidents of my life, that happened from this time until I arrived to years of discretion...(Franklin, "Silence Dogood's First Letter to the *New-England Courant*" " 8). When you're reading the letter, it makes you feel that Silence is a very innocent woman, who has a kind front despite her many years of misery. Someone who has survived that much, makes them honorable in others eyes. The same thoughts must have gone through Franklin's head as well, because he used these details to create a likable character.

- Vincent, Grade 8

- Vincent writes 205 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Use of Evidence.
- He receives a score of 4 because he describes what he notices in both of the quotes he includes, and makes some great inferences based on those quotes.
- He includes a direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.
- He adds another direct quote, then describes what he notices in this quote.

## Rubrics and exemplars: Personal narratives

### Amplify Focus rubric

**Definition of Focus:** To select one specific moment or idea, and to exclusively write about this moment or idea.

#### Sixth grade Focus rubric

1 Needs Work	2 Getting Better	3 Very Good	4 Great Work
Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

#### Seventh grade Focus rubric

1 Needs Work	2 Getting Better	3 Very Good	4 Great Work
Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 115 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 150 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

#### Eighth grade Focus rubric

1 Needs Work	2 Getting Better	3 Very Good	4 Great Work
Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 125 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.	Student writes a minimum of 160 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Note:** When using the Amplify curriculum, students frequently practice writing in class for 10–15 minutes. Amplify teachers periodically score this low-stakes student writing and use the results of these formative assessments to adjust and differentiate instruction. In order for a student to be considered proficient, he or she must demonstrate proficiency across a variety of writing assignments. As seen above, the students' Focus scores are based on higher word count requirements in each grade, requiring students to engage with the skill more deeply as they progress through middle school. The examples provided list Seventh grade word count requirements.

**Focus score of 1**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 125 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 160 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Assignment:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 175

I just finished soccer practice and I had learned a scissor kick, which was really hard for me. It was just an ordinary Wednesday night, cool and perfect for a jacket. My dad was in the garage fixing my purple bike and I was bored out of my wits. Then a brilliant, beyond intelligent idea popped in my head! I leapt up and did a twirl. I sped walked to the screen door and called to my younger sister. She was eating a sandwich and texting her friend. I got hungry and decided to have a sandwich too. Then our brother came down and told us he was going to a friend's house.

I told my sister my idea was to build a birdhouse but she didn't want to. She said we should go jump on our trampoline so we decided to do that. We got really hot and came inside to watch tv. Our mom told us that she was going to the grocery store so we told her to buy some ice cream.

- Melissa, Grade 7

- Writes 175 words and is eligible for a score of up to 1, 2, 3, or 4 in Focus.
- Scores a 1 because almost every sentence refers to a new moment or idea.
- Lists seven different moments instead of elaborating on one moment.

**Focus score of 2**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 125 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 160 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Writing Prompt:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 168

One time in art class I had a really hard drawing assignment. Well it was a free choice but I decided to make it challenging because I like a challenge every once in a while. I was trying to draw a Grey wolf face. I saw a grey wolf once at a zoo when I went on a trip to Minnesota. We drove to Minnesota and it took a really long time, especially because we had to keep stopping so my brother could go to the bathroom. We visited my grandparents and we went swimming in the lake near their house. I was copying a drawing that showed a snarling wolf coming out of fog. I started by drawing the nose. My friend was sitting next to me and she was sketching a turtle. She was doing a great job and the shell looked perfect. The nose that I made turned out ok. Once I made a drawing of a cat and the whole face looked really good.

- Trevor, Grade 7

- Trevor writes 168 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Focus.
- He scores a 2 because six of the 11 sentences he writes refer to the moment when he is drawing the grey wolf.
- He sometimes develops the moment when he is drawing the grey wolf.
- Trevor includes details from many events that are separate from the drawing instead of just talking about the drawing.

## Focus score of 3

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Assignment:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 213

My new next door neighbor moved into her apartment. The people that moved out were really nice but they had to move to California for their jobs. They live in LA now and I want to visit them.

One really challenging time was when my dad and I helped the new next door neighbor move. My dad told me to pick up a box, so I went ahead and tried to lift it. 'Whoa, I was right!' This box is way too heavy. I tried to at least get it to the door. As I picked up the 5 ton box, I could feel my muscles tightening as the weight of the box pulled me down. 'What did she have in here, bricks?!' I thought to myself. 'Ok, maybe if I try to slide the box-, No. Ugh what will it take for me to get this box to the door!' I tried one last time. With all my might I almost barely picked the box up! I trudged across the sidewalk with the heavy box. All of a sudden my dad scolded at me for trying to lift the box!

"You told me to lift this box!"

"No I told you to pick up the box with the tea set inside of it!"

"WHAT!"

- Samantha, Grade 7

- Samantha writes 213 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Focus.
- She scores a 3 because most of her sentences talk about the moment of lifting the heavy box.
- She includes details about the weight of the box, how she tried to move the box around, the physical effects of the challenge, and her frustration about the experience to give the reader an understanding of her struggle in this moment.
- Samantha includes unnecessary background information.

**Focus score of 4**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and almost none of the sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.		Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all sentences refer to the same precise moment or idea.

**Assignment:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 179

Just 200 feet between terrible struggle and glorious relaxation.

I didn't even have to command my legs to carry me further. They moved of their own accord, sending me gliding further and further down the sidewalk. Sweat beaded my brow and trickled down my nose, but I forced myself to ignore it.

Could it be the end of the mile run was stretching further and further away, increasing the rest of my distance by the second?

My breath was burning like raging fire in my lungs. All my lungs felt was heat and I gasped for breath hoping that somehow air would turn into water and extinguish the fire in the lungs. My head felt the pounding of each step like the pounding of a judge's mallet on my head. Someone passed me and I felt him taunting me, telling me I wasn't good enough. None of that mattered, I blocked it all out. All that mattered was that I would make it to the finish, feel the enormous weight of exhaustion and anxiety become lifted off my shoulders.

- Jonathan, Grade 7

- Jonathan writes 179 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Focus.
- He scores a 4 because every sentence he writes talks about the moment of running the last 200 feet of a mile race.
- He does not include any off-topic sentences to distract from the moment.
- Jonathan includes details about his physical and emotional state, and gives the reader a more complete understanding of the moment at the end of the race.

## Rubrics & exemplars: Responses to Biography & Literature

### Amplify Showing rubric

**Definition of Showing: says:** Showing is using descriptive details to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

#### Sixth grade Focus rubric

1 Needs Work	2 Getting Better	3 Very Good	4 Great Work
Student writes a minimum of 25 words and none of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 105 words and most of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 140 words and all of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

#### Seventh grade Focus rubric

1 Needs Work	2 Getting Better	3 Very Good	4 Great Work
Student writes a minimum of 25 words and none of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 115 words and most of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 150 words and all of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

#### Eighth grade Focus rubric

1 Needs Work	2 Getting Better	3 Very Good	4 Great Work
Student writes a minimum of 25 words and none of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 125 words and most of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.	Student writes a minimum of 160 words and all of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

**Note:** When using the Amplify curriculum, students frequently practice writing in class for 10–15 minutes. Amplify teachers periodically score this low-stakes student writing and use the results of these formative assessments to adjust and differentiate instruction. In order for a student to be considered proficient, he or she must demonstrate proficiency across a variety of writing assignments. As seen above, the students' showing scores are based on higher word count requirements in each grade, requiring students to engage with the skill more deeply as they progress through middle school. The examples provided list Seventh grade word count requirements.



## Showing score of 1

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and none of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 115 words and most of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 150 words and all of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

**Assignment:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 50

Last Wednesday, October 14 I was trying to learn a lacrosse trick. My sister was outside but she was not playing with me. She wanted me to take a walk with her. I was trying to learn the trick but I could not do it. My dog came outside too.

- Peter, Grade 7

- Writes 60 words and is eligible to receive a 2 or 1 in Showing.
- Scores a 1 because the entry includes no precise or descriptive observations: student does not incorporate strong verbs, sensory detail, internal dialogue to create a picture in the reader's mind.

## Showing score of 2

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and none of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 115 words and most of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 150 words and all of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

**Assignment:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 77

I went horse back riding for the second time when I was 12. I went to a farm on Oak Street in Silverton that had chickens and goats. I saw a horse that I wanted to ride near a fence. There was a lady near the horse who said, "if you want to ride this one you need to be experienced with horses." I said I was experienced and I mounted the horse. It was named Daisy.

- Emma, Grade 7

- Emma writes 77 words and can score a 2 or 1 in Showing.
- She scores a 2 because she uses one strong verb and one line of dialogue, which help to create a picture in the reader's mind.
- She uses dialogue to show the interaction between herself and the lady near the horse.
- She uses a strong verb, which provides a precise description of her action.
- Other than those mentioned above, Emma does not include strong verbs, sensory details, or unique observations, which could help create a vivid picture for the reader.

**Use of Evidence score of 3**

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and none of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 115 words and most of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 150 words and all of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

**Assignment:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 154

Last summer, while camping deep in the emerald woods of Northern Wisconsin, we wanted to go canoeing in the lake near our summer cottage. When we go camping we always bring the kayaks and canoes down to the sand so we can canoe whenever we want. We went down to the lake and we dragged the heavy beast from the sand into the water. The canoe felt like it came alive and was resisting our every step. We put on our life jackets and I got the oars. I sat in a canoe with my cousin and we started talking. My brother and mom were in the other canoe and we all started paddling out into the middle of the lake. My arms were aching from continually paddling the oars in and out of the lake water. My shoulders felt like they were a windmill on a windy day. Fatigue shot through my muscles.

- Jacob, Grade 7

- Jacob writes 154 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Showing.
- He scores a 3 because most of his entry contains descriptive details, which help create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. He uses phrases that point out just what he saw while in the woods.
- He includes descriptive details that allow the reader to feel the sensations in his arms, shoulders, and muscles as he paddled.
- Jacob's piece could have been stronger if he had taken one of the strong phrases listed above and written more about it. For example, if the entire piece of writing had described all the ways the canoe was a "heavy beast," Jacob could have included a larger variety of sensory details, strong verbs, and dialogue.

## Use of Evidence score of 4

1	Needs Work	2	Getting Better	3	Very Good	4	Great Work
	Student writes a minimum of 25 words and none of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 50 words and some of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 115 words and most of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.		Student writes a minimum of 150 words and all of the entry contains precise and descriptive observations to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

**Writing Prompt:** Write about a moment when you were doing something challenging.

**Number of minutes spent on the assignment:** 15

**Word count:** 221

The frisbee was coming towards me, closer, closer. It wobbled in the heated air, left than right than left; it tilted. The sun shone its bright rays into my eyes causing me to squint. Somewhere in front of me, I heard Kevin yell "You got this!" I waited anxiously as the white frisbee drifted closer and closer. My heart was beating, willing myself to make the catch. I reached my hands out as the frisbee made its way to me, swerving at first, then going perfectly straight and then swerving again as if it had been spun in a circle way too many times. Time seemed to stop as I tried to reach out so the frisbee would land in my open hands. I touched it briefly, but didn't manage to grab on. The frisbee seemed to taunt me, as it came crashing down to the ground as slow as molass running uphill. I desperately tried to grab it as it fell, but my hands repelled the frisbee like a strong magnet with both the same poles facing each other. As it finally was about to reach the ground, Aidan dove for it, missing it narrowly by no less than a centimeter. Then it was over, gravity succeeding as the white frisbee glided to the ground in front of my feet.

- Michelle, Grade 7

- Michelle writes 221 words and can score a 4, 3, 2, or 1 in Showing.
- She scores a 4 because every sentence is filled with descriptive details that allow the reader to visualize the moment when she misses the Frisbee.
- She uses strong verbs to make the moment come alive.
- She includes sensory details that put the reader in the scene; the reader can feel and see the sun, hear Kevin's voice, see the movement of the Frisbee, feel the beating of Michelle's heart, and see Aidan's dive.
- Michelle chooses her words very carefully; her observations create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.