



Exemplar Grade 6 Writing Test Prompt



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Introduction

This booklet explains the ACT Aspire[®] Grade 6 Writing test by presenting a sample test prompt. The prompt is accompanied by an explanation of the task the prompt poses, ideas for improvement, and scored student responses that illustrate student writing at different score points on the test rubric. The exemplar test prompt included here is representative of the range of content and types of questions found on the ACT Aspire Grade 6 Writing test. Educators can use this resource in several ways:

- Become familiar with ACT Aspire Writing test prompts.
- Help reinforce or adjust teaching and learning objectives.
- Learn how ACT Aspire improvement idea statements can help students identify key skills they have not yet mastered.
- See examples of actual student writing that have been scored and annotated according to the Writing test analytic scoring rubric.

Writing Framework

The ACT Aspire Writing assessments consist of a single 30-minute summative writing task at each grade in grades 3 through 8 and early high school (grades 9 and 10). The tasks target one of three primary modes of writing: reflective narrative, analytical expository, or persuasive/argumentative. The assessments are designed to provide a strong indication of whether students have the writing skills they will need to succeed as they begin work at their next grade level. All writing tasks are designed to target a depth of knowledge (DOK) level 3.¹ Student responses are evaluated according to analytic rubrics that assess the generation, development, organization, and communication of ideas in standard written English.

Because there is one extended writing task at each grade level, ACT Aspire rotates through the three modes to ensure coverage across the grades.

The reflective narrative mode appears at grades 3 and 6. The analytical expository mode appears at grades 4 and 7 and at early high school. The persuasive/argumentative mode appears at grades 5 and 8. The ACT Aspire assessments are designed to give students at every grade level an opportunity to display the higher-order thinking skills needed for meaningful reflection, analytical explanation, or persuasive argumentation.

¹ Norman L. Webb, “Depth-of-Knowledge Levels for Four Content Areas,” last modified March 28, 2002, <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/All%20content%20areas%20%20DOK%20levels%2032802.doc>.

Taken as a whole, the ACT Aspire Writing assessments are intended to reflect an integrated continuum of writing ability that advances in skill and complexity grade by grade. This continuum culminates in the ACT® writing test, which provides a measure of student readiness for the writing demands of college. The ACT Aspire assessments cover Common Core State Standards that pertain to writing as well as the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards, which are derived from ACT research.

Foundations

The ACT Aspire assessments represent an extension into earlier grades of the philosophy of writing and assessment found in established ACT high school writing tests—the ACT writing test and the ACT QualityCore® English constructed-response assessments. The ACT writing test was designed from extensive research identifying the essential skills needed for success in entry-level college writing. Data validate that test takers who perform adequately on the ACT writing test are likely to succeed in their first-year college composition courses. Thus our claim that the ACT writing test is a reliable measure of a student’s readiness for college-level writing is supported with empirical evidence.

The ACT QualityCore End-of-Course Assessments were designed to help more high school students achieve the level of writing readiness they will need for college and career success. ACT QualityCore took shape from *On Course for Success*, a research project conducted by ACT and The Education Trust, which examined the curricula of high schools where students excel despite facing socioeconomic challenges.² ACT then built the ACT QualityCore assessments around the high academic standards found in these schools, with the intention of helping more schools understand and incorporate into their classrooms the level of academic rigor needed for their students’ success. There are four ACT QualityCore constructed-response assessments, one at each grade from 9 through 12. The demanding 45-minute tests encourage critical thinking and accomplished composition in the modes of reflective narrative (grade 9), literary analysis (grade 10), persuasive writing (grade 11), and expository writing (grade 12).

The ACT Aspire Writing assessments draw upon this rich research base for their design and reflect the same principles of writing that are found in the ACT writing test and in the ACT QualityCore constructed-response assessments.

Writing Competencies and Analytic Scoring

The Writing Test is scored with a four-domain analytic scoring rubric. Each grade level has a unique rubric because the writing tasks assess different writing modes, but the underlying design is the same across grades.

Each of the four rubric domains corresponds to a different trait of the writing sample; traits in the writing sample are evidence of the writing competencies described below. In addition to an overall writing test score, students receive scores in four reporting categories that correspond to these analytic rubric domains.

² ACT and The Education Trust, *On Course for Success: A Close Look at Selected High School Courses That Prepare All Students for College and Work* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2004).

Reflective Narrative/Analysis/Argument

The name of the first rubric domain corresponds to the mode of writing assessed at the grade level. Regardless of the mode, this rubric domain is associated with the writer's generation of ideas. Scores in this domain reflect the ability to generate productive ideas and engage with the writing task. Depending on the mode, writers generate ideas to provide reflection, analysis, or persuasive and reasoned argument. Competent writers understand the topic they are invited to address, the purpose for writing, and the audience. They generate ideas that are relevant to the situation.

Development and Support

Scores in this domain reflect the writer's ability to develop ideas. Competent writers explain and explore their ideas, supporting them with reasons, examples, and detailed descriptions. Their support is well integrated with their ideas. They help the reader understand their thinking about the topic.

Organization

Scores in this domain reflect the writer's ability to organize ideas with clarity and purpose. Competent writers arrange their writing in a way that clearly shows the relationship between ideas, and they guide the reader through their reflection, analysis, or argument about the topic.

Language Use

Scores in this domain reflect the writer's ability to use language to convey their ideas with clarity. Competent writers make use of the conventions of grammar, syntax, and mechanics. Their word choice is precise, and they are also aware of their audience, adjusting voice and tone to enhance their purpose.

Task Templates

The ACT Aspire writing tasks are built from task templates that have been designed to elicit the writing competencies discussed above. Through these templates we strive to generate writing tasks that give students with a wide range of abilities a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate their best writing. Thus, the templates call for writing topics that are accessible in language and concept to a large majority of students at a given grade level, that are free from cultural bias, and that do not require of students any preexisting specialized or background knowledge. At the same time, each template is designed to provide an opportunity for students to think critically if they can, and to demonstrate the upper range of their composition skills.

Improvement Ideas

ACT Aspire includes simple improvement ideas at the reporting category (skill) level on student and parent reports. These improvement ideas are provided for the lowest performing skill for each subject tested. The skills are always ordered from highest performing to lowest performing based on the percentage of points correct. If the percentages for two or more skills are tied, the skill with the lower number of total points is displayed first.

Keep in mind that the order of skills listed on reports may not always be exemplary of where to focus learning. For example, the skills in which a student performed within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed first, and the skills in which a student did not perform within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed last. Also, keep in mind the total number of points possible in each skill when interpreting the percentage correct.

There are two levels of improvement idea statements (low and high) for ACT Aspire summative reporting. Low statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is below the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill. High statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is at or above the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Ideas and Analysis (IAA)	6	Practice prewriting strategies such as questioning and brainstorming to generate ideas for a story; when reading a story, try to identify the moral of the story or the lessons it teaches; identify and discuss reasons for selecting one topic for a story over others to fit your writing purpose.	Understand the assignment: learn to identify the purpose, audience, and key words. Before you begin writing a story, ask: Who is going to read this story? Think about what the story means to you. Use vivid details to help your reader feel as you do about the events in your story.
Development and Support (DAS)	6	Review model stories to identify and discuss what types of supporting details and events authors include in order to communicate their ideas; review your writing to identify areas where you can use more details to describe the experience and can explain your ideas with more precision.	Practice writing a story in which you use descriptive details and dialogue to show rather than tell the story. Think about how you might enrich your story by reflecting on events or characters: How do the people in your story feel? What do the events mean to them?
Organization (ORG)	6	Use clustering, concept mapping, or another visual organizer to identify the relationships among the events or characters in a story. Practice arranging the details within a story so the story logically builds and progresses. Review your story to recognize when it wanders away from its main ideas.	Use clustering, concept mapping, or another visual organizer to identify the relationships among the events or characters in a story. Practice arranging the details within a story so the story logically builds and progresses. Review your story to recognize when it wanders away from its main ideas.
Language Use and Conventions (LUC)	6	Read and discuss the works of skilled writers to become more familiar with correct language use; practice proofreading to identify obvious errors and missing words; revise your writing with a focus on clearly communicating your intended meaning while avoiding vague or imprecise word choices.	Read and discuss the works of favorite writers or subjects; use a dictionary to learn any unfamiliar words or phrases; practice proofreading your or others' work to identify obvious errors and missing words; regularly write in a journal to get more practice using both new and familiar words.

Sample Prompt

This section presents a sample prompt, a written explanation of the task, a task-specific scoring rubric, and sample student responses. The sample task has been developed to DOK level 3.

Grade 6 Reflective Narrative Writing

You are going to write a **reflective narrative**.

Think about the first time you experienced a new food. Where were you, what food was it, how did trying this new food affect the way you think about trying new things? Write a **story** to show what it was like to try something for the first time, and **reflect** on what you learned about trying new foods. Be sure to use descriptive details to show what this experience means to you.

Common Core State Standards expect students to write proficiently in the Narrative mode (CCRA.W3). The ACT Aspire Grade 6 Writing test, which is a narrative writing exercise, affords students the opportunity to meet this expectation. This writing task expands the narrative mode by asking students not just to recount an experience, but to think critically about its meaning.

The Grade 6 Writing test marks the second appearance of the narrative mode in the ACT Aspire suite of writing assessments. While the grade 3 narrative task utilizes heavy scaffolding to accommodate students in their earliest stages of development as writers, this task uses grade-appropriate scaffolding that is light by comparison. This sample task asks students to recount the experience of trying a new food, and to reflect what they learned in doing so. The task provides a targeted series of questions meant to encourage the generation of story elements and narrative detail (*Where were you, what food was it, how did trying this new food affect the way you think about trying new things?*).

Rubric for Grade 6 Reflective Narrative Writing

	Reflective Narrative	Development	Organization	Language Use
<p>Score: 6 Responses at this score point demonstrate effective skill in writing a reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response critically engages with the task, and presents an effective reflective narrative. The narrative conveys the significance of the event through insightful reflection on the experience and on the meaning of the experience. There is skillful movement between specific and generalized ideas.</p>	<p>The narrative is effectively developed through skillful conveyance of action, sensory details, and/or character. Reflection on experience and meaning is well supported through effective description and/or explanation. Details are integral to the story and its significance.</p>	<p>The response exhibits a skillful organizational strategy, with logical progression within the story. Transitions within the response consistently clarify the relationships among the elements of the reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates the ability to effectively convey meaning with clarity. Word choice is precise. Sentence structures are varied and clear. Voice and tone are appropriate for the narrative purpose and are maintained throughout the response. While a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be present, they do not impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 5 Responses at this score point demonstrate capable skill in writing a reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response engages with the task, and presents a capable reflective narrative. The narrative conveys the significance of the event through thoughtful reflection on the experience and on the meaning of the experience. There is purposeful movement between specific and generalized ideas.</p>	<p>The narrative is capably developed through purposeful conveyance of action, sensory details, and/or character. Reflection on experience and meaning is supported through apt description and/or explanation. Details enhance the story and help to convey its significance.</p>	<p>The response exhibits a purposeful organizational structure, with some logical progression within the story. Transitions within the response clarify the relationships among elements of the reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates the ability to capably convey meaning with clarity. Word choice is usually precise. Sentence structures are clear and often varied. Voice and tone are appropriate for the narrative purpose and are maintained throughout most of the response. While errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be present, they do not impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 4 Responses at this score point demonstrate adequate skill in writing a reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response is appropriate to the task, and presents an adequate reflective narrative. The narrative demonstrates recognition of the significance of the event through reflection on the experience and/or on the meaning of the experience. Connections between specific and generalized ideas are mostly clear.</p>	<p>The narrative is adequately developed through conveyance of action, sensory details, and/or character. Reflection on experience and/or meaning is mostly supported through description and explanation. Details may enhance the story and help to convey its significance.</p>	<p>The response exhibits a clear organizational structure, with a discernable logic to the story. Transitions within the response clarify the relationships among the elements of the reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates the ability to clearly convey meaning. Word choice is sometimes precise. Sentence structures are occasionally varied and usually clear. Voice and tone are appropriate for the narrative purpose, but may be inconsistently maintained. While errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, they rarely impede understanding.</p>

Rubric for Grade 6 Reflective Narrative Writing *(continued)*

	Reflective Narrative	Development	Organization	Language Use
<p>Score: 3 Responses at this score point demonstrate some developing skill in writing a reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates a limited understanding of the task, and presents a somewhat appropriate reflective narrative. Reflection on the experience or on the meaning of the experience is limited or only somewhat relevant. Specific and generalized ideas are only somewhat connected.</p>	<p>The narrative is somewhat developed. There is some conveyance of action, sensory details, and/or character, but it may be limited or only somewhat relevant. Reflection on the experience and/or meaning is somewhat supported through description and explanation.</p>	<p>Organization is somewhat appropriate to the task, but may be simplistic or may digress at times. Transitions within the response sometimes clarify relationships among the elements of the reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates some ability to convey meaning. Word choice is general and occasionally imprecise. Sentence structures show little variety and are inconsistently clear. Voice and tone are somewhat appropriate for the narrative purpose but are inconsistently maintained. Distracting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, and they sometimes impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 2 Responses at this score point demonstrate weak or inconsistent skill in writing a reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates a rudimentary understanding of the task, with weak or inconsistent skill in generating a reflective narrative. Reflection on the experience or on the meaning of the experience is unclear or incomplete, or may be irrelevant. If present, connections between specific and generalized ideas are weak or inconsistent.</p>	<p>Development is weak. Elements of the story are reported rather than described. Reflection on the experience and/or meaning through description or explanation is weak, inconsistent, or not clearly relevant.</p>	<p>Organization is rudimentary. The logic of the story may be unclear. Transitions within the response are often misleading or poorly formed.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates a weak ability to convey meaning. Word choice is rudimentary and vague. Sentence structures are often unclear. Voice and tone may not be appropriate for the narrative purpose. Distracting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, and they impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 1 Responses at this score point demonstrate little or no skill in writing a reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no understanding of the task, with virtually no narrative, and/or virtually no reflection on the experience or its meaning.</p>	<p>The response is virtually undeveloped, with little or no action, sensory detail, or character, and little or no reflection.</p>	<p>The response shows virtually no evidence of organization. Transitional devices may be present, but they fail to relate elements of the reflective narrative.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no ability to convey meaning. Word choice is imprecise, making ideas difficult to comprehend. Sentence structures are mostly unclear. Voice and tone are not appropriate for the narrative purpose. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are pervasive and significantly impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 0 Unscorable</p>	<p>The response is blank, voided, off-topic, illegible, or not written in English.</p>			

Sample Essay 1

Score: 1111

I was my Graandmas house. she just cooked for the fl then we had dzord then we will go to the porike then my dad me to the wort parke then we wat homes.

Score Explanation

Reflective Narrative (1)

The response demonstrates little understanding of the task (*I was my Graandmas house. she just cooked for the fl then we had dzord*). The dessert is not identified, and we are not told that it was being tried for the first time.

Development (1)

This minimal response is virtually undeveloped, with no reflection. Extraneous details (*then we will go to the porike then my dad me to the wort parke then we wat homes*) relay the events of the day rather than the experience of trying a new food.

Organization (1)

The response shows virtually no evidence of organization. As a transitional device, “then” is used four times in this brief, two-sentence response.

Language Use (1)

The response demonstrates little or no ability to convey meaning. Spelling errors (*fl; dzord; wort parke; wat*) are pervasive and significantly impede understanding.

Sample Essay 2

Score: 2222

One time i tried roast beef for the firs time in my life when I first tried it I thought it was nasty untill i tried it and it was good i was at my grandmother house when i tried it she said im about to cook some roast beef I said no at first but she said have you ever had roast beef before i said no but it lokks nasty she im going cook some and see if you like it I said I was not going to like but you can go ahead and cook it

Score Explanation

Reflective Narrative (2)

The response demonstrates a rudimentary understanding of the task. Reflection on the experience or on the meaning of the experience is unclear (*im about to cook some roast beef I said no at first but she said have you ever had roast beef before i said no but it lokks nasty she im going cook some and see if you like it I said I was not going to like but you can go ahead and cook it*).

Development (2)

Development is weak. Elements of the story are reported (*i tried roast beef; I thought it was nasty; it was good*) rather than described. Reflection on the experience and its meaning through description or explanation is weak (*I thought it was nasty; it was good*) and not clearly relevant (*I said I was not going to like but you can go ahead and cook it*).

Organization (2)

Organization is rudimentary. The logic of the story may be unclear. Transitions within the response are often misleading or poorly formed (*when I first tried it; untill I tried it; when I tried it*).

Language Use (2)

Word choice is rudimentary and vague (*nasty; good*). Sentence structures are often unclear due to lack of punctuation.

Sample Essay 3

Score: 3334

Have you ever tried a new food? I have and it was so good! I was in Florida on a disney cruise ship. We were sitting in the resturaunt and the waiter brought a big plate of what I thought was chicken strips. My dad told my siblings and I to try one so we did. Little did we know that afterward my dad would tell us it was actually aligator tail. It tasted so much like chicken I actually believed it was at first! I don't hesitate anymore to try new things. So if you have never tried a new food you should. There are so many types of food in this world, you'll never know what you'll like if you dont try new things.

Score Explanation

Reflective Narrative (3)

The response presents a somewhat appropriate reflective narrative about being fooled into trying a new food. Reflection on the experience or on the meaning of the experience is limited or only somewhat relevant (*I don't hesitate anymore to try new things. So if you have never tried a new food you should. There are so many types of food in this world, you'll never know what you'll like If you dont try new things*). Specific (*the waiter brought a big plate of what I thought was chicken strips*) and generalized ideas (*you'll never know what you'll like If you dont try new things*) are somewhat connected.

Development (3)

The narrative is somewhat developed. There is some conveyance of action (*sitting in the resturaunt*), sensory details (*tasted so much like chicken*), and character (*I actually believed it was at first*), but it is limited or only somewhat relevant. Reflection on the experience and its meaning is somewhat supported through description and explanation.

Organization (3)

Organization is somewhat appropriate to the task but is simplistic. After introducing the topic (*Have you ever tried a new food?*) and the setting (*I was In Florida on a disney cruise ship*), the response uses a simplistic sequence of events as an organizational device. Transitions (*Little did we know*) within the response sometimes clarify relationships among the elements of the reflective narrative.

Language Use (4)

The response demonstrates the ability to clearly convey meaning. Word choice is sometimes precise (*hesitate*). Sentence structures are varied and clear (*We were sitting in the resturaunt and the waiter brought a big plate of what I thought was chicken strips. My dad told my siblings and I to try one so we did. Little did we know that afterward my dad would tell us it was actually aligator tail*). Voice and tone are appropriate for the narrative purpose. While errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, they rarely impede understanding.

Sample Essay 4

Score: 4444

Food, it is everywhere. It inspires cultures. It is the one of the main things in order to survive. There are very unique foods in the world. Some are fun to try, and taste extraordinary and others not so much. Food is great! These next few paragraphs are about the first time I ever have tried deer bacon.

Deer bacon is very tasty. I remember the first time I tried it I was about eight years old. I was at my friend's house, there was also some other people there that I knew and we were all playing and running around their huge yard. My dad and the other dads were all cooking deer meat, that one of them had killed. It was awesome they had so much. A lot of it was bacon. They were all grilling it on a huge Bar-B-Que pit. When it was dark, my friends and I went over to the pit. We tried some of the bacon, it was the first time I had ever tried deer bacon. I thought it was so delicious. I could eat it until I got sick! I kept going back for more.

I learned that it was great to try new foods. I loved deer bacon and still do to this day. I love trying new foods now and love to find something so tasty like the bacon. Now when I go to restaurants, I love to try new things and just experiment a little. Trying the deer bacon affected me to love to see new tastes in food. It gave me a positive outlook on trying things. Not all things taste good though, but I still try them and after that I know to avoid them.

Score Explanation

Reflective Narrative (4)

The response is appropriate to the task and presents an adequate reflective narrative. The narrative demonstrates recognition of the significance of the event by reflecting both on the experience (*I thought it was so delicious. I could eat it until I got sick!*) and on its meaning (*I learned that it was great to try new foods; I love trying new foods now and love to find something so tasty like the bacon. Now when I go to restaurants, I love to try new things and just experiment a little; Not all things taste good though, but I still try them and after that I know to avoid them*). Connections between specific (*I learned that it was great to try new foods*) and generalized ideas (*Food is great*) are mostly clear.

Development (4)

The narrative is adequately developed through conveyance of action, sensory details, and character. Reflection on the experience and its meaning is mostly supported through description and explanation. Details enhance the story and help to convey its significance (*I was about eight years old; It was awesome they had so much. A lot of it was bacon*).

Organization (4)

The response exhibits a clear organizational structure, with a discernible logic to the story. The first paragraph is introductory, the body paragraph tells the story, and the final paragraph constitutes a reflective conclusion.

Language Use (4)

The response demonstrates precise word choice (*inspires; survive; unique; extraordinary; affected; positive outlook*). Despite some punctuation errors, sentence structures are varied and usually clear (*Deer bacon is very taste. I remember the first time I tried it I was about eight years old. I was at my friend's house, there was also some other people there that I knew and we were all playing and running around their huge yard*). Voice and tone are appropriate for the narrative purpose. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present but rarely impede understanding.

Sample Essay 5

Score: 5556

In my life, I have tried many new foods, such as pizza and potatoes, but never had I ever tried them together until this day. I was just getting to the restaurant for my friends birthday party. We were celebrating at a pizza place called Fetta. After ordering drinks and appetizers of bread knots, it was time to order pizza. Usually I'm a cheese pizza kind of girl, but I had never been here before and my friends were trying to convince me to try soemthing new. I asked them what they suggested and they all agreed that the mashed potato pizza was a slice of heaven.

"Mashed potato pizza?" I asked.

This happened to sound absolutely disgusting! I mean, think about it. A piece of pizza with mashed potatoes on it? It just doesn't sound right! After debating on it for awhile, I agreed to try it, but I was going to get a piece of cheese pizza, too. Together with my friends, we went and walked around for a little bit. By the time we came back, our food was ready! Time to try this AWFUL mashed potato pizza, or so I thought.

I had my water sitting beside me on the table, ready to wash down the nastiness. I took a bite and realized that my friends were right! This pizza was amazing! It was actually better than amazing! It was one of the best things I had ever tasted!

After trying this food I realized that you should never be opposed to trying new things and you should never doubt your friends because, a lot of the time, they're right! I guess that some people would say, "Try it and you'll like it!" After trying this astonishing pizza that is now one of my favorites, I thank my friends for introducing me to this delicacy and I tell them that they can feel free to take me back at any time!

Score Explanation

Reflective Narrative (5)

The response engages with the task and presents a capable reflective narrative. The narrative conveys the significance of the event through thoughtful reflection on the experience (*This pizza was amazing! It was actually better than amazing! It was one of the best things I had ever tasted!*) and on the meaning of the experience (*I realized that you should never be opposed to trying new things and you should never doubt your friends because, a lot of the time, they're right!*). There is purposeful movement between specific (*all agreed that the mashed potato pizza was a slice of heaven*) and generalized ideas (*I have tried many new foods, such as pizza and potatoes, but never had I ever tried them together*).

Development (5)

The narrative is capably developed through purposeful conveyance of action (*walked around for a little bit; I took a bite*) and sensory details (*pizza with mashed potatoes on it*). Reflection on the experience and its meaning is supported through apt description and explanation. Details enhance the story and help to convey its significance (*After ordering drinks and appetizers of bread knots, it was time to order pizza. Usually I'm a cheese pizza kind of girl, but I had never been here before and my friends were trying to convince me to try something new*).

Organization (5)

The response exhibits a purposeful organizational structure, with some logical progression within the story (i.e. she had never tried pizza and potatoes together, her friends tried to convince her to try something new, she thought that it didn't sound good, they debated, she agreed to try the pizza, she had water ready to wash the pizza down, she realized her friends were right). Transitions within the response (*After ordering; After debating; By the time; After trying*) clarify the relationships among elements of the reflective narrative and move the story along.

Language Use (6)

The response demonstrates the ability to effectively convey meaning with clarity. Word choice is precise (*convince; slice of heaven; absolutely disgusting; debating; wash down the nastiness; better than amazing; astonishing*). Sentence structures are varied and clear (*It just doesn't sound right! After debating on it for awhile, I agreed to try it, but I was going to get a piece of cheese pizza, too. Together with my friends, we went and walked around for a little bit. By the time we came back, our food was ready! Time to try this AWFUL mashed potato pizza, or so I thought*). Voice and tone (*feel free to take me back at any time!*) are appropriate for the narrative purpose and are maintained throughout the response. While a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be present, they do not impede understanding.

Sample Essay 6

Score: 6666

The first time I experienced a new food was a Mexican dish known as the “Chefs Special”. I was at a restaurant called “El Mazatlan”. The first time I had went to El Mazatlan, I wasn’t very excited. I am not familiar with Mexican food, and I wasn’t too thrilled about going there. My mother assured me that the food was awesome, and I had nothing to worry about. Once I had entered the restaurant, the delicious smell of food filled my nose. We were greeted by very nice people and they took us to our table. When we got seated, I paid close attention to all the designs on the walls, tables, chairs, it was so amazing! Whoever painted those walls was a very talented person. My mother and I continued to talk until our waiter showed up to our table. “Hello!” the waiter told us. “Can I start you out with something to drink?” My mom and I smiled brightly and ordered our drinks. The drinks came within two minutes, along with a basket full of chips and salsa. We told the waiter “Thank you.” and he left. I began eating the chips, and the salsa was delicious! No other salsa that I have tried tasted as good as this one! El Mazatlan’s salsa had a special recipe. I had eaten about a fourth of the basket until the waiter returned, taking our meal orders. I wasn’t in the mood for a huge meal, so I stuck to something a bit simple. “Chefs Special, please.” I tell the waiter. He smiles and takes up my menu. Our food arrived in less than 5 minutes, it looked yummy! We took our sizzling food and began to eat. My first bite of the Chefs Special was great! It was a mixture of grilled chicken, rize, and a special cheese. I looked over at my mom’s food and saw that she had gotten something good as well. Her dish was a plate of food with a few tortillas, beans, lettuce, tomatoes, avocado, beef and chicken, with some peppers! We switched our plates to try each other’s food and we both liked what we had gotten. Once we finished our food, our waiter cleaned up for us and we paid for our meal. When I sat In the car, I told my mom that I knew we would be going back to El Mazatlan often. Trying this new food helped me change the way I feel about trying new things because, you can’t judge a book by its

cover. I thought I would hate the food, but once I took a bite, I fell in love! Many people nowadays, have gotten used to the food they eat daily, and dislike trying new things. That was me at one point, but ever since I had eaten at El Mazatlan, I'm into trying new things everyday! I eat a varitey of foreign foods, such as: Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Bosnian .. the list goes on! This experience means a lot to me because it's a positive thing to be trying out new stuff. Not only will it let you eat amazing food, but it will let you see how different parts of the world live their lives and their culture. I sure do hope you visit many different restaurants, and see what food is best for you!

Score Explanation

Reflective Narrative (6)

The response critically engages with the task and presents an effective reflective narrative. The narrative conveys the significance of the event through insightful reflection on the experience (*We switched our plates to try each other's food and we both liked what we had gotten*) and on the meaning of the experience (*Trying this new food helped me change the way I feel about trying new things because, you can't judge a book by its cover. I thought I would hate the food, but once I took a bite, I fell in love! Many people nowadays, have gotten used to the food they eat daily, and dislike trying new things. That was me at one point, but ever since I had eaten at El Mazatlan, I'm into trying new things everyday!*). There is skillful movement between specific (*I eat a varitey of foreign foods, such as: Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Bosnian*) and generalized ideas (*it's a positive thing to be trying out new stuff; see what food is best for you!*).

Development (6)

The narrative is effectively developed through a skillful conveyance of action (*took us to our table; ordered our drinks; eating the chips; began to eat; waiter cleaned up for us; paid for our meal*) and sensory details (*delicious smell of food; sizzling food*). Reflection on the experience and its meaning is well supported through effective description and explanation. Details are integral to the story and its significance.

Organization (6)

Although there is a slight digression (*I paid close attention to all the designs on the walls, tables, chairs*), the response exhibits a purposeful organizational structure, with logical progression within the story as shown by the action details cited above and by the lengthy, reflective closing. Transitions (*The first time; When we got seated; Our food arrived; Once we finished*) within the response provide connections among elements of the reflective narrative and foster the effectiveness of the narrative.

Language Use (6)

The response demonstrates the ability to effectively convey meaning with clarity. Word choice is precise (*I wasn't very excited; I am not familiar with; I wasn't too thrilled; assured me that the food was awesome; smiled brightly; it looked yummy; dislike trying new things; positive thing to be trying out new stuff*). Sentence structures are varied and clear. Voice and tone are appropriate for the narrative purpose and are maintained throughout the response. While a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, they do not impede understanding.