

# California Writing Project

## Uncovering Misperceptions Associated with Living in a Small Town: Writing Analytical Argument Essays

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## From Teacher to Teacher

When Californians venture to other states, a frequent assumption is that we all live by the beach, that we know movie stars, that we spend most of our time at the mall, and that we have lots of money. There are different assumptions about rural life too—that it's pastoral, safe, and beautiful. But the small town in Northern California where I teach doesn't resemble these stereotypes. There are no movie theatres, malls, or skate parks. The city takes up a small geographic space and has a population of 6,000, yet the school services an area of over 750 square miles.

Some of my students' families are transplants from urban places, seeking out their little piece of land where they can grow a garden and raise a few chickens. Some students have lived in their small town and in the same house all of their lives, some are children of migrant families, and still others are just passing through. What all of my students share, though, is that they live within the district's boundaries and come to school nearly every day. Yet what they rarely articulate is that where they live has a powerful impact on the assumptions others make about them, and the ways those assumptions have influenced their own perceptions of themselves.

Rarely does instruction happen without teachers and students creating an intentional context or chain of actions and influences. For the following assignment sequence, many instructional events came together to allow students to enter into a discussion about the perceptions that are formed about where a person lives or the judgments that are made about a person's character by how they look. What follows is a series of lessons that both illustrate the power of assumptions about people and place, as well as the power of being labeled merely by external appearances.

This sequence of lessons can move from informal personal writing to more formal reflective, analytical writing that makes an argument. The sequence begins with the reading of an excerpt from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, which opens up multiple possibilities for further teaching and learning. The instructional activities were originally designed for students in English 1 (mostly ninth graders), but I have used the lesson sequence with students in grades 9-12, and the student examples included here are from twelfth graders.

## Text Resources

Cisneros, Sandra. "The House on Mango Street" in *The House on Mango Street*. New York: First Vintage Contemporaries, 1984.

The Kellogg Foundation. *Perceptions of Rural America*

<http://www.greenbergresearch.com/index.php?ID=1599> (accessed July 5, 2012).

## Teaching Context

This lesson was designed for students, grades 9-12, in a small rural high school in Northern California and took about two weeks to complete during 50-55 minute class sessions.

## Text Type, Genre, Writing Prompt

- Informal and Formal Analytical Essays that draw on and blend narrative, informational, and argumentative elements.

- **Informal Writing Prompt**

In Sandra Cisneros' vignette, "The House on Mango Street," the narrator describes the house she lives in, how she feels about living there, and how others make assumptions about her based on their impression of her house.

Think about the house that you live in. If someone who doesn't know you were to drive by your house, what might he or she assume about the people who live there? Based on the exterior of your house, how accurate would their assessment be of the people who live inside?

- **Culminating Writing Prompt Two/Analytical Argument Essay**

The author in "The House on Mango Street" suggests that where we live can influence the ways others think about us, and even the ways we think about ourselves. In *Perceptions of Rural Life in America*, the study shows that people living in urban areas believe that life in a rural place is distinctly different from city life and city values. To what extent do you see these attitudes where you live?

Write an analytical essay exploring your insights into perceptions and misperceptions associated with living in small towns or rural communities. To develop your essay and to help you present your ideas, use examples from your own experiences, your observations of others, and your reading, including "The House on Mango Street" and *Perceptions of Rural Life in America*.

## Instructional Strategies

- Studying and color-coding genre features of mentor texts—vignettes and reports
- Posting genre and language examples for ongoing reference
- Quick Write responses to issues and structures
- Studying the organizational features and development of reflective and informational writing
- Exploring bias and misperception
- Reviewing language and rhetorical moves within mentor texts
- Revision conferences on writing for clarity and genre effectiveness

### Common Core State Standards

Standards in bold are focus standards. Those not in bold are important supporting standards.

#### READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE 9–10

##### Key Ideas and Details

1. **Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.**
2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

##### Craft and Structure

4. **Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone** (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

#### READING STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT 6–12

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

##### Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
5. **Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text.**
6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

##### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

8. **Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.**

## WRITING STANDARDS

### Text Types and Purposes

1. Write **arguments** to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
  - a. **Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that reasons, and evidence.**
  - b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
  - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claims(s) and counterclaims.
2. Write **informative/explanatory texts** to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
  - a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; **organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions**; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  - b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
  - c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
  - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
  - f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - a. **Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation**, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
  - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
  - c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
  - d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
  - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

### Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3.)
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

### Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting, or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### Lesson Objectives

The goal of this project is to position students within an analytical discussion about the assumptions that are made about people based on where they live and/or how they are perceived because of where they live.

#### Students will:

- study the genre of reflective narratives
- study the style of Sandra Cisneros
- identify the purpose of reflective narrative in the context of argument
- compose an informal reflective narrative
- use reflective narratives as informal writing for analytic essays
- study a complex informational text
- explore bias and misperception
- identify narrative, reflective, informational, and argument structures in their own writing
- revise writing for clarity and genre effectiveness.

For students to be ready to write this essay, students must be familiar with examining the positions others take on issues as ways for understanding their own opinions. They must also be familiar with varied text structures for presenting their ideas.

### Session One: Building Connections to Students' Lives

1. Discuss: "Does it matter where we live?"
2. Quick Write (short informal writing used to orient thinking, and "quick" reactions to a topic): "How does where you live affect you?"
3. Share and record responses on chart paper. Hang the chart so that it can be referenced as the sequence continues.

### Session Two: Reading and Reacting to "The House on Mango Street"

1. Read text aloud with the class
2. Ask students to write a response to the following question: "What is your first reaction to the ideas in this story?" They should have about ten minutes to think and write.
3. Students read their responses to a small group and then each group shares with the whole class some of the highlights of their group's writings. Chart these responses and post them for ongoing reference.

### Session Three: Analyzing Text for Use of Language

Students reread the vignette.

1. Using a yellow colored pencil, underline the most interesting and/or thought-provoking lines in Cisneros' vignette. Students can read with a partner or alone.
2. On strips of paper (I like to use adding machine tape), students copy their most interesting line from the vignette onto the tape.
3. Post lines on the wall.
4. Discuss commonalities in these lines and imagery, as well as the reasons for why these lines were chosen.
5. Read the text again (alone, with a partner, or in a small group).
6. Using a red colored pencil, circle the most important words.

7. Make a class list of these words noticing:
  - the economy of Cisneros' language
  - the construction and diction of personal narrative
  - the construction and diction of reflection
8. Post these words on the wall and discuss the power and impact of Cisneros' writing.

In about a page of writing, ask students to address the following questions:

- What effect does Cisneros' language have on you? What does the line you chose show you about writing style? What do you notice about the lines you chose? Do you see connections, differences, commonalities, etc.?
- Discuss the impact of Cisneros' language—the diction.
- Identify the ways the lines are constructed—the syntax.
- Discuss the central character's concern and state her claim as you interpret it from the story.
- What do you think Cisneros wants her readers to consider/understand? With a partner, write what you believe Cisneros is saying.

**Note:** The assignment usually asks that student write a full page. They choose which of the following questions they want to address so that they have enough ideas to complete a full page of writing. Other times, they may choose a particular number of questions to respond to in a certain amount of time. The configuration of response is completely open. The goal is for students to think about the vignette's construction and the ways that reveals the writer's purpose.

## Session Four: Writing Reflective Narratives Using “The House on Mango Street” as a Guide

### ▪ Writing Prompt

In Sandra Cisneros' vignette, “The House on Mango Street,” the narrator describes the house she lives in, how she feels about living there, and how others make assumptions about her based on their impression of her house.

Think about the house that you live in. If someone who doesn't know you were to drive by your house, what might he or she assume about the people who live there? Based on the exterior of your house, how accurate would their assessment be of the people who live inside?

Students compose an informal reflective narrative that is due the following day.

**Note:** From the following student examples, it is easy to see Sandra Cisneros' influences. Students move from literal descriptions to reflective insights.

### Student Example A

*“When someone drives by my house, they might think the people were just another Mexican family with not a lot of money that really don't care what their house looks like. O.K., so maybe they won't think all of that but my house is out of town on a dirt road with a lot of potholes. The house's paint is falling off and the screen door has a lot of holes in it. Even if you looked inside of the house you might still feel the same way. My house is not the cleanest of houses. There is almost always a wrapper of some sort on the floor. And because I'm the one that usually takes out the trash, I'm also hardly ever home, so it doesn't get done all the time. But my house isn't all bad. We have a big front yard and two acres in the back. We have roses and flowers in the front yard and the grass is nice and green. So all in all I don't know what someone would think about my house. A person driving by my house might fail to realize that the people in the house don't have it that easy and the mother is a single mother with four kids. And her husband is in jail. And to top it off, she works 10 hours a day everyday,*

can't afford a babysitter or a person to take care of the yard work, or anything. The kids are young and the older brother is almost never home because of all the other stuff he has to do. I don't think you should ever assume anything by what someone has."

### **Student Example B**

"...People might think we are unfortunate and poor, but what they don't understand is that we are trying to find a house.... People don't see how much love goes on in our house. My mom works hard at her job then comes home and makes dinner. She makes sure that my brother and I are doing well in school and talks to us about our day.... My mom spends her every waking hour into making sure my brother and I are safe and happy. That is what goes on inside our small apartment. That is all everyone ever really needs, is love and comfort in your home, no matter what the size or what your house looks like. People see a small apartment; I see a warm cozy home with love and support."

### **Student Example C**

"I have always lived in a nice house or apartment. Before I moved [here] I lived on Cherry Street and Ocean Avenue [in San Diego]. But right now I live on Fifth Street. The house is nice, but it does have a splattered egg on the front of the house that has chipped away the paint. When people walk or drive by my house, I see their look of disappointment or disgust. People must think that we are poor and cannot keep things clean and nice. I am embarrassed to bring anybody over. I don't want their first impression to be like "Eww! You live here?" Whenever we go to the grocery store or along the roads to Chico I see the rich and very well kept houses and wish that I could live there. But instead I live on Fifth Street. What people might not understand is that we are not poor and we try to do the best we can to make our home nice looking. We manage to get by with what we get. We are nice people who take pride about the way we look and how our home looks. When my mom says that this house is only "temporary," I can't help but think that maybe it's not for a little while but until I graduate from high school. But I am grateful that we do have a house."

### **Student Example D**

"My house is on Chestnut Street. It is right on the corner of the street. It is light blue almost white. There are about three trees in front of my house. It has two big rooms and two small rooms and it also has a back yard. I feel happy living at my house because I live in town. Before moving there I used to live in a different house and it was out of town and I didn't like it there because it was lonely and I didn't have people to talk to. At this house it is different because I can go walking to my friend's house. People who drive by my house would think that we are a lazy family, but we are not. It's because we don't have time to fix our house. My parents work and they come home tired and late from work. But I don't care what they say as long as we are happy, that is good for me."

### **Student Example E**

"It's a country house surrounded by 175 acres of trees. There are sidewalks surrounding it with olive and sycamore branches obstructing the pathway around the house. The sidewalk leads to a small cement bottomed pond that contains dark water and fish long absent from it. The lawn is becoming slightly patchy and long, and the hedge has become overgrown. By the garage are boxes of stuff in somewhat organized little towers. By the front of the house there is a pool held up with iron poles to keep it from collapsing. Around the back, one of the numerous wooden decks has several boards torn up, indicating a half-done project. Away from the house a sandbox sits with a few sun-bleached toys for playing in the sand. Someone passing by would get the impression of people incompetent to finish

*projects or to buy new things. They may see the overgrowing shrubs and brush as laziness or scatterbrained. I see the boxes and things as part of numerous other projects slowly being accomplished. I see a busy family who takes time out to be together and not to work their children in their little free time to make sure everything is perfect. I see a family who cares more about how their children grow up than how perfect their yard looks. I see a family who cared about their lawn more until the 6th child came along. In reality, it is a manicured house and lawn gone a little to seed like a mother whose toned body rounds out a little after too many children. Like the mom who becomes so busy she neglects herself, so it is with us. Other things take precedence over "keeping up with the Jones'!" It is not that bad, but just worn down a little. Being busy and having lots of family time takes priority over an immaculate landscape."*

## Session Five: Finding Significance in Reflective Narratives

In the following activity, students may work with their own writings or they can work with a partner's.

1. Find the most significant sentences and color them yellow.
2. Each student writes his/her own significant sentences on strips of papers (or adding machine tape) and posts it on the bulletin board.
3. Using the red colored pencil, students circle the most powerful/meaningful word in their narrative.
4. Compare students' lines and words to Cisneros' by looking at the chart and tapes.
5. Discuss the comparisons and the ways they chose to present their ideas.
6. Students write a short reflection about how their own ideas and the ways they've written about them were influenced by the way Cisneros wrote hers. Students might write about style, topic, point of view, tone, or any other connections they may have with "The House on Mango Street." This writing helps them focus on the power of their own ideas, as well as on the ways they tell their own stories of where they live and the misperceptions that may exist for them.

**Note:** *This may be the end of this series of lessons. Students can revise their pieces and their work can be published into a class book.*

## Session Six: Writing about an Issue from "The House on Mango Street"

### (Formal Writing: Moving from Narrated Reflection to Reflective Analysis)

Students generate a list of ideas that comes from their reading and from their writing about assumptions based on outward appearances. They reread their own lists, the ones on the wall, and their informal writings from "The House on Mango Street." They are reminded that Cisneros helped them think about *assumptions and perceptions* in their own lives. They are also reminded that they will be thinking about a topic that will culminate in an essay where they will think about this topic, as well as explain their own insights into the topic.

The class brainstorms a collective list of issues about *assumptions and perceptions* presented both in the vignette as well as from their groups. We chart these and post them so that students can review them and use them as references for their paper topics.

Once students see the variety and range of ideas, they begin to think about the power of *assumptions and perceptions* that arise from merely looking at outward appearances.

Students choose two *assumptions and perceptions* from the list to think about through a pair of short writings that are about a half-page on each topic. They write about how their selections help them think about the power of assumptions and perceptions.

Students then begin to think about how *assumptions and perceptions* about appearances can lead to misunderstanding about an individual's character. Some of the most often chosen topics are about the misperceptions of the ways people in urban areas perceive rural life.

**Note:** *This is the place in the teaching sequence where students might choose from a broader variety of assumptions and perceptions ideas. Because students often identify that people living in larger, more urban place don't understand small town life, the following report provides them with additional insights into ways of understanding and misunderstanding rural life.*

## Session Seven: Analyzing Informational Text for Development of Ideas and Claims

Read *Perceptions of Rural America* by the Kellogg Foundation, an informational report based on 242 interviews with rural and non-rural Americans about their perspectives on rural life, values, work, and poverty.

**Note:** *Perceptions of Rural America is quite long, so the text students receive might be abridged, although most of my students find it quite interesting.*

- With a yellow highlighter, identify the report's claim/claims.
- Using two different colors of pencils that the class agrees on, color the report's facts with one color, and use another to color the writer's analysis/opinions that support the claim.
- Using an overhead transparency of the report or putting it under a document camera, debrief what students believe about the report by coloring the overhead as they suggest. They will notice that sometimes it is difficult to decide if an idea is a fact or an opinion.
- If there is time, or if the class is inclined, it is interesting to identify the most significant sentences in the report as well as the most powerful words, just as they did with "The House on Mango Street."
- Once the students have studied the report, they write about the ideas and claims that they think are in it. The purpose here is to connect their thinking to the ideas of the report and to let students reflect on and analyze the issues presented.

## Session Eight: Writing Prompt 2: Culminating Writing Assignment

The author in "The House on Mango Street" suggests that where we live can influence the ways others think about us, and even the ways we think about ourselves. In "Perceptions of Rural Life in America," the study shows that people living in urban areas believe that life in a rural place is distinctly different from city life and city values. To what extent do you see these attitudes where you live?

Write an analytical argument essay exploring your insights into perceptions and misperceptions associated with living in small towns or rural communities. To develop your essay and to help you present your ideas, use examples from your own experiences, your observations of others, and your reading, including "The House on Mango Street" and *Perceptions of Rural Life in America*.

Support the students' writing of this essay from drafting, to revising and editing, and finalizing the essay.

See student examples in the Learning From Student Work section.

## Reflections

Students readily engaged in this series of lessons. Because they live in a small rural town they have experienced ridicule and stereotyped branding about their “hick-ness” and isolation. At the same time, my students are quick to comment about “those rich people who live in the city.” But through this series of activities, they analyzed their own experiences and found new meanings through that reflection. Then, as they pushed farther to think more globally, they found new perspectives and shared those with people who might not understand what it means to be misunderstood. By looking at their work, it’s obvious that they each have strong connections to an important place. It’s surprising that from a seemingly simple look at where we live can see a larger view of the world.

### **Modifications:**

Some students aren’t sure what to write about. They may live in an apartment, or on a ranch, or just got to town. For ALL students, I invite them to choose some aspect of where they live to explore. One student wrote about his front door, another about her mother’s flowers. The focus isn’t my concern, rather the meaning they can gather from their analysis.

For students whose skills and/or language abilities are limited, we do all of the reading together. Some students tell the story of their “house” while others draw and then jot down some words to describe it. I explain what the Kellogg study says and project some of the more easily understandable paragraphs.

The next step in this process is for students to write an analytical essay that explores this idea of perceptions and misperceptions by reading another series of articles and then composing an essay that asks them to think about how and why we are labeled by where we live.

## Extension Resources

### Professional Resources

Soven, Margot Iris. *Teaching Writing in Middle and Secondary Schools: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D., and Michael Smith. *Reading Don't Fix No Chevy's: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.

## Assessment Guide

ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR ARGUMENTATION/ANALYTICAL WRITING					
	Not in Evidence	Some Evidence of Competency	Approaching Competency	Competent	Exceeds Competency
<b>Response to Essay Topic:</b> The writer responds effectively to the writing task. The writer demonstrates that he or she can develop his or her own ideas in response to readings, research, observations, and lessons learned.					
<b>Understanding &amp; Use of Text:</b> The writer provides the reader a clear and accurate understanding of the readings, research, and observation, and effectively uses the ideas from them to develop the writer's response.					
<b>Development:</b> The writer develops the essay effectively by analyzing well-chosen examples from experience, observation, reading, or learning in ways that make his or her perspective compelling.					
<b>Organization:</b> The writer organizes the essay effectively, establishes a focus, and guides the reader through a coherent, well-ordered presentation of his or her ideas. It is clear how each new paragraph advances the writer's response to the essay topic.					
<b>Word Choice &amp; Sentence Structure:</b> The writer uses a wide variety of sentences in ways that help convey and reinforce his or her ideas and chooses words that convey his or her ideas clearly and precisely.					
<b>Grammar, Usage, &amp; Conventions:</b> The writer makes sophisticated use of grammatical relationships and punctuation to support the effective communication of his or her ideas.					

The teacher may use all or part of the assessment guide to evaluate student writing. The categories and descriptions that make up this assessment guide are adapted from the Analytical Writing Improvement Continuum (AWIC) developed by high school, community college, and university teachers of writing who are Teacher Consultants with the California Writing Project. The scoring guide in these modules is just a slice of the AWIC and gives a glimpse into this improvement assessment tool that is organized by 18 essential attributes of analytical writing and uses no deficit language. Contact the California Writing Project for more information about the ISAW assessment tools and the ways they support preparing students for college- and career-readiness.

Because the culminating writing prompt provides an array of entry points, and because students need to find their own voices about this topic, the following student essays illustrate a range of responses and forms about living in a rural place. Given options, students will find the form for expressing their ideas.

The first student describes his town, then pokes fun at the stereotypes of his experiences and observations of his community, but takes his reader back to his own beliefs about the importance of where he lives.

The second student writes a letter to her deceased grandfather to tell him about her life in a tiny town. She weaves the literal aspects of her own life experience with historical wonderings. Although she uses a letter format, her reflective analysis shows readers the significance of her analysis.

The third student reflects on and analyzes her summer experience and learning as a student ranger at Mono Lake. The reader is guided through the geography and political history of it as she builds an argument for the preservation of Mono Lake.

## Student Sample A

This student chose to take on a satirical tone in his analytical essay.

### What is a Small Town?

*Corning, California has a population of close to seven thousand people. Seven thousand people aren't many; in fact, seven thousand of anything really isn't much anymore. 100,000 people regularly gather at football stadiums and auditoriums, in shopping malls, on street corners, or in telephone booths (well, maybe I'm exaggerating a little bit on the last two). In any case, Corning is just big enough to be classified as anything at all, so we who live here call it a town.*

*My town is a bit unusual, even among its peers. No nearby city has a Burger King located a block away from an orchard. In fact, orchards seem to be dispersed randomly throughout town, including the commercial sections. No one seems to notice though, because if you grew up here, you are used to agriculture popping up frequently, no matter where you are.*

*Take, for instance, olives. Corning has the distinction of being called "The Olive Capital of the World." It is easy to see why, considering I have an olive orchard, my friends have olive orchards, and there is a giant Bell Carter olive plant smack dab in the middle of town. In fact, Corning probably consumes the most olives per person of any place in the world, if only for the fact that those eating the olives are supporting the family business. I feel like a traitor when I don't order olives on my pepperoni pizza.*

*It isn't just that little green fruit that makes Corning what it is though. There are acres of rice paddies, almond orchards, rows of prune trees, figs, and manzanita. Fruit pickers may as well hold their annual convention here in the fall because they'll all be here anyways. If it's green and it sprouts out of the ground or falls from a tree come spring, then someone here is bound to grow it. We are a farm town, but what exactly does that mean?*

*A great thing about Corning is that we are close to so much. We are in the middle of a valley, but mountains, parks, and the like are only 2-3 hours away. Big cities such as San Francisco and Sacramento are just another 2-3 hours. Lake Tahoe: 3 1/2 hours. The ocean, Oregon, or Nevada: 4-6 hours. But it may be more revealing to state what is here, instead of what is close. Three stop lights, one movie theatre (one movie per week), zero malls, zero dance clubs, zero everything else you can possibly conceive of except trees. Maybe I see the town's deficiencies through a teenager's eyes, but when you have to drive thirty miles to pick up a pair of football cleats, or you and your friends are renting movies for the third weekend this month, the town seems close to desolate.*

So why would anyone want to live in our village of small town gossip, a place where only this year was a Starbucks built (gasp!)? Why have people been drawn toward the rather puny gravitational pull of the "Olive City?" The answer isn't simple. Many people enjoy the beauty and clean air of our private little valley in Northern California. It's nice for those who have lived in San Francisco or L.A. to escape city life. On the negative side, many people stay here, just like anywhere else, for fear of change and moving somewhere new. Others just want to stay around their family and life-long friends. For some it's a combination of all these factors, and for some reason, people seem to like it here.

There are some nasty rumors going around about Corning, and all of rural America for that matter. Apparently they don't sell toothbrushes here, and the clothing stores are lined with cowboy boots. Everyone here supposedly shops at giant, all-purpose stores (rhymes with ball cart...) and rides horses to work. These myths are, of course, false. The rural environment I see is much different. It is warm and cordial, yet still in touch with the rest of the world. It is laid back and down-home, but with an eye to the future. Most of all, it is a place that parents, children, and everyone else for that matter, can be proud to live in.

## Annotation – Student Sample A

Student Work	What do you see in the student work?	How does it connect to your assessment tools?	What will you work on next with this student?
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What is a Small Town?</b></p> <p>Corning, California has a population of close to seven thousand people. Seven thousand people aren't many; in fact, seven thousand of anything really isn't much anymore. 100,000 people regularly gather at football stadiums and auditoriums, in shopping malls, on street corners, or in telephone booths (well, maybe I'm exaggerating a little bit on the last two). In any case, Corning is just big enough to be classified as anything at all, so we who live here call it a town.</p> <p>My town is a bit unusual, even among its peers. No nearby city has a Burger King located a block away from an orchard. In fact, orchards seem to be dispersed randomly throughout town, including the commercial sections. No one seems to notice though, because if you grew up here, you are used to agriculture popping up frequently, no matter where you are.</p> <p>Take, for instance, olives. Corning has the distinction of being called "The Olive Capital of the World." It is easy to see why, considering I have an olive orchard, my friends have olive orchards, and there is a giant Bell Carter olive plant smack dab in the middle of town. In fact, Corning probably consumes the most olives per person of any place in the world, if only for the fact that those eating the olives are supporting the family business. I feel like a traitor when I don't order olives on my pepperoni pizza.</p> <p>It isn't just that little green fruit that makes</p>	<p>Orienting the reader to the context of place. Begins with a personal observation.</p> <p>Uses unique generalizations</p> <p>Gives a reader unfamiliar with small town life a sketch of what the town is like.</p> <p>The transition here is awkward</p> <p>Clever details that merge an iconic image with some rural details. But the details are thin for someone unfamiliar with an orchard.</p> <p>Beginning of reflection here.</p>	<p>Provides enough information to engage a reader.</p> <p>Grounded in a concrete set of examples</p> <p>Very aware of the reader.</p> <p>Grounded in concrete.</p> <p>Weaves reflection into description.</p>	<p>Transitions</p> <p>Development.</p>

<p>Corning what it is though. There are acres of rice paddies, almond orchards, rows of prune trees, figs, and manzanita. Fruit pickers may as well hold their annual convention here in the fall because they'll all be here anyways. If it's green and it sprouts out of the ground or falls from a tree come spring, then someone here is bound to grow it. We are a farm town, but what exactly does that mean?</p> <p>A great thing about Corning is that we are close to so much. We are in the middle of a valley, but mountains, parks, and the like are only 2-3 hours away. Big cities such as San Francisco and Sacramento are just another 2-3 hours. Lake Tahoe: 3 1/2 hours. The ocean, Oregon, or Nevada: 4-6 hours. But it may be more revealing to state what is here, instead of what is close. Three stop lights, one movie theatre (one movie per week), zero malls, zero dance clubs, zero everything else you can possibly conceive of except trees. Maybe I see the town's deficiencies through a teenager's eyes, but when you have to drive thirty miles to pick up a pair of football cleats, or you and your friends are renting movies for the third weekend this month, the town seems close to desolate.</p> <p>So why would anyone want to live in our village of small town gossip, a place where only this year was a Starbucks built (gasp!)? Why have people been drawn toward the rather puny gravitational pull of the "Olive City?" The answer isn't simple. Many people enjoy the beauty and clean air of our private little valley in Northern California. It's nice for those who have lived in San Francisco or L.A. to escape city life. On the negative side, many people stay here, just like anywhere else, for fear of change and moving somewhere new. Others just want to stay around their family and life-long friends. For some it's a combination of all these factors, and for some reason, people seem to like it here.</p> <p>There are some nasty rumors going around about Corning, and all of rural America for that matter. Apparently they don't sell toothbrushes here, and the clothing stores are lined with cowboy boots. Everyone here supposedly shops at giant, all-purpose stores (rhymes with ball cart...) and rides horses to work. These myths are, of course, false. The rural environment I see is much different. It is warm and cordial, yet still in touch with the rest of the world. It is laid back and down-home, but with an eye to the future. Most of all, it is a place that parents, children, and everyone else for that matter, can be proud to live in.</p>	<p>Good question.</p> <p>An overabundance of distance</p> <p>Clear awareness of a reader by including interesting details then moves to reflection and significance. Gives the reader an insight into life in this small time.</p> <p>Begins the move from reflection to argument.</p> <p>Poses an idea for the first time. Is the town desolate?</p> <p>Back to the reader.</p> <p>Nice set of details that honor the surprised reader.</p> <p>Awkward shift "the negative side" that isn't even a necessary signal.</p> <p>Acknowledges the world.</p> <p>More sarcasm/humor</p> <p>Answers doubters.</p> <p>Persuades readers about the merits of the town.</p> <p>Delayed the impact of his claim, which could have been more effective if the closing was not so rushed.</p>	<p>Keeps reader engaged.</p> <p>This specific distance information is almost distracting</p> <p>More audience awareness.</p> <p>Challenges the reader.</p> <p>Creates the significance for a reader.</p> <p>Weaves narrative/ Informative/ reflection/ persuasion.</p> <p>Needs to say more at the end so reader can think more about his ideas.</p>	<p>Continued study of rhetorical strategies.</p> <p>What details matter?</p> <p>Rhetorical shifts</p> <p>Closings</p>
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## Student Sample B

This student struggled to find a form for her ideas about where she lives. Through many dead-end pieces, she decided to make her audience her deceased grandfather. In this letter she weaves her ideas, historical information, and reflection into a tender talk with her Grandpa.

**Dear Grandpa**

Dear Grandpa,

I've been so busy with school and church that I let time pass me by sometimes. I still miss you and think about you more as I'm getting older. These are days when I wish you were still near, and could see what I'm growing up to be. I think you would have been proud of me that I'm going to college to do what I really want to do—not for the money either. I still live in Capay with Mom and Dad and Paul. I think Dad misses you more now that he's retired and has the same health problems you had when you were younger. Even though he talks about moving away from here, I know he won't. There will never be another Capay for us. Time is slow and relaxing here; no one needs to rush or leave any sooner than they want to. Dad loves Capay just as much as I do, but you already knew that.

I want to live here forever. You would too if you could see this view, smell and feel the wind die down during a summer sunset. If you could only be here when the rain falls softly on the earth on a cool January evening. There are days when I wonder how much more beautiful the mountains might look if it were fifty years into the past. Maybe even a hundred. What would the land look like, I wonder? Could the actual place my house rests on once have been a pioneer's campfire, or an Indian's village?

My main question has become, "What makes Capay so simple, and why hasn't it become a city like those around it so long ago?" John Bidwell once called Chico, 'El Rancho Chico', but now has its own college and baseball team. I don't think poorly of cities, of course, Grandpa, since you lived in one once, but I have always felt secure in Capay. Never have I moved, even to another house. There is something peaceful about Capay that causes one to stay, as if time slows down. Do you think time can really stop? I know it sounds silly, but that's what I feel like after coming home from a busy vacation to the city or even after a long day of school. Both of my parents came from large cities, or even from another state. They found Capay by chance, and saw no reason to leave. There are people in Capay who have lived here for many generations. Some are even from the two families that started this farming district. I wonder how this came about, and what made them stay?

Capay means stream in the language of the Wintun Indians. We now know that Wintuns occupied a great portion of Northern California before miners and families came to settle. In 1844, a pioneer by the name of Josefa Soto was granted a piece of land in Northern California. Not only was Josefa a woman buying her own land in the 1800's, but she also succeeded in starting a farming district without the help of anyone. Manuel Micheltorena, the Mexican governor of the Department of California, gave her the land. Although quite a few stories have been written about Josefa, it's hard to say how she knew about the land. The land lay on the western bank of the Sacramento River and north of the mouth of the River Capay (Stony Creek). It extended five leagues from south to north and two leagues from east to west.

Josefa's goal was her own cattle ranch, and for her, this was the land to do it with. The land was deeded to many people up until 1910. After all that, all of the people owning portions of land were able to farm and grow crops or even start small businesses. This land was developed and known as El Rancho Capay. In 1917, the first church of Capay was established. By 1924, three churches had made their mark and even a few schools formed. Many small cities began this way too, with people owning portions of land and expanding with buildings and providing more jobs for people. But Capay never became a city; it was barely able to be a district.

What makes all of this history of Capay enriching to me is that I'm living in the middle of the excitement. Grandpa, did you know that the first church ever built in Capay still has relations attending the church I go to? At the end of the road I live on, is the

Sacramento River where many Wintun tools have been found. Every day of my life I can see the same mountains and the same sunrise that Wintuns saw when they first settled here.

Everyone needs a Capay to come home to, or at least visit, don't you think so? Some place that has importance to them and serves as a refuge where time slows down, and sometimes stops. I want to live here forever, and I will. I want to continue being a part of Capay. I will have our own farm to grow and harvest. Some day people will discover Capay as I have done, and they will see how such a family of people cannot be torn apart by cities or religions. They will finally understand what is so serene about Capay, about a place that has found a way to pause time. I now know a way to express Capay in writing. Thank you for listening, Grandpa, and letting me stop time with you.

Love, Your Granddaughter

## Annotation – Student Sample B

Student Work	What do you see in the student work?	How does it connect to your assessment tools?	What will you work on next with this student?
<p>This student struggled to find a form for her ideas about where she lives. Through many dead-end pieces, she decided to make her audience her deceased grandfather. In this letter she weaves her ideas, historical information, and reflection into a tender talk with her Grandpa.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dear Grandpa</b></p> <p>Dear Grandpa, I've been so busy with school and church that I let time pass me by sometimes. I still miss you and think about you more as I'm getting older. These are days when I wish you were still near, and could see what I'm growing up to be. I think you would have been proud of me that I'm going to college to do what I really want to do—not for the money either.</p> <p>I still live in Capay with Mom and Dad and Paul. I think Dad misses you more now that he's retired and has the same health problems you had when you were younger. Even though he talks about moving away from here, I know he won't. There will never be another Capay for us. Time is slow and relaxing here; no one needs to rush or leave any sooner than they want to. Dad loves Capay just as much as I do, but you already knew that.</p> <p>I want to live here forever. You would too if you could see this view, smell and feel the wind die down during a summer sunset. If you could only be here when the rain falls softly on the earth on a cool January evening. There are days when I wonder how much more beautiful the mountains might look if it were fifty years into the past. Maybe even a hundred. What would the land look like, I wonder? Could the actual place my house rests on once have been a pioneer's campfire, or an Indian's village?</p> <p>My main question has become, "What makes Capay so simple, and why hasn't it become a city like those around it so long ago?" John Bidwell once called Chico, 'El Rancho Chico', but now has its own college and baseball team. I don't think poorly of cities, of course, Grandpa, since you lived in one</p>	<p>The student still feels a closeness to her grandfather.</p> <p>Uses comfortable language appropriate for a letter, but it's very elementary</p> <p>Provides background information about the literal place where she lives.</p> <p>Begins reflecting</p> <p>Jump to a different aspect of Capay.</p> <p>Back to description of the place.</p> <p>Begins thinking about the past and historical view of Capay.</p> <p>Rough transition. No need for quotation marks.</p> <p>Names are unfamiliar to people from other</p>	<p>Finds an appropriate form</p> <p>Needs more precision.</p> <p>Needs to spend more time here</p> <p>Connects concrete with reflection to persuasion.</p>	<p>Continued discussion about the relationship between form and function.</p> <p>Diction and syntax need to be more precise. Study sentence boundary options, sentence types, language choices, tone.</p> <p>Rhetorical development Development of details. Appropriate/significant details.</p>

<p>once, but I have always felt secure in Capay. Never have I moved, even to another house. There is something peaceful about Capay that causes one to stay, as if time slows down. Do you think time can really stop? I know it sounds silly, but that's what I feel like after coming home from a busy vacation to the city or even after a long day of school. Both of my parents came from large cities, on even from another state. They found Capay by chance, and saw no reason to leave. There are people in Capay who have lived here for many generations. Some are even from the two families that started this farming district. I wonder how this came about, and what made them stay?</p> <p>Capay means stream in the language of the Wintun Indians. We now know that Wintuns occupied a great portion of Northern California before miners and families came to settle. In 1844, a pioneer by the name of Josefa Soto was granted a piece of land in Northern California. Not only was Josefa a woman buying her own land in the 1800's, but she also succeeded in starting a farming district without the help of anyone. Manuel Micheltorena, the Mexican governor of the Department of California, gave her the land. Although quite a few stories have been written about Josefa, it's hard to say how she knew about the land. The land lay on the western bank of the Sacramento River and north of the mouth of the River Capay (Stony Creek). It extended five leagues from south to north and two leagues from east to west.</p> <p>Josefa's goal was her own cattle ranch, and for her, this was the land to do it with. The land was deeded to many people up until 1910. After all that, all of the people owning portions of land were able to farm and grow crops or even start small businesses. This land was developed and known as El Rancho Capay. In 1917, the first church of Capay was established. By 1924, three churches had made their mark and even a few schools formed. Many small cities began this way too, with people owning portions of land and expanding with buildings and providing more jobs for people. But Capay never became a city; it was barely able to be a district.</p> <p>What makes all of this history of Capay enriching to me is that I'm living in the middle of the excitement. Grandpa, did you know that the first church ever built in Capay still has relations attending the church I go to? At the end of the road I live on, is the Sacramento River where many Wintun tools have been found. Every day of my life I can see the same mountains and the same sunrise that Wintuns saw when they first settled here.</p> <p>Everyone needs a Capay to come home to, or at least visit, don't you think so? Some place that has importance to them and serves as a refuge where time slows down, and sometimes stops. I want to live here forever, and I will. I want to continue being a part of Capay. I will have our</p>	<p>places.</p> <p>Acknowledges limited experience</p> <p>Talks directly to the reader. Clear awareness of audience.</p> <p>Reflection moves to questions</p> <p>Question hangs here without a speculated response.</p> <p>Moves to the impact of native peoples, but the transition is awkward</p> <p>Purpose for this information is unclear.</p> <p>Too heavy with history.</p> <p>Bring her purpose back to the significance her experience.</p> <p>Writer's experiences impact the reader as we see the significance of the history she shared earlier.</p> <p>Moving to argument through a simple question.</p> <p>Moves back and forth from literal to reflective to</p>	<p>Reflection stems from actual occurrence.</p> <p>Creates significance for the reader.</p>	<p>Continued discussion about the importance of audience awareness. Even though this is a letter, the audience is beyond the "recipient".</p> <p>Rhetorical moves through questions.</p> <p>Transitions</p> <p>Balance of information Relationships among details/facts and opinions</p> <p>Balance between fact and reflection that move to persuasion.</p>
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<p>own farm to grow and harvest. Some day people will discover Capay as I have done, and they will see how such a family of people cannot be torn apart by cities or religions. They will finally understand what is so serene about Capay, about a place that has found a way to pause time. I now know a way to express Capay in writing. Thank you for listening, Grandpa, and letting me stop time with you.</p> <p>Love, Your Granddaughter</p>	<p>persuasive.</p> <p>Serenity is nice description</p>		<p>Closings that invite a reader to keep thinking.</p>
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## Student Sample C

The third student reflects on and analyzes her summer experience and learning as a student ranger at Mono Lake. The reader is guided through the geography and political history of it as she builds an argument for the preservation of Mono Lake. More than a response to a topic that asked her to address misperceptions about a community and its people, she developed an essay that draws on aspects of a feature article to argue and call the readers to act.

### **The Battle for Mono Lake**

Dark clouds smother the sky, threatening rain as I walk along the lakeshore. Thunderheads have imposed their presence here the entire week, and give no sign of taking their leave. Lightning cracks open the nearby mountain crest as I head back towards the car. I knew my last day at Mono Lake wouldn't bring me the sun-drenched weather that so many flock to California for. I didn't care—just being in this place was enough for me. It was my last taste of the magic of Highway 395, of the lonely high desert and its solid mountain enclosures—there is nowhere in California, or the world, like it. Tucked away in California are these mountains and deserts, in forgotten valleys, distant forests, and hidden canyons where an untamed spirit and grandeur remain. Seagulls catch the updraft above the blackened, choppy waters. Humanity fades away, and nature comes into focus. A place where time ends and life begins—a primordial sea: brine shrimp, alkali flies, and tufa towers that pools in the sagebrush bowl below the backdoor of Yosemite. Even the air smells pure and clean here. Earth and sage, salt and water all mix and cleanse the soul's palette. I ease my way between the guard posts of white and chalky tufa towers, memorials to an enduring battle: the war to save Mono Lake. A place of great struggles and raw beauty, the lake is a reflection of both prehistoric past and modern efforts to keep it alive. The fight between two great forces of California—the water-thirsty beast of Los Angeles, and the group of grassroots citizens that banded together to stop the destruction of one of the last great places of the region, culminated at this lonely place. Mono Lake is the spirit of California, a place rich in beauty that can so easily be destroyed.

High school geography textbooks tell us that on the leeward side of a mountain range there is a rain shadow—an arid region beyond the mountains where precipitation is scarce. I contemplate this information as I turn away from the wind. Gusts sweep over the lake, creating miniature-breaking waves. The saline brine churns salt molecules into the atmosphere and disperses them. I close my eyes and suddenly it is no longer Mono Lake—it's the sea, and I'm breathing in the soggy, salty air of the Pacific. I open my eyes again. The ocean has given way to the shrinking inland sea of Mono, and the heavens pour down on me. I remember that geography textbook again, and how your experiences can be so different from what you read. A book can say that Mono Lake is just a barren wasteland, but the people who have actually explored the basin know better. I run back to the car, realizing I left my jacket there. As I move up to the parking lot, I notice the markers that the people of the Tufa Reserve placed, carefully noting the water levels of years past. Mono Lake was not so salty, not so shallow once. The creeks that once flowed into it were rich in life, fragile ecosystems that were carelessly destroyed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, diverted to feed its own needs instead of Mono Lake.

As you drive down Highway 395 through the Owens Valley on a windy day, you can taste the bitter, biting wind as it stings your eyes and mouth—the product of LA's parched mouth, emanating from a dried up playa. Once blue like Mono, it is the now deceased Owens Lake: a dry bed that is no longer a source of life, but a creator of stinging alkali dust storms. The only place these acrid storms do not penetrate is in your enclosed car. But in the metropolis' growing thirst for water, the Owens River and its Lake were no longer enough to satisfy its ever-lengthening drinking straw. The DWP gradually stretched its arm farther north, until it seized the Mono Basin. Slowly it began to choke its creeks—the very arteries it needed to survive, its green and blue veins of life died away. And the lake shrank.

But there were people who knew better. The effects that were beginning to show on the lake shocked them. When the shore drew back, it exposed a land bridge to an important nesting area, leaving thousands of migratory birds, who had made their home on the

islands of Negit and Paoha for ages, exposed to predation and death from coyotes. A man named David Gaines formed the Mono Lake Committee, a group of brave souls who stood up for a wild land that could not. They worked to make sure that Los Angeles should never be allowed to do such a thing again. With the efforts of the Committee and others, the Lake could now fight back. Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area formed, and the restoration of the lake began. Slowly, the green and blue hues of life once again returned to Rush Creek and the other tributaries that end their journeys at the lake. Mono reclaimed the land connecting the islands. Although progress has been made, it will be many long years before Mono will return to its original capacity. No longer does Los Angeles take its water mercilessly and heedlessly, and now acts with a much more responsible hand to the land. Mono Lake won its first battle, yet there are—and unfortunately will be—many others. The latest is a proposed subdivision within its boundaries of the Scenic Area, now threatening the environmental integrity and raw beauty of the basin. The proposal would line Mono's western shore with a group of tract homes. The committee continues to fight its progress with grassroots supporters. Only time will tell whether their endeavor will be triumphant over the encroaching development that still threatens Mono Lake.

Turning onto the highway now, I drive back to Lee Vining, but slowly, with the highest setting on my windshield wipers as a deluge of precipitation pounds down on my car. Eventually, I pull off of the road altogether and wait for the cloudburst to pass. Slowly, the rain passes, moving to the south. I am able to see the crest of the Sierra again, veiled at the top with the white gauze of falling snow. Driving to the very foot of these mountains, I enter the hamlet of Lee Vining, home of the Mono Lake Committee. The doors are open for the day, welcoming many others and me. We marvel at the accounts and artifacts of the Battle of Mono Lake. Photographs, exhibits, and maps all chart the progress of the lake as it gradually regains health. The committee headquarters is the fort that protects Mono Lake, and people who share a love for this area are its soldiers—the ones who help keep the lake alive, the people who care, who take action. When you first visit the committee, you can see people who are marveling at Mono for the first time. When I went to Lee Vining, I did not just see solitary people at the visitor's center. I saw families, friends on vacation, people from Los Angeles and elsewhere, all learning and sharing their newly-found knowledge about Mono Lake, becoming excited and inspired to help save the lake. They are part of a spirit of optimism in California, one that believes to change things for the better, the power lies in the hands of the people. A dream that believes you can solve any problem if you care enough about it. However, these optimistic people must have caution.

Not everyone knows the power and history behind Mono Lake, nor do they bother to find out. Everyone does not share the fight of those who care for the lake. Some people wish to develop the land surrounding Mono, and want to build a vacation home there, or create more real estate. Others do not care at all, because they have not taken the time to explore the lake, or even travel outside their own sprawling city or suburb. For every few people who stop there, a few hundred drive by, on their way to Yosemite, Reno, or other places along 395. Those few hundred will never support efforts to save the lake. But, for the committee and the people who care, all they can do is hope that the ones who do stop on their way elsewhere will have been inspired by the efforts to keep Mono Lake alive. For, with any luck, the people who do take time to stop will be the ones to help save the last pockets of wild California, which even as I write, the new subdivision or vacation home developments draw closer to.

## Annotation – Student Sample C

Student Work	What do you see in the student work?	How does it connect to your assessment tools?	What will you work on next with this student?
<p><b>The Battle for Mono Lake</b></p> <p>Dark clouds smother the sky, threatening rain as I walk along the lakeshore. Thunderheads have imposed their presence here the entire week, and give no sign of taking their leave. Lightning cracks open the nearby mountain crest as I head back towards the car. I knew my last day at Mono Lake wouldn't bring me the sun-drenched weather that so many flock to California for. I didn't care—just being in this place was enough for me. It was my last taste of the magic of Highway 395, of the lonely high desert and its solid mountain enclosures—there is nowhere in California, or the world, like it. Tucked away in California are these mountains and deserts, in forgotten valleys, distant forests, and hidden canyons where an untamed spirit and grandeur remain. Seagulls catch the updraft above the blackened, choppy waters. Humanity fades away, and nature comes into focus. A place where time ends and life begins—a primordial sea: brine shrimp, alkali flies, and tufa towers that pools in the sagebrush bowl below the backdoor of Yosemite. Even the air smells pure and clean here. Earth and sage, salt and water all mix and cleanse the soul's palette. I ease my way between the guard posts of white and chalky tufa towers, memorials to an enduring battle: the war to save Mono Lake. A place of great struggles and raw beauty, the lake is a reflection of both prehistoric past and modern efforts to keep it alive. The fight between two great forces of California—the water-thirsty beast of Los Angeles, and the group of grassroots citizens that banded together to stop the destruction of one of the last great places of the region, culminated at this lonely place. Mono Lake is the spirit of California, a place rich in beauty that can so easily be destroyed.</p> <p>High school geography textbooks tell us that on the leeward side of a mountain range there is a rain shadow—an arid region beyond the mountains where precipitation is scarce. I contemplate this information as I turn away from the wind. Gusts sweep over the lake, creating miniature-breaking waves. The saline brine churns salt molecules into the atmosphere and disperses them. I close my eyes and suddenly it is no longer Mono Lake—it's the sea, and I'm breathing in the soggy, salty air of</p>	<p>Student uses reflection to lead to a political viewpoint and claim.</p> <p>Commanding use of rhetorical strategies to achieve an argumentative purpose.</p> <p>Intriguing title</p> <p>Vivid description incorporating all of our senses.</p> <p>Connection to significance on observations</p> <p>Geographical details are sprinkled with pointed commentary, "forgotten valleys" that signals that the writer is making an argument.</p> <p>Back to the present.</p> <p>Introduction of political tension.</p> <p>Reflection of the political climate.</p> <p>Move to another example.</p>	<p>Writing observations to reflection to persuasion brings significance to the reader.</p> <p>Language choices impact tone.</p> <p>Reader is immediately captured.</p> <p>Reflection is woven in from the beginning.</p>	<p>For the WHOLE class: Continued study of rhetorical structures. Review the importance of observation and learning as evidence. Review the importance of well-chosen examples, precise diction, and interesting syntax. This paper will serve as a model for balanced writing, carefully crafted details, precise diction, and varied syntax. The following "What will you work on..." is what the whole class can learn from this essay used as a model.</p> <p>Tone</p> <p>Use of present tense</p> <p>Imagery</p> <p>Transition to a personal example then moves to a personal insight, then to a larger context.</p>

<p>the Pacific. I open my eyes again. The ocean has given way to the shrinking inland sea of Mono, and the heavens pour down on me. I remember that geography textbook again, and how your experiences can be so different from what you read. A book can say that Mono Lake is just a barren wasteland, but the people who have actually explored the basin know better. I run back to the car, realizing I left my jacket there. As I move up to the parking lot, I notice the markers that the people of the Tufa Reserve placed, carefully noting the water levels of years past. Mono Lake was not so salty, not so shallow once. The creeks that once flowed into it were rich in life, fragile ecosystems that were carelessly destroyed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, diverted to feed its own needs instead of Mono Lake.</p> <p>As you drive down Highway 395 through the Owens Valley on a windy day, you can taste the bitter, biting wind as it stings your eyes and mouth—the product of LA’s parched mouth, emanating from a dried up playa. Once blue like Mono, it is the now deceased Owens Lake: a dry bed that is no longer a source of life, but a creator of stinging alkali dust storms. The only place these acrid storms do not penetrate is in your enclosed car. But in the metropolis’ growing thirst for water, the Owens River and its Lake were no longer enough to satisfy its ever-lengthening drinking straw. The DWP gradually stretched its arm farther north, until it seized the Mono Basin. Slowly it began to choke its creeks—the very arteries it needed to survive, its green and blue veins of life died away. And the lake shrank.</p> <p>But there were people who knew better. The effects that were beginning to show on the lake shocked them. When the shore drew back, it exposed a land bridge to an important nesting area, leaving thousands of migratory birds, who had made their home on the islands of Negit and Paoha for ages, exposed to predation and death from coyotes. A man named David Gaines formed the Mono Lake Committee, a group of brave souls who stood up for a wild land that could not. They worked to make sure that Los Angeles should never be allowed to do such a thing again. With the efforts of the Committee and others, the Lake could now fight back. Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area formed, and the restoration of the lake began. Slowly, the green and blue hues of life once again returned to Rush Creek and the other tributaries that end their journeys at the lake. Mono reclaimed the land connecting the islands. Although progress has been made, it will be many long years before Mono will return to its original capacity. No longer does Los Angeles take its water mercilessly and heedlessly, and now acts with a much more responsible hand to the land. Mono Lake won its first battle, yet there are—and unfortunately will be—many others. The latest is a proposed subdivision within its boundaries of the Scenic Area, now threatening the environmental integrity and raw beauty of the basin. The proposal would line Mono’s western shore with a group of tract homes. The committee continues to fight its</p>	<p>Revisiting and reimagining the present.</p> <p>Touching back to the past to propel to the present then to the future then to the persuasive.</p> <p>Emotional diction that supports the case she is making for Mono Lake.</p> <p>Tone is created with deadly glutinous terms.</p> <p>The simple use of <b>but</b> as a transition word.</p> <p>History as support for the argument.</p> <p>To the present political context.</p>		<p>Recursive writing of ideas.</p> <p>Word choice contributes to tone.</p> <p>Ways of transitioning</p> <p>The role of facts in analytical argument writing.</p> <p>The need for conflict to create interest, tension, and significance.</p> <p>Attention to audience needs</p>
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<p>progress with grassroots supporters. Only time will tell whether their endeavor will be triumphant over the encroaching development that still threatens Mono Lake.</p> <p>Turning onto the highway now, I drive back to Lee Vining, but slowly, with the highest setting on my windshield wipers as a deluge of precipitation pounds down on my car. Eventually, I pull off of the road altogether and wait for the cloudburst to pass. Slowly, the rain passes, moving to the south. I am able to see the crest of the Sierra again, veiled at the top with the white gauze of falling snow. Driving to the very foot of these mountains, I enter the hamlet of Lee Vining, home of the Mono Lake Committee. The doors are open for the day, welcoming many others and me. We marvel at the accounts and artifacts of the Battle of Mono Lake. Photographs, exhibits, and maps all chart the progress of the lake as it gradually regains health. The committee headquarters is the fort that protects Mono Lake, and people who share a love for this area are its soldiers—the ones who help keep the lake alive, the people who care, who take action. When you first visit the committee, you can see people who are marveling at Mono for the first time. When I went to Lee Vining, I did not just see solitary people at the visitor’s center. I saw families, friends on vacation, people from Los Angeles and elsewhere, all learning and sharing their newly-found knowledge about Mono Lake, becoming excited and inspired to help save the lake. They are part of a spirit of optimism in California, one that believes to change things for the better, the power lies in the hands of the people. A dream that believes you can solve any problem if you care enough about it. However, these optimistic people must have caution.</p> <p>Not everyone knows the power and history behind Mono Lake, nor do they bother to find out. Everyone does not share the fight of those who care for the lake. Some people wish to develop the land surrounding Mono, and want to build a vacation home there, or create more real estate. Others do not care at all, because they have not taken the time to explore the lake, or even travel outside their own sprawling city or suburb. For every few people who stop there, a few hundred drive by, on their way to Yosemite, Reno, or other places along 395. Those few hundred will never support efforts to save the lake. But, for the committee and the people who care, all they can do is hope that the ones who do stop on their way elsewhere will have been inspired by the efforts to keep Mono Lake alive. For, with any luck, the people who do take time to stop will be the ones to help save the last pockets of wild California, which even as I write, the new subdivision or vacation home developments draw closer to.</p>	<p>Continued pushing of purpose and intention.</p> <p>Back to the beginning.</p> <p>The purpose to persuade readers to consider the plight of Mono Lake is clear and this section brings readers back to that intention.</p> <p>Writer sees with new perspective. Renewed faith in people to smooth out struggles.</p> <p>Acknowledges that the struggle isn't over.</p> <p>Personalized conclusion that brings us back to the present concern and the reason for her argument— the battle for Mono Lake.</p>		<p>Revisiting an idea without repeating it.</p> <p>Reflection brings clarity and new understanding.</p> <p>Anticipate reader's questions.</p> <p>Conclusions</p>
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